Critical thinking when developing a Pride Campaign

It is valuable to your campaign to begin thinking about how to organize and present information about the impact of your Pride campaign to Rare, your Lead Agency, donors, partners, the media, and the community. Now is a good time to begin thinking critically about the data you will collect over the course of the next two years. Critical thinking is a vital component of your final report. It helps you evaluate the information that you received over the course of the last two years and the information that you plan to share with others.

**Critical thinking** is the process of evaluating propositions or hypotheses and making judgments about them on the basis of well-supported evidence.

By the end of this lesson you will be able to:

- Describe the concept of critical thinking as it applies to a Rare campaign.
- Apply skills in critical thinking to the steps and deliverables of the campaign planning process.
- Harness skills in critical thinking to common challenges in Pride campaigns.

**Activity, Reviewing Your Campaign Journey Through a Critical Thinking Lens**

**Instructor Procedure**

1. **Prepare the Activity**
   
   1. Critical Thinking is one of the supportive skills that you will need to customize based on your cohort needs. Please reach out to global programs if you need further support in identifying additional activities and content. You should review the list of additional resources at the end of this lesson for further support.
   
   
   3. Print out copies of the Open Standards Manual for each CM. You should already have this in your regional language.

2. **Conduct the Activity**
   
   1. Ask each student to review the Open Standards (60 minutes) or ask them to do so outside of the classroom and highlight/underline key steps that relate to their campaign.
2. Ask each student to take out their journey map and reflection from their most recent journey map activity.
   
   Direct the students to the high level steps in the Open Standards and back to the characteristics of critical thinking and the questions a critical thinker should be asking him or herself when assessing a situation.

3. Ask each student to build a more critical analysis from their journey map using critical thinking skills and the Open Standards Framework.

4. Ask the students to identify a few critical thinking questions (examples provided in PowerPoint but they can develop their own) to draw on for each step in the Open Standards Framework and provide bullets or a short narrative to those questions.

5. Once they are done, ask them to prioritize 3 items on reflection and synthesize on index cards, can be anything - challenges, opportunities, key insights - and put them up on a sticky wall when they are done. Ask each student to explain their index cards and the story behind them. Go through a typical ORID type process here of organizing the cards and bucketing them into categories. These categories of key challenges, insights, and lessons learned can be revisited multiple times through the rest of the university session.

6. The key to this activity is to get the Participants thinking more critically about what happened in their field phase, what it means for the implementation of their campaign as a conservation project, and to reflect on what types of analytical decisions they may draw out when they do their planning, as well as how the framework can be used during implementation. This activity builds on the journey map in that it puts specific boundaries around key activities and lessons learned so that they can be used for reflection and improving the implementation. The results of this activity can also be used to revisit and refine the work plan one last time.

3. Debrief the Activity

   - Ask students to share key critical thinking insights - what worked? what didn't? what would they do differently next time? You can then facilitate a discussion of what summary topics can be gleaned from their insights.

**Participant Procedure**

1. **Purpose**

   To apply critical thinking skills in evaluating challenges, opportunities, and lessons learned.

   2 Hours

2. **Participate in the Activity**


      - Highlight and reflect on key areas that you experienced so far in your campaign -e.g. identifying your stakeholders, results chains, project planning.

   2. Create a word document with 5 sections for each of the steps in the Open Standards

      - Using the presentation as a guide, identify some key critical thinking questions that you can ask about your campaign for each step in the Open Standards.

      - Build from your journey map to flesh out answers to your critical thinking questions. These can be in bullet format (don't need to be structured into
paragraphs yet). These will be used as you develop your final Campaign Learning Report for the critical analysis section.

3. When complete and as guided by the instructor, identify 3 elements you want to share (synthesized for an index card) around lessons learned, challenges, or opportunities. You will have the opportunity to share everything at some point so just choose the ones you think are most powerful from a learning perspective. Place your index cards on the sticky wall.

4. The instructor will then facilitate a discussion about your critical thinking process and lessons learned. Be prepared to discuss your process, answers to critical thinking questions and choices for your index cards.

Lesson Content, Critical Thinking

As a campaign manager, you will have been following the standard, well-tested Rare processes and procedures for the bulk of your campaign. However, it would be unreasonable to imagine that every campaign proceeded in exactly the same way. Different countries, different cultures, different threats, and different people mean that each campaign will necessarily be customized to some extent.

What if you were presented with a unique challenge that was not covered in this program? What if you discovered that what has worked well in previous Rare campaigns in other regions simply did not have the same result in your region?

In order to customize your campaign and make reasonable and effective decisions to tackle key challenges, you must engage in "critical thinking." Many of the choices and actions you took during your Pride campaign utilized critical thinking skills, so you are already engaging in this process.

However, in order for critical thinking to become a habit and a tool, it is important to pay attention to when you are engaging in critical thinking—to recognize your behavior, to watch results, and to adjust your behavior based on rational decisions. This will be extremely important as we revisit your campaign journey, what challenges and opportunities you may have had, key decisions that were made, as well as how things might proceed differently when you tackle campaigns in the future. Applying critical thinking tools will also be extremely valuable for asking the right questions of your data, and testing specific hypotheses about the impact of your campaign.

What is Critical Thinking?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strong critical thinkers address complex situations:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Logically, rationally, and by seeking information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making judgments based on information rather than emotion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Without bias</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With empathy and understanding of other people's feelings, culture, values, and perspectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creatively</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategically</td>
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Most importantly, critical thinkers assess their own thought processes. They challenge themselves while making decisions. A critical thinker will continuously ask him or herself the following questions.
Use these questions as a checklist for yourself to monitor your own problem solving thought patterns and behaviors.

1. Am I being rational?
2. Is there a more creative way to address this situation?
3. Am I maintaining an open mind?
4. Are there any biases evident in my thought processes? Is there evidence of bias in the data I have collected?
5. Do I have the appropriate information to make the decision? If not, why? Can I get the missing information?
6. Is there a more disciplined way to approach this situation?
7. Have I considered all aspects or layers to this situation and theorized or predicted their relative impact?
8. Do I have a plan that is strategic and that is focused exclusively on solving the root problem?
9. Are my ideas practical or implementable?

Applying Critical Thinking to your Campaign Journey

The application of critical thinking to your campaign journey will be an important part of uncovering key challenges and opportunities, as well as preparing you for the next step in organizing and analyzing all of the relevant data you have collected. The Rare approach for campaign management and implementation was designed from a broader conservation planning framework called "The Open Standards for the Practice of Conservation". This framework was developed by a group of conservation organizations including WWF, WCS, TNC and also Rare, so that we can better organize and align our critical thinking processes across organizations, and provide a common template for managing and evaluating a conservation project.

In reviewing the Open Standards manual, you will see how the Rare process and your campaign has been built from this planning framework. From concept mapping and work planning to data collection and campaign implementation, you can clearly see your campaign mirrored in each step. This framework can also help in structuring a more formal evaluation of your campaign by providing key insights on each step in your campaign process and journey. For example, if you apply critical thinking skills in reviewing step 1 - Conceptualize, you define scope, vision and targets - you should be asking questions such as "How did I identify the scope of the campaign, was it challenging? If I didn't define a scope, what kinds of implications did that have for my campaign journey?" A reflection of each step can then be used to refine your analysis, final report, and results presentations.

There are five steps in Open Standards: Conceptualize, Plan Actions and Monitoring, Implement, Analyze and Adapt, and Capture and Share Learning. Each step is associated with a set of best practices and includes guidelines on what is involved:

- **Step 1 Conceptualize:** This first step involves specifying the basic parameters for your project in preparation for the design work that will come in the next step. Specifically, it involves identifying who will initially be involved on the project team, articulating your project's geographic and/or thematic scope, your vision of what you hope to achieve, and the conservation targets which will be the focus of your work. It also includes making sense of the context in which your project is intending to work, including threats and opportunities, and key stakeholders.

- **Step 2 Plan Actions and Monitoring:** Once you have described the basic parameters for your project, the next step is to design the specific strategies you will undertake to
achieve conservation. In particular, this step involves developing your Action Plan that you will use to record your campaign’s goals, strategies, and objectives. It also includes developing the Monitoring Plan that you will use to track your progress and developing your Operational (Work)Plan that will specify the resources you need and risks you should consider. Finally, it involves compiling all your work from Steps 1 (Conceptualize) and 2 (Plan) into your Strategic Plan.

- **Step 3 Implement**: This is the most important step in the entire adaptive management cycle process. It is the time in which you put all of the planning efforts you conducted in the previous steps into action. The step involves developing and implementing specific work plans while ensuring sufficient resources, capacity, and partners.

- **Step 4 Analyze and Adapt**: This step involves managing your data as it comes in and regularly analyzing it to convert it into useful information. In particular, you need to analyze your project’s results and core assumptions as well as operational and financial data and then adapt your work plans as necessary. The amount of time needed to complete this step is often underestimated by project managers, leaving them with lots of data that they have collected but have not analyzed or used. By making this a deliberate step, you should find it easier to observe and understand changes, solve problems, and make improvements to your project.

- **Step 5 Capture and Share Learning**: The final step in the management cycle involves sharing lessons and formal products with key internal and external audiences. It also involves giving and receiving feedback, conducting evaluations and audits, as well as promoting a learning culture. In this step, it is important to foster learning not only within the project but also at an institutional level and, more generally, within the conservation community. With this in mind, these standards include practices that your organization should adopt at an institutional level to help foster learning and sharing.

- **CMP 2007**

  The Open Standards manual provides more detail how you can use these steps to design, implement and track all sorts of conservation projects. As you move from campaign manager to Rare alumni, you can use these tools to develop new campaigns or enhance your current Pride campaign. It will also allow you to take a more structured approach to implementation that can be easily shared and communicated across partner conservation organizations or with your fellow alumni.

  [http://www.conservationmeasures.org/initiatives/standards-for-project-management](http://www.conservationmeasures.org/initiatives/standards-for-project-management)

**Summary**

Critical thinking is a vital component of the Rare Pride campaign. In this lesson you learned that effective critical thinking involves time and effort. The effort is worthwhile because it helps provide information on where there is a lack of theoretical support for particular ideas or actions, problems or mistakes that have occurred and where changes could be made to improve success.

Identifying these factors is vital for long term success for you, your organization and Rare. As you apply your critical thinking skills to realistic Pride campaign challenges, remember that these skills will enable you to think deeply about important issues, as well as show that you understand the situation, and why things went wrong. Finally, keep in mind as you move forward, that critical thinking is extremely important throughout your Rare campaign, but it is particularly important because it is evaluated in the Critical Analysis Section of your Final Report.