



## SHARING RESOURCES IN MINISTRY: A GUIDE FOR ELCA SYNODS AND CONGREGATIONS ON MUTUAL ACCOUNTABILITY IN PROJECTS

**THIS GUIDE INTRODUCES THE PLANNING, MONITORING AND EVALUATION PROCESS, WHICH CAN GUIDE COLLABORATIVE MINISTRY PROJECTS BETWEEN COMPANIONS TO GREATER SUCCESS. BY THE END OF THIS GUIDE, YOU WILL HAVE:**

- Gained a basic understanding of each of the three steps of PME
- Identified the roles of three stakeholders: The ELCA Synod, the Companion Church Body, and the Community
- Learned to recognize good Goals and Objectives
- Articulated the connection between the Concept Note, good Goal and Objectives, and better outcomes
- Understood how the ELCA Global Mission unit evaluates Concept Notes for a project
- Learned about how to provide feedback to a companion in order to strengthen a project's Goals and Objectives.



### SHARING RESOURCES IN ACCOMPANYING RELATIONSHIPS

#### Who is this guide for?

This guide is designed for members of ELCA companion synod committees who are contemplating deepening the way they walk together with a companion church by funding a small-scale development project, such as a small building project or simple training.

Sharing resources in ministry can be a challenge. How should we share and receive resources such as money, time, expertise, or access to decision makers—especially when that sharing takes place across time zones, countries, cultures and languages? How can we be attentive to asymmetries of power that arise as we share resources?

This guide will help stakeholders in a project “get on the same page” in order to share resources within a project more effectively and more justly. It introduces an approach called planning, monitoring and evaluation (PME) that ELCA synods and companion churches can use to help guide a development project so it has a greater likelihood of achieving the desired results.

Planning, monitoring and evaluation is a three-step process. This guide looks at step one, planning. Important in the planning process is the ability to draft a concept note—a summary description of the project, its goals and its objectives, that can help guide companions collaborating in ministry toward the results they hope to achieve.

After using this guide, companions will be better equipped to share resources within a relationship that is entering into a funded project by using the concept note process to set goals that lead to mutual accountability and better outcomes.

#### What will I learn?

This guide introduces the planning, monitoring and evaluation process, which can guide collaborative ministry projects between companions to greater success. By the end of this guide, you will have:

1. Gained a basic understanding of each of the three steps of planning, monitoring and evaluation
2. Identified the roles of three stakeholders: the ELCA synod, the companion church and the community
3. Learned to recognize good goals and objectives
4. Articulated the connection between the concept note, good goal and objectives, and better outcomes
5. Understood how the ELCA Global Mission unit evaluates concept notes for a project
6. Learned about how to provide feedback to a companion in order to strengthen a project’s goals and objectives.

#### Sharing resources in accompanying relationships

In today’s diverse and complex world, Christians are understanding more and more deeply that mission is about God’s restoring and reconciling work. In mission we realize that we are inextricably intertwined with



God, one another, creation and even the cosmos! God is on the move to reconcile our relationships. Responding to the context of today, the ELCA has engaged mission using accompaniment as a lens and methodology for mission. Accompaniment is defined as *walking together in a solidarity that practices interdependence and mutuality*. In this walk we share gifts, experiences and resources, but also advice and admonition that help us to expand and deepen the capacity for ministry.

As we walk together in accompaniment, we strive to share God's love and participate in God's mission:

- **Mutually:** all of us have gifts to support God's mission. There is no mission *to*, only mission *with* and *among*.
- **Inclusively:** We seek to build relationships across boundaries that exclude and divide.
- **Vulnerably:** Just as Jesus became vulnerable to us, we open ourselves to others.
- **Empowering:** We seek to identify and correct imbalances of power, which may mean recognizing and letting go of our own power.
- **Sustainably:** We are intentional about our relationships, nurturing them for the long term, and embedding projects in the context of ongoing relationships and communities.

Living out these values of accompaniment can help us see and acknowledge the asymmetries of power that exist in relationships that cross cultures, borders and boundaries. Acknowledging these asymmetries can be a healthy step for any relationship.

### **Acknowledging and confronting asymmetries of power**

**Asymmetries of power often appear when resources are shared in relationship.** Grants for projects, funded by North American churches, are one such resource. In most cultures, money equals power. The "hard power" of money goes hand in hand with the "soft power" of the banking system, the food distribution system, and other Western-based institutions that regulate our lives.

For example, a community in a rural district of Namibia, concerned about access to health care, approaches a North American companion church about the possibility of expanding its health clinic. The council president of the North American church who receives the request would rather set up a scholarship program to help send local students to the high school 10 miles away. Recognizing that the North American church's access to funds makes it the more powerful companion, the Namibian community agrees to the scholarship program.

Acknowledging that this is the reality in which we live, we can see how planning, monitoring and evaluation (PME), the topic of this guide, could be viewed by our companions as another tool of Western dominant culture. As we begin to explore planning, monitoring and evaluation in this guide, let's name our reality and acknowledge the bias of this tool.

### **The blessings and challenges of sharing resources**

Walking and working together in mission can be an amazing journey, and the exchange of gifts and resources within the relationship—such as money, time, job and travel opportunities, access to key decision-makers, family connections, housing and building facilities, expertise, or legal status—can be very positive. When an ELCA synod supports the work of a companion church that responds to its own context with a keen sense of its own assets and a need that can be addressed, people's lives can be improved.



Walking together and sharing gifts, especially within a collaborative development project, can also be frustrating and problematic. The synod that is sharing resources may not know enough about the context where they will be invested or overstep the limits of their role and offer inappropriate or uninformed solutions or assistance. As we just saw in the story of the Namibian community, an asymmetry in power can inadvertently—and inappropriately—influence a project. Some gifts may actually undermine a community’s self-sufficiency. Funds can be mismanaged. The outcome may not be what was hoped for—and as misunderstandings mount, relationships can be damaged and people can feel terrible.

Many of these problems can be traced to cross-cultural challenges, including our own Western notions of what constitutes “success” in a collaborative project. (North Americans are very focused on achieving intended outcomes!) The asymmetries of power noted above also play a role.

The planning, monitoring and evaluation process (PME) introduced in this guide helps address some of these challenges. The ELCA Global Mission unit uses the PME approach to help ensure that a companion church seeking funding has every opportunity to discuss and define hoped-for outcomes, so that a development project has a greater likelihood of achieving the desired results.

As we explore sharing resources in accompanying relationships, let’s acknowledge the reality and bias toward our own often unacknowledged power and our Western, U.S.-centric institutions and assumptions. By doing so, we can hope to:

- Enter this conversation about sharing resources with humility, knowing that the planning, monitoring and evaluating approach introduced here comes from our own context and culture and is biased toward our understandings and assumptions.
- Enter this process with a sense of openness to changing or transforming our means of planning, monitoring and evaluating a shared project in ways that are more culturally appropriate for our companion.
- Check our response of judgment when we perceive that a companion church does not understand or follow the approach in the same ways we do.
- Commit to digging deeper and asking “why” when planning, monitoring and evaluation appear not to be working.

### **Opening to God’s grace**

Collaborating around work or ministry is always challenging—especially across cultures, languages and distance. As we learn to value reconciliation and relationship above power and domination, may we walk together on the Emmaus Road—nurturing our relationships and staying committed to trying to see others, not from our human point of view but from God’s point of view. Using planning, monitoring and evaluation may help us be more effective and faithful in our culturally rich and diverse relationships as we share resources and collaborate around projects.

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## PLANNING, MONITORING AND EVALUATION: AN APPROACH TO SHARING RESOURCES IN PROJECTS

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Imagine a young couple about to be married. Each person comes from a family with its own culture and expectations. Now they want to create a ceremony to celebrate with their friends and loved ones—while staying within their budget. But what is the budget? And what do friends and family expect? What about their own hopes and dreams?

Even more important, how will they measure the success of their event? Is “success” staying on budget—making parents and community happy—or being featured in *The New York Times Style* section?

To answer these questions and move forward, the couple must probe their values, assumptions and goals. When these are clear, they can begin considering how details like location, time, length, liturgy, music and menu can embody their values and achieve their goal of a memorable, meaningful occasion.

Sharing resources and collaborating around a project is just as complicated, with just as many agendas, ambitions and goals. Planning, monitoring and evaluation is an approach that can make it easier for an ELCA synod and a companion to collaborate and communicate around a project by creating a shared vision, goals, and a plan for bringing them to fruition. The process can be helpful in complex, international, cross-cultural contexts in which companions explore, together, how to be effective and faithful in ways that deepen and extend their relationships.

This guide focuses on the planning step: setting mutual goals and objectives for the project. It addresses the concerns of the ELCA synod that is preparing to share resources and collaborate with a companion. The ELCA synod is not the only stakeholder in the process, however.

### Stakeholders and their roles

Three groups participate in a resource-sharing development project and have an interest in its process and outcome—the companion, the community and the ELCA synod.

The **companion** church, synod or diocese, or congregation is the owner of the project. As an expert in its own context, the companion identifies the needs of its community, clarifies its assets, sets the vision, and leads and implements the project.

The **community** includes the people being served by the companion’s project. Companion and community are not necessarily the same. While a companion church may identify and respond to a need among its own members (capacity building for Sunday school teachers), it may also reach beyond its membership to serve a vulnerable population (widows in the community who need a source of income).

The **ELCA synod** typically provides funding support for needs identified by the companion or community. The synod shares the vision and, following the lead of the companion, may contribute some thoughts on a project — perhaps to make it more fundable — but acknowledges that the project is “owned” by the companion.

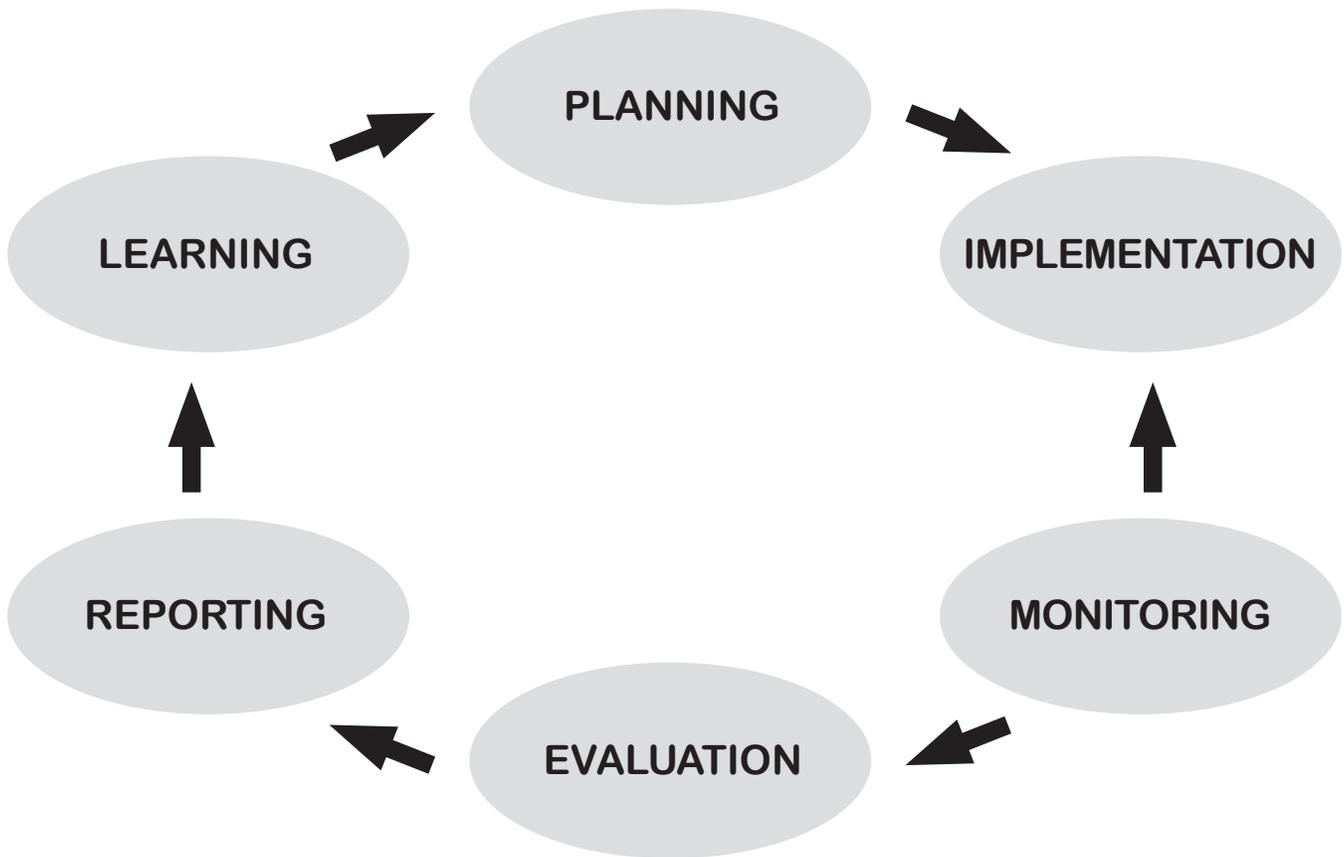
This guide focuses primarily on the concerns of the ELCA synod, whose role in walking alongside a companion church in a collaborative project is primarily sharing financial resources. Its goal is to help maintain healthy, positive relationships and shape outcomes that the synod, companion church and community can rejoice in.



### The planning, monitoring and evaluation process at the ELCA churchwide organization

ELCA Global Mission uses the planning, monitoring and evaluation process with companion churches seeking funding because it facilitates good collaboration and ensures better outcomes. When the ELCA, the companion and the community understand one another's goals and agree upon the measures to be taken to reach them, the project is more likely to be a success in everyone's eyes.

When Global Mission uses planning, monitoring and evaluation to work with companion churches seeking funding, many steps are involved. The learning loop looks like this:





A large-scale Global Mission-funded project typically follows these steps:

- Companion church approaches Global Mission about funding a project.
- In the planning stage, Global Mission personnel and the companion church review and ensure the proposed goals and objectives are clear and achievable.
- The companion church implements the project.
- The companion church and Global Mission jointly monitor the project to make sure it stays focused on reaching agreed-upon goals.
- The companion church and Global Mission jointly review the project to evaluate whether it has achieved its outcome.
- The successes, challenges and lessons learned from the project are detailed in reports that provide the specific outcomes, such as money saved, skills increased, practices changed and actions taken. The synod and companion embody the accompaniment value of vulnerability by staying open to one another, listening to feedback, learning from one another and applying those learnings as the project expands or to other projects when this one successfully concludes.
- The cycle begins again!

The planning, monitoring and evaluation steps are equally important for small-scale funded projects. Planning will help the stakeholders set clear, shared goals and objectives for the project. Clear goals and objectives make it easier to monitor the project as it is being implemented and eventually evaluate how well it achieved its goal.

*The planning, monitoring and evaluation approach to development projects is results-based, rights-based and relational.*

- *Results-based—focuses on answering the question, “So what difference will this project make?” in order to support meaningful results and improvements in the lives of those being served.*
- *Rights-based—seeks to ensure human rights at all stages of the development process so that the equal value and dignity of individuals is upheld in implementation, the community actively participates in the process, and the results are sustainable for both people and the environment.*
- *Relational—places the development project in the context of relationship and community.*



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## AN OVERVIEW OF PLANNING, MONITORING AND EVALUATION

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**Planning, monitoring and evaluation** is a three-step approach to collaborating on development projects that focuses on measurable results and emphasizes accountability. The three steps are:

- Planning — defining what a project aims to achieve and how to go about it.
- Monitoring — checking in regularly to promote good communication during the project implementation phase and keep the project on track toward reaching objectives.
- Evaluating — determining whether a project is meeting or has met its objectives and goal.

Planning takes place before the project is launched. Monitoring and evaluating focus on learning from project successes and challenges in order to improve or modify the current or future programs. All three steps can improve the chances that a project will improve the lives of the people served by or participating in a development project.

This approach gives an ELCA synod and companion synod tools for mutual dialogue as the proposed project moves from dream to reality. The ELCA synod and companion synod can use the process to enhance their relationship by participating in conversations marked by transparency, respect and vulnerability.

The primary question the process asks is: What will the people who are participating or benefiting from the project be able to do differently because of the project? How will their lives change?

Answering this question helps the companion to:

- Create or sharpen its vision.
- Craft a plan for bringing the vision to fruition.
- Set an achievable goal as well as objectives to meet along the way.
- Agree on what constitutes a “successful outcome.”

### What is ‘success’?

The United Nations Development Programme says that the planning, monitoring and evaluation process helps companions in development determine “whether work is going in the right direction, whether progress and success can be claimed, and how future efforts might be improved.”

However, how and by whom “success” is defined and measured is as important as the actual results. There are many ways to measure progress and success! While Western culture often tends to focus more on quantitative results—how many people’s lives have been changed and at what cost—qualitative methods of measurement are better at describing in what ways people’s lives have changed.

We who belong to supporting organizations like the ELCA need to guard against using planning, monitoring and evaluation in a way that increases rather than lessens asymmetries in power. By engaging our companions in conversations about what success looks like for both parties, we will jointly define how success is measured. In doing so, we also need to watch out for judgments we make or unwittingly imply as we journey together using the process — particularly around words like “progress” and “success.”

Let’s get back to our young, engaged couple. Juggling the expectations of family, friends, community and, of course, each other, what are some ways they might define “success” as they work through the planning, monitoring and evaluation process?



## PLANNING

Planning means defining what a project aims to achieve and creating steps for how to go about it. By painting a clear vision of the end result, planning helps clarify the steps needed to realize that outcome.

For example, if we want to build a house, we need to decide what we want the house to look like, how much we want to spend, and how long we want to spend building it. Blueprints—plans, in other words!—capture that vision and turn it into the construction process.

And if we want to create a vegetable garden, we start by imagining the flavors and quantities of vegetables and fruits we hope to eat. That vision shapes a plan for selecting and cultivating plants suitable for our climate, palate and harvest yield.

Without planning, a project will not necessarily fail, but evidence suggests that planning yields greater effectiveness and efficiency—a more comfortable, energy-efficient home, and a more beautiful, bountiful garden.

However, there is more than one way to plan, as our young engaged couple will demonstrate.

### **Individual or collective, the plans are not about us!**

In North America, wedding plans are typically led by the couple, who decide together how their ceremony will look, sound, smell and cost.

What is the norm in individualistic cultures is not necessarily true in collective cultures. In these cultures, the process of planning a wedding may be a communal affair. The community would probably have a say in deciding location, menu and guest list. “Success” may be determined less by how the couple feels (although they are also members of the community whose feelings and opinions matter) than how well the event expresses the community’s relationships and values.

In planning with a companion synod, be open to the possibility that decisions about the project may be made collectively and may reflect a shared definition of “success.” Whether the planning process follows an individualistic or collective path, the focus remains setting a vision and planning steps to turn the vision into a reality.

In all cases, the companion sets the vision, and the ELCA synod supports that vision. During the planning conversations, there are many opportunities to discern together how to make the vision, the goal and objectives clearer and more results oriented. The planning step of the planning, monitoring and evaluation process offers tools for that conversation.

*Planning means defining what a project aims to achieve and how to go about it.*

*Planning:*

- *Sets a clear vision of the direction to go and the outcomes to be achieved.*
- *Is collaborative and mutual—it happens in conversation as stakeholders define and develop a project together.*
- *Can be a collective, communal process with many stakeholders.*
- *Asks what assets are available that can be built upon.*
- *Focuses on setting goals and objectives together.*
- *Results in a brief project summary called the concept note. (See Appendix 1 for a sample.)*

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## MONITORING

*Monitoring helps the ELCA synod support the objectives that the companion has set and asks, are we on track?*

Think of monitoring as a regular check-in that promotes good communication during the project implementation phase. How is the house construction proceeding? How is the garden growing? Are the wedding plans advancing on schedule and on budget, or are costs mounting and time slipping away? Monitoring can help pinpoint areas that need to be changed or improved in order to get back on track.

Monitoring can take place daily, monthly or quarterly. Using the goal and objectives established by the companion during the planning phase, stakeholders can ask one another:

- Are activities being completed as intended?
- Are we on the right track toward reaching the objectives?
- Are decisions being made mutually?
- Are we paying attention to asymmetries in power?
- What adjustments might be needed to keep the project on track?

## EVALUATION

*Evaluation answers the question: Has this project made real improvements in people's lives and in the choices and opportunities open to them?*

Evaluation is the process of determining whether the project's vision has become a reality. Has this project made real improvements in people's lives and in the choices and opportunities open to them?

Evaluation typically takes place at mid-term or at the end of the project and helps companions determine whether a project is meeting or has met its objectives and goal. Is the house ready for occupancy? Have the corn, beans and tomatoes been harvested and shared? How did the wedding go?

Many aspects of the project can be evaluated:

- Process: How did we communicate? What was easy? Where were the stumbling blocks? In what ways was our relationship deepened?
- Structures/personnel: How did the structure lift up the assets of the community? Was local expertise included?
- Efficiency: Were the project objectives achieved within budget and in the time allotted?
- Cost-effectiveness: Were there other ways to achieve the results that would have cost less but would have had other implications on the companion/ELCA synod relationship?
- Sustainability: Were new and lasting networks created among participants? Were participants empowered to continue the project after ELCA synod funding concludes?

Conversations during the evaluation phase help the ELCA synod and the companion reflect on the project and may identify opportunities that had not been seen before, as well as inform the next phase, if the project has one.



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## THE CONCEPT NOTE: STEP ONE IN THE PLANNING PROCESS

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The planning step of the planning, monitoring and evaluation process encourages stakeholders to discuss and set a goal and objectives before a project begins. A thoughtful, deliberate planning process helps include the voices of all stakeholders and results in a more clear, shared and longer-term vision of the project.

This understanding is captured in a **concept note**, a two- or three-page preliminary description of the ideas behind the project, with the first draft written by the companion. This short document's purpose is to summarize the central ideas, the goal and the objectives of the project, a few of the proposed activities, and a strategy to carry it out. A sample concept note form is included in Appendix 1.

The concept note facilitates dialogue and consensus as a shared understanding of the project is shaped. A good concept note can help identify opportunities that might be missed without a wider conversation, as well as save money. A good concept note can even help raise money, because a well-defined project with measurable goals and objectives is easier to communicate to potential donors. As the project moves forward, the completed concept note provides a baseline for monitoring and evaluating progress toward the shared goal.

A concept note:

- Describes an idea for a project's potential strategy.
- Is short and succinct, focusing on the central ideas and not the details.
- Is a tool to start a conversation on a project idea.

### **Creating a concept note strengthens relationships and outcomes**

Creating a good concept note together can strengthen the relationship between the ELCA synod and the companion and increase the likelihood that a joint project will succeed.

Investing plenty of time at this stage helps confirm a shared understanding of project parameters, goal and objectives. Misunderstandings that surface during this stage can be explored mutually and much more easily than when the project is underway or being evaluated.

Careful listening is a prerequisite for a mutual, supportive dialogue around a project, as is remaining open to constructive and appropriate feedback. What are the companion's hopes? How does the companion envision achieving those hopes? In this process, the role of the ELCA synod is to encourage the companion to share a detailed picture of the project's proposed outcome, as well as the goal and the objectives for reaching that outcome. While the fruit of the discussion is captured in a form (the concept note), this is not a fill-in-the-blank exercise!

Through this important conversation, an ELCA synod and a companion can:

- Network before the project begins with stakeholders, such as the beneficiaries of the proposed project.
- Build consensus about the parameters, vision, goal and objectives of a project.
- Discuss a proposed strategy before too much work has been put into it.
- Test ideas and concepts and determine whether a project idea is feasible before a great deal of time and money is invested.
- Identify activities and other project components.
- Estimate the budget.
- Promote a sense of joint engagement.



How might our young engaged couple develop a concept note for their nuptials?

For starters, they need to consider whose voice needs to be included. Will they make all the decisions themselves, or will they sit down with parents and other elders and listen to their vision? If many voices give input, how will the final vision be discerned?

When the vision is clear, what needs to happen to bring it to life? Weddings can include as many as a thousand people. How will they be housed and fed? How long will they dance and who will provide the music? Are gifts expected? Will gifts go to the couple or to their families? Far from mere “to-do” items, these decisions also require conversations that reflect on how these pieces connect to the overall vision and outcome.

How will the couple know that their plans are complete and on schedule? What if, a week before the wedding, another 50 people are invited to the banquet and much more food needs to be prepared? When, through conversation, the couple and their community have pinned down the details, they can create benchmarks and a timetable to keep them on track.

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## **GOALS AND OBJECTIVES: THE MOST IMPORTANT PART OF THE CONCEPT NOTE**

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The conversation around a concept note seeks to craft a document that pins down these four key elements.

- **Goal:** Describes what will be different in the lives of the participants/beneficiaries over a period of three to five years as a result of the activities of the project.
- **Objective:** Explains the intermediary changes that need to take place in order to meet the goal.
- **Requested fund amount:** Confirms how much and over what period of time it will be distributed.
- **Number of beneficiaries/participants:** Describes the people whose lives will change or who will be able to do something differently as a result of participating in the activities of the project—and their number.

A concept note with a good goal and good objectives will lead to better outcomes and a stronger companion relationship. Like a covenant, a solid concept note can guide a collaborative project and remind stakeholders of the promises they have made to another.

### **Why concept notes matter**

Moving ahead without a concept note, or with one that is vague, can lead to misunderstandings or other problems in implementation.

For example, let’s say that a companion asks an ELCA synod to set up an income-generating project in an area where only a few women have sources of income and many children have malnutrition. The companion envisions a poultry project that will not only provide an additional source of income but will provide the much-needed nutritional source of protein.

The companion asks the ELCA synod to help fund a small savings-and-loan group. Its vision is to train women in raising poultry and handling finances. After being trained, the women can borrow a small amount of money to buy poultry to raise and sell. When the loans are paid back, more loans will be available, so



the women can launch other income-generating activities (perhaps beading, weaving or opening a small store) that will further enhance their incomes.

The ELCA synod likes the idea because, besides improving nutrition, the additional income may help households build sanitation facilities and acquire improved cook stoves that reduce their use of solid fuels. Accumulating assets will also help households reduce their vulnerability to disasters.

Both the ELCA synod and the companion know that this proposed project includes many details, and they need to spend some time pinning them down. For example, must participants pass along hens to new participants—or do they get to keep all the chickens they raise? Is the project “successful” when all women have chickens, when all the money has been paid back, when children are better nourished, or when homes and sanitation have been improved? Is the money reinvested in the loan program, or can the women keep their gains and purchase those stoves? Should the project be evaluated for its impact on individuals or the community as a whole? What marks the “end” of the project, and what happens if all the chickens die?

Developing a concept note together can help pin down project details and identify places that need more clarity. By talking through the goal, the objectives, and the activities that will help reach the objectives, the ELCA synod and companion will be able to develop indicators that answer these questions.

*A concept note defines four key elements:*

- *Goal*
- *Objective*
- *Requested fund amount*
- *Number of beneficiaries/ participants*

**Goals convey a vision**

A good goal conveys a vision and illuminates a path toward making that vision a new reality. To convey that vision—the long-term end result that a companion synod hopes to achieve with resources from the ELCA synod—a good goal is:

- One complete sentence written in the present or past tense to describe the community already enjoying the benefit of the behavior change or ability to do something differently, several years later.
- Clear and easy to understand.
- Specific about the people and place who will be affected by the change.
- Measurable, using SMART indicators (see page 16).
- Uses behavior language:
  - Increase production
  - Reduce incidence

For our young couple, who hope to live in peaceful, wedded bliss for many years following this ceremony, a good goal for planning a wedding might be:

*Osvald and Malika are encouraged by the presence of family and friends attending the nuptial ceremony and reception.*

This goal is written in the present tense, describes the people who will be affected by the change, and is clear and easy to understand!



For the income-producing poultry project, a good goal might be:

*Women of the Salimia District (Malawi) have improved livelihoods.*

This goal is also written in the present tense, and describes what will be different in the lives of participants/beneficiaries (or what they will be able to do differently) because of their involvement in the project.

There is one more criterion for a good goal in a resource-sharing project: the goal and the objectives of the project belong to the companion. The ELCA synod's supporting role may be simply to assist the companion in making the goal more clear and more likely to be funded.

**A good goal:**

- *Describes in present or past tense a community already enjoying the benefit.*
- *Describes the behavior change.*
- *Is measurable, using SMART Indicators (see page 16).*
- *Belongs to the companion.*

**Practice: Which goal is well stated and why?**

*Circle the well-stated goal. Use the criteria for good goals to explain what makes it good and then check your answer in the "Improving an unclear goal" section.*

- *Tanzanians in Tarime District of Mara have reduced incidence of sexual and gender-based violence.*
- *The aim of this project is to increase students' and the community's capacity to prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence.*

**Improving an unclear goal**

Recognizing a "good" goal takes practice! A goal expresses what will be different in the lives of the participants/beneficiaries as a result of participating in the project. To draft a well-stated goal, the companion and the ELCA synod may need to coach one another to make the goal as clear as possible.

For our young people, an unclear wedding goal might be, *750 wedding guests have a really good time*. While this statement is written as a goal in the present tense, measuring "a really good time" would be challenging!

For the poultry project in the Salimia District of Malawi, an unclear goal might be, *Livelihoods in the Salimia District are improved*. Yes, but—whose livelihoods, exactly? Everyone in the Salimia District? In the practice box, the "good" goal is this one:

*Tanzanians in Tarime District of Mara have reduced incidence of sexual and gender-based violence.*

In a few words, this goal describes who will benefit (Tanzanians) and where they live (Tarime District of Mara). It uses behavior language (reduced incidence) and pinpoints the result (less *sexual and gender-based violence*).



The first draft of this goal was less clear:

*The aim of this project is to increase students' and the community's capacity to prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence.*

Notice that this version of the goal includes many ideas (prevent and respond) and states the aim of the project rather than the “so what” or outcome. There is no way to gauge how the community’s capacity has been increased, and it may be too specific about the beneficiaries (students and community — changed in second draft to “Tanzanians”). And it doesn’t state the desired change!

To create and revise this goal, many questions were asked and answered in a dialogue between the companion and ELCA synod. Asking and answering questions is part of creating a good goal. In this example, the stakeholders probably answered these questions:

- What are we trying to achieve? (we want to reduce incidence of sexual and gender-based violence)
- Why are we trying to achieve it? (not included in goal, but clarifies the overall rationale for the concept note)
- What will be different after this project ends? (Tanzanians in the Tarime District of Mara will experience reduced incidence of sexual and gender-based violence.)
- What can people do differently as a result of our work?

When goals are created through dialogue, asking and answering questions like these are an essential part of the process.

### **Objectives are strategies that move toward a goal**

If a goal is a result you want the project to achieve, then an objective is an intermediary step that moves the project closer to achieving that goal. A good objective is:

- One complete sentence written in the present or past tense describing the community’s ability to engage in a behavior or do something differently, as a direct result of the project.
- Written in present tense using strong verbs like “plan,” “write,” “conduct,” “produce,” etc. rather than “learn,” “understand,” or “feel.” These verbs describe the changes that will take place in the community as a result of the project. (See Appendix 2)
- Clear, specific and measurable, using SMART indicators (See page 16 and Appendix 3).

For our young people, an objective might be:

*Osvald and Malika provide a delicious reception dinner for 750 guests.*

This objective is written in the present tense and sets clear and specific criteria for what Osvald and Malika are going to do.

The Salimia income-generating poultry project might set these three objectives:

1. *Women have membership in savings-and-loan groups.*
2. *Women establish poultry keeping as income-generating businesses.*
3. *Women have increased capacity to keep accurate business/financial records.*



Written in the present tense, these are clear and specific (women join the groups, women keep poultry, women have capacity to keep records) as well as measurable (it's possible to count members and sources of income).

**A good objective is:**

- Written in the present/past tense to help us achieve the goal.
- Describes clear, measurable intermediary steps to achieving the goal.
- Describes behavior change.
- Is measurable, using SMART Indicators (See page 16 and Appendix 3).

**Practice:**

*Circle the “well-stated” objective. Use the criteria for good objectives to explain what makes it good and then check your answer in the “Improving an unclear objective” section.*

- Women-headed households in the Salimia District of Malawi realize modest profit from raising poultry for the local market.
- To conduct trainings that will increase knowledge about microfinance in order to initiate small businesses for improving household incomes and financial stability.

**Improving an unclear objective**

Recognizing a “good” objective also takes practice! While the objective is an intermediary step to achieving the goal, here again the companion and the ELCA synod may need to have a discussion to make the objectives as clear as possible.

In the practice box, the “not-so-good” objective is this one:

*To conduct trainings that will increase knowledge about microfinance in order to initiate small businesses for improving household incomes and financial stability.*

This statement describes what the project staff will do, not what will be different in the lives of the participants/beneficiaries as a result of participating in the project. It would be better to focus on the “so what” section (improving household incomes and financial stability). In general, “to” verbs typically refer to activities the project will conduct. These are not objectives, as we will see in a moment.

The “not-so-good” example follows this structure:

*To [verb] so that [X] which will cause [Y] for [Z1] and [Z2].*

A better structure for objectives is: *[Participants/beneficiaries] [intended behavioral outcome].*

This is the structure used in the “good” objective in the practice box:

*Women-headed of households in the Salimia District of Malawi realize modest profit from raising poultry for the local market.*

This objective makes the participants in the project the subject of the sentence, and then simply states the expected behavior.



Together, stakeholders can seek clarity around objectives (and write clearer, more specific objectives in the concept note) by asking and answering questions as they discuss the project:

- Who is participating in this project?
- What are the most immediate things we are trying to change?
- What are the things that must be in place first before we can achieve our goals and have an impact?

Follow this structure to write a “good” objective:

*[Participants/beneficiaries]*  
*[intended behavioral outcome].*

### **Activities are actions taken to achieve the goals and objectives**

An activity is neither a goal nor an objective. An activity is:

- An action taken to achieve the goals and objectives.
- Often written as a phrase beginning with an infinitive verb (“to provide, to train, to distribute, to organize, to teach” etc.)

What needs to be done in order to achieve the goal and the objectives? Answering this question can help distinguish activities from goals and objectives.

Of course, activities are important, and project plans should include them! In the concept note, there is a space where the companion and ELCA synod can give examples of the kinds of activities that are intended.

These activities may help our young couple achieve their objective, *Osvald and Malika provide a delicious reception dinner for 750 guests*:

- Identify four possible lead chefs.
- Sample a meal he or she prepares.
- Ask questions about the process and the resources needed.

These activities may help the Salimia District income-producing project reach its goal, *Livelihoods of women in the Salimia District of Malawi are improved*:

- Mobilize and empower community to form savings.
- Train participants on entrepreneurship skills.
- Deliver start-up kits for poultry project.

An **activity** is an action taken to achieve the goals and objectives.

### **Using SMART indicators to track progress**

Indicators are developed for projects in order to identify what specific change will provide evidence that the objective has been achieved. Measurable, a word that has already been used in this manual to describe both goals and objectives, is one of five key indicators that can help monitor project progress to see whether the project is on track to achieve its goal. For example, a person trying to lose weight can track the number of pounds lost, the change in body mass index, even the way clothes fit. In a project to increase theological education levels of Bible school faculty, the number of post-graduate study scholarships given may be an indicator.

Indicators can also be used to evaluate a project, to determine whether a goal has been achieved. How close did the dieter come to losing 50 pounds, reducing body mass to 3.5, and fitting into a size 8 dress? Did the theological education project secure 10 scholarships or 14?



Our young couple have dozens of indicators to help them determine whether they have met their objective, *Osvald and Malika provide a delicious reception dinner for 750 guests*:

- 2250 dirty plates and 100 pots in the kitchen can indicate that all guests were fed a three-course meal.
- An absence of complaints about bland or boring food can indicate that guests thought the dinner was delicious.

In projects that share resources, building SMART indicators into project goals and objectives can help measure progress later. Each indicator should include all five of these elements:

- *Specific* – They target a specific area for improvement.
- *Measurable* – They quantify or at least suggest an indicator of progress.
- *Achievable* – They state what results can realistically be achieved, given available resources.
- *Relevant* – They answer the questions: Should it be done? Why? What will be the impact?
- *Time-bound* – They specify when result(s) can be achieved (often stated or assumed to be “by the end of the project.”)

For example, one way to measure the success of the objective, *Women have membership in savings-and-loan groups*, might be to count the number of women who paid back at least one loan. By setting a target number of participants that can be realistically achieved by a particular date, a SMART Indicator can be crafted:

*Thirty women in the Salimia District have borrowed and paid back at least one loan from the savings-and-loan group by the end of the project (or date).*

Other indicators could be written to describe:

- The amount of capital of each savings-and-loan group (The total capital of the savings-and-loan group has increased by 2 percent over the life of the project).
- Proportion of women selling eggs and chicken (The percentage of participants who earn income from selling poultry at market has increased by 20 percent by the end of the project).
- Share of women with other income-generating activities in addition to the poultry project (The percentage of participants who generate income from non-poultry activities has increased by 15 percent by the end of the project).

Indicators can also describe behaviors:

- Fewer households use solid fuels as source for cooking. (The percentage of households using wood or charcoal for cooking decreases by 30 percent by the end of the project.)
- Nutritional status of children is improved. (The number of cases of malnutrition reported by community development nutritionist decreases by 50 percent by the end of the project.)

Appendix 3 shows how to match the language of the objectives and indicators so that objectives match the indicators the project uses to measure its success.

Goals, objectives, activities and indicators are set by the companion, not the ELCA synod.

As the planning, monitoring and evaluation approach is used in an accompanying relationship, take care to stay focused on drawing out, understanding, clarifying and supporting the goals and objectives of the companion. The process is about reaching *their* objectives, not ours.

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## COMMUNICATING AROUND GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

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When a companion approaches an ELCA synod for resources to support a project, share the concept note form in Appendix 1. Explain that the process of drafting a concept note is intended to help clarify the goals and objectives for the project and that stakeholders can discuss the project and ways to convey it on paper.

Eventually, the companion will draft and submit the completed concept note form.

What next? How can the concept note be evaluated? If changes seem to be needed to increase clarity, how can they be discussed? How the ELCA Global Mission unit evaluates concept notes may be helpful.

When the ELCA receives a concept note from a companion seeking funding, Global Mission staff focus on four key elements: the goal, objectives, requested fund amount, and number of beneficiaries and participants. The rest of the information in the form provides background, example activities, recognized assets of the companion, etc. and are seen as supporting the four focus areas of the review.

Using those key elements, staff ask these questions about the proposal:

- What are the identified problems or issues, and why are they important?
- What is the goal of the project?
- What are the project's objectives?
- What are the strategies to achieve these objectives?
- How realistic are these objectives and strategies?
- Will the proposed activities lead to the desired results (good goal and objectives)?
- How many beneficiaries are estimated? How does that relate to the amount requested? (cost-benefit analysis)
- How do stakeholders participate—both the people who will benefit, and others (teachers, trainers, etc.) who play a role?
- What are the plans for sustainability—for ensuring that the project lasts, even after ELCA companion synod resources are phased out, and that efforts to achieve change continue?
- How many community members will participate? How can the project be owned by the community as a whole rather than depending on one or two people?
- Are there any areas of confusion? Where could there be more clarity?
- Does the proposed project and its priorities seem to be congruent with the companion church's overall mission priorities? With the ELCA's overall mission priorities and funding criteria/guidelines?

When areas of concern and/or lack of clarity have been identified, staff begin a back-and-forth conversation with the companion. In emails, telephone conversations, Skype conversations, or face-to-face meetings, staff offer comments and suggestions for areas that need work—mixed liberally with affirmation and positive language.

Through conversations around the concept note, staff and the companion arrive at a clearer sense of the project. The companion revises and submits the concept note (or, for larger projects, the full proposal, which includes a much more detailed narrative, the indicators to measure the goals and objectives, and a budget)



and the conversation begins anew. Eventually, the concept note (or full proposal) is accepted, funding is arranged, and the concept note (or full proposal) becomes the basis for monitoring and evaluating the project.

At all stages, this process seeks to be supportive. The vision and project always belong to the companion! Global Mission's conversations around revisions support the companion as it clarifies the project goal, objectives and activities.

### **Tips for providing feedback on concept notes**

1. Remember it is not your project—it belongs to the companion church.
2. Begin and end with positive comments or affirmation.
3. Keep the companion's context in mind.
  - Remember English might not be the primary language—use clear, simple language.
  - Remember this might be a new process for the companion.
4. Focus on the coherence of the ideas presented, not on incidental details.
5. Ask questions that aim to seek clarity, especially on a first review.
  - Ask specific questions about content: Who would do that activity? How often? How is that related to the stated goal?
6. Try to discern the companion's intent and provide guidance to help them draw that out more clearly.
  - Rather than tell them what to do, try to help them better focus their thinking.
  - Be specific in your comments rather than general.
7. Provide suggestions—not instructions—and examples when possible.
8. Be cautious about how feedback is framed.
  - Saying “this needs work” is not helpful.
  - Use words or phrases like “you might want to consider” or “it would be helpful if” or “please help me to understand.”
  - Do not be judgmental in your comments.
9. Provide a brief rationale/explanation for the recommendations/questions.
  - Explain how suggested changes could benefit the project.
  - Explain how suggested changes could make reporting easier/clearer.
10. Limit the number and length of comments.
  - Focus feedback on critical elements of the concept note (e.g. goal, objectives, participants, amount requested).
  - Try not to be too wordy but provide enough information to make the point clear.
  - State specifically which element of the concept note a comment is referring to.
11. Address sustainability by asking questions that foster local ownership of the project, including stakeholder participation and plans for an exit strategy.
  - How are stakeholders involved? How is the community empowered?
  - If a project is to be ongoing, what portion will be self-sustaining?
  - How can the funding base be diversified?
  - What happens if the ELCA synod is not able to continue to fund the next phase of work?



## Dialogue and feedback in accompanying relationships

Drawing on the values of accompaniment during the planning, monitoring and evaluation process can help keep the emphasis on the relationship, not the project. Strive to be:

- **Mutual.** Open up a potentially one-way transaction by finding ways to receive the gifts of the companion. Money is not the only gift!
- **Inclusive.** Help the companion look at what strengths and assets it can bring to the project and how the project participants/beneficiaries can be included in the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.
- **Vulnerable.** Feeling judgmental about the companion? Check your world view! What can you learn by setting aside individualistic understandings of projects and “progress” and opening up to what a more collective culture might have to teach and share about the value of community? What other ways might there be to set goals or evaluate success?
- **Empower.** Identifying and correcting imbalances of power may mean recognizing and letting go of our own power. With humility, seek ways to affirm and build up the companion and community involved in the potential project.
- **Sustainable.** Be intentional about the relationship and nurture it for the long term. When the planning, monitoring and evaluation process appears not to be working, commit to digging deeper and asking each other, “Why?”

As noted previously, the planning, monitoring and evaluation approach is rooted in a Western understanding of progress and success. This may be a source of friction as the ELCA synod and the companion walk together through the process. However, using the process to frame a resource-sharing project helps equip both the ELCA synod and the companion to expand their access to resources from the ELCA and other sources as well. Fluency in the language of planning, monitoring and evaluation is an advantage for any group seeking grants and funding.

We can also seek change. As people who have used this approach, we can advocate for ways of transforming the process to be more culturally appropriate and seek other approaches to accessing resources and tracking development projects that are more inclusive of other people’s culture and ways.

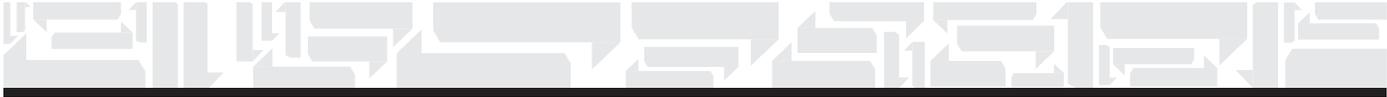
### When to call Global Mission for assistance

If a proposed project is very complicated—for example, it includes multiple objectives, complicated behavioral changes, many trainings, or when the language of the goal and the objectives isn’t clear—consider consulting the ELCA Global Mission unit for additional assistance in clarifying its goals and objectives.

You can reach us with any questions at [GMInfo@elca.org](mailto:GMInfo@elca.org) with the following subject line:  
*PME Sharing Resources in Accompanying Relationships.*

## Conclusion

The planning, monitoring and evaluation process is a resource for small-scale development projects within our global relationships. With God’s help, the process has been proven to help the companion, the community and the ELCA synod collaborate across cultures in healthy, mutual ways. Be aware of and address asymmetries of power that might arise during the project and transform the lives of all who participate in the project.



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## RESOURCES FOR FURTHER READING AND STUDY

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1. United Nations Development Programme Planning Monitoring and Evaluation Guide:
  - a. Handbook on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluating for Development Results
  - b. May be accessed as an online tool:  
<http://web.undp.org/evaluation/evaluations/handbook/english/documents/pme-handbook.pdf>
2. Catholic Relief Services ProPack, Chapter 4:
  - a. Results Frameworks, Programmes and M&E Planning; an introduction
  - b. May be accessed as an online tool:  
<http://www.crsprogramquality.org/publications/2011/1/14/propack-i-english.html>

## APPENDIX 1: SAMPLE CONCEPT NOTE

### PROJECT CONCEPT NOTE

<b>Date Submitted:</b>	
<b>Name of Church/Organization:</b>	
<b>Country:</b>	
<b>Primary Contact Person:</b>	<b>Contact Name:</b> <b>Title:</b> <b>Email:</b>
<b>Title of Project:</b>	
<b>Period of Implementation:</b> <i>(State the <u>beginning date</u> to <u>end date</u>)</i> <i>Up to 36 months</i>	____/____ to ____/____ MM/YYYY MM/YYYY
<b>Budget (in USD):</b>	<b>Total Requested from ELCA:</b> _____ <b>Year 1:</b> _____ <b>Year 2 (estimated):</b> _____ <b>Year 3 (estimated):</b> _____ Potential financial support from others? <b>Yes / No</b> (circle one)
<b>Thematic Focus: (check all that apply)</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Health <input type="checkbox"/> Water <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture <input type="checkbox"/> Food Security <input type="checkbox"/> Livelihoods <input type="checkbox"/> Education <input type="checkbox"/> Advocacy <input type="checkbox"/> Disaster Risk Reduction / Preparedness <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Description) _____	
<b>Project Participants/Beneficiaries:</b> <i>(State the estimated number and a one sentence description of direct and indirect beneficiaries)</i>	<b>Direct # :</b> _____ <b>Indirect # :</b> _____
<b>Participation of Beneficiaries:</b> <i>(Describe in 2-3 sentences how the participants/beneficiaries participate in the design, implementation, and monitoring/evaluation of the project)</i>	
<b>Project Rationale:</b> <i>(Describe in 3-5 sentences the problems or needs to be addressed by the project, and how the project fits the priorities of the church/organization)</i>	
<b>Goal:</b> <i>(Provide one sentence stating the intended result or expected change sought over the long term)</i>	



<p><b>Objectives:</b>  <i>(List no more than three objectives. Each objective is a one-sentence statement describing what will be different or change in the lives of the participants/beneficiaries by the end of the project, as a direct result of implementing the project)</i></p>	
<p><b>Main Activities:</b>  <i>(List the proposed main activities that the project will implement to achieve the objectives)</i></p>	
<p><b>Assets and Capacities:</b>  <i>(Describe in 2-3 sentences the organization's current expertise, experience, and/or infrastructure that will contribute to successful implementation of the project)</i></p>	
<p><b>Actors/Partners:</b>  <i>(List other actors/partners with whom the project will coordinate, e.g. government ministries and personnel, NGOs, etc.)</i></p>	
<p><b>Sustainability:</b>  <i>(Describe in 2-3 sentences how the achievement of the goal and objectives of the proposed project will continue beyond the implementation period.)</i></p>	
<p><b>Comments:</b>  <i>Anything else you want to share?</i></p>	

**Endorsement:**  
*All concept notes must be endorsed by the national church or governing authority.*

Endorsing Authority: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Position: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Place and date: \_\_\_\_\_



## APPENDIX 2: USING CHANGE LANGUAGE IN WRITING OBJECTIVES — SAMPLE

By using present tense in writing objectives, we are in essence using change language as outlined below.

<b>Action language</b> ( <i>Expresses what the program/ project does</i> )	<b>Change language</b> ( <i>Describes changes in condition of children and women</i> )
To help women generate profit from sale of poultry products	Women generate profits from sale of poultry products Indicator: 80 percent of women met the minimum amount of savings requirement as set by the group
To train women on best poultry production practices	Women have increased knowledge of good poultry production practices Indicator: 80 percent of women use good poultry production practices
To increase access of households to sufficient, nutritious food year-round	Women have access to sufficient, nutritious food year-round for their households Indicator: 90 percent of households have increased food availability



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## APPENDIX 3: MATCHING OBJECTIVES TO INDICATORS — SAMPLE

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When writing indicators it is important that they match the objectives set.

### Objectives

Note: Present tense or active language is used in writing objectives. Change language is used for objectives and indicators.

Action language	Change language
Expresses what the program/project does	Describes changes in condition of children and women or households, etc.
To increase access to sufficient, nutritious food all year round	Objective: Women poultry project member households have access to sufficient, nutritious food all year round. Indicator: 90 percent of women poultry project member households have increased food availability.
To train women on entrepreneurship	Objective: Women poultry project members have increased knowledge of small-business management. Indicator: 80 percent of women poultry project members have established successful income generation activities.
To form strong savings-and-loan groups	Objective: All the women poultry project members belong to strong savings and loan group. Indicator: All women poultry project members save at least the minimum amount set by the group by-laws.



**Program: Poultry Keeping Project for Women in Salimia District of Malawi**

Goal: Households in Salimia experience improved living conditions

Objectives:

1. Women poultry project members in Salimia District in Malawi have enhanced incomes from poultry keeping
2. Women poultry project members in Salimia District have alternative sources of income
3. Women poultry project members in Salimia District are members of strong Savings-and-loan groups

Objective	Indicator	Method
<p>Activities</p> <p>Process/activity; (<i>Tasks, procedures and methods undertaken in order to produce research outputs</i>)</p> <p>Women trained on poultry</p> <p>Women form savings-and-loan groups</p>	<p>Number of women trained</p> <p>Percentage of people on poultry keeping</p> <p>Number of women rating sessions</p> <p>Number of brochures distributed</p> <p>Number of meetings with key stakeholders</p> <p>Number of savings-and-loan groups formed</p>	<p>Minutes</p> <p>Attendance</p> <p>Track form</p>
<p>Outcome</p> <p>Outcome statement; (<i>Short to medium term</i>) change in development</p> <p>Situation</p> <p>Number of women generating income from sale of poultry products</p> <p>Women use good poultry keeping practices</p> <p>Women have increased incomes through sale of poultry products</p>	<p>Number of eggs, chicken and chicks sold</p> <p>Number of new small businesses operated by women</p> <p>Number savings-and-loan groups reporting increased amount of savings from poultry farmers</p>	<p>Observation</p> <p>Questioning</p> <p>Focus groups</p> <p>Savings-and-loan group records</p> <p>Interviews when possible</p>
<p>Impact</p> <p>Impact statement (long-term); ultimate benefits for target population</p> <p>Households in Salimia experience Improved living conditions</p>	<p>Percentage of households reporting increased access to food all year round</p> <p>Percentage of households with access to improved water</p> <p>Percentage of people with more permanently constructed housing</p>	<p>Follow-up</p> <p>Observations</p> <p>Questioning</p> <p>Interviews when possible</p>