

Exit Strategy

Preparing for an Effective Exit

1. Introduction

Four years after DRF started grantmaking, we faced the decision of exiting from certain countries due to a change in DRF donor priorities. Staff took the opportunity to explore how to mitigate negative consequences and consolidate and multiply the value of DRF's investment in these countries. This crossroads initiated rich discussions among staff and Board and Grantmaking Committee members about the best way to transition out of a country, as well as how to measure our successes, document our short legacy, and build on and sustain the wins of the disability rights movement in any one country.

Research and common sense say that exits should be predictable and carefully planned, as possible. Exits should be considered a part of all grantmaking strategies. It is important to think about this inevitability in every phase of the grantmaking process, including in the development of Country Strategies and in communications with grantees. Clear communication with stakeholders, especially grantees, is key to managing expectations. Sharing information about alternative sources of financial support with grantees, as possible, is important to enhance the chance that grantees continue their activities after a donor leaves.

The aim of the General Exit Strategy is to provide steps for a responsible and respectful transition or exit from a country where DRF/DRAF has had a presence over a number of years. This document provides an outline of steps both for decision-making about exiting and for the transition process itself. These steps may not fit every country exit. For example, there may be a time when we are forced to exit a country because of a conflict or political crisis. The document is intended to set out a framework and guidelines for an ideal situation.

2. Guiding Principles

- Communicate decisions on exits as soon as viable and both in email and, as possible, through in-person communications such as at Grantee Convenings.
- During the last Grantee Convening (and/or before), seek to include training on fundraising and other funder resources.
- After exit is complete, reflect upon the process, consult with past grantees, and learn from the exit to inform future exits.
- Maintain communication with former grantees to follow up on outcomes and to share relevant information about CRPD implementation.

3. Exit Criteria

The following factors should be considered when assessing whether or not to exit any particular country:

- DRF/DRAF strategic priorities
- DRF/DRAF budget
- Donor preference and interest
- Level of CRPD advancement
- Grantee achievements & outcomes
- Potential for further impact
- Political will, other political factors
- Staff and organizational capacity
- Strength and diversity of DPO movement
- Other funding possibilities for grantees

4. Steps for an Effective Exit from a Country

1) Assess exit

Program Officer conducts research and prepares information for the DRF/DRAF Boards on consequences of exit from a Country. This information is ideally included in a Country Strategy Assessment (or, if timing does not allow, a memo) and should include the following information:

- Country overview (political, socio-economic situation)
- Status of DPO movement
- Grantee portfolio history
- DRF/DRAF outcomes and progress towards impact (based on Country Strategy, Country Strategy Assessment, and logframe)
- Opportunities and consequences of staying in or exiting the country
- DRF/DRAF donor priorities

2) Make decision on exit

Based on the information presented (and other considerations considered crucial and outlined below), the Boards discuss and approve an exit timeline.

- DRF/DRAF strategic priorities and budget
- DRF/DRAF donor priorities
- Staff and organizational capacity
- Other considerations such as security and other risk factors, poverty level, etc.

3) Develop Exit Strategy

Program Officer develops an exit strategy that provides specifics to the Country situation, builds on Step 1 above, and considers how to sustain grantee achievements and link grantees to other potential donors.

4) Inform grantees and other stakeholders

Program Officer communicates with grantees and other stakeholders regarding the exit, specifically rationale, steps, and timeline. Points to consider:

- Method for communication, such as the organization of a Grantee Convening
- Facilitation of networking between grantees and other potential donors

5) Implement Exit Strategy

Program Officer implements plan according to the Exit Strategy, ensuring clear and respectful communication with grantees. Program Officer would:

- Share information on potential networks, resources, conferences, etc;
- Ensure reporting processes are honored; and
- Make adjustments to the steps as needed.

6) Reflect on and analyze DRF achievements and lessons learned

Program Officer and other staff (communications) produce a brief report (this may be in the form of a fact sheet, grantee stories, or webpage) to document DRF's grantmaking in the country for dissemination. Depending on the country, circumstances, and resources, this documentation could serve different purposes, for example:

- Highlighting DRF and grantee achievements and lessons learned;
- Serving as a point of departure for future actions in that country;
- Outlining best practice advocacy strategies for the larger disability movement.

References:

Petrovice, Janice. "Exiting Responsibly: Best Donor Practices in Ending Field Support" Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, December 2011

Grantmakers Without Borders. "Letting Go, Saying Goodbye: Designing Fair Exit Strategies".

Grantcraft. "The Effective Exit. Managing the End of a Funding Relationship", 2011

Telephone conversations with Angela Martínez, from AJWS.

Council on Foundations. Webinar "Exiting Responsibly: Best Donor Practices in Ending Field Support (August 16, 2012)