Asha-Seattle Project Processes

Asha-Seattle Project Processes 1
1 Introduction 2
2 Types of projects 2
2.1.1 One-time projects 2
2.1.2 Recurring and Recurring (new) 2
2.1 Donor-specific Projects 3
2.2 Other Chapter Projects 3
2.3 Support A Child (SAC) 3
2.4 Asha Star 3
3 Project roles 3
3.1.1 Project Stewards 3
3.1.2 Project Coordinator 4
4 Project Processes 5
4.1 Project applications and approval process 5
4.1.1 New Projects 5
4.1.2 Post Approval Steps 6
4.1.3 Recurring projects/Funding renewals 8
4.2 Site visits 8
4.2.1 Site visitors 8
4.2.2 “Surprise” site visits 9
4.2.3 Social visits 9
4.3 Check Sending 9
4.3.1 Receipts 10
4.3.2 Mechanism by which funds are sent 10
4.4 Asha Project webpage 11
4.5 Recurring follow-ups 12
4.5.1 Regular communication 12
4.5.2 Annual Survey 12
4.5.3 Audit reports 13
4.5.4 Site visit reports 13
4.6 Annual Presentations 13
5 Beyond processes 13
6 E-mail aliases 14
7 Open issues/action items 14

If you see changes that need to be made to this doc, please do go ahead and make them. Also feel free to develop supplementary materials (as listed in the Open issues/action items section)
To modify this doc:

1) Edit a local copy
2) Note the changes you have made in the table below
3) Send it to Project Coords and Chapter Coords for review
4) If recommended send to Asha-Seattle yahoo group for comment
5) When approved, delete the old copy from yahoogroups. Add new one.
6) Inform Asha-Seattle yahoo group that there’s an updated version of the document

Revision	Name	E-mail or phone contact	Date	Comments
12	**Shailesh Vaishnavi**	**206-353-3059**	**4/19/2011**	**Changed processes to reflect switch to www.ashaseattle.net instead of yahoo databases for project information tracking**
11	Nagendra Singh	425-301-4419	1/17/2010	Added budget document requirements
10	Vibhavaree Gargeya	206-706-8158	8/9/2008	Added place holder sections 2.3, 2.4. Added open items 10-13. Added section 4.3.2.1
9	Vibhavaree Gargeya	206-706-8158	4/9/2008	Moved the modifications section up based on feedback from Hareesh Veldandi
8	Vibhavaree Gargeya	206-706-8158	3/25/2008	Incorporated changes from Srijan Chakraborty
7	Vibhavaree Gargeya	206-706-8158	3/19/2008	Modified “Beyond Processes” section based on feedback from Swati Sircar
6	Vibhavaree Gargeya	206-706-8158	3/15/2008	Several small modifications and sections added
5	Vibhavaree Gargeya	206-706-8158	2/25/2008	Rev based on feedback from Hareesh Veldandi, Shailesh Vaishnavi, Binay Pathak, Deb Kukreja, Swati Sircar
4	Vibhavaree Gargeya	206-706-8158	1/31/2008	Major rev of the doc to focus on project processes leaving Stewardship skills and best practices to other docs.
3	Vibhavaree Gargeya	206-706-8158	6/29/2006	More minor changes
2	Vibhavaree Gargeya	206-706-8158	5/15/2006	Minor changes
1	Vibhavaree Gargeya	206-706-8158	3/16/2006	First rev; created doc

1 Introduction

This document covers processes used by the Seattle chapter of Asha for Education to manage projects.

2 Types of projects

As far as project management is concerned, all projects are categorized based on their funding as One-time projects or Recurring projects.

2.1.1 One-time projects

One-time projects are approved for a lump sum, and are not expected to have recurring expenses. A typical example of a one-time project is a project with infrastructure expenses, such as a school building. One-time projects may have the entire approved sum sent in one lump sum, or spread out over several installments.

2.1.2 Recurring and Recurring (new)

Recurring projects are approved for recurring funding. All new Recurring projects are approved for only one year, and are termed recurring (new). When a Recurring project comes up for its first funding renewal, it needs to be voted upon and, if approved, will not have to be voted upon for re-approval on an annual basis. But, each project is evaluated by the Chapter on at least an annual basis and continued funding is contingent upon the Project’s on-going impact.

2.1 Donor-specific Projects

Donor-specific projects are funded by a specific donor. They may come to us because a donor is interested in a specific project, but would like to channel funds through Asha for Education for tax purposes or to get the additional oversight that Asha provides. Donor-specific projects can be one-time, recurring (new) or recurring.

2.2 Other Chapter Projects

These are projects stewarded by other chapters, and Asha-Seattle provides a portion of, or all the funding. Other chapter projects are treated like regular one-time projects except that the Asha-Seattle Steward does not interact directly with the project, but rather, the other chapter Steward interacts with the project. The expectation is that the other chapter will work to find funding on its own for the project in the long run. Other Chapter Projects can be one-time projects only, and the stewarding chapter must approach us for funding every year.

2.3 Support A Child (SAC)

???

2.4 Asha Star

Asha Star is a program where an individual, along with a group of like-minded individuals, takes responsibility for a specific project. Asha Stars get first-hand understanding of issues related to development and see a project grow over time. With a secure source of long-term support, the project is able to strike roots and move towards self-sufficiency.

Asha Star projects are stewarded by the Asha Stars and follow same processes as other projects.

For more information on the Asha Star program, please see - http://www.ashanet.org/projects/asha-stars/

Asha Star projects are typically recurring projects.

3 Project roles

3.1.1 Project Stewards

Each project has at least 3 Stewards – a Primary Steward, and two or more Secondary Stewards. At least 2 of the Stewards must be local, including the Primary Steward. The Stewards work as a team, with the Primary Steward being ultimately responsible for the project. The Primary Steward is the main contact for the Project Coordinators.

Project Stewards liaison between the project and the chapter. They are expected to build a strong relationship with the project, be extremely knowledgeable about their project – its social context, goals, size, challenges, operations, effectiveness, be up to date with happenings in their project, and to be advocates for their project within the chapter.

As with every role and task in Asha-Seattle, the Project Steward role is a serious one. It does not require a lot of time, but does require regular follow up and strong commitment. It is okay for a Steward to transition out of this role if his/her circumstances change. However it is critical to give as much advance notice as possible, and it is expected that the Steward work to find his/her replacement (seek the help of Project Coordinators to find a replacement), and to make sure that the transition is smooth for all concerned, in particular the Project.

Specific processes that Project Stewards are responsible for:

- Shepherding a Project's proposal through the approval process
- Creation and maintenance of the Asha Project web-page
- Site visits – a minimum of once a year
- Check sending – based on the Project's funding cycle
- Regular communication with the project – a minimum of once a month
- Project presentation to the chapter - Yearly
  Includes annual survey, last site visit report, audit report and general status presentation
- Providing Project information when requested (for Asha's annual reports, events, etc.)
- Practices as described in - http://data.ashanet.org/datastore/data/Chapters/Seattle/Volunteer_Resources/ProjectStewardBestPractices.doc

3.1.2 Project Coordinator

The chapter has one or more Project Coordinators. Their role is to guide Stewards, and make sure that each project is getting the attention it deserves. Project

Coordinators can be reached at the e-mail alias listed in the e-mail alias section of this document.

4 Project Processes

4.1 Project applications and approval process

4.1.1 New Projects

Applications from Projects can come to the chapter from several sources – direct applications to Asha-Seattle, applications forwarded from Asha-wide groups, from volunteers, or from individuals who know about Asha-Seattle, and have contacts with a Project seeking funding.

If they haven't already, all projects must fill out a new project application form and the relevant addendums, found here - http://www.ashanet.org/seattle/resources.php

An Asha-Seattle volunteer (or an individual familiar with the project, but does not have a role in running it and does not have family ties to the project and wishes to become a volunteer) will need to pick up the project and shepherd it through the application process. This individual can continue on as Steward, but does not need to.

If no one volunteers to shepherd the project through the application process, the project will not be considered. Similarly, if no one is willing to Steward the project, the project will not be approved, even if it makes it part way through the application process.

Taking a Project through the application process goes like this:

1) Obtain a time slot at an upcoming meeting, and get it on the agenda. To get an item on the agenda, respond to the agenda request from the Meeting Moderator, or mail the Moderator's alias listed in the e-mail alias section of this document.

2) Upload a copy of the Project application and supporting material here -- http://groups.yahoo.com/group/asha-seattle/files/Project%20Proposals/ and send it out to the Asha-Seattle yahoogroup so folks may review it ahead of time.

3) Present the Project at the meeting. There will be a lot of questions. Carefully note down items that need further information from the Project.

4) Follow up with the Project to get more information, and questions answered.

5) A site visit is required prior to project approval. See the section on Site Visits for more information. Arrange for a site visit, if it hasn't already occurred.

6) Present again at a chapter meeting. At this point, the Project might be approved by vote at the chapter meeting or through an on-line poll, for One-time, or Recurring (new), or may need further follow up.
   The amount approved is in Rupees. This allows the Project to be guaranteed the funding they are approved for regardless of fluctuations in the exchange rate.

4.1.2 Post Approval Steps

As soon as a Project is approved for funding, the Steward must:

1) Create the Asha project webpage (see section on this later in this document), and upload the initial application, and all documents that don't contain sensitive information (e.g. bank account details, non-public personnel information like names of children/teachers, non-public details on the project) to the webpage.

2) On the Asha project webpage that you created, upload a document which includes all the line items of the approved budget. In addition, at the top of the document, please include the period for which the budget document is valid. Few examples follow.

- Budget for the Year 2009.
- Budget for the Years 2006, 2007, and 2008.
- Budget for 2006 - 2009.
- Budget for Oct 2006 - Dec 2007.

Essentially, by looking at the top of the document, one should get a clear idea of the period to which the document applies.

A sample of such a document can be found at the asha-seattle yahoo groups Projects file folder (http://groups.yahoo.com/group/asha-seattle/files/Projects/). The file name, of the sample document, is "Sample Budget Document.doc"

As and when the budget amount or the line items change, please seek chapter approval, and create and upload a new document which has the latest information.

3) Register yourself on http://www.ashaseattle.net, selecting favorite email-id and password, and providing contact information as requested. Also select your role within the organization (e.g.' volunteer', the most common one) that you would like to be approved for.

4) Create an entry for the new Project:

Login to http://www.ashaseattle.net. Under Projects, select 'New Project'. You will see a list of existing partners (organizations) that we support. If the new Project is part of one of these, select it; otherwise select the 'Add Partner' tab at the top left and enter details about the new Project Partner organization including its address.

Next, you will be asked to enter the Project's name and address. You can select the 'project address' to be the 'same as partner' unless the Project Partner runs multiple projects in different locations in which case the address of this new Project might be different than that of the Partner Organization.

5) Fill in detailed information about the newly approved Project:

Login to http://www.ashaseattle.net. Select the project you created, and fill in all information under each section (tab) for the Project.

'Basic' tab covers project address, FCRA # and other information. 'Partner DD Address' is the address used to send checks, so make sure this is correct. Some Projects have their checks routed through a different organization/bank with a different address, in which case this address will be different than the Project address.

'Stewards' tab is used to assign yourself as a steward for the Project. Do this right away.

'Approvals' tab is used to add/track information about chapter approved funding for the Project. Make an entry for the newly approved funding using this, filling in all details, including a link to chapter meeting minutes in the 'Meeting Minutes' field. Funds cannot be sent to the Project without an entry here. A new 'Approval' entry needs to be added here only when a budget increase is approved for the Project (more details in the next section on funding renewals).

'Check Requests' tab is used to enter a check request for funds transfer to the Project. See the 'Check Sending' section below for more details on the process.

'Documents' tab is used to upload or provide links to various project specific documents. Make sure to upload the latest budget document, site visit report and annual report every year to the project webpage and add links to them under the 'Documents' tab.

'Categories' tab is used to classify the project based on the type of work it does (the project application filled out by the Project Partner will have information on this) as well as the type and duration of its approved funding (see 'Types of Projects', Section 2, above). Use this information to classify the project appropriately here.

6) Make sure that the meeting minutes, when they come out (you will find them here), contain all necessary information (amount, time period approved for and any contingencies) because this is the only record of chapter approval.

7) Inform the Project that they have been approved, and initiate check sending (see section on check sending later in this document)

4.1.3 Recurring projects/Funding renewals

When a Project is first approved for recurring funding, it is approved for one year as Recurring(new). This gives us the opportunity to become more familiar with the project and develop a stronger relationship. After a year, assuming, the project requires recurring funding, it must be brought for a vote to the chapter. If approved, the project becomes a Recurring Project.

If a Recurring Project has increased budget needs, the Steward is authorized to approve an increase up to 10% of the approved annual budget (unless there is a chapter freeze on doing so). The Steward must send a mail to the Asha-Seattle yahoogroup notifying the chapter of this increase. A new entry should be made for the Project at http://www.ashaseattle.net under the 'Approvals' tab and a link to this mail you sent included in the 'Meeting Minutes' field of the new entry.

If a Recurring Project's increased budgetary needs are greater than 10% of the previously approved amount, then the Steward brings the details of the increase to a chapter meeting for a vote. If the increase is approved, a new entry should be made for the Project at http://www.ashaseattle.net under the 'Approvals' tab including a link to the meeting minutes in the 'Meeting Minutes' field therein.

4.2 Site visits

Before a Project is approved, a site visit must be done. The site visit guide is found here --

http://www.ashanet.org/seattle/resources/general/sitevisitguide.htm

All Projects get annual site visits, as long as they are being funded. Site visit reports are uploaded to the Project's Asha webpage, and a link to them must be added at http://www.ashaseattle.net under the 'Documents' tab for the Project.

4.2.1 Site visitors

It is highly preferred that site visits are conducted by an Asha-Seattle volunteer. If the Stewards cannot conduct the site visits themselves, then they should try to get another individual to do this. The Steward should first try to find another Asha-Seattle volunteer. If that fails, he/she should drop a mail to the Project Coordinators (e-mail alias listed later in this document), who have access to Asha-wide project groups to find a volunteer. If that also fails, the Steward can request a friend or a trusted person to conduct the site visit. In all cases, the individual conducting the site visit must be introduced to the Project ahead of time, be thoroughly briefed on Asha for Education, the Project, what the Steward is looking for out of the site visit and must follow Asha-Seattle site visit guidelines.

4.2.2 “Surprise” site visits

The Steward should arrange the site visit ahead of time with the Project, and should give reasonable consideration to times that are more convenient for the Project than others. Surprise site visits are not recommended, and should not be conducted unless there is a strong reason (ex: looking into abuses) to do so. Surprise site visits are very stressful for a Project and can hamper trust between the Project and Asha-Seattle.

4.2.3 Social visits

There may be individuals (such as donors to Asha-Seattle) interested in visiting a Project. Such individuals should be routed to the Steward. The Steward should decide in conjunction with the Project when and whether this visit should happen. It should be made clear to the Project that this is a Social visit, and it does not replace a Site Visit.

4.3 Check Sending

Each Project can be on its own funding cycle, Jan-Dec being the default. The norm is for checks to be sent to projects twice a year, but the frequency can be whatever the Steward and Project decide. Enter the cycle and frequency decided upon at http://www.ashaseattle.net under the ‘Approvals’ tab for the Project in the ‘Funding Cycle’ and ‘Requests/Year’ fields.

It is extremely important that checks be sent on time. It can take up to 6 weeks from the time of request till the funds reach the project, so please put in a check request 2 months before the funds to the Project are due.

These are the steps for check sending:

1) Enter a request under the ‘Check Requests’ tab for the Project at http://www.ashaseattle.net. You will be asked to upload the Budget Document if you have not already done so – this is a requirement, so make sure you have obtained one from the Project well ahead of time. No exceptions!

2) Make sure the address information for check sending is correct in the ‘Partner DD Address’ under the ‘Basic’ tab for the Project at http://www.ashaseattle.net. The address in here is where the check will be sent, so it is important that it is correct. If your project does not have an entry here, do add one now.

3) Make sure there is a record of the funding approval under the ‘Approvals’ tab for the Project at http://www.ashaseattle.net. Funds will not be sent if there is no record.

4) Fill in the ‘Send Check By’ date for the check request. This will be at least two (2) weeks from the date you enter the check request (to allow for process checks before approval). Once the check is sent, it may take up to six (6) additional weeks for the project to receive the funds. If the funds request is urgent, mention it in the ‘Request Comments’ field; then email asha-seattle-project-coordinators@yahoogroups.com once you have filed the request so it gets priority treatment, otherwise one of the Project Coordinators monitoring the check request database every few days will approve your request as soon as they have verified all the information.

5) Send a cover letter to the project letting them know that they will receive the check in approximately 6 weeks. The cover letter can either be mailed or e-mailed.

Cover letter template "CoverLetter.doc" is here -- http://groups.yahoo.com/group/asha-seattle/files/Projects/

You are encouraged to send a customized cover letter; however make sure your cover letter has all the information including the *disclosure statement* that is in " CoverLetter.doc"

If a paper check is being sent directly to the project, it should be enclosed and sent with the cover letter, and the cover letter should be modified to indicate this.

6) Use the ‘Treasury Comments’ section in the check request entry to track if/when the check has been sent – the fields herein will get updated by the Treasury/Project Coordinators once check-sending has been scheduled.

4.3.1 Receipts

The finance team files receipts for each check sent to Projects.

When a Project receives the funds sent to them, they need to send a receipt back. The Cover letter template request this, and instructs the receipt to be sent to the Asha-Seattle PO box, from which the finance team picks up the receipts. If a receipt is sent to a Steward, the Steward should send it to the finance team.

4.3.2 Mechanism by which funds are sent

The Finance team sends funds over to the Project. The Finance team’s alias is in the e-mail alias section of this document. The Finance team sends an electronic request to ICICI bank, which then sends a paper check to the Project. If the amount is very large, the Finance team will either wire the funds, or issue a paper check to be mailed or physically carried over to the Project.

4.3.2.1 Detail as of May 2008

1. Paper check - does not travel fast and takes over 5-8 weeks to realize the funds.

2. ICICI e-Transfers are quick 5-8 business days but need to be broken in $3000 chunks and could take 2-4 weeks to transfer the whole amount.

3. ICICI Power Transfers are like wire transfers and have an option to directly deposit in bank account (2-4 days) or mail a "Rupee Demand Draft" (could take 8-15 days depending upon destination as a paper check has to be sent by Regd. Post/courier). There is a $30 expense for this option.

4. Direct Wire transfer from our Wells Fargo account to NGO's bank accounts - works well and money reaches in 2-3 business days in recipients' bank account.

- Typically we prefer option #2 as it requires no fees but has limitations.

- To send anything asap best option is option #4 which requires accurate bank wire information and costs Asha a $40 wire fee. Costs come out of general funds

4.4 Asha Project webpage

Every project has an Asha Project webpage, which is publicly viewable. The Steward creates this webpage and keeps it up to date. All documents that do not contain sensitive information (Project application, annual reports, if the Project puts one out, annual survey, site visit reports) need to be uploaded to the Project webpage.

The Steward also makes sure contact information on the webpage is accurate. The Steward is not responsible for updating financial information. This is done by the Asha-Seattle Project Coordinators.

To create or update the Project webpage, a username and password is needed. Send a mail to the Project Coordinators alias, (which is in the e-mail aliases section of this document) with your phone number to obtain these credentials. A Project Coordinator will call you.

Once you have the credentials, go to: https://www.ashanet.org/projects-new/admin/ All Instructions you need are available here. Start with clicking on the link "How to Add a Project (General) ". It will guide you through the creation and adding other info. Once you fill in all information, make sure you hit the "Add" / "Upload" / "Submit" button at the bottom (depending on context) to save your changes. Make sure you have all information handy about the project (Short & Detailed Project Description, Organization description etc ...) - you will need to cut and paste them into the appropriate fields when creating the project page.

Once you are done adding it, you can see if it shows up in the projects list under Seattle (when you click on Project Info: Project at the very bottom of the page). Also go to http://www.ashanet.org/projects/ and make sure the project page appears under the Seattle projects (should look something like this other new project - http://www.ashanet.org/projects/project-view.php?p=726)

If you need more details:

Demo on how to use the projects database:-
http://www.ashanet.org/austin/resources/projectsdB.ppt

Helpful document for webpage creation/updates:
http://data.ashanet.org/datastore/data/Chapters/Seattle/Volunteer_Resources/WebpageUpdateHelp.doc (user/passwd: guest/guest)

Full set of instructions for creating and updating the Project web page are also in Db.doc, which is here - http://groups.yahoo.com/group/asha-seattle/files/Volunteer%20help%20line/Projects/

4.5 Recurring follow-ups

4.5.1 Regular communication

As mentioned before, the Steward should communicate with the Project regularly, at least once a quarter. Whatever mode of communication works best is fine, but using the phone or having regular conference calls between the Steward team and the Project is recommended.

4.5.2 Annual Survey

The annual survey is a list of questions that the Steward sends to the Project to be filled yearly. It is another means of keeping in touch with the Project, and assessing how well it is serving the needs of the community it serves.

Two versions of the annual survey currently exist – “annual_survey.doc” and “asha_yearly_stats.doc” and can be found at http://groups.yahoo.com/group/asha-seattle/files/Projects/ . The Steward should customize the survey, send it to the Project ever year, and obtain a response to the survey.

Annual survey responses should be uploaded to the Project’s Asha webpage.

4.5.3 Audit reports

All non-profits need to file annual audit reports as required by Indian law. Stewards should request a copy of the Audit report every year. The Audit report should not be uploaded to the Project's Asha webpage, as it contains sensitive information.

4.5.4 Site visit reports

In addition to the above, site visits are conducted every year, and the site visit report is uploaded to the Project's Asha webpage.

4.6 Annual Presentations

The Steward presents status of the Project to the chapter at least once a year. The presentation should convey the impact the Project is having, and how well it is meeting the needs of the community it has set out to meet. It should also present relevant information obtained through the annual survey, audit report, and the last site visit report.

This presentation can be combined with an approval by vote to convert a project from recurring(new) to recurring or to request budget changes.

5 Beyond processes

This document covers the very basic processes a Steward is expected to follow, to allow for smooth project management across the chapter. It does not go over how to develop as a Steward, or how to work on the skills required to excel at, and provide the most value in this role.

Such skills would include a thorough understanding of the project and the people involved. This includes but is not limited to

1. Knowledge of the geographic area & the socio-economic reality of the community as well the people running the Project

2. Motivation and mentality of the staff of the Project

3. Issues and challenges faced by the community, in general, and the Project, in particular

A Project Steward should be critical in monitoring the Project making sure the support is utilized properly and detecting any abuses with the Project. However a Project Steward should always try to go beyond a critic of the Project and also look into solutions. This can include providing the Project with resources like access to other Project's best practices, information about Government schemes, contacts that would be helpful, for example. A Project Steward should be able to see how a project can improve as well as what Asha-Seattle can learn from the Project. The learnings should be shared with the chapter.

It is important for the Steward to update the Chapter about the Project regularly and to develop good presentation and communication skills and be able to update the Chapter in an efficient, interesting and useful manner. A Steward also needs good inter-personal skills to work well with the Project and other Stewards on the team.

As material that covers these skills is developed, it will be linked here.

But the biggest thing this document does not cover is that Stewardship does not require a lot of time, but does require a lot of heart. It needs to be approached with deep commitment, seriousness and an understanding that this role makes a difference.

Stewards should always be conscious that people are depending on them - the Project is dependent on the Steward, and a Steward failing to act in a timely manner can have a huge negative impact on the functioning of the Project. The Chapter and the Project are both dependent on the Steward to execute well.

6 E-mail aliases

Asha-Seattle yahoogroup: asha-seattle@yahoogroups.com

Project Coordinators: asha-seattle-project-coordinators@yahoogroups.com

Finance Team: asha-seattle-treasurers@yahoogroups.com

Meeting Moderator: quasarandnemesis@comcast.net

7 Open issues/action items

1) Where should audit reports be sent to? Clarification about the law that requires Projects to file these.

2) Need to expand Project Coords role description

3) Need to create a new project letter that communicates welcome information also communicate escalation path if contact with steward is lost.

4) Create a supplement about how to give an effective project presentation to the chapter.

5) Beef up/redo site visit guidelines

6) Redo annual survey

7) Emergency funds; fast track (ex Mumbai floods)

8) Info about how to get feedback on the Project from the community it serves

9) Details about how to go about setting up a relationship and working with a new project and stewardship team.

10) Need to add detail about SAC processes

11) Add info about FCRA clearance

12) Protocol when a project is not approved. How to inform the project; what information to provide.

(End)