



Responsibilities of a Project Steward

Ideally, we like to have two or more stewards for each project, subject to availability of bodies. This is particularly important if the sole steward is a new volunteer. If possible, the steward must be a person familiar with the vernacular language. The following is an outline of the responsibilities of a project steward.

1) Timely Funds Disbursement

The most important responsibility of a project steward is to ensure that funds are disbursed in a timely manner. This is essential for both the initial grant from Asha for Education and subsequent funding, if any. For multi-year projects with recurring funding needs, the funds should be equally distributed in 6 monthly periods over the duration of the project. If a huge grant has to be made initially, say for infrastructure costs, the steward needs to monitor the project more closely to ensure that the initial funds have been utilized well before subsequent checks are sent (need to revisit this and come up with guidelines for risk assessment). If the organization already has FCRA/prior permission, the steward should get the check from the treasurer and mail it within a week of the project being approved. Along with the check, a cover letter and disclosure letter (which is essentially a contract the organization needs to sign) need to be sent. All checks should be sent by registered mail. If the organization is waiting to get FCRA/prior permission, the steward needs to send out a letter to the project conveying Asha for Education's decision to support the project, so that they can attach this to their application for FCRA/prior permission.

2) Introduction and Relationship Management

The project steward needs to introduce himself/herself to the organization in India and convey that he/she will be the contact person for any interaction between Asha for Education and the project. This is particularly important if the steward is not the same person as the one who initially interacted with the organization to get the details required to present the project. In this case, the steward should collect all project documents from the coordinators, make a copy (originals should stay with the project coordinators) and get familiar with the project as soon as possible (ideally, before the check is sent out). Also, the steward needs to make sure that the organization acknowledges the receipt of funds and returns the disclosure form. The steward should ensure that all snail-mail is sent to the Asha for Education PO Box and not to the steward's home address.

3) Web content update

The steward needs to create the web content of the project based on the Asha for Education-wide template and send it to the webmaster. Once the acknowledgement of funds is received, the web page needs to be updated to reflect that.

4) Communication

The steward needs to arrange for a conference call between the project and Asha for Education volunteers every quarter.

5) Site visit

The steward needs to arrange for a site visit to the project every year. This may involve posting on local Asha for Education mailing list and on Asha for Education-wide to try and find a volunteer for this purpose. The project coordinators may be able to help out in finding a volunteer. Once the volunteer is identified, the steward needs to make sure that the site visit guidelines are handed over to the volunteer. Also, if there are any project-specific questions that Asha for Education would like answered, this needs to be communicated to the volunteer. It would be ideal to get an Asha India person to do the site visit.

6) Bi-annual Reports

The steward is responsible for getting a bi-annual update from the project. Along with each round of funding, the steward should also send a questionnaire (need to come up with one) for getting relevant information from the project. Receipt of the completed questionnaire by Asha for Education should be a requirement for subsequent funding.

7) Coordinate with Publicity

(a) If the project has any merchandise that can be sold in the US, the steward should take the initiative to arrange for that. The publicity coordinator may be able to help out with this.

(b) The steward should create posters for the project that can be used by the publicity coordinators at events (template for the poster needs to be created).

8) Attend Meetings

Ideally, the steward should attend Asha for Education project meetings, so that experience gained from one project can be applied elsewhere, if possible.

9) Self-sufficiency

The steward should encourage the organization to obtain government funding and make an attempt to be self-sufficient (and less reliant on Asha for Education).

10) Ownership and feedback

Finally, the steward needs to stay in close contact with the project beyond the above responsibilities and communicate any relevant information/concerns to the project coordinators. Also, the steward needs to get feedback from the organization on how Asha for Education is doing and what we can do better. Any information received from the organization must be archived by the steward and the web page for the project must be updated as and when appropriate.