The Art of Community Review
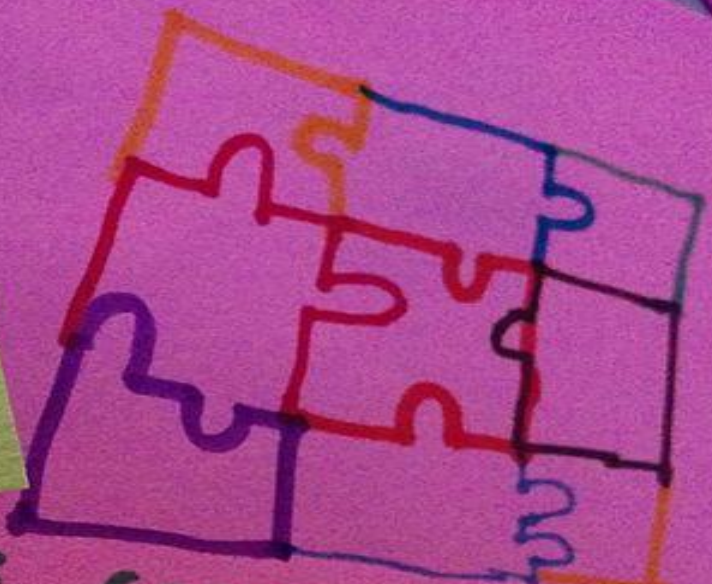
Rohini Lakshané
CIS-A2K Train The Trainer
Mysore
26 January, 2018

WE COMPLEMENT EACH OTHER.
USER: Rohini

What this talk is about:

Best practices for the Wikimedia community to write and review grant proposals.

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What this talk is not:

Commentary on specific grant proposals, grantors, grantees, individuals, communities, groups, or their motivations.

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Differences between

Centralised, non-partisan, uninvolved and opaque reviewer/ auditor

Review by the public/ community

- E.g., Right To Information requests

A system of checks and balance

Stages where you, the reviewer, can participate

- Proposal stage: The resources being invested in the project or activity are being used for a good and necessary cause that benefits the community.
- Mid-point report or similar update: The resources are indeed being used for the cause they were allotted for. There are strong explanations for (significant) deviations or changes that may have occurred from the proposal stage.
- End: Same as the "mid-point" stage.
  - Next level of end review: Was previous community feedback implemented? Has it worked? Why or why not?
- Check for profligacy.
  - A high expense when a lower one would have sufficed. E.g., stay in luxury hotels at a non-discounted cost when cheaper options were available.
  - Exercise caution when evaluating this. Assume good faith unless/ until there is evidence to the contrary.

Tips for writing grant applications

- When you write a grants proposal, consider the steps in the previous slide but from the lens of a potential grantee.

Of devils and details

- If you believe an expense is unnecessary or exaggerated, refer to the specific item in the budget.
  - State why you believe it is overpriced and what you believe would be a reasonable cost for it. Back it up with reliable sources. "[Citation needed]"
    - *E.g.*, price quotations from different and competing vendors; websites that provide estimates and quotations.
    - "Rate of subsistence allowance", a.k.a, *per diem* costs as stated in documents that can be treated as an irrefutable yardstick. *E.g.*, rates as defined by the European Commission and the UN.
  - Share useful contacts and leads if you know they would do the job better or at a lower expense.

Comparisons are odious*

- Refer to an up-to-date cost-of-living index for the location of the project.
- Refer to up-to-date wage rates for the same or similar position(s) in the industry/ domain at the location where the project will be executed.
  - This will work for lower-rung positions, clerical positions, and some freelance jobs. This usually cannot be used to evaluate compensation for specialised skill sets and/ or expertise.
- Evaluate cost-to-benefit ratio: How do the expenses for paying contractors and/ or contractual services offset the increase in project time?
- When you write a grant proposal, this is your groundwork to make it bulletproof. Retain all price quotations, bids etc. until the final project review is over.

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-- The language barrier for communities that do not speak English

-- Issues that need a change in <u>process</u>