Seeding future projects

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Time machine - learning from the past

In 2014 WMRS opened a microgrant application for the first time. Call was opened for individuals and NGOs. There was no commission for microgrants. Proposals were voted for or refused as they arrived.
Six project with original and inventive idea and/or approach were supported. By the end of the year, only two projects could be considered successful, three were mostly successful and one could not be considered as success.

How to get fresh ideas/reach new people?

Call for project proposals for small grants (up to 500€) - maximum 6 individual grants. One proposer could apply with more than one project proposal.

- Promotion on WMRS website, blog and Serbian Wikipedia (Village Pump)
- Sent to all former partners (with kind request to forward it to whom they find adequate)
- Sent to large number of NGOs in Serbia
- Promoted on website of Voluntary service of Serbia

Choose what?

- Original and feasible idea
- Reliable partner (bad experience from previous year)
- Potential to grow
- Contribution to free knowledge
- In compliance with WMRS strategy goals

Evaluation of proposals

Project idea: 0-50%

- free knowledge 25%
- coverage (already covered or not) 7,5%
- possibility to grow to long-term project 5%
- innovation 7,5%
- visibility 5%

Feasibility: 0-40%

- scope of activities (realistic, adequate budget for activities) 10%
- human/material resources (do they/we have) 10%
- requested financial means (is the amount requested justified) 10%
- measurable outcomes 10%

Proposer: 0-10%

- experience of proposer 5%
- potential for further cooperation 5%

27 proposals arrived, and were evaluated by a 3-member committee

- 4 proposals were presented to WMRS Board as ones with great potential
- 3 proposals were marked as ones with medium potential (refused by the Board of WMRS)
- 20 proposals were declined by the committee (around half for lack of innovation and the rest for lack of contribution to free knowledge)

How to grow a proposal into outcomes?

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- Negotiation for proposal adjusments
- Personalized contract forms - different projects demand different finance and report models
- Creating a report template (in order to make reporting process clear, and more enforceable)
- Introduicing communication practices (Trello and similar platforms for information exchange)
- Evaluation - quantitative and qualitative (getting back to the proposal form)

Learnings

- Sometimes it's not enough to grade aspects of projects - we've had some projects with high grades, but the proposal did not look as promising
- It is very important to make good communication and report practices. Reporting mustn't be done in a manner of audit, but more as part of teamwork process.
- Building long-term partnerships shouldn't be on account of rule bending (some previous partners implied that they will receive next funding, no matter proposal quality is not as good).

Photos

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Thank you for your attention!

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