

Basics on Establishing and Sustaining a “Resource Mobilization and Grants Support Office” at agencies in resource limited settings

A Users’ Guide - 2023

1.0 The different faces of the “Resource Mobilization and Grants Support Office”

With every sector counting its post-pandemic losses and affected by the general reduction in resources committed to development and research, I cannot see any institution surviving without some form of “alternative or 3rd party financing”. Be it a community-based agency or SACCO, a big private company or University, a Government Ministry or Local Government. This has made the Resource Mobilization and Grants Support Office, the most trending and significant Unit for any progressive agency. Of course, it takes so many shapes and can assume several different names; Grants and Innovations, Business Development and Contracts Management, Research and Grants or Resource Mobilization and fundraising.

1.1 The unique components that make up the Office

The obvious success or failure of such an office is achieved at ideation. Caught in what to carry or leave behind, there is a temptation to mix so many tasks including; resource mobilization, fundraising, proposal and grant writing, marketing and events, research or project support, innovations and products development, grants and award management, training and staff support, a Research Review/ Ethics Committee, manuscript writing or publications, partnerships and collaborations, and usually some bit of financial management.

And no one is wrong because often times, lack of any of the above components may compromise achievement of the other. Take an example when an NGO is competing for a grant, but lacks a research or M&E Unit to help in demonstrating its past works (and it’s a common scenario) and even the donor is struggling to access any publication about them. Its easy to lose the funding. Anyway, the science is in the details; considering the type of institution and the intended objectives. Young and relatively new institution can start with all this mix but plan to wean each off as the need and resources get in. A private company totally driven by profits may need to pick “what can bring-in the money quickly” and later wander into others if they become bankable. Universities and Research institutions may have less choices as all the above components listed somehow contribute to the modern-day student menu but also may and should be selective with what to start with in a phased approach.

1.2 Key roles of the Office

1. **Projects;** Design Development Concepts and Business Projects
2. **Resource Mobilization and Fundraising;** Initiate and participate in Resource mobilization and fundraising activities
3. **Research and Innovations;** Develop Research projects and protocols
4. **Grants and Award Management;** Offer Grants and Award Management support and reporting
5. **Partnerships and collaborations;** Initiate Grants and funding related Partnership and collaborations
6. **Capacity Development;** Lead in Capacity building and Technical support to partners and stakeholders
7. **Consultancy and Enterprises;** as a fundraising and community extension activity

2.0 Abridged stages in establishing the Office

- **Ideation and design:** State the vision, goal, scope, objectives and the target group. At this level, a Strategy and the Business case are clarified. Other issues that must come up include the justification based on the present opportunities, the business and impact case, the enabling environment, core partners and stakeholders, and available funding/ financing opportunities as well as other sources of income possible to support and sustain the office.
- **Establishment;** This level involves head-hunting for both staff and core partners. Activities may include work planning, benchmarking, equipping, training, awareness creation. Its recommended that the offices take-off with prioritization of pre-preparatory issues like registrations with Donor websites, building writing teams, compliance with some regulatory bodies or writing smaller and less demanding grants to take-off.
- **Management;** Management involves the day-to-day running of the office activities and priorities largely hinged on the planned roles of the Office.
- **Sustainability;** The core targets for such an office must be to secure buy-in and receive direct support from the host institution, but immediately become self-sustaining and finally graduate as a source of pride and income for the mother agency. This process must be carefully stitched into its primary design.

2.1 Possible Office staffing;

Start with 1 or 2 and aim to grow once resources become available. This may include;

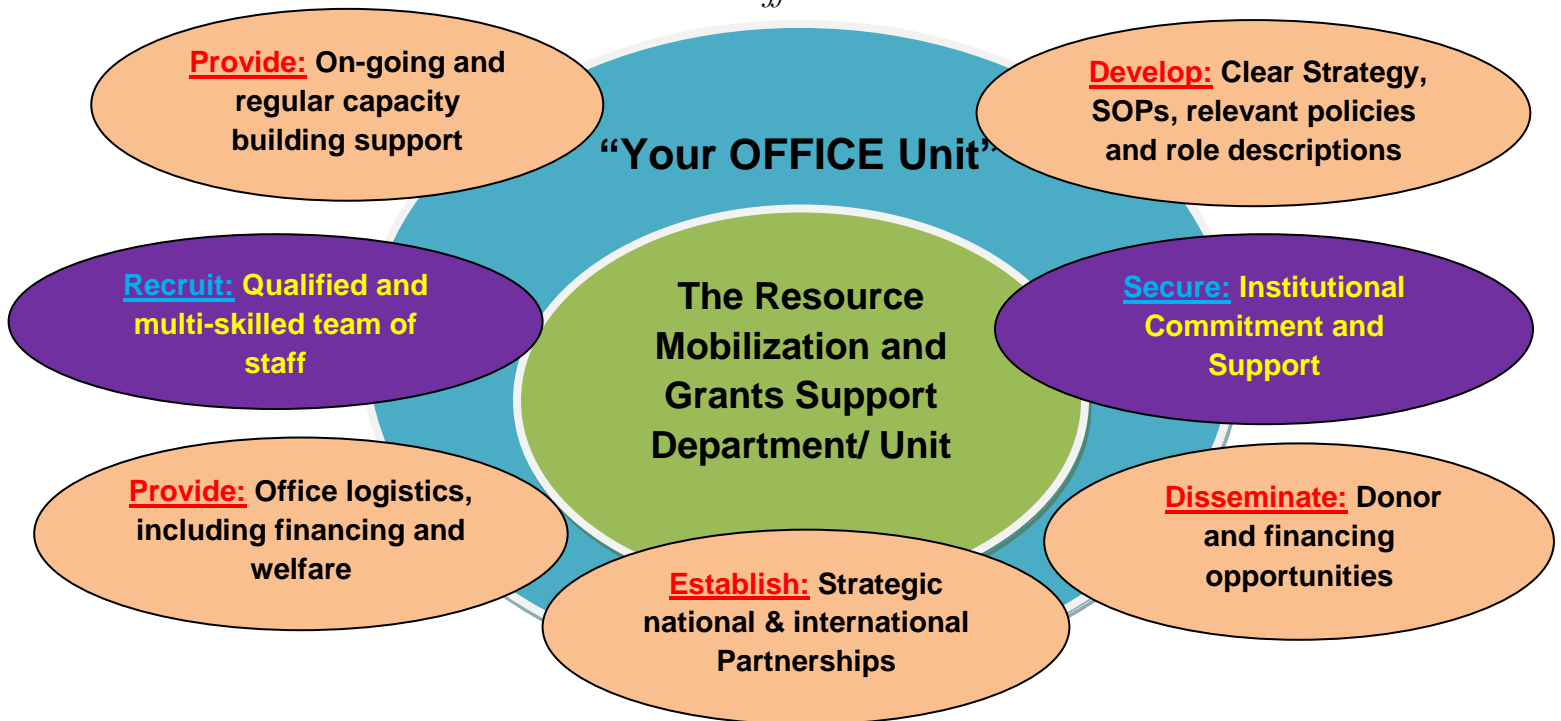
- a) Resource Mobilization and Grants Manager
- b) Grants Officer
- c) Research Officer
- d) Budget Specialist
- e) Partnership Officer
- f) IT and Training Officer
- g) Ethics and Regulatory Officer

3.0 The 10 Points to have in mind while establishing “The Resource Mobilization and Grants Support Office” at your institution

1. Ensure there is adequate institutional buy-in not just for the Directors and Senior staff but even those who may be small “but whose roles or duties” are significant to the office’s operations.
2. While identifying the personnel to run the office, it’s the quality of the multidisciplinary collective team and not the individuals”.
3. Tailor the Office to your institutional needs and not what others are doing – of course benchmarking is part of the game.
4. START with what you have. By its nature, this office takes shape along the journey.
5. Attention has shifted from funding to financing, donors to financiers and from partners to collaborators. Don’t ignore this difference while designing your approach.
6. Resource mobilization has a lot to do with emotions and is an extremely dynamic field. No approach or strategy is cast in stone so your mind should be “the end justifies the means”. Of-course be selective and purposeful but diversify your sources to include; events, consultancy, enterprises, products among others.
7. Equip the office adequately. The routine activities for this office involve dreaming, ideating, designing, deadlines, image management and taking risks. This, at a minimum requires

- computers, stable source of power, internet and some of those “logistics” that can convince a sponsor that he is working with a credible team.
8. Plan and conduct didactic and hands-on internal and external training sessions in different fundraising, resource mobilization and grants areas to improve team capacity.
 9. Start and run sustainably. The first mistake is to get expensive people run the office. Consider commitment, availability and basic experience.
 10. Benchmark with similar and like-minded agencies for success stories and good practices

Figure 1: Key factors and determinants for a successful Resource Mobilization and Grants Support Office



3.1 What LINK Partners International does;

With specific and enviable experience in establishing such offices;

1. We **guide** you while initiating your “Resource Mobilization, financing and Grants Support Office”
2. We **write** your resource mobilization, fundraising, financing and grants strategy
3. We **develop** the institutional structures, systems and plans to effectively run the office
4. We **identify** and share with you funding/donor/revenue and investment opportunities
5. We **write** fundable project proposals, investment and research concepts
6. We **train** the team in resource mobilization, financing, fundraising and grants

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