Grant reporting for volunteers:

The building blocks

Part 1: Report of project activities

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Please, start reading bottom-up, because:

- This is how buildings are built. ☺
- This is how grassroot communities operate. ☺

What makes our project report unique and worth remembering?

When you are the first / only one to do something (e.g. you invented, coded it, etc.). ☺ When you have done something many times and under various conditions / contexts, and can report and explain the differences. ☺ When you have performed better than anyone else, and know the reasons why. ☺ When you have failed epically, but learned your lesson and help others not make your mistakes. ☺

Any final comments?

Yes. Many people consider report writing the most boring part of the project and try to avoid it! Write your grant report with the same enthusiasm, which you wrote your proposal with! Don't half-ass it. ☺

What are these "learning patterns" in the report template?

Learning patterns are a way of sharing experience and lessons learned from both success and failure. No two WMF projects are the same, even if they formulate identical goals but are implemented by different user groups, or are repetitively submitted by the same team over the years. We cannot step twice into the same river. We can learn from every new project.

How to make the report more easily digestible? ☺

Bulleted lists, tables, figures and evidence photos are important ingredients of any grant report. Such items, included along the relevant portion of the text, emphasize on key points, remove clutter and repetition, and make the report visually appealing and easy to follow. Figures, graphs, and tables serve as powerful tools for making comparisons, or summarizing content in a way that captures and retains interest. The same information, presented in descriptive sentences, makes the report too lengthy and cumbersome.

We have thirty days to prepare our project report. Is this time enough?

Yes, especially if you started preparing for this moment in advance: collecting and organizing deliverables, statistics, feedbacks, etc. If you objectively need more time, let your WMF officer know.

Again about teamworking and time. What if no one in our project team takes responsibility for the report, or no one likes writing reports?

Well, user groups are informal, and their members are volunteers. But once your project proposal has been approved and funded, it doesn't matter if you *like* writing reports, because you *have to* and you have a deadline. Unless explicitly agreed otherwise, project proposers and contact persons are *in charge of* this job. They shall schedule their work so that the rest of the team is given enough time for discussions, edits and additions, before the end of the deadline.

What to write in our report and how?

A good report is always a complete and self-explanatory document, containing all the evidences needed to support the data provided and statements made about the project implementation and outcomes. Ideally, it not only describes the activities, but also explains the rationales behind them. It shows not only the final *product*, but also the *process* involved and the long-term benefits for the community.

What if our project didn't meet its goals?

Sometimes, despite all your efforts, some (or all!) of your project goals remain unachieved. This happens all the time in projects run by professional managers, so it will inevitably happen in projects run by volunteers, as well. ☺ Don't be discouraged, and – more importantly – don't try to sweep the problem under the carpet: show that you learn from it.

Who is responsible for preparing the grant report?

This is an internal decision that project teams should take explicitly and before the end of the grant term. Ideally, all team members should feel welcome to contribute, but contact persons *have to*.

So, is there a magic recipe?

So, the truth is there is no magic recipe for writing a good report – every report is different, there is no "one size fits all" solution. Each report depends on what the project purpose was, what kinds of activities were envisaged, who implemented it, what was the budget, what obstacles appeared along the way, and how were they overcome. The good news is that once you learn writing good reports, the ability will stay with you. ☺

How are reports structured?

Each of the available grant programs has a predefined structure of the report that you should follow. If relevant, add subsections, but don't remove ones. Colours can help you additionally structure your report.

What is grant reporting?

Reports of WMF funded projects (grants) are public documents ensuring the responsibility and accountability of individuals and affiliates who are transparently spending donated resources for mission aligned purposes. The report is the obligatory concluding part of any project and it covers project activities, outcomes and expenditures.

Is grants reporting really important?

Reporting is usually deemed important for the sponsoring side, as it ensures eligibility and appropriateness of expenditures while collecting information about the project outcomes and impact of the sponsor. Reports are often used as a basis for taking future decisions and framing policies. **However**, reporting is helpful for beneficiaries, too, as the process requires them to analyze various aspects of their performance, like strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, needs, vulnerabilities, mistakes and lessons learnt, and is a measure of success for the beneficiary.