TOGETHER FOR INCLUSION:

YOUNG PEOPLE WITH LOW VISION FOR ACTIVE PARTICIPATION, AWARENESS AND ASSOCIATIONISM AROUND THE WORLD

METHODOLOGICAL GUIDE FOR BUILDING ACTIVE PARTICIPATION AND ASSOCIATIONISM AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE WITH LOW VISION



Co-funded by the European Union

injuve

TOGETHER

CC BY NC ND

This intellectual output is part of the project "Together For Inclusion: Young People with low vision for active participation, awareness, and associationism around the world" co-funded by the Erasmus+ program and the European Union [Grant Agreement Number 2022-1-ES02-KA220-YOU-000088194].

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission.

This publication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

injuve



Co-funded by
the European Union

How to read this guide if you have visual impairments?

This guide is 100% accessible as it has been developed following accessibility guidelines to ensure that a person with disabilities can access and understand its content.

Images, diagrams, infographics, and other multimedia elements are described textually through alternative text. This ensures that individuals using assistive technology can understand the graphical content.

Text legibility is guaranteed with color combinations that provide sufficient contrast.

To avoid spaces of different widths between words that may confuse the reader, texts have not been justified.

The text size is recommended, as well as line spacing between sentences.

The content is organized using titles and subtitles arranged hierarchically, without skipping levels between them.





This facilitates navigation for people using a screen reader or those with low vision who need a navigation panel to move between headings. These tools allow them to quickly jump between sections.

It can be used with a screen reader that will read aloud all the textual content of the file.

It can also be viewed with a screen magnifier that will enlarge the size of the content. The fonts are of the appropriate size.

The high contrast setting of the operating system can also be used.

ZoomText

Who is it aimed at?

This guide is aimed at young people with low vision from around the world, who can learn in a didactic way about the importance of associationism and how to become part of an association.

This material is one more product of the official materials of the project, and for proper teaching, the order of use should be as follows:

ORDER Of use

Webinar
Multidisciplinary webinar for young people with low vision.

Methodological guide
Guide for promoting associationism and how to form an organization.

Manual for engaging
Manual for gathering support from professionals and organizations.

Pilot Test
After reviewing the previous sections, conduct test trials of the same.



Together For Inclusion

For more information https://sighttogether.eu/

AUTHOR AND COLLABORATORS

EDITING AND AUTHORSHIP:

ALBA, Asociación para la ayuda a personas con albinismo

COLLABORATORS:

Aniridia Italiana APS

Aniridia Europe

Redtree Making Projects

Fundación Nacional Simplemente Amigos

Corporación Albinos Chile



TABLE OF CONTENTS

01 THE IMPORTANCE OF PARTNERING.....8

02 HOW TO GENERATE YOUR ORGANIZATION.....19

03 THE STRUCTURE OF AN ENTITY FROM THE BOARD TO THE TECHNICAL STAFF.....56

04 METHODS FOR WORKINF IN AN ASSOCIATION: NETWORKING.....88

05 ACTION PLAN.....115

06 WAYS TO MAKE YOUR PROJECT A REALITY: THE E+ PROGRAM.....139

07 CONCLUSION.....156

08 THANK.....165

09 AUTHORS.....166

THE IMPORTANCE OF PARTNERING

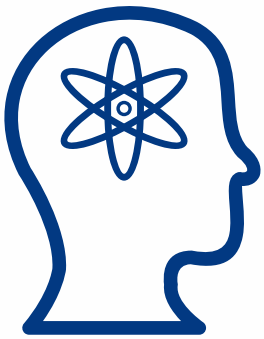
Chapter 1



MAHATMA GANDHI

“Be the change you want to see in the world.”

BECOMING AWARE



This is where our adventure begins, kick off this associative project from scratch.

My proposal is that we start up with an awareness that allows us to join this path with a sincere conversation, with spaces to **Be and Be Present**, to Reflect, Validate, to Communicate assertively, to Recognize ourselves, and why not, to breathe, organize and go to Action effectively and efficiently.

1.1 ¿WHY TO JOIN?

From the first moment, a group of young people decides to join together to carry out activities with
the same common interest, an association is born.

**I know that many of us, whether we have this condition of low vision or not, do not consider it
important to be associated, basically because we are afraid of it. We relate concepts such as, here only
I work and the others are accommodated, with endless hours of meetings where nothing concrete is
achieved, and why do I make an effort if the policies or rules of the game in my community are not
going to be changed by me or a group of people like me, because it is difficult, with the fact of
associating and being honest, we are lazy to have that commitment. ¿Right?**



However, it may interest us to know that we can find thousands of examples of associations that fulfils their objectives, that is, groups of people who joined their common voices and work to achieve the goals they set for themselves, who are interested in doing useful things for themselves and to contribute to their communities, and all this under the objective of sharing experiences, offering help, guidance, training and seeking solutions to the problems they want to understand, research, seeking the results they expect to solve what stands in their way in order to improve their quality of life and contribute to their well-being.

A while ago I heard that “If you want to go fast walk alone, if you want to go far go accompanied”, this phrase makes sense to me because, as humans, we are an essentially empathic and social species,
we know that alone we do not have the same impact as when we do it accompanied, and this has far-reaching consequences for society and especially for me, for you, and for all those who share this rare disease. Yes I know, we are not that many, I do not know what country you are in, nor what your statistics are, but if this guide has reached your hands it does not matter how many there are, we are the ones we are and we can make this effort be worth it, because together we can seek to improve our
quality of life and develop our full potential and not only by and for me but for those you meet in your city and yes why not, for those who are in your country.



> ***“Don't ask what your teammates can do for you. Ask what you can do for them.”***
>
> **Magic Johnson**

But, you might ask, we would like to know a little more about what these words really imply and mean before we begin. So, with the intention that I have as your guide, which is primarily to awaken your curiosity and therefore your interest in the creation and implementation of an association, I want to provide guidance and serve as a logbook where you can find records of all important data, objective and real information on how to create, design, implement, manage, and maintain associations for useful purposes.

Additionally, with it, you can enhance research, understanding, inclusion, training, access to resources, sharing and exchanging experiences, not only among yourselves but especially with others in other countries around the globe, whose associations have already progressed and can help you access information, technology, live transformative experiences, and provide a different perspective and insight where you can find better functional adaptation measures for your condition, benefiting all young people with low vision in your community.

I don't want to deceive you, implementing an association requires commitment, and this commitment must be real, genuine. It's about really wanting to and being convinced to participate in an associative project that can be the means to contribute fraternally to building a better world for you.

I must say that sometimes you will want to give up, as in any project involving challenges, even in your personal relationships, whatever they may be, or at work, sometimes you want to throw in the towel, but you keep going, right? Well, it's the same here.



I know my purpose as a guide is very ambitious. I have had to select topics and the way of writing so that you will read me and have a clear vision, saving you time searching for information when traveling the necessary path to shape the project and create an association, one that is truly needed by you and your fellow adventurers. Of course, this is about teamwork, not about individuals with good ideas who occasionally contribute.

For this, you must understand everything that is required, because it's like shaping a business idea, an enterprise. My mission is to make it light, easy where you truly feel you can do it, and especially important, sustain it, thus seeing and feeling the leap you will make, which can lead you to find the solutions you need, and these will not only be in your community but anywhere these solutions are found; and if you don't find them, you can propose them in your meetings and why not, create them. The sky is the limit, and I am here to encourage you to believe that you can make real what you want to achieve with strategy and perseverance.

This implies that you must know and assimilate more and better what is required of you; this way, you can see and be the change that we all want to see in the world. In the world you live in every day.

You might wonder: How can an association change an entire society? Simply by changing the way they think, changing the way they relate, communicate, and especially, changing the way they self-lead. Here I must insist that social transformation is possible if a group of people working together with discipline and persistence are capable of dealing with the challenges involved in making changes.



It's important for you to know that my purpose is not only to motivate you to create an association. Perhaps you may feel that you are still very inexperienced to take on this responsibility or assume these risks. As you progress through this reading, you may also be encouraged to seek out and connect with associations that are already established in your countries and become part of them. You can even propose projects that these associations do not have and that are important to you, take the initiative, and carry them out. This is also valid and possible, and these associations will most likely be open to receiving your ideas and providing space for you to actively participate and contribute to their cause. Therefore, whether it's to create one or to participate in an existing one, I am here to guide you so that you understand what it means to be an agent of change, taking actions to achieve them.

That's why having a first step of awareness will allow you to give meaning and heart to the associative project. And, of course, we're going to see what I really mean by being present, reflecting, validating, expressing, recognizing, breathing, organizing, and taking action.

THE IMPACT OF WORDS

You know what they say, words have power. And you know very well that words have a vibration and can build and destroy. But why? If we look at it closely, words, all of them, are neutral; it's us who give them meaning.

One clear way to give them meaning is the intention we put into what we say, are you following me? Therefore, here I'm going to give you some definitions that can help you in those initial steps, to shape and give purpose to the associative project, and of course, you will discuss or debate them with those who are thinking of creating in this process, if you so decide. I believe they can be useful to gauge your commitment:





Presence

Presence isn't just attending meetings and raising your hand to let others know you've arrived at the gathering. It's being there for your peers, being yourselves without fear of judgment, wanting to be there because you feel it's important, because you see it as useful, because you feel useful—not because you have to or are obliged to, it's wanting to share your experiences and listen when others share theirs. Presence is active participation and it costs little (it's free), yet it gives you a lot in return.

Actively participating in an association allows each of you to develop qualities that will be incredibly useful today and throughout your life, in any situation; moreover, it enables genuine participation in society as well.

To Reflect

Reflection is pausing, **it's stopping to observe closely**; the act of reflection comes before seeing a clear solution. It involves thinking calmly, meditating, weighing various options before choosing (what we buy, how we spend our time, attention, and resources, whom we trust, etc.). **In an association**, decisions must be made, and therefore, there **must be spaces for reflection**. You yourselves must seek out spaces for reflection before deciding on something. Our lives are full of decisions and sacrifices, so in an association, there must be spaces for thoughtful decision-making.

We reflect when we examine, when we analyze our own feelings and thoughts, when we exercise criticism not only of others but also of ourselves. **It's good to reflect before acting**.

Furthermore, reflection opens the doors to empathy because it helps us put ourselves in someone else's shoes, and to compassion because from that internal gesture, we can feel the suffering of our neighbor, our colleague, and our own.



Expressing

Communicating, expressing what we feel is very important. So that society can understand what happens to them. We think that others do not understand, or that they are not aware of the reality they face every day, because they are not interested, they do not care, or simply it does not affect them, therefore, we usually keep them away from many of our experiences, from those difficulties that make us feel excluded.
You know that when your condition is referred to as a rare disease, this simple word, rare, already creates a space in the mind that opens an interpretation and can confuse others and even scare them. There lies the opportunity you have to teach them about this condition, and make them understand why it does not limit intellectual, social, or professional abilities.
You are like everyone else, just that you cannot do things in the same way, therefore, you must create communication spaces to develop strategies that allow people in the environment to adapt to changes. Also, people with this condition often limit their communication to what they need, forgetting that others do not really know what they need and, as you are not many to generate a critical mass, these communication spaces are not generated that allow reaching a little attention, budget, and activities that society should contemplate to facilitate their development. This is regarding external communication, what we want to express outside the association. We will see this in more detail in the following chapters.
Here it is important to clarify that the first thing we must do is express what we feel within the association. So when something affects you, it is legitimate to express it.

Knowing how to communicate is an investment for the future, it empowers you and gives you security, while also learning to respect others. I know it can seem very difficult at first to talk, since you will worry more about what others may think than what you may feel or need.

Expressing the truth of what we think and feel should not harm anyone. This attitude emotionally connects us, as it creates emotional intimacy between you and others. Showing our vulnerability humanizes us. The greater the connection, the greater the cooperation.

To Validate

It's important to put into words and translate what each one feels or needs, legitimately speaking, so that they notice and feel that they are listened to, accepted, respected in the group.

When we validate, there is no interpretation, criticism, judgment, or attacking the other person. We validate what they feel or need and talk about their behavior, not about them. Remember that we validate the idea, not the person. We affirm, we say yes to what the other person says with respect. In this way, everyone feels understood. Feeling understood will make it easier for them to cooperate, as there will be emotional connection and they will not feel denied or rejected. And this happens frequently in other spaces, right? Well, not in the one you're going to create. The idea is for everyone to feel good.



To acknowledge

Recognizing means becoming aware of what is happening, calling things by their name, seeing reality as it is. Valuing others for their contributions, efforts, or extraordinary results. This motivates to keep working hard and has a domino effect on others. It enhances members' satisfaction and happiness. It boosts self-esteem and self-confidence for everyone. It provides positive feedback, reaffirming that they are working well and can achieve common goals together. It increases involvement, commitment, and trust.

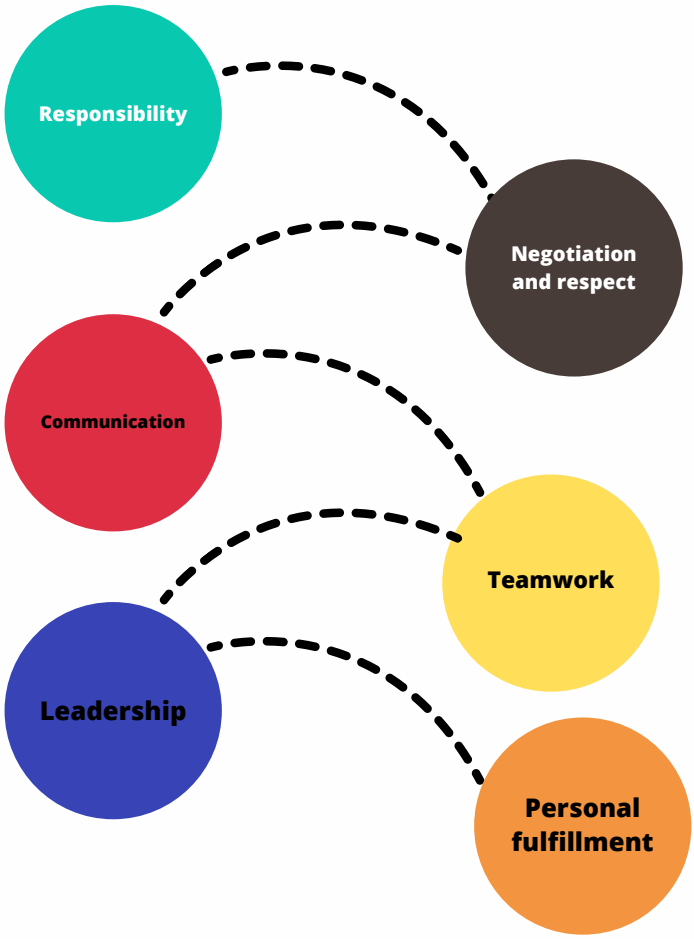
Breathing, Organizing, and Going into Action are part of chapters in this Guide. Breathing is essential because when we take a moment to do so, we are weighing and calibrating ourselves. Inhaling allows us to oxygenate every cell in our body, and exhaling detoxifies it, so breathing before speaking or acting impulsively allows us to control our reactions, organize our thoughts, feelings, and emotions, and then decide how to take action. Developing a joint project also involves testing ourselves individually, knowing what we are made of, because only in the midst of others can we grow, learn, and move forward. This is a great journey, enjoy it!



1.2 WHAT WILL YOU LEARN FROM ALL OF THIS?

Responsibility

When they commit, they care about the smooth functioning of the association so that common interests become a reality. For example, they can be involved in the planning and implementation of activities that the association members have conceived. In this way, they can achieve the objectives.



Negotiation and respect

When they participate within a group, within an association, they must reach agreements to make decisions that are shared and supported by the majority of the members, which leads them to negotiate and try to convince others by formulating their arguments and adjusting their own initial ideas by incorporating the ideas of others to achieve consensus. Debate and discussion should be conducted in a respectful manner.



"Hope doesn't mean that something has to turn out well, but rather that something makes sense regardless of the final outcome."

Vaclav Havel

Communication

By participating and making decisions, you will gradually acquire communication skills, which will allow you to overcome the fear of public speaking. You will improve with practice and oral expression of ideas, which ultimately becomes a social tool and a boost to self-esteem.

Teamwork

If they engage and undertake joint activities to successfully achieve the group's goals, other members of the association will care about the well-being of the group's participants, thus fostering supportive behaviors that promote cohesion and unity among members.

Personal fulfillment

When they assess an activity as a success, they feel rewarded with a sense of well-being after a job well done, they feel useful, which means personal fulfillment and an improvement in self-esteem, in addition to strengthening the bonds of unity within the association and among its members.

Leadership

The role of the leader is important for the smooth functioning of groups of people working together to achieve common goals. To be a good leader, it is necessary to know how to bring out the best in each group member to improve the association's performance.





Don't worry about the word **"association"** or the tasks necessary for it to function. From here on out, I'll get straight to the point using simple language as much as possible. I'll accompany you step by step without skipping anything, to establish an association at your own pace, without rushing. Dedicate a few minutes each day, and you'll see how your project is born, grows, and matures. I'm here whenever you need clarification.

The institutions joining me in this project have contributed their knowledge and experience (as well as affection) to create, review, and design this guide. We believe in it and are confident it will be of great help to you as you embark on this adventure.
Every journey begins with the first step, just as every association begins with the first action. So go ahead! Turn the page and start your journey, your own associative project. Dare to venture, learn, and act!



HOW TO CREATE YOUR ORGANIZATION

Chapter 2



"Starting together is a beginning. Staying together is progress. Working together is success."

HENRY FORD

WHAT TO DO AND HOW TO DO IT



Great! If you're already here, it's because you've decided to invest some of your time and effort in using me for what I am, a guide to progress through this process. In the following pages, you'll find what is needed to establish your association.

Surely, you already have one or more companions in mind, and you may have already spoken with them and some of your family members, and you might all be reading me at this moment.
Congratulations! Becoming aware of the importance of your active participation in seeking solutions that benefit yourselves and others in your community, and aiming to have a voice within society to bring about the changes you deserve, is one of the paths of citizen participation.

And what is that? Well, citizen participation is the involvement of the citizens in decision-making regarding the management of resources in a society and actions that have an impact on the development of their communities. Several entities deal with this, including Erasmus+.

Breaking it down further and making it easier to understand: Citizen participation is important for the development of public policies that can benefit groups like yours. It's a central element because it allows the opinions of citizens at different stages of project formulation, enabling the creation of more effective public policies that are closer to the real needs of young people like yourselves (as they aim to address those needs). Similarly, it's a central component in nation-building, as fostering it also strengthens democracy.

Clear up to this point? I want you to see the real impact you can make when you decide to participate actively and create an association that represents your goals and needs, as I mentioned in the previous chapter. This allows you to unite voices to achieve common goals. Unity is strength, you surely know that. This is becoming aware of what it means to take the step towards association and understanding that it is framed by laws and has a structure that allows you to achieve your goals and protect your projects.



A BIT OF HISTORY



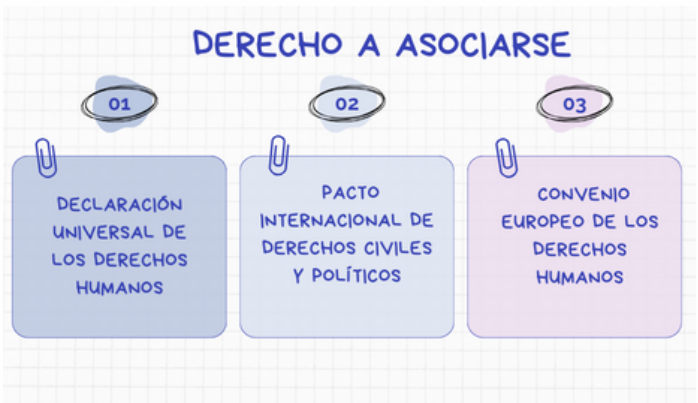
Citizen Participation is enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, recognizing the right to participate, associate, express, engage, and be heard by the State.

Historically, the right to associate stems directly from individual freedoms, and as such, the freedom of association was first expressly recognized in the French Constitution of 1848, that is, after the revolution. Since then, numerous texts and legal documents at the local, state, and international levels have emphasized the necessary protection from public authorities for the associative world and the importance of promoting its development and consolidation. In other words, this is not just about getting together and that's it; it's a serious matter, and therefore, you have legal backing to establish yourselves.

Here are just a few recognitions that have been made regarding the right to associate:

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in its Article 20, specifies:

1. Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association.
2. No one may be compelled to belong to an association.
3. You can find more information at this link.



Article 22 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights states:

1. Everyone shall have the right to freedom of association with others, including the right to form and join trade unions for the protection of their interests.

2. The exercise of this right shall be subject only to such restrictions as are prescribed by law and are necessary in a democratic society in the interests of national security or public safety, public order, the protection of public health or morals, or the protection of the rights and freedoms of others. This provision shall not prevent the imposition of lawful restrictions on members of the armed forces and of the police in their exercise of this right.

3. Link with more information.



Article 11 of the European Convention on Human Rights states:

1. Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and to freedom of association, including the right to form and join trade unions for the protection of their interests.

2. The exercise of these rights shall not be subject to any restrictions other than those which are prescribed by law and are necessary in a democratic society in the interests of national security, public safety, the prevention of disorder or crime, the protection of health or morals, or the protection of the rights and freedoms of others. This article shall not prevent the imposition of legitimate restrictions on the exercise of these rights by members of the armed forces, the police, or the State Administration.

In this regard, it is advisable to investigate the acknowledgments and statements of intentions in the laws governing associations that are in force in the constitutions and/or policies of your country of origin.

Well, you might ask, what is this for?



The associative project is what connects the association with society. The association communicates with society through its project. From there, from its project, each association proposes and convenes; contributes and receives; questions and is questioned by the rest of the social and institutional actors. That is why understanding the legal framework that supports them gives substance when creating them, as it is their statutes that formalize the constitution of an associative project.

You may think I'm getting boring by showing you these articles, but I just want you to understand. I want the best for you, and if you have the idea of joining, this idea becomes a project, and the project can lead to the creation or conclusion of an association with rights. Therefore, you will also have duties, and it is very important that you know both rights and duties so that you are clear and aware of your commitment, tasks to be performed, and how to organize yourselves to give shape and clarity to your participation. I'm talking about the fact that order is necessary to start this journey.

When you meet, you can do so with colleagues, friends, or family informally. However, when it comes to an association, this meeting loses its informal character and aims not only for an exchange of information and experiences but also to meet certain formal requirements, reach agreements, create rules, and establish the objectives and principles that represent them. In other words, formalizing these meetings through a founding act. And here we are going to start taking steps, so I ask you to take a deep breath!



INITIAL CONCEPTS

I must inform you that I am proceeding with the assumption that you have no knowledge of how to establish an association, its purpose, or the necessary steps to achieve it. This is because you had not previously considered the possibility of creating one, or if you had, you felt overwhelmed by the requirements, especially the amount of documentation, correct?

In reality, the process is quite simple when you know what needs to be done. My goal is to serve as a reference that you can turn to again and again to consult concepts, verify them, and, of course, use the examples I will provide.

Now, I ask you to please pay attention, as we will analyze everything carefully, step by step. We will start from the beginning, that is, the actions you need to take and how to do them to establish an association. To facilitate the process for you, I have decided to use a series of questions and the concepts related to them, which will allow you to have clarity and progress in creating the association.



THE FIRST STEPS

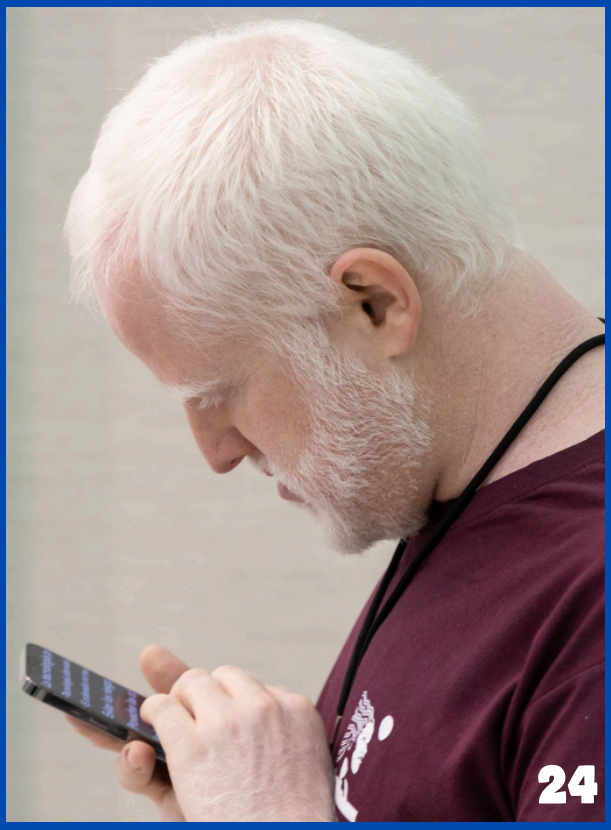
Nowadays, the world revolves around projects, and I'm sure many of you have had experience in school, college, or even at work (for those who are already working). Therefore, I will provide you with some suggestive questions to sit down and define what is required to collaboratively create an association project.

As you will see, the questions are simple, and the concepts associated with answering them will seem logical and easy to apply and execute. And you know what? You will be able to apply these principles to any project you come up with in the future, even to projects you wish to carry out within your association. So, let's get to work!

WHY?

This question mainly refers to the rationale, meaning it is the initial and most important question you should ask yourselves. It's like laying the foundations of a building. You must answer the question of why you are considering the creation of an association. To answer this question, you need to:

Identify the need or problem to be addressed: The first thing you should do is identify what motivates you to come together, what you want to improve or change, what you want to do in your community or country, and what you need that is not being addressed. It's important to define this clearly to effectively focus your efforts on the project.



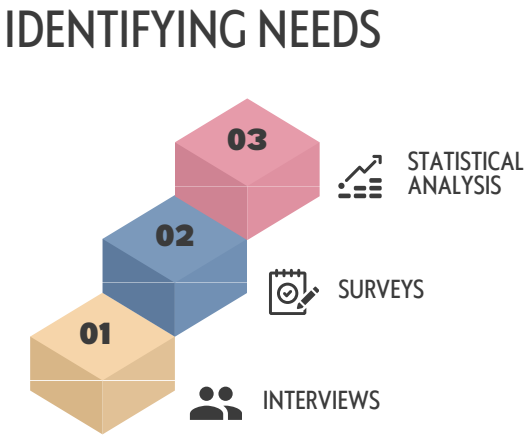


HOW CAN WE DO IT?

You should consider that in your community, there is a group of people with low vision who face similar difficulties to yours in their daily lives due to the lack of resources and specific support for their visual impairment. Some of the difficulties they might be facing include:

1. Difficulty accessing written information due to the lack of materials in accessible formats.
2. Lack of emotional support and specific resources to deal with situations related to their visual impairment.
3. Obstacles to participating in recreational and sports activities due to the lack of adaptations and accessible resources.

With the purpose of identifying the needs for an association to support people with low vision, you could conduct a study or survey in your community to gather information about the difficulties and specific needs of people with low vision within it. Some ways to do this include:



1. Conduct interviews with individuals with this condition and their family members to inquire and/or gather notes about the difficulties and specific needs they may have.
2. Conduct online or in-person surveys to obtain quantitative data on the need for resources and support.
3. Perform an analysis of visual impairment statistics in your neighborhood, town, city, and/or country, and compare them with existing resources and support to determine unmet needs.

With this information, you could identify the specific need that would answer the question of why you are considering creating an association that can provide such support, work to address them, obtain resources, and develop activities for people with low vision.

WHAT?

The "what" refers to the denomination, that is, giving a name to the association. This will identify you, just as it identifies you. Naming an association idea can be a creative and exciting process.

Here are some steps you can follow to choose an appropriate name:

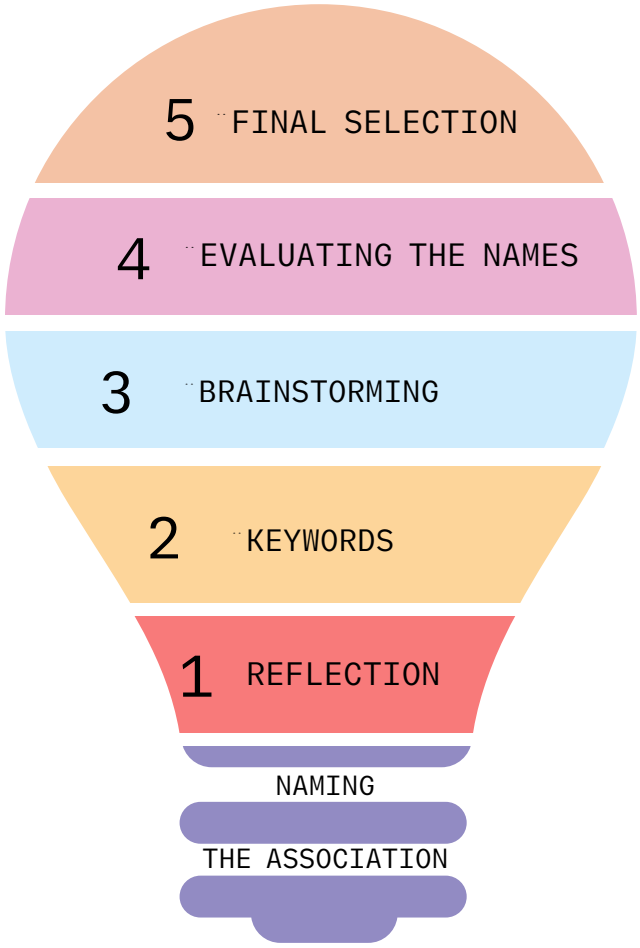
- Reflect on the association's mission: The name of the association should reflect the mission and values of the organization. Think about what you want to achieve with the association and the values you want it to represent.

- Create a list of keywords: Make a list of keywords related to the mission. These words may be related to visual impairment, support, inclusion, community, or other relevant concepts.

- Do aBrainstorm: Use the keywords to generate a list of possible names. Be creative and play with words, rhymes, or associations that fit the mission and values of the association.

- Evaluate the proposed names: Once you have a list of names, evaluate each one according to its sound, meaning, ease of remembering and writing, and comprehensibility. Ensure that the name has good resonance and is easily recognizable.

- Select the final name: After evaluation, choose the name that best fits the mission and values you want to represent, that is easy to remember and write, and that has a clear meaning for your target audience.



Remember that the name of the association will be the image you project to the community, so choose a name that is appropriate and accurately reflects your purpose and values.

FOR WHAT?

Once you have identified the need or problem you are interested in addressing or working on in your association, and have given it a name, you need to establish the objectives and goals of your associative project. Here are my suggestions for the steps to follow to define what you want to achieve:

To define the **objective of an associative project step by step**, you need to consider the following:

The first thing to do is to identify the needs or problems you want to solve. It is important to define them clearly to effectively focus the project's objective. These objectives and goals should be clear and relevant to all members of the association, as they will help you establish clear and achievable goals and monitor your progress to achieve success in your management. We will see the process in another chapter.

Once you have identified the needs or problems, you should examine them in depth to better understand them and establish as a team how you think they can be effectively addressed. I know you have many, but you must start with the ones you consider most important; you must prioritize because these questions are about helping you legally establish an association, and in this section, you must identify the objective that sets it apart from others.

Your association will have more projects in the future to address more needs, but in this initial stage, you should choose the most pressing ones that allow you to build the documents that will make you legal. You may ask, "How can we do this?" Well, here's an example:



“Never doubt that a small group of committed people can change the world. In fact, it is the only thing that ever has.”

Margaret Meade



- Identify a need or problem related to your condition, such as access to education, employment, assistive technology, transportation, healthcare, recreation, among others.

- Gather information: Once you have decided what to work on or start working on, you need to gather information on the chosen topic to better understand it. This can be done through interviews, focus groups, document reviews, and statistics available in your country, among other methods.

- Analyze the information: After gathering the information, you need to analyze it to identify patterns and trends. This will allow you to identify the underlying causes of the problem and possible solutions.

- Prioritize: Once the information has been analyzed, it's important to prioritize what is important from the identified needs or problems. This will help the association focus its efforts and resources on areas where it can have the greatest impact.

- Choose the best option to start: This may include defining a general goal, specific objectives, implementation strategies, a budget, and a timeline.



Doing so will allow the association to take concrete steps to address the needs and problems of its members, thus improving their quality of life and overall well-being. The purpose of your association, which will allow you to have a clear reason for existence and facilitate reaching an agreement to continue advancing in this process.
- Establish a general goal: After analyzing the need or problem, you should set a general goal that summarizes the objective(s) of the associative project. Here's an example of how to frame it:

"The general goal of our association is to improve the quality of life for young people with low vision, promoting their social inclusion, autonomy, and access to information and necessary services to fully develop in their personal and professional lives."

This statement of the general goal describes the main purpose of the association and establishes the areas of work it will focus on. Additionally, it highlights the objective of improving the quality of life for young people with low vision, indicating the importance of the members and their needs.

It's important to note that the general goal should be clear, concise, and easy to understand so that members of the association can comprehend the common objective and work together to achieve it, measure their progress, and evaluate their success in the future.



"The forces that come together for good do not add up, they multiply."

Concepción Arenal

Identifying specific objectives:

Based on the general goal, specific objectives must be identified to achieve the overall goal. These objectives should be relevant, achievable, and focused on addressing what has been identified as needs or problems. Here are examples of how to articulate them:

- Foster social integration by organizing inclusive activities and events that allow us to interact and share experiences.
- Promote personal development and growth through the offering of courses, workshops, and activities that foster autonomy, self-esteem, and social skills.
- Provide resources and support to improve the quality of life of members, including the provision of technical and technological assistance services, guidance and mobility training, as well as access to educational and employment resources.
- Raise awareness in society about the needs and rights of young people with low vision, promoting inclusion and equal opportunities in all aspects of our lives.
- Establish partnerships with other organizations and entities to work on joint projects.







Prioritizing specific objectives:

Once identified, it's important to prioritize them to establish an order of importance and define a clear focus. Here's a step-by-step approach:

- Evaluate the importance of each objective: Determine which of your specific objectives is most important and has the greatest impact to start with. To do this, you can ask yourselves: Which objective will help us make the most progress in launching our association or what impact do we want to generate in the lives of our members? Which one will bring us closer to our purpose?

- Set a deadline: Each objective should have a deadline for achievement. This will help you focus on what is most important, on what gives you early victories that encourage you to promote yourselves as an association, and also prevent you from getting distracted by less relevant things.

- It may be that an objective is great but has a very long deadline to achieve it; this can still be on the list, but below those that help you achieve milestones in a shorter period.

How to do it?

The associative project is what connects the association with society. The association communicates with society through its project. From there, from its project, each association proposes and convenes; contributes and receives; questions and is questioned by the rest of the social and institutional actors. That's why understanding the legal framework that supports them provides sustenance when creating it, as it is their statutes that formalize the constitution of an associative project.

You might say I'm getting a bit boring, showing you these articles, but I just want to ask you to understand me, I want the best for you, and if you have the idea of joining, this idea becomes a project, and the project can lead to the creation of an association with rights, and therefore also with duties. It is very important that you know both so that you are clear and aware of your commitment, your tasks to be carried out, and how to organize yourselves so that your participation takes shape and is clear. I'm talking about how order is necessary to start this path.



Don't forget:

- Make a task list: Once you have defined your specific objectives, create a list of tasks necessary to achieve each of them. This will help you organize and plan your work effectively.
- Prioritize tasks: Identify the most important and urgent tasks to achieve your specific objectives and place them at the top of your task list. Make sure to complete these tasks before addressing others that are less critical.
- Maintain focus: It's crucial to stay focused on your specific objectives and avoid distractions with less relevant tasks. Avoid procrastination and fulfill your daily responsibilities to progress towards your long-term goals.
- Review and adjust your objectives: Review your specific objectives periodically and ensure that you are on the right path to achieve them. If necessary, make adjustments to ensure that you continue to make progress in the right direction.

Planning

Planning and efficient task management are essential for the success of any project, including the creation of an association. Staying focused on the objectives and being flexible in adaptation as you progress is crucial to achieving your goals.

Establishing success indicators: In order to evaluate whether the objective or objectives have been achieved, it is important to establish success indicators that allow you to measure progress and the achievement of specific objectives. I can provide you with these indicators that will help you when you sit down to determine yours:

- **Number of members: This indicator measures the quantity of members the association should have within a specific period.**
- **Member retention rate: It measures the number of members who remain in the association.**
- **Participation in events: It refers to the quantity of individuals participating in events organized by the association.**
- **Member satisfaction: It seeks to calculate the level of satisfaction among association members with the activities and services offered, which is crucial for having a greater impact in the community.**
- **Social impact: Measures the impact the association has on the community or society.**
- **Goal achievement: Measures the association's ability to meet its established objectives and goals.**
- **Efficiency in resource utilization: Evaluates the association's capacity to use its resources effectively.**
- **Transparency and accountability: Assesses the transparency and accountability of the association towards its members and other stakeholders.**
- **Level of member participation in decision-making: Checks the involvement of association members in decision-making and governance of the organization.**

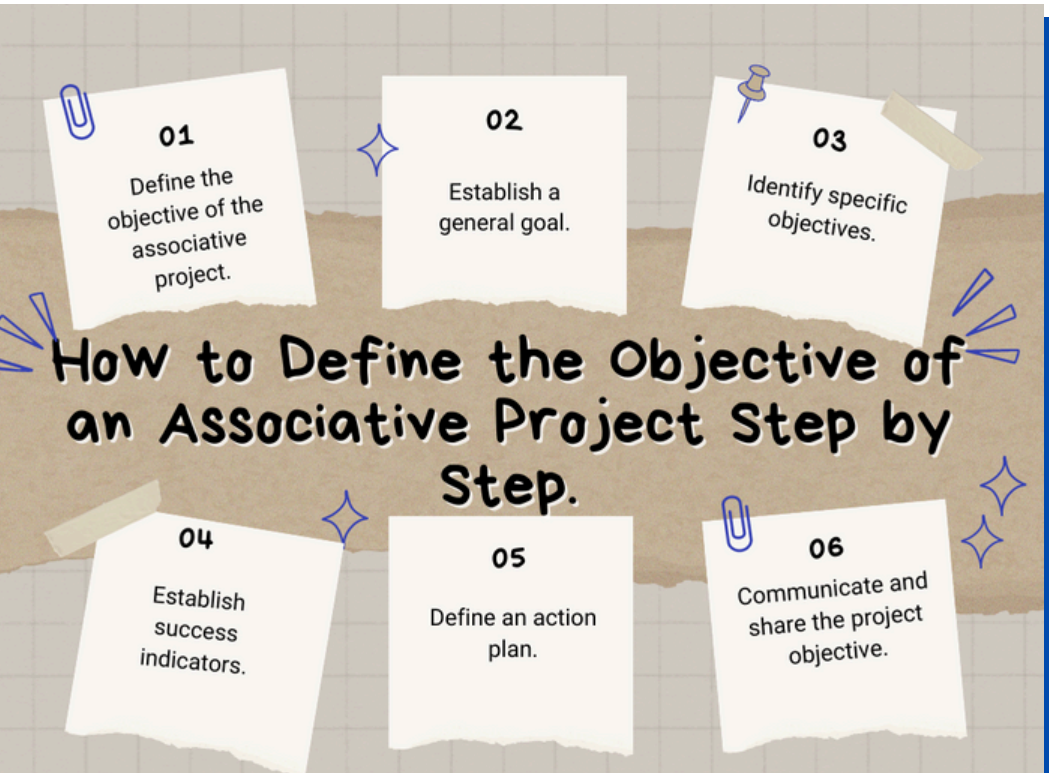




It's important to consider that success indicators should be specific and tailored to the goals and objectives of the association in order to accurately measure its performance and success.

1. Define an action plan: Once the objective or objectives of the association have been defined, a detailed action plan should be established, specifying the specific actions and tasks necessary to achieve the objectives and the overall goal.
2. Communicate and share the project's objective: Finally, it is important to communicate and share the project's objective with all group members and stakeholders to ensure that everyone is aligned in the same direction and works effectively towards achieving them.

In summary, to define the objective of an associative project step by step, the reason for which we associate, the following steps should be taken: identify the need or problem, analyze it in depth, establish a general goal, identify specific objectives, prioritize them, establish success indicators, define an action plan, and communicate and share the project's objective with all members of the association.



"What drives and moves the world are not machines, but ideas."

Victor Hugo

WHOM?

To identify the target population, the individuals who would benefit from the creation of the association, it's important to consider including people of different ages, conditions, genders, and levels of visual impairment.

1. **Investigate the current situation:** It's necessary to research the current situation of individuals with low vision in your community, including the barriers they face in their daily lives, unmet needs, and existing services and resources. I know I've repeated this several times, but it's SO important to understand how things are currently functioning, what kind of services are available to them, and what access they have to those services. These are the questions you need to address to determine the scope of your association.
2. **Identify barriers:** Specific barriers faced by people with low vision should be identified, such as lack of access to information, lack of emotional and social support, limited employment opportunities, and accessibility issues in public spaces. You can also investigate if there are any proposed bills or legislation that could make their daily lives easier, and if not, consider creating one among yourselves. Remember, this is what citizen participation is all about.
3. **Analyse needs:** Once barriers are identified, analyse the needs of people with low vision to determine which ones are most urgent and could be addressed through the creation of an association.
4. **Identify potential solutions:** Based on the identification of needs and barriers, identify potential solutions that could be addressed through the creation of an association, such as promoting accessibility and inclusion, education and training, and emotional and social support, among others.
5. **Consult with the community:** It's important to consult with the community to ensure that you're addressing the most important needs and problems and to get their feedback and perspective. With all the information you've gathered, you'll be better equipped to invite them to join. This involves a challenge: figuring out how to engage people to create an environment that motivates them to support the idea of creating an association as efficiently as possible, so that they, like you, want to impact their surroundings.



HOW?

We've reached the question that surely is the most important one. You have already clarified in your associative project why you want to do it, what name will identify you, for what purpose you are going to create it, in other words, what objectives and goals you have and to whom those efforts are directed. So far, everything is very well organized, right?

The how to do all of this that you have already clarified refers to the method, that is, the way in which you will make your commitment a reality. The method to carry out these activities and tasks from the initial 4 questions is through the creation of an association.

As you can see, you have to organize yourselves in order to create an association that complies with a natural and organic order that allows you to detect potential associates: we already saw that, for this, you must analyze your environment to know and find people who share your condition or who feel motivated to be part of this adventure (who can be our friends, parents, close relatives, etc.).

An association is not just an organization that gives donations or seeks assistance through project generation. Generally, it aims to be a permanent institution focused on the social welfare of its members. For this, the founders need to have a clear idea of how they are going to create it and obtain results.

The key challenges are to discover how to interest people and how to create an environment that allows the association to support the people it wants to impact as efficiently as possible.

Do you remember that in the previous chapter I talked about presence, naming, validating, and taking action? Well, from here on out, you will begin to see and feel what you are gestating. You will start giving it shape. You are preparing for the birth of something and like any birth, it will require following some steps.

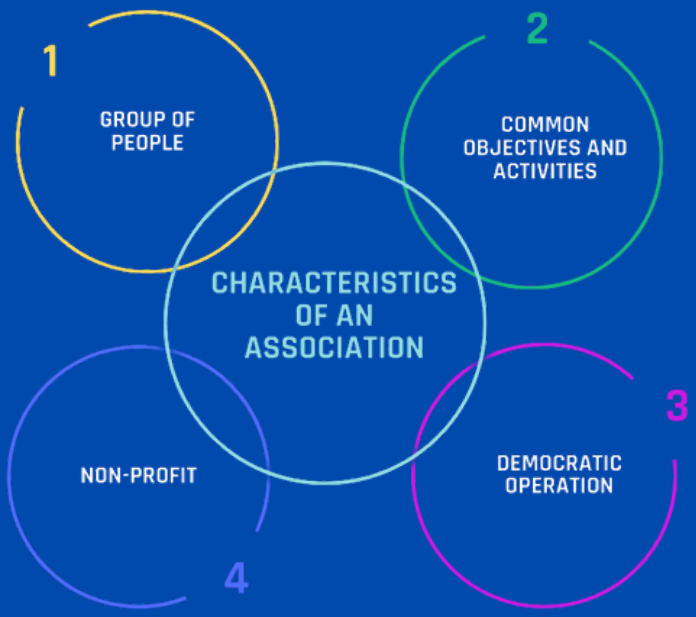
The process of forming an association can take a variety of paths, depending on the political, economic, social, and cultural contexts of each country.



CONCEPTS IN DETAIL

So, you might be wondering, what is an association exactly?

There are many concepts of association. We'll start with several general concepts of association to arrive at a more specific one that is the one you're really interested in:



- **A union of individuals who cooperate towards a common altruistic and beneficial goal, in other words, nonprofit.**
- **A grouping of people who pursue common purposes.**
- **An association implies a shared activity of individuals to serve a common purpose, which is not the same as that of its members but that of the association. Here we see that it has an impact.**
- **Groupings of people established to carry out a collective activity in a stable manner, organized democratically, nonprofit, and independent of the State, political parties, and businesses.**
- **Dynamic organizations that emerge from society to organize it around addressing territorial or sectoral needs.**

What types of associations exist and which one could be the best for us?

The main differentiating criteria among associations will be the objectives and purposes pursued by each of them, as well as the target group they are aimed at, so depending on this, there are different types of associations:





There are even more types, but these are the most representative ones. Likewise, distinctions can also be made between:

- Associations
- Unions
- Federations
- Confederations

These associations would be entities formed by the grouping of several associations or federations; the only difference is that in the latter two, the members will be legal entities, and this must be specified in the statutes.

In reality, the way these entities are formed is not very different from how an association is formed, especially in the initial procedures. However, due to the different types of registers in which they are registered, each one will have a series of distinguishing features, always in accordance with the policies that your country has in place for their formation and registration.

Therefore, it is very important that you know the laws that govern the formation of associations in your country. This way, you can avoid problems in the future due to a lack of knowledge about how they should be formed and the scope they can have.

All these types of associations have in common that they are non-profit entities. It is necessary to clarify that being non-profit means that the profits or economic surpluses cannot be distributed among the members annually; therefore, it is possible to:

- Have economic surpluses at the end of the year.
- Have employment contracts within the association.
- Engage in economic activities that may generate economic surpluses.

Of course, these surpluses must be reinvested in fulfilling the objectives of the association.



What is needed to establish an association?

An association must be formed through an agreement of three or more natural persons who commit to pooling their knowledge, resources, and activities to achieve certain purposes or objectives. Do you see how the previous work on these pages, answering those questions, was important?



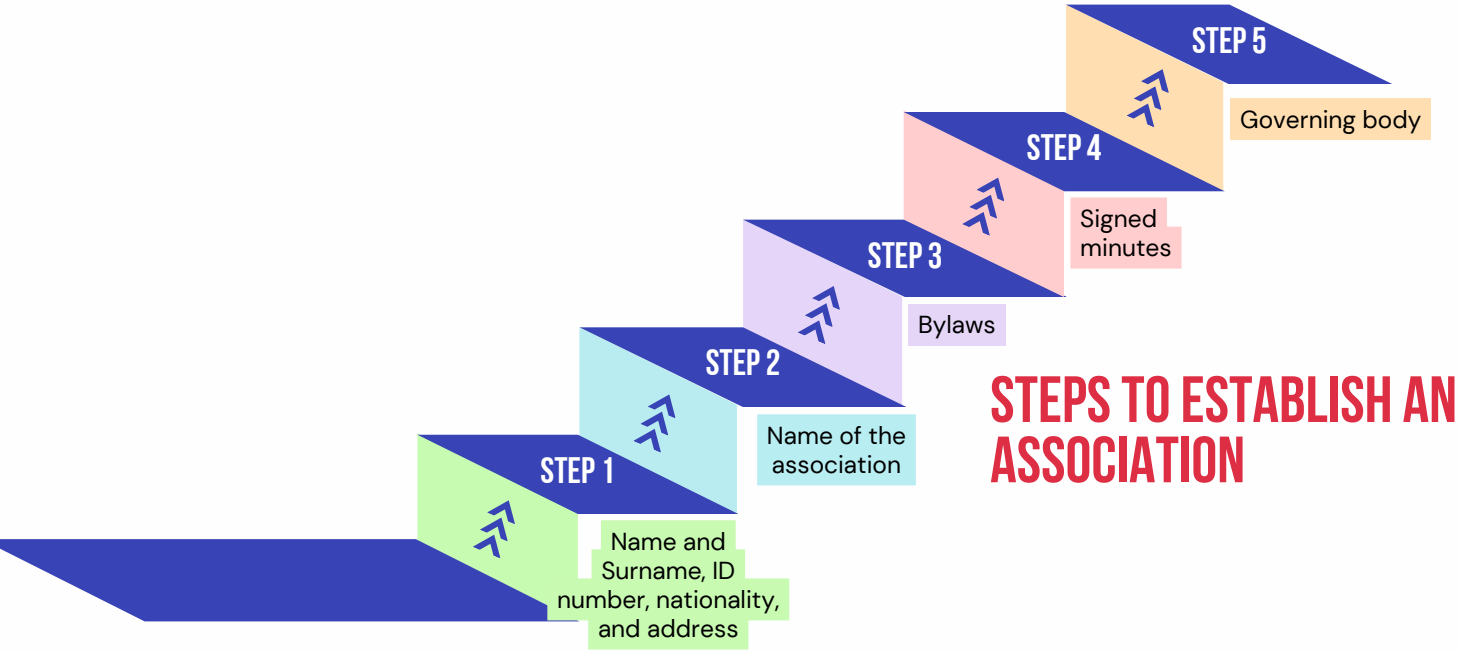
MINUTES OF INCORPORATION



That agreement they reach must be formalized through minutes of incorporation, which will include the approval of the bylaws.

These minutes of incorporation will include:

1. The full names of the association's promoters if they are individuals (they may also be legal entities), ID card (depending on the country), nationality, and address.
2. The intention of the promoters to establish an association, and its denomination (the name they will give it).



3. The approved statutes that will govern the functioning of the association. The statutes regulate the organization and operation of the association throughout its life and during the development of its activities, both internally and externally.

4. Place and date of issuance of the minutes and signature of the promoters, or their representatives in the case of legal entities.

5. The designation of the members of the provisional governing bodies. (Yes, of governance, because this constitution document is as important as the constitution of your country, a company, or a business. Don't worry, remember, patience, and breathe!)

Here is an example of how a constitution document could look like. I'm guiding you through, so don't worry:

FOUNDING MINUTES

LOGO

MINUTES OF THE FOUNDATION OF THE ASSOCIATION "ENGAGED YOUTH WITH LOW VISION"

In the city of [City Name], on the [Day] day of [Month] in the year [Year], the following individuals gather to establish a non-profit association for youth with low vision:

[Full Names of the Founders]:

-
-

The attendees express their intention to establish a non-profit association, which will be governed by the statutes and regulations of the association law in force in [Country], and, for this purpose, they agree on the following points:

- The association shall be named "Engaged Youth with Low Vision."
- The association is established with the purpose of bringing together young people with low vision to share experiences, provide mutual support, promote social, cultural, and educational inclusion, and advocate for the rights of people with visual disabilities.
- The association shall have its registered office at [Complete Address], and may establish branches anywhere within the national territory.

The founders appoint a provisional board that will be responsible for convening the founding assembly, drafting the statutes, developing the internal regulations, and carrying out the necessary procedures for the registration of the association in the corresponding registry.

The provisional board is composed of the following members:

President: [Full Name of Provisional President]

Secretary: [Full Name of Provisional Secretary]

FOUNDING MINUTES

LOGO

Treasurer: [Full Name of Provisional Treasurer]

Vocal Members: [Full Name of Provisional Vocal Members]

It is agreed to set the date for the founding assembly on the [Day] day of [Month] in the year [Year], at [Time] hours, at [Complete Address].

With no further matters to discuss, this present document is concluded and signed by the attendees as a sign of agreement.

[Full Names of the Founders]

-
-
-

SIGNATURES:

Here you can see examples of minutes from some entities:

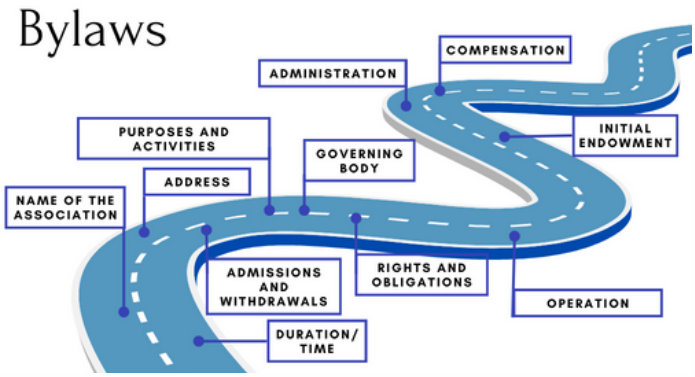
Aniridia Italiana

ALBA

Aniridia Europe

BYLAWS

The Bylaws shall include:



a) The name of the association.

b) The address, as well as the territorial scope in which it will primarily carry out its activities.

c) The duration, usually established for an indefinite period.

d) The purposes and activities of the association described precisely.

e) The requirements and procedures for admission and withdrawal, sanctions, and termination of members.

f) The rights and obligations of the members.

g) The criteria ensuring the democratic functioning of the association.

h) The governing and representative bodies, their composition, rules and procedures for the election and replacement of their members, their powers, term of office, grounds for cessation, the form of deliberation, adoption and implementation of their agreements, and the persons or positions authorized to certify them, as well as the requirements for the said bodies to be validly constituted, and the number of members necessary to convene meetings of the governing bodies or to propose matters for the agenda.

i) Administration, accounting, and documentation regime, as well as the closing date of the association's financial year.

j) The Initial Patrimony and Economic Resources that may be used.

k) Causes of dissolution and destination of the assets, which may not distort the non-profit nature of the association and must respect the purposes for which it was established.

m) Any other lawful provisions deemed appropriate by the founders. The content of the statutes cannot be contrary to the legal system.

n) It must also be included in the statutes whether members receive remuneration for their positions, as well as in the annual accounts approved at the General Assembly.

In addition to these minimum contents, each association may include any other aspect it deems necessary to regulate through the statutes, which may also be supplemented by Internal Regulations, which will develop certain aspects contained in the statutes in greater detail.

In the event of modifications to the statutes, there is a period of one month to register the changes in the corresponding registry, this is the case in Spain and they only take effect from the date of registration. That is why it is important to identify the association law of your country so that you are clearly aware of the time frames available for making changes or modifications.



Here's an example:

BYLAWS OF THE ASSOCIATION "YOUNG PEOPLE ENGAGED AND WITH LOW VISION"

CHAPTER I. NAME, PURPOSE, ADDRESS, AND DURATION

Article 1. Name

An nonprofit association is established, called "Young People Engaged and with Low Vision," which shall be governed by these bylaws and the current legal regulations regarding associations.

Article 2. Purpose

The purpose of the association is to bring together young people with low vision to share experiences, provide mutual support, promote social, cultural, and educational inclusion, and defend the rights of people with visual impairments.
The association may organize activities, events, and projects to improve the quality of life of young people with low vision, promote their training and skills development for employment and education inclusion, encourage collaboration and exchange of information and resources with other organizations and entities working in the field of visual impairment nationally or internationally.

Article 3. Address

The association shall have its registered office at [complete address], and may establish branches anywhere in the national territory.

Article 4. Duration

The association shall have an indefinite duration, unless its dissolution is agreed upon by the general assembly of members.

CHAPTER II. MEMBERS

Article 5. Requirements to Become a Member

All individuals, whether visually impaired or not, who share the objectives of the association and meet the requirements established in these bylaws, may become members of the organization.

Article 6. Admission of Members

The admission of new members shall be made through the submission of a written application, which must be approved by the board of directors of the association.

Article 7. Rights of Members

Members shall have the following rights:
a) Participate in the activities and projects of the association.
b) Attend and participate with voice and vote in the general assemblies of members.
c) Be eligible to vote and stand for election to the leadership positions of the association.

Article 8. Duties of Members

Members shall have the following duties:
a) Contribute to the achievement of the association's objectives.
b) Comply with the statutory provisions and decisions of the general assembly and the board of directors of the association.
c) Pay the fees established by the association.

Article 9. Loss of Membership Status

Membership status shall be lost due to the causes established in these bylaws, voluntary resignation, expulsion decided by the board of directors of the association, or failure to pay the established fees.

CHAPTER III. GOVERNING BODIES

Article 10. Governing Bodies

The association shall be governed by the following governing bodies:

General Assembly of Members: It is the supreme body of the association and shall be composed of all members. It shall meet at least once a year and shall have the following powers:
a) Approve the management of the board of directors and the annual accounts.
b) Elect and dismiss the members of the board of directors.

c) Approve and modify the association's bylaws.

d) Meetings of the General Assembly shall be ordinary and extraordinary. The ordinary meeting shall be held once a year within four months following the end of the financial year; extraordinary meetings shall be held when circumstances warrant it, at the discretion of the president, when the Board so decides, or when proposed in writing by one-tenth of the members, who may also propose the agenda items in the same written communication.

e) The President shall convene the General Assemblies in writing, stating the place, day, and time of the meeting, as well as the agenda with specific matters to be discussed. Between the notification and the day scheduled for the meeting in the first call, at least fifteen days must elapse. If applicable, the date and time for the second call may be included, provided that it is at least one hour after the first call.

f) General Assemblies, both ordinary and extraordinary, shall be validly constituted on the first call when one-third of the members entitled to vote are present, and on the second call, regardless of the number of members entitled to vote. Agreements shall be adopted by a simple majority of those present or represented, with such a majority existing when affirmative votes exceed negative votes, with blank votes or abstentions not counted for this purpose. A qualified majority of those present or represented, which shall be achieved when affirmative votes exceed half for:

1. Appointment and dismissal of members of the Board of Directors.
2. Agreement to establish a Federation of Associations or join them.
3. Disposition or alienation of real estate.
4. Amendment of the bylaws.
5. Dissolution of the Association.

g) The Ordinary General Assembly has the following powers:

- Approve, if applicable, the management of the Board of Directors.
- Examine and approve the annual accounts.
- Approve or reject the proposals of the Board of Directors regarding the activities of the Association.
- Set ordinary or extraordinary fees.
- Any other power not exclusively within the competence of the Extraordinary General Assembly.



f) The Extraordinary General Assembly has the following responsibilities:
- Appointment of members of the Board of Directors.
- Amendment of the Bylaws.
- Dissolution of the Association.
- Expulsion of members, upon proposal by the Board of Directors.
- Establishment of Federations or integration into them.

Board of Directors: It is the management and representative body of the association and will be composed of a president, a vice president, a secretary, a treasurer, and several members. They will be elected by the general assembly of members, and their term of office will last for four years.
Their functions are as follows:

a) Execute the resolutions of the general assembly of members.

b) Manage the resources and activities of the association.

c) Represent the association before third parties.

d) Convene and preside over meetings of the general assembly of members.

- **Monitoring Committee: It will be a body responsible for ensuring compliance with the objectives and activities of the association, and will be composed of two members appointed by the general assembly of members.**

a) Monitor the progress of the projects and activities of the association.

b) Collaborate with the board of directors in the management of the association.

c) Present reports to the general assembly of members about the activity of the association.

Article 11. The president shall have the following powers:

a) Legally represent the Association before all kinds of public or private entities.
b) Convene, preside over, and adjourn the sessions held by the General Assembly and the Board of Directors, as well as direct the deliberations of both.
c) Authorize payments and sign documents, minutes, and correspondence.
d) Take any urgent measures that the proper functioning of the Association may require or that may be necessary or convenient in the development of its activities, without prejudice to subsequently informing the Board of Directors.

Article 12.

The Vice President shall replace the President in case of absence, vacancy, or illness, and shall have the same powers as him/her (only in the event that they exist).

Article 13.

The Secretary shall be responsible for the purely administrative work of the Association, issue certifications, keep the association's legally established books and the membership registry, and safeguard the organization's documentation. They shall ensure that communications regarding the appointment of Boards of Directors and other inscribable social agreements in the Association Registry are processed, as well as the submission of annual accounts and compliance with documentary obligations in accordance with legal requirements.

Article 14.

The Treasurer shall collect and safeguard the funds belonging to the Association and shall comply with the payment orders issued by the President (only in the event that they exist).

Article 15.

The Board Members shall have the duties inherent to their positions as members of the Board of Directors, as well as those arising from the delegations or work committees entrusted to them by the Board itself.

Article 16.

Vacancies occurring during the term of office of any of the members of the Board of Directors shall be provisionally filled by the remaining members until the definitive election by the Extraordinary General Assembly.

It is important to note that the governing bodies may vary depending on the needs and characteristics of each association, so it is advisable to adapt them to the specific circumstances of yours.

CHAPTER IV. MEMBERS

Article 17.

Those with legal capacity who have an interest in furthering the aims of the Association may belong to it.

Article 18. (Only in the case of wanting to establish different classes of members)

Within the Association, the following classes of members shall exist:

- Founding Members, who shall participate in the establishment of the Association.
- Ordinary Members, who shall join after the establishment of the Association.
- Honorary Members, who, due to their prestige or significant contribution to the dignity and development of the Association, are deemed worthy of such distinction. The proposal for the appointment of honorary members shall be made by the Board of Directors and approved by the General Assembly.

Article 19.

Members shall cease to be such for any of the following reasons:

- Voluntary resignation, communicated in writing to the Board of Directors.
- Expulsion due to failure to fulfill social obligations, following the processing of the appropriate proceedings by the Board of Directors.

Article 20.

Ordinary and founding members shall have the following rights:

- Participate in any activities organized by the Association in pursuit of its aims.
- Enjoy all the advantages and benefits the Association may obtain.
- Participate in Assemblies with voice and vote.
- Be eligible to vote and stand for election to the positions of the Board of Directors.
- Receive information about the decisions made by the Association's organs.
- Be heard prior to the adoption of disciplinary measures.
- Be informed about the composition of the governing and representative bodies of the association, its financial status, and the progress of its activities.
- Challenge decisions of the association's organs that they believe to be contrary to the law or the Statutes.

Article 21.

Founding and ordinary members shall have the following obligations:

- Comply with these Statutes and the valid agreements of the Assemblies and the Board of Directors.
- Pay the fees and levies set.
- Attend Assemblies and other events organized.
- Fulfill, if applicable, the obligations inherent to the position they hold.

CHAPTER V. FINANCING, ACCOUNTING, AND DOCUMENTATION REGIME

Article 22.
The economic resources envisaged for the development of the aims and activities of the Association shall be as follows:
Membership fees, whether periodic or extraordinary.
Subsidies, legacies, or inheritances that it may legally receive from members or third parties.
Any other lawful resource.

Article 23.
The Initial Assets of the Association amount to ……. (or alternatively, the Association has no assets at the time of its establishment).

Article 24.
The association's fiscal and financial year shall be annual, closing on the …… of each year.

CHAPTER VI. DISSOLUTION

Article 25.
The dissolution of the Association shall be decided upon at an Extraordinary General Assembly convened for this purpose. The approval of the dissolution agreement requires a qualified majority of persons present or represented.

Article 26.
In the event of dissolution, a liquidation committee shall be appointed, which, once the debts have been extinguished, shall allocate any remaining assets to other non-profit associations pursuing similar purposes. If this is not possible, the assets shall be allocated to charitable associations, without in any case detracting from the non-profit nature of this association.

FINAL PROVISION

I, [Name of the Secretary] , Secretary of the Association, CERTIFY that the present Statutes have been approved in accordance with the provisions of the Law (here, the current law in your country), by resolution of the Extraordinary General Assembly of members dated [Date], and that they are initialed on each of the pages that comprise them.

Approved:

Signed: [Signature of the Secretary] Signed: [Signature of the President]

The Secretary The President

WHAT MUST BE DONE TO MAKE IT LEGAL

Associations must register with the competent Association Registry of their country, providing copies of the identification documents of the association's founders, along with all documentation signed on every page. It should be registered in the relevant registry according to its scope of action: national and/or local. Let's get started!

Registration

Once you have all the documentation explained above and approved through the Founding Act, you can register the association in your country's registry.
The Right of Association, which appears in virtually all constitutions around the globe, includes the right to register with the corresponding registry, which can only be denied if the requirements for registration are not met. Therefore, it is important to carefully read the association law of your country, as you will generally find all the steps to follow for registering your association in the legal entity where it must be registered.
Normally, at least in the case of Spain, the registration period in the corresponding registry will be three months from the receipt of the application by the competent authority.

This registration makes the constitution of the association and its statutes public, providing a guarantee for third parties with whom they will have relationships, as well as for their own members. With this registration request, you will ask the competent Administration of your country/city for inclusion in the corresponding Official Register. This request is a letter addressed to the authority responsible for registration.



With registration, the rights of third parties are protected from possible defenselessness against an entity whose public existence is not documented, holding all members of the association accountable for the actions of any of them on behalf of it. Remember, it is the registration that creates the separation between the assets of the association and the assets of the members.
Come on! Don't be lazy to do it, because if you're not registered, you won't be able to receive subsidies or assistance, and you won't be able to engage with other associations, both locally and internationally.

Here ends this chapter, and we will continue with more details related to Management. It's important to establish clear roles and responsibilities for the members of the association. Once registered, it becomes visible and legal, so it's important to organize internally to manage the necessary internal documents and avoid chaos in the administration of your association.

THE ADMINISTRATIVE FUNCTIONING OF THE ASSOCIATION

1. Documentary and Accounting Obligations:

- **Minutes Book:** Where the meetings of its governing and representative bodies (Board of Directors, Assemblies) will be recorded.
- **Members Register:** Associations must maintain an updated list of their members, including names, dates of enrollment and resignation, and membership type.
- **Inventory of Assets:** Where furniture, computers, printers, and any other items used to carry out the association's functions will be listed.
- **Accounting:** A proper accounting system must be maintained to provide a true and fair view of the association's assets, financial performance, and activities. The association's accounts are approved annually by the General Assembly, along with its annual financial statement.

2. Updates Regarding Members:

- In the event of voluntary withdrawal of any of the members, their contribution to the assets can be retained, provided it is stipulated in the statutes.
- Ten percent of the members can request the Board of Directors to convene an Extraordinary General Assembly.

You can define the deadlines for communicating all the above data to the public administration responsible for receiving and auditing associations in your country.



3. Request for Tax Identification Number (TIN):

After registering with the association's registry in your country, you must register with the tax authority to conduct economic operations.
With all the aforementioned steps, you have created a new legal entity, and like all entities to operate legally, you need a number to identify you.
This procedure is mandatory for the association to engage in economic activities, receive subsidies, open bank accounts, and operate smoothly.
The required documents for the TIN application are as follows:

- Original and photocopy of the constitution document, including the statutes.
- Certificate of registration in the corresponding registry (For the definitive assignment of the TIN, the constitution document and the statutes that have finally been registered in the registry must be provided).
- Original and photocopy of the document proving the representative's capacity to sign (this will not be necessary if it is mentioned in the constitution document or in the statutes).

The identification number, which will legally identify the association, will be provided on the same day or the following day.

4. Other Details to Consider:

A) Opening a Bank Account

Since the association is a legal entity that can carry out economic activities and is an entity that has income and expenses, it is advisable to open an account in the name of the association. This is to ensure transparency and to separate the association's assets from those of its members.
To proceed with the opening of a current account, the following documentation is required:

- Original and photocopy of the association's statutes.
- Original and photocopy of the association's TIN.
- Certificate of the minutes, stating the intention to open a bank account, including the association's name, address, date, name of the bank, authorized names, funds disposition (indistinct, joint), and signature of the president and secretary.
- Document indicating the authorized persons on the account.
- Photocopy of the IDs of the authorized individuals.

It is highly recommended to inquire about the conditions of the bank account from different institutions and compare them, choosing the most advantageous one for your association. Pay attention to the commissions and maintenance fees they will charge you, and you may even negotiate these commissions with the responsible person at the bank. Another important factor is the proximity of the bank branch to the association's headquarters (which may initially be someone's home); it is preferable to choose a branch near the association's headquarters to avoid unnecessary travel.



B) Insurance for the Association

Associations are often established to organize various activities. In organizing these activities, there is a responsibility and risk involved, and to ensure that the association is responsible for this liability and not the members, it is advisable to take out a Civil Liability Insurance that covers potential damages that may arise from the organization of these activities.
Additionally, in most youth associations, there is the figure of the Volunteer, so associations are obligated to take out insurance to cover potential accidents and/or illnesses resulting from the work of their volunteers.

It is important to consider certain details when purchasing insurance:

- **OBJECT AND COVERAGE OF THE INSURANCE:** When subscribing to an insurance policy, it is advisable to ensure that everything is well-defined to avoid interpretation issues by the insurance company in case of accidents. This includes ensuring that all activities carried out by the association are clearly covered by the policy.
- **DEDUCTIBLE:** To reduce the cost of the policy, a deductible can be agreed upon. The deductible is an amount agreed with the insurance company, where in the event of an accident, the association will cover expenses up to the specified amount (deductible), and the insurance company will cover expenses beyond that amount.
- **GROUP INSURANCE:** In contracts covering a certain number of people, it is sometimes not necessary to determine the individuals in advance. Instead, a mechanism can be established with the insurance company for including beneficiaries on behalf of the entity. This allows for the insurance to be kept open permanently, adding and removing different volunteers as needed for coverage during activities.
- **MINORS:** It is crucial to always remember that if the insured individual is a minor or incapacitated, written authorization from their legal representatives is always required.
- **"FINE PRINT":** Although it may sound like a cliché, it is essential to carefully read and ensure that everything discussed is documented in the contract. Good intentions and promises during the insurance negotiation process are meaningless if not documented in writing.

Finally, I leave you a checklist for this first phase:

1ST PHASE LIST

- [ ] 1. Know the law that covers the constitution of an association in your country
- [ ] 2. Meetings to define what, for what, when and how
- [ ] 3. Write the articles of incorporation and approve it together
- [ ] 4. Write the statutes and approve them together
- [ ] 5. Make photocopies of the ID of the founders
- [ ] 6. Pay registration fees
- [ ] 7. Write to request registration (or complete the procedure required for this purpose in your country)
- [ ] 8. Register the association
- [ ] 9. Request the association's tax identification number from the Treasury
- [ ] 10. Open a bank account
- [ ] 11. Take out civil liability insurance
- [ ] 12. Enjoy this whole process
- [ ] _____

THE STRUCTURE OF AN ORGANIZATION FROM THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS TO THE TECHNICAL TEAM.

Chapter 3



After having observed the process of creating an entity, it's understandable if you feel overwhelmed by all the tasks involved in formalizing it. However, once you have a clear understanding of the essentials, the steps to legalize it are the same as those that anyone must follow when wishing to formalize an association, an enterprise, or a relationship.

You may already be considering that creating an association is akin to making a long-term commitment or establishing a business, right? You're correct. As mentioned before, an association requires commitment, and as you will see in this chapter, an organizational structure that allows it to manage its activities and projects properly.

The path you have chosen to embark on is filled with experiences and emotions. It resembles embarking on a kind of heroic adventure, similar to what we see in the Star Wars movie. Have you seen it? You can choose between different paths with the aim of approaching the goals you need to achieve as a collective, overcoming obstacles, and developing strategies to overcome them. In the following pages, I will focus on the steps you need to follow to create an association step by step, but, as you will see, you always have the freedom to choose, just like Luke Skywalker did.

"The strengths lie in our differences, not in our similarities."

STEPHEN COVEY

In the previous chapter, I provided you with a summary and a checklist to help you organize more efficiently. This will lead you to answer the essential questions that must be addressed in the development of any project: Why, What, For what purpose, For whom, How. In this chapter, I will focus on another question of great importance: With whom. Here I will address the topic of you and how to choose the right people for your association.

I will explain what it means to have a structure in an association, that is, how you will work to give it order. Here you will begin to understand that each position must have a specific role, and each role is associated with a particular profile.

I reiterate that order must prevail over chaos, especially at the beginning. This way, your meetings, activities, and projects will not remain as mere intentions without any result or progress. Want me to tell you something? If you have carefully observed how an association is formalized, you will realize that it closely resembles the way a State is organized, that is, how a country is organized. I am sure, as a guide (you probably think I have some experience to claim this title), that you understand that the leaders who accepted to lead and organize their country did so with the same interest and enthusiasm that you have now. Here, the key to avoiding falling into rhetoric is organization, and organization is built with people.

Surely you realize that the purpose of all this text is to motivate you. I understand that many of you reading may think that I am not aware of the situation in your country (whatever it may be). Currently, chaos has taken hold and urgency often prevails over importance. This has led to general demotivation, and everyone continues with their lives, trying to cope with the situation with the available resources, right?

I can see that you are engaging in these initial discussions, which are entirely valid. Look, being young in this early century, in this third millennium, is not easy, I understand it very well. You feel that a lot is demanded of you and that your freedom of expression, your voice, is limited by adults who, frightened by the consequences of their past actions, have not fully assumed their responsibility. Adults see you as the saviors of this part of history, something similar to what happens in the zombie movies they watch when they look away from their screens and face the challenges that await them.



I don't know which country you are reading this from, but I have a mission. My mission is for you to truly believe that you are heroes, to stop depending on others and complaining, and to start taking initiative. You must see yourselves for what you are, so that the complaints trapped in your throats do not suffocate you and you can express what you need. If you don't have the necessary conditions, you must create the path that leads you to success.

It's true, you're right, you haven't made everything more complicated than necessary, nor have bureaucratic procedures made you feel like everything is impossible. I agree with you, but now that you are in this world, if you want change, if you want to be taken into account, if you want more people around the world who share your situation to have better conditions, you must put aside your ordinary and indifferent persona and put on the hero's costume, because that's what you'll need to achieve what you require.

Remember Neo from the movie "The Matrix"? At first, he didn't believe he was the chosen one, the hero, but only when faced with the possibility of losing everything did he find the inner strength to give his best and save those who mattered most to him. He realized he had no other option. If you haven't seen the movie, I suggest you look it up and watch it, as I'm sure it will provide you with many clues to finally see yourselves as heroes.

But, beware, it's not about saving the world, that would be a utopia, and I'm very realistic. It's about doing something for the world you live in every day, in your country, in your time zone, and under the climatic conditions you experience. Yes, you, along with your peers, from where you are, have the ability to bring about change. Don't hesitate anymore and dare to do it. Of course, it's difficult, but when have you seen something that is truly worth it be easy?

The best news is that you are together, reading me in your group, and you have people of the same age, and surely also some adults among you. Can I tell you a secret? Those adults were like you once. The truth is that they all had a hero's costume, some decided to put it on and others didn't. That's why you see or hear about things happening in your country or other parts of the world, because they accepted the challenge of wearing that costume. They were tired of living the same without changes, bored of complaining, and they joined together to work and make what they wanted and needed a reality. Like everything in life has two sides, black or white, yin and yang, good and evil, up and down. In this dual world, at the same time, you see things happening in the world because there were people who didn't put on the costume and decided to look in another direction, to continue their path without worrying about how to contribute or only contributing in what they felt they could. That is, being realistic and taking care of their own lives, and that's also valid.

I'm not going to offer you a speech about what's right or wrong, it's not about judging anyone. Here, we all do the best we can according to our level of consciousness. What matters is that you are here, reading me, whether motivated, curious, or for whatever reason you have, all are valid, because I need you. Yes, I need you, you are fundamental and important to your community. Don't forget that you have many things in common and that you have something that I didn't have in my youth: technology, which advances every day and can benefit you if you use it properly.

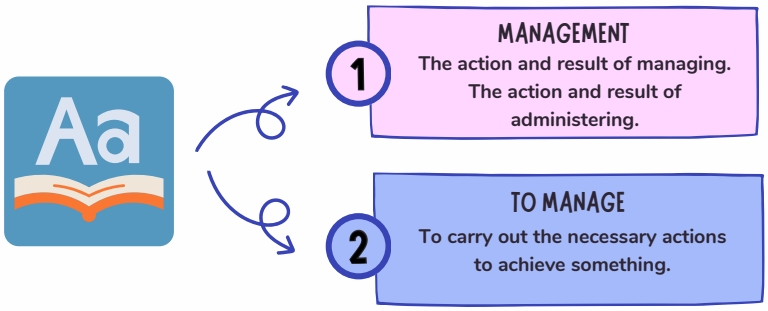
I hope you are taking notes and learning because what I write to you will also help you make your personal dreams come true, those that may seem impossible or distant. Just as I write to you, I have also written to those who start their own businesses, to those who make their dreams come true within companies because they dare to step out of their comfort zone. It takes courage, yes, you must give voice to what you need, as I mentioned at the beginning, but it's always good to remember what this is all about: it's about being the change you want to see in your world.

Well, let's get to the point! The structure of an entity relates to the people who will be visible, those who will represent you, that is, the leaders. How to carry out this process involves the use of reason and also common sense, intuition, because these two qualities are what give voice to your heart.

What do we understand by management in an association?

Once the association is established and after reflecting on the objectives, it's time to consider how to organize the different aspects of the association to achieve its goals. This is a crucial aspect because, even if you have clear objectives and the willingness to work together to achieve them, the way you organize yourselves will be decisive in reaching them.

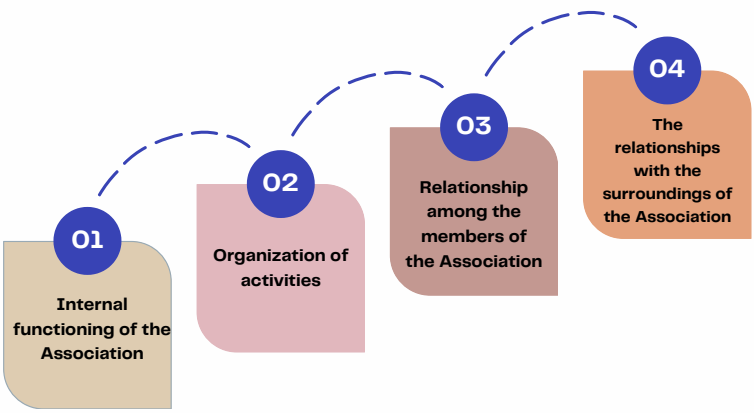
According to the dictionary:



In simpler terms, it could be defined as the internal planning and organization that enables the group (the association) to function optimally, defining responsibilities and ensuring that all members participate in the process.

This management encompasses a variety of aspects of different nature, each of which could be the subject of individual study for a deeper understanding. In practice, when we refer to the management of an association, we are referring to the joint and orderly execution of the actions that I will detail in the following pages.

The first step is to identify the different organizational areas that you consider necessary in your association. Often, we believe that we only need to organize activities or administrative matters, and although they are important, they are not the only ones to consider.



Within an association, four fundamental areas where organization is a matter of great importance can generally be identified:



How does the internal functioning of an association work?

Structure

The statutes of your association explain and regulate its governing bodies. Remember that in Chapter 2, in the example of how to develop the statutes of the association "Youth Engaged and with Low Vision," Chapter III was titled "Governing Bodies." If you don't remember, this is the moment to review it.

I want to emphasize that, since I am being very formal and teaching you how to do everything correctly, you may consider that these statutes can be complemented with the drafting of Internal Regulations detailing more precisely the functions, responsibilities, and procedures of each member of the association. I know it can be a bit tedious, I don't deny it, but if you want to be transparent and organized, you can find the time to do it. If you don't, there's no problem, as everything can be recorded in minutes when you meet, and you can address it then. However, in my opinion, what I provide here is sufficient to start.

It is important to highlight that the structure of an association can vary according to its size and objectives. These roles can be performed by volunteers or paid staff, depending on your financial resources. I know associations where all the work is done by the Board of Directors without receiving a salary or remuneration. Do you know why? They do it out of passion, out of the desire to collaborate on projects that benefit the majority, because the association is born out of a passion for generating change, getting to know each other better, and building a solid group with common challenges and needs.

The selection of the management team of an association should be a fair, transparent, and participatory process that allows choosing individuals with the right skills, experience, and motivation to lead the organization and fulfill its objectives.

Here are some recommendations that can help you select the management team of your association:

- **Before starting the selection process, it's important to define the competencies and skills required for the leadership positions within the organization. These competencies may include leadership skills, teamwork ability, communication skills, decision-making ability, and conflict management, among others.**

- **Encourage the participation of all members of the association in the selection process for the management team. This will allow them to get to know each other better and build mutual trust. You can use informal calls within the group, such as suggesting someone to apply for a position, or you can hold candidate presentations and debates among members to express their own motivations and abilities.**

- **Establish clear evaluation criteria. These criteria may include aspects such as professional background, previous experience in similar positions, the candidate's willingness to contribute, communication skills, and, of course, verifying whether they possess the necessary skills and competencies for the position, such as organization, empathy, and respect for others, among others.**



Remember that selecting the management team is an important step in managing the association and can have a significant impact on its success. Taking the time to carry out this process properly can contribute to effective leadership and the achievement of the association's goals.

If there are many members who do not know each other well or wish to get to know each other better beyond good intentions, it's important to use appropriate evaluation mechanisms such as interviews, skills tests, resume presentations, among others. In this case, the group that initiated this idea can play a leadership role in this phase to bring order to the selection process.

Ensure transparency throughout the process. This can be achieved by publishing the evaluation criteria used, disclosing the results on a notice board, and ensuring the confidentiality of information, among other important aspects to ensure the trust of association members in these processes.

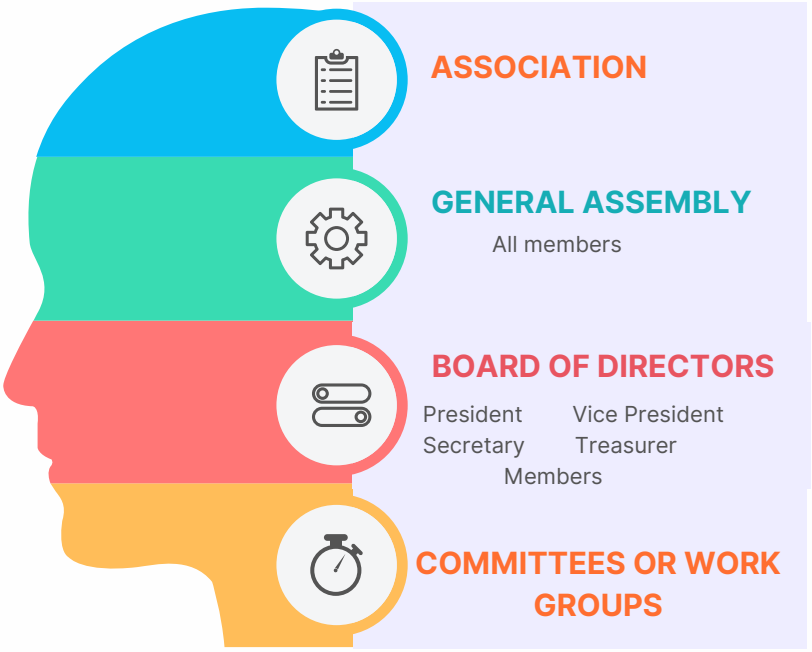
Maintaining transparency and active member participation in the selection of the management team will help build a solid foundation for association leadership and foster trust in the decision-making process.





Chart of Organization

As mentioned earlier, the structure will be determined by the bylaws and agreements adopted by the association.
In any case, it will consist of the following organs:

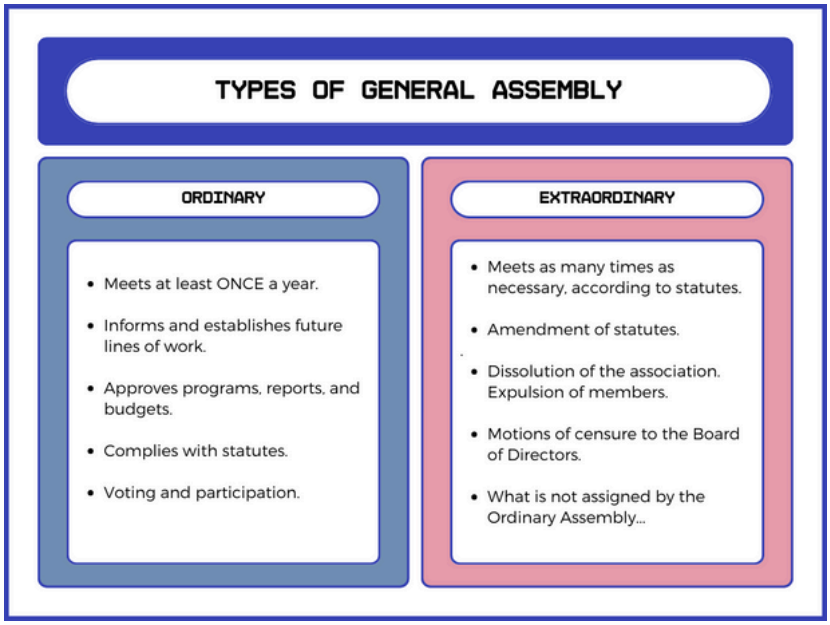


A. GENERAL ASSEMBLY

It is the supreme governing body of the association, where the sovereignty of the association resides, and is composed of all members. Its fundamental characteristics are as follows:

- It is composed of all its members with voice and vote.
- The quorum necessary for the constitution of the General Assembly shall be one-third of the members, unless the bylaws provide otherwise.
- Resolutions of the General Assembly shall be adopted by a simple majority of the persons present or represented, meaning when affirmative votes outnumber negative ones. However, decisions relating to the dissolution of the association, modification of the Bylaws, disposal or alienation of assets, and remuneration of members of the governing body shall require a qualified majority of the persons present or represented, which shall be achieved when affirmative votes exceed half of the total.

The convocation of the General Assembly, the venue, and the agenda must be known to all members with sufficient advance notice. This is usually done by letter, email, or by posting it on the association's notice board (if available).
Summoning the members to the General Assembly is one of the functions of the Board of Directors.



B. BOARD OF DIRECTORS

It is the body responsible for making strategic decisions for the association. It is composed of a group of individuals elected by the members of the General Assembly, which may include a president, vice president, secretary, treasurer, and other positions as necessary. The board of directors establishes the objectives and general policies of the association, and oversees their implementation.

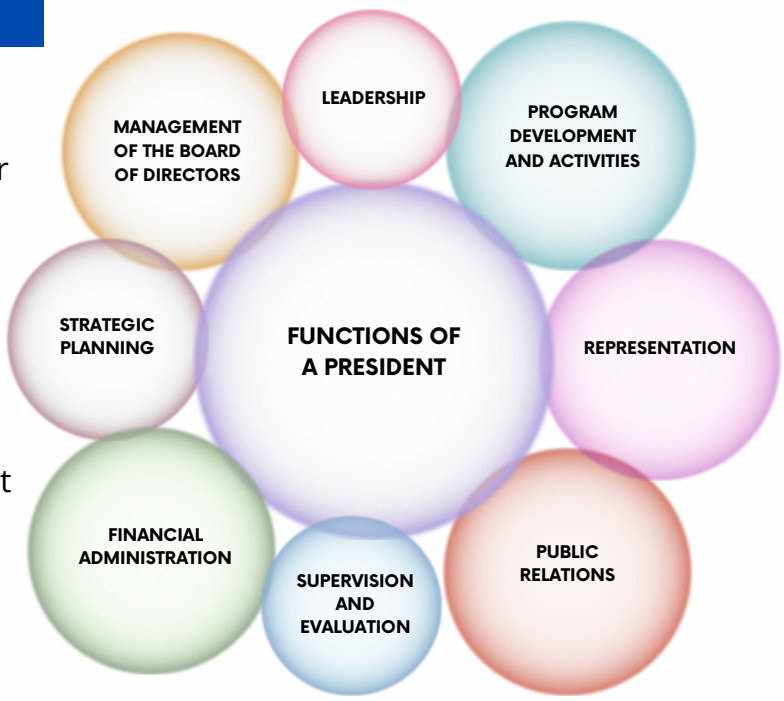
C. STRUCTURE, FUNCTIONS, AND SKILLS

It is important to ensure that the board of directors is composed of individuals committed to the organization's mission, with skills and knowledge useful for management (recall the definition provided above), and with the ability to work collaboratively to achieve objectives.

1. President:

They will be the leader of the association, responsible for conducting internal or external meetings and making important decisions. Their main functions are:

- Leadership: The president has the responsibility to provide leadership and direction to the association. They must establish clear goals and objectives and motivate members to achieve them. It is important to keep in mind that the president is the visible face and will be responsible for voicing all projects and activities, therefore, they must have a strong and uninfluenced personality.





- **Representation: They are usually the main representative of the association to the public, other organizations, institutions, and authorities. They must participate in events, meetings, and activities to promote the interests of the association and strengthen alliances.**

- **Management of the board of directors: They preside over board meetings and are responsible for coordinating the activities of board members. They must encourage active participation, facilitate decision-making, and ensure compliance with the association's statutes and policies.**

- **Strategic planning: They collaborate with the board of directors and other members to establish the long-term vision and strategies of the association. This includes developing action plans and overseeing their implementation.**

- **Financial administration: The president may play a role in the financial management of the association. This involves overseeing the budget (they should have knowledge to do so, and if not, they should ask and seek advice), ensuring that resources are used effectively, seeking sources of funding, and being accountable for the financial aspects of the organization.**

- Public relations: They have the task of maintaining and strengthening relationships with members, collaborators, sponsors, and the community at large. This person must have well-developed communication skills. They should promote a positive image of the association and establish effective communication with all stakeholders.
- Program and activity development: They can participate in the planning and execution of association programs and activities. This includes identifying needs, setting priorities, coordinating with committees and working groups, and ensuring that relevant and quality services are provided to members.
- Supervision and evaluation: Supervising and evaluating the overall performance of the association. This involves monitoring goal achievement, reviewing reports and results, and taking corrective or improvement measures when necessary.

The president must possess several qualities to effectively lead the organization and achieve established objectives and goals. They are the visible face and spokesperson for the community and for national and international entities with whom they may work or collaborate. They must be very focused and able to consider everyone who wants to get to know them. Therefore, here are some important qualities that the profile of the board president should have, which you will choose:

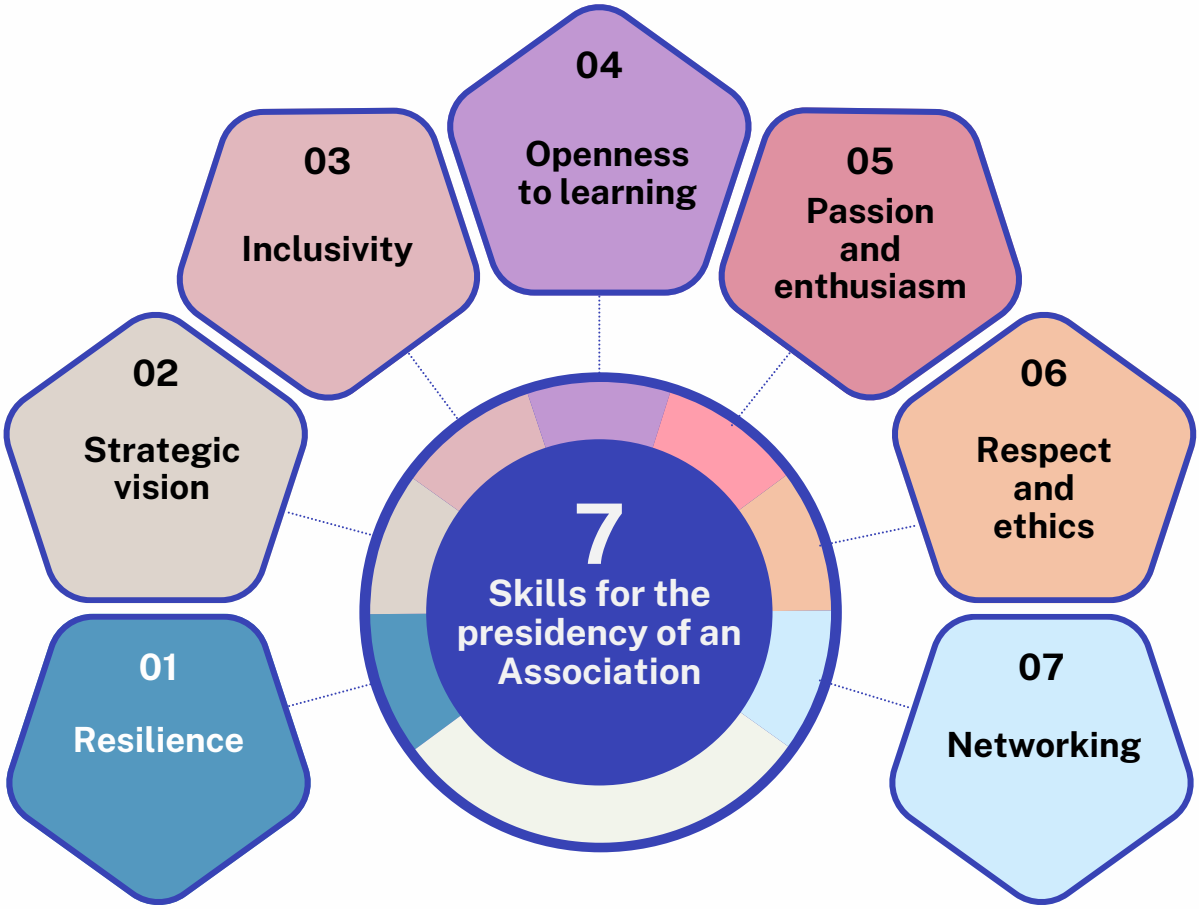
- Understanding and experience in low vision: The president of the board of directors of the association should have a deep understanding of the challenges and specific needs faced by young people with low vision. Ideally, they would also have personal or professional experience with low vision. I know several cases where this position is held by mothers or fathers who, wanting to better understand their children's visual impairment, gathered the courage and willingness to create an association and become president, with all that entails, so surely you will have cases like these to inspire you and your parents. What I just wrote is an example, I know them, now don't go telling your mothers or fathers that they have to do it because any of you can be it.
- Commitment to inclusion and diversity: They must be committed to creating an inclusive and diverse organization that addresses the interests and needs of all young people with low vision, regardless of their ethnic origin, gender, sexual orientation, religion, etc. You understand, right? This is about adding up!
- Leadership and management skills: Having effective leadership and management skills to lead the organization and ensure that established objectives and goals are met. This includes the ability to motivate others, make informed decisions, and delegate tasks and responsibilities.
- Excellent communication skills: As mentioned, to interact effectively with board members, organization volunteers, and other stakeholders. This includes the ability to listen carefully, persuade, motivate, speak clearly and efficiently, and effectively convey important information in a close and effective manner with the audience.

- Knowledge of nonprofit organizations: Having a good understanding of nonprofit organization management and being familiar with the legal and tax requirements for operating a nonprofit organization in your country. Okay, if they don't find themselves prepared like this, everyone can learn together and find information on Google, or in your city, or by approaching other associations to learn how they have done it. Here's the point, it's about supporting each other, the positions are just labels, remember that what matters is what they do and why they do it.

- Ability to work in a team: They must be a good collaborator and have the ability to work as a team with other board members, committees (if they have them), and organization volunteers to achieve the association's objectives and goals.

- Commitment to transparency and accountability: The president must be committed to transparency and accountability to ensure that the organization operates ethically and responsibly. This includes willingness to share information about the organization's financial management, investments, and decision-making.

And the skills he may have:
1. Resilience: Resilience is the ability to cope with and recover from challenges and adversities. A resilient president is able to overcome obstacles, adapt to changing situations, and maintain a positive attitude in the face of adversity.



2. Strategic Vision: Strategic vision involves having a clear understanding of the association's long-term goals and the ability to develop strategic plans to achieve them. The president should be able to see beyond current circumstances and set a clear direction for the organization.

3. Inclusivity: Inclusivity involves ensuring that all members of the association and all collaborators feel valued, respected, and represented. An inclusive president fosters equitable participation of all members, promotes diversity, and creates a welcoming and safe environment for everyone.

4. Openness to Learning: A president who is open to learning is willing to acquire new knowledge, skills, and perspectives. They recognize that there is always room for growth and improvement, and are open to receiving feedback and suggestions from other association members.

5. Passion and Enthusiasm: Passion and enthusiasm are contagious qualities that can inspire and drive other members. A passionate president demonstrates a strong commitment to the association's mission, motivating others and creating an energetic and positive atmosphere.

6. Respect and Ethics: They must demonstrate respect towards all members and practice high ethical standards. This involves treating others with courtesy and consideration, adhering to values such as honesty and transparency in actions and decisions, and maintaining confidentiality when necessary.

7. Networking Skills: They should be able to establish and maintain effective connections with other organizations, professionals, and relevant stakeholders. Networking skills facilitate collaboration, resource sharing, and the creation of strategic alliances for the benefit of the association and its members.

2. Vice president

Will act as a substitute for the president in case of absence or incapacity. All members are important, and I suggest that you outline their roles and qualities to avoid errors and confusion, especially because each person should clearly understand how they contribute to achieving the objectives and avoid duplicating efforts or roles.

- Support to the President: The vice president closely collaborates with the association's president and supports them in performing their duties. This involves assuming the president's responsibilities in their absence and working closely with them to make strategic decisions and ensure the overall effectiveness of the organization.



- **Supervision of operations:** They may have the responsibility to oversee and coordinate the operational activities of the organization. This includes ensuring that projects and programs are being carried out properly and that established objectives and goals are being met. In other words, they will be responsible for monitoring tasks that the president may not have time to do.

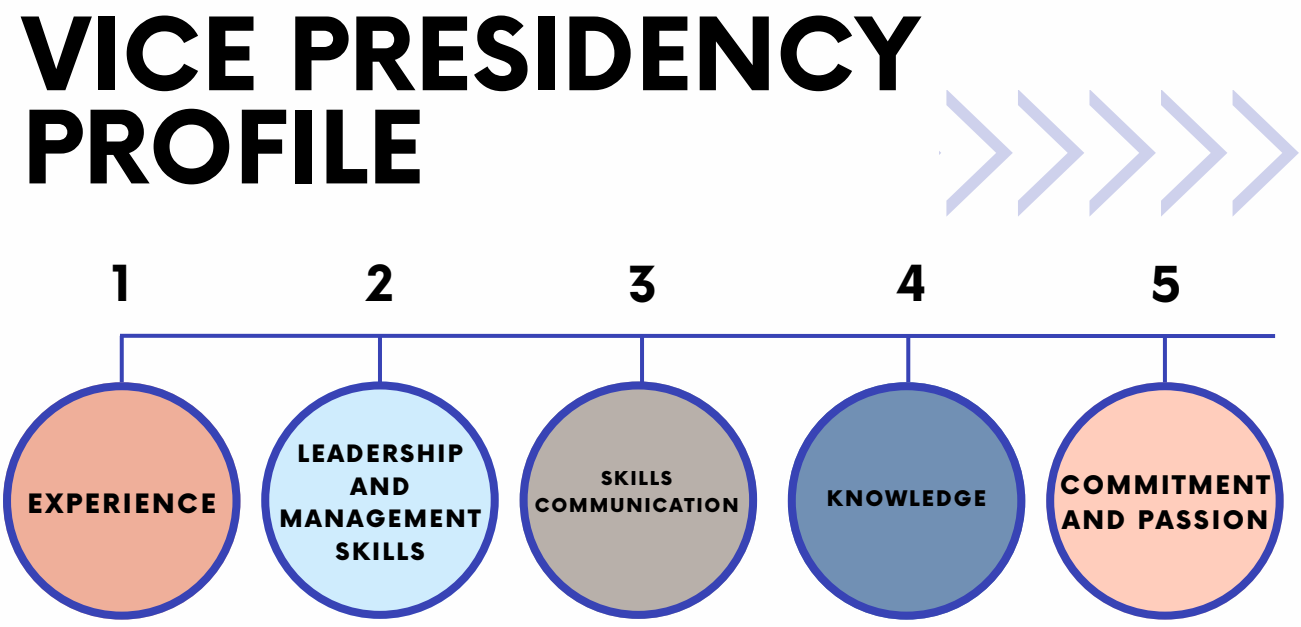
- **External relations:** They may represent the association at events, meetings, and other public occasions. This involves establishing and maintaining relationships with partners, donors, sponsors, and other relevant organizations. The vice president may participate in fundraising efforts and promote the organization to the public. Here's a piece of information: I know some vice presidents who have this condition and are researchers, communicators, who, from their profession, convey a message to raise awareness about what needs to be considered for the environment to have clear information about what it means to be born with this condition. Among you, there must be those who choose their careers thinking about what they like and what makes them feel good, great! I know that when you all become professionals, you will have the opportunity to contribute from there and establish external relations that amplify the impact of the association.

- Participation in decision-making: As a member of the board of directors, they actively participate in strategic decision-making and policy development for the organization. They contribute their experience and knowledge to influence the direction and plans of the association.

- Supervision of committees and working groups: In some associations, they may have the responsibility to oversee specific committees or working groups. This involves leading and coordinating their activities, ensuring they are progressing towards established objectives, and maintaining effective communication between the committees and the board of directors.

Regarding the profile of the vice president, some valuable characteristics and skills often include:

1. Experience in the nonprofit sector: It's beneficial for the vice president to have knowledge and previous experience in nonprofit organizations, which allows them to understand the challenges and dynamics of the sector. It's ideal, but if they don't have it, they can work together to acquire what is needed; this is a group effort, remember.
2. Leadership and management skills: The vice president should be an effective leader, capable of motivating and guiding the board members and the organization's staff. Additionally, they should have management skills to oversee operations and make strategic decisions.
3. Communication skills: The ability to communicate effectively is crucial for the vice president, as they will need to interact with various stakeholders, including board members, partners, donors, and the general public.
4. Knowledge and expertise: Depending on the association's focus, the vice president may need specific knowledge in areas such as fundraising, financial management, marketing, community development, or other related areas.
5. Commitment and passion: It's important for the vice president to have a strong commitment to the organization's mission and values, and to be motivated to make a positive impact in the community or for the cause the association represents.

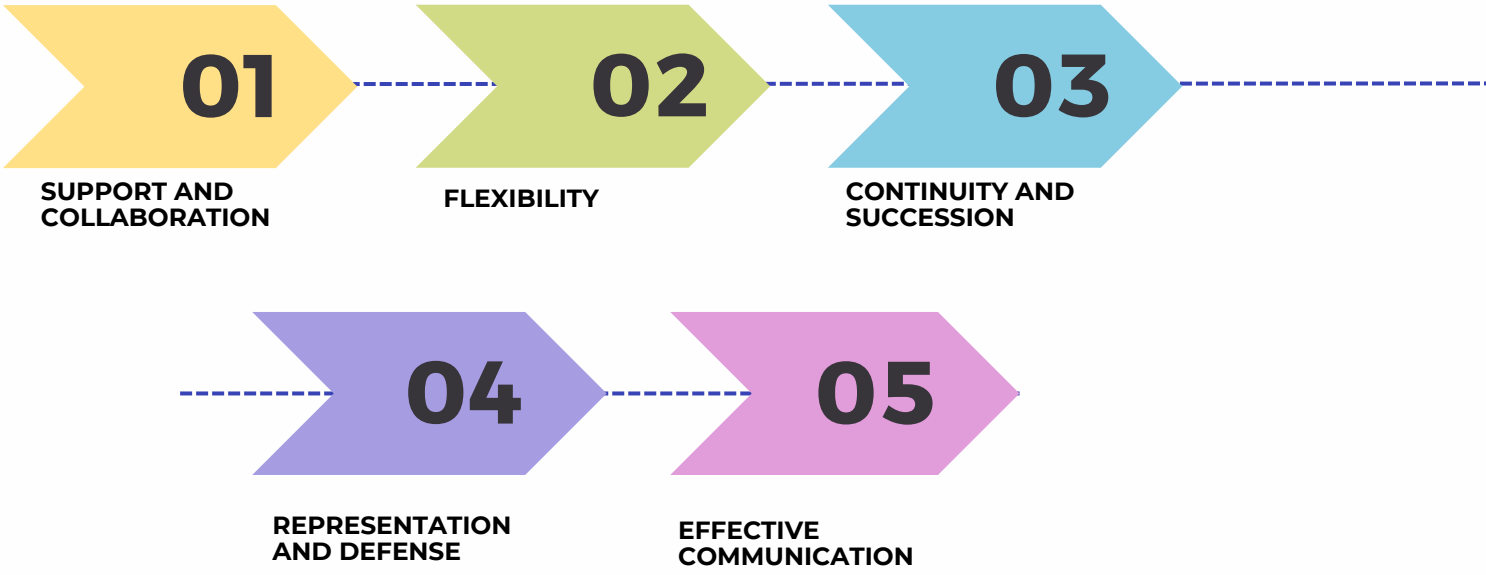




And Qualities:

- Support and collaboration: The vice president should be someone who values and promotes collaboration within the association. They should be willing to work closely with the president and other members of the leadership team, offering support, actively listening, and providing constructive ideas and solutions. The vice president should be there for the members of the association and demonstrate a helpful and cooperative attitude.
- Flexibility: The vice president should be flexible and able to adapt quickly to new circumstances. There may be a need to make decisions or take on additional responsibilities at unexpected times. The ability to adapt to changes and maintain composure in challenging situations is essential. Additionally, the vice president should be able to adjust existing plans or strategies as needed to ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of the association.

6 QUALITIES OF A VICE PRESIDENT



- Continuity and succession: The vice president should be a key figure in ensuring leadership continuity within the association. They should be familiar with the strategic objectives, internal operations, and policies of the organization. This will enable them to provide adequate support to the president and assume their responsibilities in case the president is temporarily or permanently unable to do so. The vice president should be willing to receive additional training or seek information to prepare for taking on the primary leadership role.

- Representation and advocacy: The vice president should be willing to represent and advocate for the interests of the association and its members. This involves being an active and effective advocate for the rights and needs of individuals with low vision, participating in relevant external events, meetings, and activities. They should express the concerns and perspectives of the association, work collaboratively with other stakeholders, and advocate for inclusion and equal opportunities for individuals with low vision.

- Effective communication: Developing clear and empathetic communication skills, including the ability to actively listen and understand the needs of members. They should have verbal and written communication skills.

3. Secretary

Responsibilities, Skills, and Qualities of a Secretary:

- Documentation: The secretary is responsible for maintaining records and documentation for the association. This involves taking and distributing minutes of meetings, keeping organized files, and ensuring that documentation is up-to-date.

- Communication: Facilitating communication within the association is a key role of the secretary. This includes drafting and distributing internal communications, managing correspondence, and responding to inquiries or requests for information from members, sympathizers, suppliers, and external parties with whom the association will have direct or indirect relationships.

- Planning and coordinating meetings: The secretary is in charge of planning and coordinating association meetings. This includes setting agendas, sending meeting notices to members, compiling relevant materials, and taking notes during meetings.

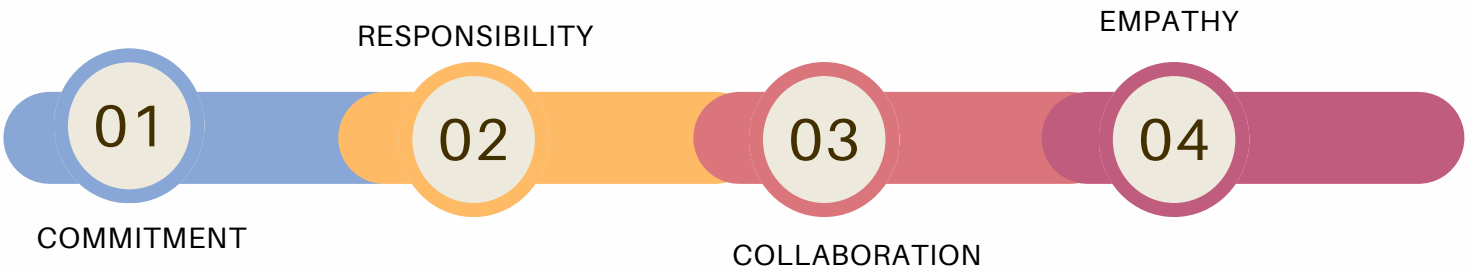
- Legal record keeping: The secretary is responsible for maintaining legal records and ensuring that the association complies with relevant legal and regulatory requirements.
- Administrative support: The secretary may provide general administrative support to the association, such as document management, deadline tracking, and activity coordination.
- Given the pivotal role of the secretary in managing all documentation, I recommend creating a profile checklist that includes the following skills and qualities:

Their skills will include:

- Organization: It is essential to have strong organizational skills to maintain records, documentation, and files systematically and accessible. They must know where everything is.
- Effective communication: Having written and verbal communication skills to draft communications, take meeting notes, and maintain clear and effective communication with association members.
- Time management: The ability to efficiently manage time is essential to fulfill the secretary's responsibilities and ensure that tasks are completed within established deadlines.
- Attention to detail: Attention to detail is required to maintain accurate records, properly track documentation, and avoid errors in communication and administration.
- Confidentiality: The secretary must maintain confidentiality regarding sensitive information about the association and internal affairs. This is important for all board members to avoid misunderstandings and conflicts among yourselves and your members.



QUALITIES OF A SECRETARY



Qualities:

- Commitment: It's important for the secretary to be committed to the mission and values of the association and have a genuine interest in supporting youth with low vision.
- Responsibility: The secretary must be reliable and take responsibility for fulfilling their tasks and commitments in a timely manner.
- Collaboration: The secretary works closely with other members of the association and must have teamwork skills to foster collaboration and mutual support.
- Empathy: Since the association is dedicated to supporting youth with low vision, having empathy and understanding towards their needs and challenges is a valuable quality.

4. Treasurer

He/she is responsible for managing the funds and budget of the association. The treasurer will play a key role in the financial management of the organization.

Here are the functions, skills, and important qualities for the treasurer role:

- Financial Management: The treasurer is responsible for managing the financial aspects of the association. This includes budget planning and oversight, financial reporting, bank account management, and tax filing.
- Financial Reporting: The treasurer must prepare accurate and detailed financial reports that reflect the economic status of the association. These reports may include income and expense statements, balance sheets, and financial projections.
- Internal Control: The treasurer must establish and maintain adequate internal control systems to safeguard the association's assets. This involves implementing strong financial policies and procedures, as well as conducting internal or external audits as needed.

- Donation and funding management: The treasurer may be responsible for managing donations and funding for the association. This includes tracking income, reporting on funding sources, and maintaining relationships with donors and sponsors.

- Budgeting and financial planning: The treasurer participates in the financial planning of the association, working with other board members to develop the budget and set short- and long-term financial goals.

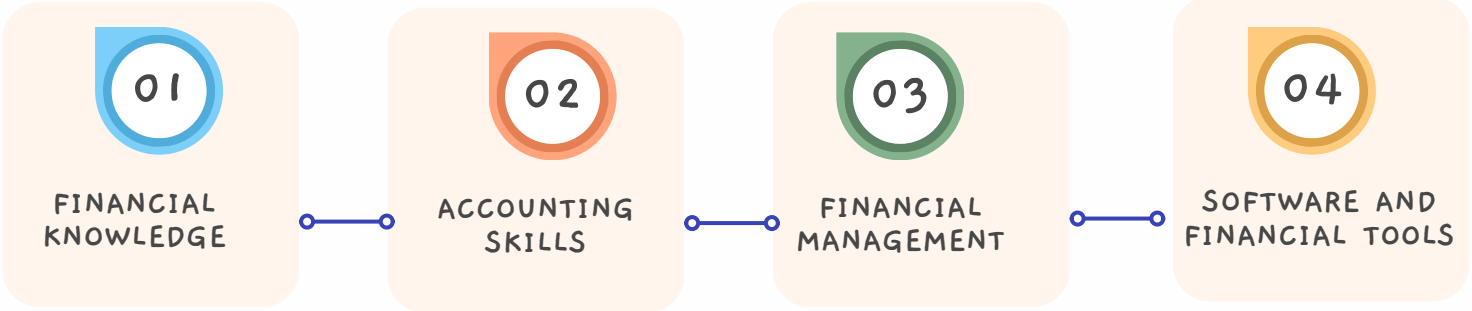
Treasurer's Skills:

1. Financial knowledge: They should have a good understanding of financial principles and practices, as well as relevant financial legislation and regulations in your country. But hey, don't be discouraged, a treasurer can be any type of professional with a good foundation in finance, either because they enjoy numbers or because they are entrepreneurs or businesspeople. I know a treasurer who is a graphic designer and manages their role within an association very well, at least there are no complaints about their management!

2. Accounting skills: It's important to have solid accounting skills to record and analyze the association's financial transactions accurately and efficiently. You can argue with me on this, because you're just starting out, but surely you have a manager, an accountant, or a friend who works in that position and can give you an introduction to the topic and maybe convince them to be part of your project. How does that sound? Surely, if they're your friend, you can have them as a member.

3. Financial management: The treasurer should have financial management skills, such as the ability to perform financial analysis, create budgets, and make informed decisions about resource allocation. This is how it should be, but in the reality of your day-to-day lives, you all make decisions with your money, right? Well, this treasurer is like any of you who have to be accountable to your parents for the money they gave you for shopping or going on a trip. It's not as difficult as it seems; remember that much of this is just common sense.

4. Software and financial tools: It's beneficial to have experience in using software and financial tools, such as spreadsheets and accounting programs, to facilitate financial management and analysis. At the very least, they should know how to handle Excel spreadsheets!



Qualities of the Treasurer, which you should consider when choosing them:

- Responsibility: The treasurer must be responsible and trustworthy in managing the association's financial resources.
- Integrity: High ethical integrity is required to handle finances fairly, transparently, and responsibly.
- Attention to detail: The ability to pay attention to detail is crucial to ensure the accuracy and precision of financial records.
- Organization: Having solid organizational skills is important to manage the financial aspects of the association efficiently and effectively.
- Collaboration: The treasurer should be able to work closely with other members of the board of directors and the team to achieve financial and organizational goals.



5. BOARD MEMBERS

They can be active members of the association who collaborate in various tasks or areas, such as organizing events, promoting the association, among others. The functions of the Board of Directors' members are only outlined in the association's statutes. Since it is not a nominal position, the member of the board can be listed in the statutes in two ways: with specific functions, such as the role of member in charge of relations with the members, or without assigning any specific function.

The number of members of the board can also be specified in the statutes. The modification of the composition or number of members of the Board of Directors, which includes the position of member, must be carried out in the same way as any other modification of the statutes: officially, with an inscription of the statutory modifications in the Register of Associations corresponding to your country. Members of the board play an important role in the functioning and success of the association.

I haven't mentioned it before, but you can decide who can be members of the association or not. This means that you can choose to have association members exclusively be individuals who have the condition themselves or have children or relatives who have it, or you can consider the possibility of allowing other individuals who feel an affinity with the condition to also be part of the association.

This is a decision that you must make, considering that any member of the association can be part of the Board of Directors.



It's also true that there could be individuals or organizations in your country that truly identify with the objectives of your project. In this case, I recommend that you subject the inclusion of a person or company as a member to a vote and analyze each case to avoid management problems in the future. Remember that each change must be registered, which implies a considerable administrative burden. I raise this issue at this point because it could create confusion if, to meet your requirements as an association, you accept "help" from individuals or companies that later become difficult to manage.

Although specific functions may vary according to the needs and structure you give them, here are some common functions, skills, and qualities for board members:

- Participation in Decision-Making: Board members actively participate in strategic decision-making. They contribute their opinions and knowledge to influence the direction and policies of the association. They come from different backgrounds; they may have the condition themselves, have a family member who has it, or simply be motivated members willing to contribute their expertise in this role.

- Support in Project Implementation: Board members may be responsible for supporting the implementation of projects and programs of the association. This may include activities such as organizing events, collaborating on awareness campaigns, and providing direct support to young people with low vision.

- Representation of the Association: Board members may represent the association at events, meetings, and external activities. This involves being ambassadors of the organization, promoting its mission and values, and establishing relationships with other entities and stakeholders.

- Collaboration in Committees and Working Groups: Board members may participate in specific committees or working groups of the association. This involves collaborating with other members of the organization in specific thematic areas such as fundraising, communication, educational programs, etc.

6. Committees and/or Working Groups

Task Groups are temporary and more flexible teams created to address specific tasks or projects within the association. When they finish, they dissolve. These groups are usually multidisciplinary and composed of members interested or with relevant knowledge in the subject matter. Some examples of task groups in an association may include:



- **Education Access Committee: This committee may be responsible for identifying and addressing barriers that may prevent young people with low vision from accessing quality education. For example, they could work on providing technology such as tablets containing all textbooks and notes, enabling students to keep up with their classes. Additionally, they may explore the use of digital whiteboards in classrooms, allowing students to view class content on monitors, similar to those seen in airplane seats. Dreaming is allowed, right? I've seen many dreams come true.**

- **Accessibility Committee: Responsible for identifying and addressing accessibility barriers in society at large, such as in public transportation and public buildings.**

- **Recreational and Sports Activities Committee: This committee could focus on planning and organizing recreational and sports activities that are accessible for young people with low vision.**

- **Projects Committee: They could focus on planning, implementing, and monitoring specific projects of the association.**

Employment Access Committee: Responsible for identifying and addressing barriers that may prevent young people with low vision from accessing fair employment opportunities. Lack of awareness and stereotypes can be barriers to employment opportunities. There is widespread lack of awareness about the capabilities and skills of people with low vision. Stereotypes and prejudices can lead to discrimination and ignorance of the adaptations necessary for an inclusive work environment. This could be one of many projects of this committee. A suggestion I give you is to inquire if the company has a Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) program, as you can propose a project that includes solutions that need to be implemented to enable them to have improvements that allow them to develop their full potential. It's a win-win situation.

Each committee has its own responsibilities and specific functions, and typically meets regularly to discuss and make decisions related to its area of specialization.

Task forces are temporary and more flexible teams created to address specific tasks or projects within the association. Once their tasks are completed, they are dissolved. These task forces are often multidisciplinary and comprise members who are interested or have relevant expertise in the topics at hand. Some examples of task forces in an association could include:

- **Awareness-raising Task Force:** Focuses on awareness-raising and education activities regarding the mission, vision, and values of the association.

- **Research Task Force:** Conducts research or studies related to the mission of the association.



- **Volunteer Coordination:** Coordinates and manages the association's volunteers. Additionally, I want you to know that these task forces in many associations, if not all, are made up of volunteers just like the committees. When you become strong and achieve good results, you should create a special day to recognize all of them because what they do, they do out of love, passion, and belief that they can contribute, and sincerely, they do.

- **Accessibility Task Force:** Works on improving physical and digital accessibility for people with visual impairments.

- **External Relations Task Force:** Establishes and manages relationships with other organizations, institutions, or sponsors.

D. TECHNICAL TEAM

The technical team is responsible for the operational and technical tasks of the association. Of course! Someone has to answer calls or respond to emails or make them visible on social media. This may include administrative support staff, web programming and design personnel, marketing and communication staff, etc. The technical team works closely with the board of directors and committees to achieve the association's objectives.



It is important to note that these roles can be performed by volunteers or paid staff, depending on the financial capacity of the association.



Here is a description and definition of some common profiles in the technical team of an association:

- Software Developer: Responsible for designing, developing, and maintaining applications or computer systems used by the association. They may work on creating websites, member management platforms, registration systems, or any other technological tool necessary for the organization's operation.

- Graphic Designer: Creates visual elements representing the association's identity, such as logos, brochures, posters, presentations, and promotional materials. They may also collaborate on designing user interfaces for digital platforms.

- Social Media Specialist: Manages the association's accounts on social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, among others. Their role is to create and publish relevant content, engage with followers, promote events and campaigns, and manage the association's online image and reputation.

- Data Analyst: Gathers, analyzes, and presents relevant information about the performance and impact of the association's activities. They use data analysis tools and techniques to identify trends, patterns, and improvement opportunities. They may also collaborate on preparing reports and evaluations for strategic decision-making.

- **Technical Support Specialist:** Provides assistance and resolves hardware and software technical issues for members of the association. They may offer guidance in the use of technological tools, troubleshoot incidents, and provide basic technology training to organization members.

- **Legal Advisor:** Here I must tell you that it is not necessary for the legal area to be part of the technical team of an association; it can be a separate function. The inclusion of the legal area in the technical team depends on the needs and resources of the association, as well as the legal complexity of its activities. Some associations may choose to have a lawyer or in-house legal advisor as part of their technical team to provide advice on legal matters, draft and review contracts, comply with applicable regulations, and provide general legal guidance. However, in other cases, associations may seek external legal services when needed, instead of having an in-house lawyer as part of their technical team. In any case, it is important for an association to have access to legal expertise and advice to ensure regulatory compliance and protect its legal interests.

This is very interesting, you might ask, but how can we choose one of us to be the president of our association or the members of the technical team? In practice and without too many long explanations, I suggest that not only for choosing the president, but for all members of the board of directors, committees, workgroups, and even the technical team, ask the following questions and be objective with your answers:



- **Is this person empathetic?:** Empathy is **VERY important** (we've talked about it all the time): members of the board of directors of an association must have empathy towards people with low vision and be willing to listen and understand their needs.

- **Do they have a strategic vision?:** The president and other board members must have a strategic vision and the ability to plan and develop effective strategies for the growth and sustainability of the organization.

- **Are they innovative and creative?:** Board members must be innovative and creative to find new ways to address challenges and opportunities that arise, and to keep the organization relevant and appealing to its members.

- **Is this person truly committed?** Board members must be more committed than all other members of the association combined, as they are the ones actively working to provide growth opportunities, meet goals, and develop strategies that will allow them to gain visibility and grow.

- **Are they flexible?** Both the president and other board members must be flexible and willing to adapt to changes and challenges that arise along the way, and to change course if necessary.

Essential considerations:

I know you're probably hyperventilating. I would be too if I were in your shoes, after all these descriptions you must be scared, right? Which I think is great because it means you have a good challenge ahead and you're going to step out of your comfort zone because staying in it means accepting the limitations that the environment imposes on you. It means you'll stay the same or worse off than you are now because that's just the way it is.

From the beginning of my journey through these pages, I told you that the path wasn't easy and that it required effort, time, and assuming responsibilities, but I don't think I mentioned that it's worth doing. Look at all the things you've been learning just by reading what I've been providing as a guide. And the journey is quite interesting, isn't it?

If you now search for information about associations on Google, you'll surely find a lot more information than I've given you, but not as detailed, organized, or fun! I'm giving you everything as if I were part of your team, and you know what? I am. That's why I want your association to have strong foundations and have everything laid out for you to do it very well, wherever you are. I'm interested in those frequent statements like "I don't know how to do it" not being an excuse but the reason that allows you to start the journey and create something, and to empower yourselves to work towards achieving it.

Let me tell you a story. Do you know which is the largest NGO (Non-Governmental Organization) in the world? It's BRAC (Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee, BRAC).



Hasan Abed with BRAC children. Photo by Isabel Whisson.

In 1969, Hasan Abed, its founder and the one who started that adventure, returned from London to his native Bangladesh, a country located to the east of India, after studying his career and obtaining good jobs in oil companies. Bangladesh is one of the poorest countries in the world, I don't know if you knew that. He returned because he had requested a transfer from where he worked because he wanted to be closer to his parents and brother, get married, and start a family.

But just two years later, in 1971, he left his position. Something changed his life and that of his fellow citizens. The effects of a massive cyclone (common in his country) in 1970 and the war of independence to separate from Pakistan in 1971 had devastated the country, leaving millions dead, displaced, and impoverished.

And Hasan Abed felt he could do something, that his knowledge (and what he obtained from the sale of a house he owned in London) would serve to help his neighbors. Thus, in 1972, BRAC was born, and since then, it has not stopped growing in Bangladesh and 11 other countries (Afghanistan, Pakistan, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Liberia, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, Haiti, and Nepal) to become the largest non-profit organization in the world, with its own universities and banks, and more than 120,000 employees. His work at the helm of the NGO, which, according to its data, has helped more than 110 million people worldwide, continues. Can you imagine? This man has received many awards and his association, international prizes for the contributions they have made in the countries where it operates. Today, associations in India, Pakistan, Ethiopia, Ghana, Honduras, and Peru have developed their pilot programs following the BRAC model.

That is to say, what Hasan Abed started with his superhero suit, 5 friends, and 4 family members has grown through determination, passion, and the desire for that project to really work and generate changes. Today he remains part of the association's board, he remains a focused person, and he continues to support the changes that many members want to make in their lives.

I sincerely hope that you, who believe you are few and practically invisible, give voice to that inner strength that moves you and can believe that you are capable of making changes and breaking down the barriers that you feel you have in such a challenging world as the one we have. May you be infected with positivity and infect those around you.

Here you will find everything you need to create an association from scratch. However, if you consider that, in your countries, the process of association is complicated or feel that it is not the right time to undertake this task, I encourage you not to remain inactive and alone, but to take action.

How? You can become volunteers for associations that already exist in your countries. With all the information at your disposal plus what you receive in this document, you can already discern and ask questions about what it entails to create an association. You should know that you are not alone, that there are people who are already involved in this work, and that you want to learn and contribute something that may not be being addressed, seen, or attended to by those organizations.

I encourage you to seek out examples of success in other associations, to find ways to create critical mass in other groups that are also affected by low vision, and to mobilize. Surely, you will find much more valuable experience than just looking at memes on TikTok or playing your favorite video games. You will learn much more and forge new friendships that will allow you to broaden your horizons and even consider other vocations, such as design (to create products or services that adapt to your needs) or law (to actively influence the modification or incorporation of legal provisions). Ultimately, dare to take action! You understand me.

Here, I leave you a directory of associations that already have vast experience and that you may be interested in joining:

ANIRIDIA

- **Aniridia Europe:** ANIRIDIA EUROPE LOOKING OUT FOR THE ANIRIDIA COMMUNITY

It is an organization that brings together different support groups and individuals affected by aniridia in Europe. You can find more information on their website.

- **Aniridia Network:** Aniridia Network

It is an organization based in the United Kingdom that provides support to people with aniridia and their families. You can find more information on their website.

- **Aniridia Foundation International:** Aniridia Foundation International®

It is a non-profit organization based in the United States that provides support to people with aniridia globally. You can find more information on their website.

I encourage you to seek examples of success in other associations, to find ways to create a critical mass in other collectives affected by low vision, and to mobilize. You will surely find much more valuable experience than just watching memes on TikTok or playing your favorite video games. You will learn much more and forge new friendships that will allow you to broaden your horizons and even consider other vocations, such as design (to create products or services that adapt to your needs) or law (to actively influence the modification or incorporation of legal provisions). In short, dare to take action! You understand me.

Here, I leave you a directory of associations that already have vast experience and that you may be interested in joining:

Aniridia Italiana

Asociación Española Aniridia

ANA Aniridia North America

ALBINISM

- **ALBA:** Asociación para la ayuda a personas con albinismo

It is an association that stands out in Europe, driven by the desire for every person with albinism to be able to grow, study, work, and thrive in a society free from intolerance and myths about this genetic condition, as low vision influences them, as they have significantly diminished and unfocused vision.

- **Organización Nacional de Ciegos de España:** ONCE

The main mission of ONCE is to improve the quality of life of blind or visually impaired people through the provision of a wide range of social services that enable their full social inclusion.

- **Albinit, asociación italiana de albinismo:** ALBINIT

Albinit works in collaboration to promote the inclusion of people with albinism in Italy.

- **Albinism Europe:**

Albinism Europe is a network that brings together albinism support organizations from across Europe. It can provide you with information about specific associations in different European countries.

- **Asociación Mexicana de Albinismo (AMAL):**

AMAL is an organization in Mexico that provides support, information, and resources to people with albinism and their families.

- **Fundación Albinos por Colombia:**

It is an organization in Colombia that works to improve the quality of life of people with albinism through education and awareness.

- **Corporación Albinos Chile:** CORPORACIÓN ALBINOS CHILE

Its objective is to inform society about the condition and create support networks so that the albino population in the country can fully develop.

- **Simplemente Amigos, Fundación Nacional de Albinismo Argentina:**

SA is an organization in Argentina dedicated to providing support to individuals with albinism and their families.

- **Asociación Peruana de Albinismo:**

It is an organization in Peru that seeks to raise awareness about albinism and provide support to affected individuals.

There are numerous organizations and support groups that focus on helping people with low vision. Some of these organizations include:

- **The International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness (IAPB):**

It is an international organization that works to prevent blindness and improve eye health worldwide. While it does not focus exclusively on low vision, it collaborates with organizations and professionals to address various issues related to visual health.

- **World Blind Union (WBU):**

It is an international organization that represents blind and visually impaired people worldwide. It works to promote equal opportunities and the rights of people with visual disabilities.

- **National Federation of the Blind (NFB) - en Estados Unidos:**

It is a national organization in the United States that advocates for the ri nd and visually impaired people. It provides resources and services to improve the quality of life for people with visual disabilities.

- **Global Albinism Alliance:**

It promotes solidarity among albi rldw

I encourage you to seek out and become part of these organizations. You already know everything that goes into an association, you know what needs to be done. Now you just have to decide whether to step out of your comfort zone and take action or continue as you are.

METHODS FOR WORKINF IN AN ASSOCIATION: NETWORKING

Chapter 4



"People score goals, but teams win games."

ZIG ZIGLAR

Well, I've shown you the importance of joining forces, as it provides the opportunity to leverage the strengths and resources of different individuals or organizations to achieve common goals more effectively, expand the reach you can have, reduce costs and risks (since there will be more than one person evaluating them), access specialized resources, and have greater influence and representation.

I've also guided you through creating an entity, the actions you need to take, and how to achieve it, and why it's important to establish a successful association where commitment, trust, collaboration, and a shared vision are required, i.e., the importance of teamwork with your partners and building strong long-term relationships, not only among yourselves but also with the companies or entities you collaborate with. Finally, we've seen how the structure of an entity should be, as it should be. I mentioned that not all positions seen in Chapter 3 are necessarily required. In fact, if you start with 5 friends, it's enough for the journey. That's how many associations start in the world, with the desire and passion of a handful of people who have a common goal. However, passion is the key; without it, your project is destined to fail. Do you know why? Because if you have passion, it binds everything, absolutely everything!

Passion is a driving force that motivates people to become fully engaged and committed to their work. When working on your association, don't forget this ingredient; I hope everyone has it. If you do, everyone will be more motivated to face challenges, overcome obstacles, and pursue ambitious goals. It provides the energy and determination needed to keep going even when encountering difficulties, and believe me, you will encounter them.



Passion enables individuals to develop a sense of personal empowerment. It allows them to live with enthusiasm. By engaging in a cause they are passionate about, they will find a meaningful purpose and feel valued for their contribution, and that's something wonderful, isn't it? This strengthens their self-esteem, confidence, and positive self-concept, which in turn helps them overcome challenges and face the barriers they will encounter.

I mention this because this chapter is about methods for networking in an association, that is, how you will organize yourselves to develop networks.

After creating your association and defining the motive (the why), the purpose (for what), the objectives (the what), the target audience (the whom), the strategy (the how), the timing (the when), and the collaborators (the with whom), in other words, the foundations and structure of your building (association), you will now see what you will need to ensure it has the proper and necessary connections that allow access to public services and acquire the furniture necessary for its operation.

WHAT IS NETWORKING?

I'm going to share something personal with you: I love knitting! Yes, I enjoy knitting because it relaxes me. As I looked at my knitting creations, it occurred to me how I could relate it to the concept of networking.

So here's my perspective.

What did you think? Did you think this was just a soulless Methodological Guide, without hobbies? Well, no, here I am not only sharing my knowledge about associations to encourage you to create one or to provide clear information for you to collaborate with one that is already in operation with enthusiasm.

I'm also thinking about you more than you imagine to bring you even closer to your path towards this adventure. I'm making an effort to have all this information in one document for you. I've put myself in your shoes; empathy is what allows me to work as a guide because yes, I've already traveled this path and I know what it's all about.

Continuing with the topic, the expression "tejer una red" (weaving a network) refers, in a broader context, to the action of creating and strengthening connections between people, organizations, or entities with the aim of forming an effective collaboration structure. Weaving a network involves creating bonds and relationships that allow the exchange of information, as well as mutual support, and in the process, expanding one's circle of friends.

The metaphor of "tejer una red" or networking, as it is known in English, implies an active and deliberate process of building connections, similar to creating a fishing net by interweaving threads. In a physical network, each thread represents a person, organization, or entity, and the way they intertwine determines the strength and effectiveness of the network.



The idea of weaving a network involves taking concrete actions to establish those connections, such as networking, attending events, sharing resources, and collaborating on joint projects. This is where the concept of "the sky's the limit" applies. As the network is built, bonds of trust are formed, open communication is fostered, and a sense of community is strengthened.

To weave a network, it's important to seek out like-minded individuals and organizations that share similar goals, interests, or values. This network can serve multiple purposes, such as sharing knowledge and resources, promoting the exchange of ideas, facilitating collaboration on projects, generating learning opportunities, funding, and growth, or providing mutual support. This network can gradually expand as new connections are established and relevant stakeholders, both local and international, are engaged.

The diversity within the network, both in terms of individual profiles and areas of expertise, enriches collaboration and promotes creativity and innovation. I told you that in this process, you would learn and have a lot of fun.

A well-woven network can be a valuable asset for addressing challenges, seizing opportunities, and achieving goals more effectively, sustainably, and with a positive impact.

So, you may ask, how do you use that magical ingredient that is passion?



Passion plays a fundamental role in networking as it goes beyond mere participation and commitment to task achievement. It is an internal engine that drives individuals to persevere even when faced with challenges and obstacles. Networking, whether among yourselves or with third parties, often involves overcoming barriers and facing difficult situations, such as lack of resources, resistance to change, communication (which is so important), or the complexity of the problems you face due to this genetic condition, where helplessness often embraces you. In those cases, passion acts as fuel that keeps the flame of dedication and long-term commitment burning. They say that the greater the challenges something represents that you want to achieve, the more gratification you feel when you succeed.

Do you want more reasons to feel it? Come on!

- It is highly inspiring and can spread to other members within those working networks you will have. When a person radiates enthusiasm and passion for what they do, they can motivate and mobilize others to get involved and contribute actively. Passion is contagious and can create a domino effect, fostering a collaborative and committed atmosphere within and outside the network.

- It drives individuals to give their best in their work. By being passionate about the cause, they are willing to invest extra time and effort to achieve significant results. This additional dedication translates into greater commitment, increased productivity, and higher quality work done together, leading to greater efficiency and effectiveness of the network.

- It stimulates creativity and the pursuit of innovative solutions. Passionate network members are willing to think unconventionally and explore new ideas and approaches to address challenges. Passion drives them to challenge established boundaries and propose new ways to solve problems, find solutions, which can lead to more impactful and transformative results.

- It provides a deep sense of purpose and significant personal satisfaction. When network members are passionate about the cause, they feel connected to a greater purpose and realize that their work is contributing to positive change in society. This sense of purpose and personal satisfaction strengthens their commitment and drives them forward.



THE NETWORKING WORK WITHIN YOUR ASSOCIATION

Here are examples to illustrate the importance of passion as a catalyst in networking and promoting inclusion and improving the quality of life for association members:

1. **Creation of a support network:**

You can establish a support network among yourselves, where you can share experiences, advice, and resources to address the common challenges you face. This network can be virtual, through online groups, digital platforms, or social networks, and/or in-person, by organizing meetings and regular gatherings. Sharing your stories, strengths, and coping strategies will allow you to learn from each other and develop a sense of community and empowerment.

Use online platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, or LinkedIn to create profiles and groups for the association. These platforms allow you to share information, events, resources, and establish connections with other young people and like-minded organizations.

Create a website or blog for the association where you can publish news, activities, testimonials, and relevant resources for young people with low vision. The person in charge of the communications area will be very busy, especially at the beginning. Give them a hand.

Explore applications and platforms specifically designed for people with visual impairments, such as accessibility apps, forums, or online communities. You'll surely find many examples that you can apply in your association.

2. **Awareness Campaigns:**

You can join forces to carry out awareness campaigns in your communities and educate people about the challenges and capabilities of individuals with low vision.

This may involve creating and/or participating in local events, spreading information online, collaborating with sister organizations, and participating in educational programs in schools and universities. By networking with companies, institutions, or organizations within reach, you can amplify your message and have a greater impact on public awareness. This way, you'll gain experience, overcome shyness as you'll need to present your association and convey your message, and you'll be able to refine and improve your goals. You'll be testing what resonates or not with the community.

3. **Access to Services and Resources:**

You can collaborate to identify and promote access to services and resources that improve your quality of life. Researching and sharing information about assistive technologies, rehabilitation services, inclusive education programs, as well as finding employment opportunities and other relevant resources can be beneficial. By working together, you can create a knowledge base and support each other in finding opportunities and services that help you achieve your goals.



4. Promotion of Inclusive Policies:

You can advocate for inclusive policies that promote equal opportunities and accessibility for people with low vision. Working together, you should draft proposals, meet with legislators and government officials, participate in public consultations, and raise your voices on issues affecting your community. By joining a network of advocacy, you can have a more significant impact and increase the chances of achieving positive changes in existing policies and regulations.

5. Mentorship Programs:

Establish mentorship programs where those with more experience and who have overcome similar challenges in specific areas can provide guidance and support to younger or less experienced individuals. This allows for the sharing of knowledge, skills, and practical advice on how to handle everyday situations, navigate the education system, or seek employment opportunities. Network mentoring creates an environment of continuous learning and strengthens the community.

6. Online Awareness Generation Projects:

Collaborate to create online awareness projects, such as blogs, podcasts, or YouTube channels. By sharing your personal experiences, offering practical advice, discussing relevant topics, and highlighting success stories, you can amplify the reach of your association and reach a wider audience, promoting understanding and empathy towards people with low vision.

7. Educational Advocacy:

Join forces to advocate for inclusive and accessible education. Work towards the implementation of assistive technologies in the classroom and promote adaptations in educational institutions. Through networking, awareness can be raised and voices can be heard on the importance of equal educational opportunities.

8. Online Support Groups:

Create online support groups where everyone can share their experiences, challenges, and achievements. These groups can serve as safe spaces to discuss sensitive topics, receive emotional support, and obtain practical advice from individuals facing similar situations. By networking, meaningful connections are formed, allowing individuals to find a sense of belonging in their community, not only in their own country but also in others within their region or continent.

As you can see, these methods of networking can be effective in raising awareness, exploring opportunities to attract more members to your association, and even connecting with other associations with which you may align and collaborate. This can prepare and strengthen you, as if communication among yourselves is already difficult, imagine how complex it can be with others. For this reason, you must maintain a high level of organization, carefully structure your message, and define the steps you want to achieve. This adventure of networking poses a challenge to your tolerance, teamwork, and coordination of activities and actions to avoid duplicating efforts. It is the best way to learn to be effective members of the association.

I suggest looking closely within your own association and building a network that allows your members to feel attended to, understood, cared for, protected, and to initiate effective collaboration with them first. You can develop activities such as the following:



1

MENTORING PROGRAMS

Establish mentoring programs where more experienced members can provide guidance and support to those just beginning their journey. This will provide them with role models, help them develop skills and give them a sense of community, belonging and empowerment.

2

READING AND DISCUSSION CLUBS

Organize reading and book discussion clubs in accessible formats to encourage the habit of reading and the exchange of ideas. You can select books related to low vision, self-improvement, leadership or any other topic that is relevant to you and your members.

3

SOCIAL SKILLS PROGRAMS

Develop programs that help members develop social and communication skills. This may include interactive workshops on how to interact with other people, how to advocate for your needs, and how to develop healthy relationships.

4

ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND SELF-EMPLOYMENT

Provide support and resources (it's not all about money) to encourage entrepreneurship and self-employment among them. They can offer business skills training, business mentoring, and access to networks and resources to help them start their own businesses or projects. They can also help generate synergies between like-minded members.

5

ART AND CREATIVE EXPRESSION PROGRAMS

Stimulate creativity and artistic expression by organizing art, music, theater or other forms of expression workshops. This will allow them to explore their creative side, improve their self-esteem, and communicate their experiences in a unique way.

6

COMMUNITY AWARENESS

Organize community awareness events to promote awareness of the abilities and potential of people with low vision. They can organize information fairs, art exhibitions, educational talks or inclusive sports activities to showcase the talent and ability of members. This will allow them to feel that they are seen for what they can contribute, for their talent and their potential.

Remember, these are just suggestions, and you can adapt them according to the specific needs and interests of your association and its members. Listen to the voices and ideas of the young people in your association and work collaboratively with them to develop programs and activities that are meaningful and relevant to their growth and empowerment.

STEPPING OUT OF THE COMFORT ZONE

Well, you're all pretty integrated now and some members are asking you or you yourselves have found that you can collaborate with other associations, companies, institutions with which you can network in your town, city, or country. Doesn't it make you a little nervous?

Since your association is new and in some countries you don't find associations similar to yours, don't worry. Although direct collaboration with similar organizations can be beneficial, there are other ways to network and establish alliances to promote the goals of your association. Something like this might help you:

- **Identify complementary organizations:** Even if you don't find associations exactly like yours, you can look for organizations that have related goals or areas of interest. For example, you can search for general disability associations, albinism associations, youth support organizations, human rights advocacy groups, or educational institutions. These organizations may be interested in collaborating with you, even if they don't specialize specifically in low vision.

- **Establish strategic partnerships:** Look for organizations or institutions that share similar goals or values with your association and establish strategic partnerships. You can seek collaborations on specific projects, share resources, exchange knowledge, or participate in joint events. For example, you can collaborate with educational institutions to offer workshops on inclusion in schools or work with youth support organizations to develop empowerment programs.

- **NGO networks and collaboration platforms:** Research if there are networks of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) or collaboration platforms in your country. These networks can provide networking opportunities and collaboration with other organizations. Participate in events, workshops, or meetings organized by these networks to meet other actors in the sector and explore possible synergies.

- **Connect with local institutions:** Establish contact with local institutions such as health centers, hospitals, educational centers, or government entities. Explore the possibility of collaborating in promoting inclusive education, employment insertion, raising awareness about low vision, or advocating for the rights of people with this condition. This may involve developing support programs, raising awareness among teachers and employers, and promoting reasonable adjustments and adaptations.

- You can propose the organization **of joint activities, participation in conferences, or the dissemination of informative materials**. These events will allow you to stay informed about the latest trends, establish contacts with experts, and share experiences with other similar organizations.



- **Use online platforms:** Take advantage of online platforms to establish connections and collaborations. You can participate in forums, discussion groups, or social networks related to low vision. Share your ideas, seek collaboration opportunities, and connect with individuals and institutions interested in similar topics.

- **Volunteering:** Encourage volunteer participation from those willing to support your association's efforts. Volunteers can assist in event organization, provide support services, create informational materials, among other activities.

- **Fundraising:** Explore different fundraising strategies to ensure the financial sustainability of the association. You can organize charity events within your network, solicit donations from companies or individuals, seek grants, or explore other sources of funding.

- **Research and data collection:** Conduct research and gather relevant data on low vision and the needs of young people with visual impairments in your community or country. This data can support your advocacy efforts, assist in program and service planning, and support funding requests, including grants.



Remember that networking doesn't always require identical organizations. You can find allies in different fields who share common goals or mutually benefit from collaboration. Maintain an open and creative mindset when seeking networking opportunities, and don't hesitate to explore new avenues of collaboration to achieve your association's goals.

Every association is unique and may have specific approaches and needs. The important thing is to remain committed to the inclusion and empowerment of network members and to adapt your strategies and activities based on shared needs and available resources.

Since your association is unique and focuses on a rare condition, you may encounter additional challenges in networking. However, there are still options available to establish connections and collaborate with other organizations:



Connect with the rare disease community: Look for organizations and communities that focus on rare diseases in general. They may not specifically target your condition, but they may still share similar concerns and challenges. Participate whenever possible in online forums, support groups, and events related to rare diseases to connect with other individuals and organizations that may be interested in collaborating.

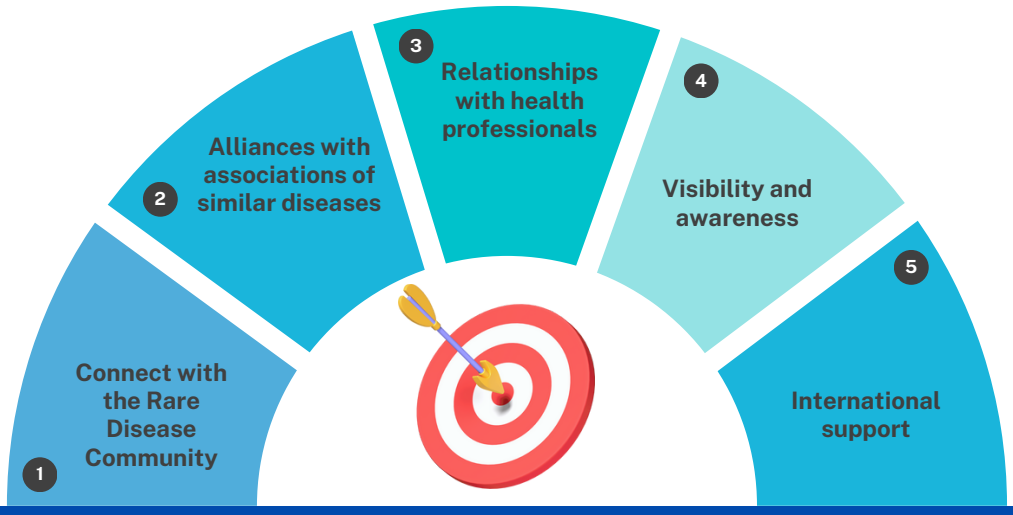
- **Alliances with similar disease associations:** Although your condition may be unique, there may be associations that deal with diseases with similar characteristics or challenges. For example, since your condition directly affects vision, you could look for associations focusing on visual impairment, albinism, or groups focusing on specific eye disorders. These associations may be interested in collaborating on common issues such as awareness, research, or access to healthcare services.

- **Build relationships with healthcare professionals:** Connect with doctors, researchers, and specialists working in the field of rare and vision-related diseases. They can be a valuable source of knowledge and may help you connect with other experts or institutions interested in your cause. You can participate in conferences, symposiums, or working groups related to rare diseases to establish connections in the medical field.

- **Promote visibility and awareness:** As you work to raise awareness about your condition, you may attract the attention of other organizations or individuals interested in supporting your cause. Use different communication channels such as websites, social media, community events, and awareness campaigns to reach a wider audience and attract the attention of potential collaborators.

- **Seek international support:** It may be helpful to expand your search beyond national borders. Research and connect with international associations focusing on rare diseases, visual impairment, or similar conditions. You can participate in international conferences and events to network and share knowledge with experts from around the world.

Despite the challenges, I encourage and empower you to see that your association can play a crucial role in raising awareness, providing support to those affected, and advocating for research into your condition. I hope that, in today's interconnected world, you seize the opportunities to connect with other organizations and individuals interested in your cause, and that you work on forming alliances that can help you achieve the goals of your association.



AND WHAT IS THE STEP-BY-STEP PROCESS FOR WORKING WITH INTERNATIONAL NETWORKS?



Working in a network with other associations of young people with low vision in different countries brings numerous benefits, such as knowledge exchange, collaboration on joint projects, mutual support, and amplification of their voice globally. By joining forces with other organizations, your association can achieve greater impact and work more effectively to improve the lives of young people with low vision worldwide. Building associative networks becomes a matter of strategic importance for the present and future of your association.

Networking should arise naturally as the relationship with other entities or international associations evolves. It should not simply be the result of a one-off decision based on assumed organizational needs. This means that for networks to be established with other associations, there must be needs within each group that justify this approach as a method of work and an effective organizational formula.

However, it is also crucial that opportunities arise for associations, including yours, to take the necessary steps and acquire the appropriate skills in areas related to communication, exchange, cooperation, training, etc. This is what allows the outcome to be defined as networking rather than other equally necessary and efficient forms of associative relationship. Do you follow?

What I want to convey to you is that connecting with international networks can be a wonderful experience, but it requires some maturity. My suggestion is that you take your first steps on your own, and then not only will you be able to run, but even fly. In other words, wouldn't you send a baby to run a marathon? Well, that's what I mean.

Although your association is located in Europe or Latin America, you can still network with other organizations around the world. How? That's the big question, and here are some answers:

- **Participation in existing regional and international** networks to enable the association to establish contacts, exchange ideas and resources, and collaborate on joint projects.

- **Creation of regional alliances:** These alliances can strengthen collaborative work and expand the reach of activities and projects. Regional collaboration can be particularly effective in addressing common challenges and issues in the region.



- **Utilization of communication technologies:** Make use of communication technologies such as email, social media, and video conferencing to establish connections and collaborate with other organizations of young people with low vision around the world. These tools facilitate communication and the exchange of ideas, enabling the association to stay connected and work effectively in a network.

Other networking methods that they can use are available. Here are some additional options:

- **Alliances with similar organizations:** The association can establish strategic alliances with similar organizations working in areas related to low vision or inclusion. This may include organizations of individuals with low vision, educational institutions, research institutions, government agencies, and private companies. By collaborating with these organizations, the association can share resources, expand its reach, and develop joint projects.

- **Collaboration with visual health professionals:** Working with internationally recognized ophthalmologists, optometrists, occupational therapists, and other visual health professionals can be beneficial. These professionals can provide specialized knowledge, advice, and support to the association. Additionally, they can be key allies in promoting inclusion and raising awareness about the needs you aim to address.

- **Exchange of experiences through online platforms:** Associations can use online platforms such as discussion forums or chat groups to facilitate the exchange of experiences and knowledge among their members and with other organizations. These platforms provide a virtual space where you can ask questions, share resources, and receive mutual support.

- **Participation in international research or development projects:** The association can collaborate on international research or development projects related to low vision. This could involve working with researchers from different countries to improve understanding of this visual condition or participating in development projects aimed at improving access to services and technologies adapted to their needs.

- **Promotion of joint events and activities:** The association can collaborate with other organizations to organize joint events and activities, both nationally and internationally. This may include conferences, workshops, seminars, or awareness campaigns. Working together on events and activities allows for resource sharing, expanding reach, and increasing the impact of initiatives. Engaging in these types of activities also increases visibility in the country where you are located.

- **Exchange of volunteers or interns:** You can establish volunteer or intern exchange programs with other organizations, both regional and international. This allows for experiences in different contexts and acquiring new skills. At the same time, organizations benefit from the experience and knowledge of volunteers or interns, and so do you. There are no losses, only gains.

- **Exchange of resources and experiences:** The association can establish information exchange relationships on assistive technologies, inclusion strategies, training programs, and resources for young people with low vision. The exchange of knowledge in an international network strengthens all organizations involved and allows them to learn and grow together.

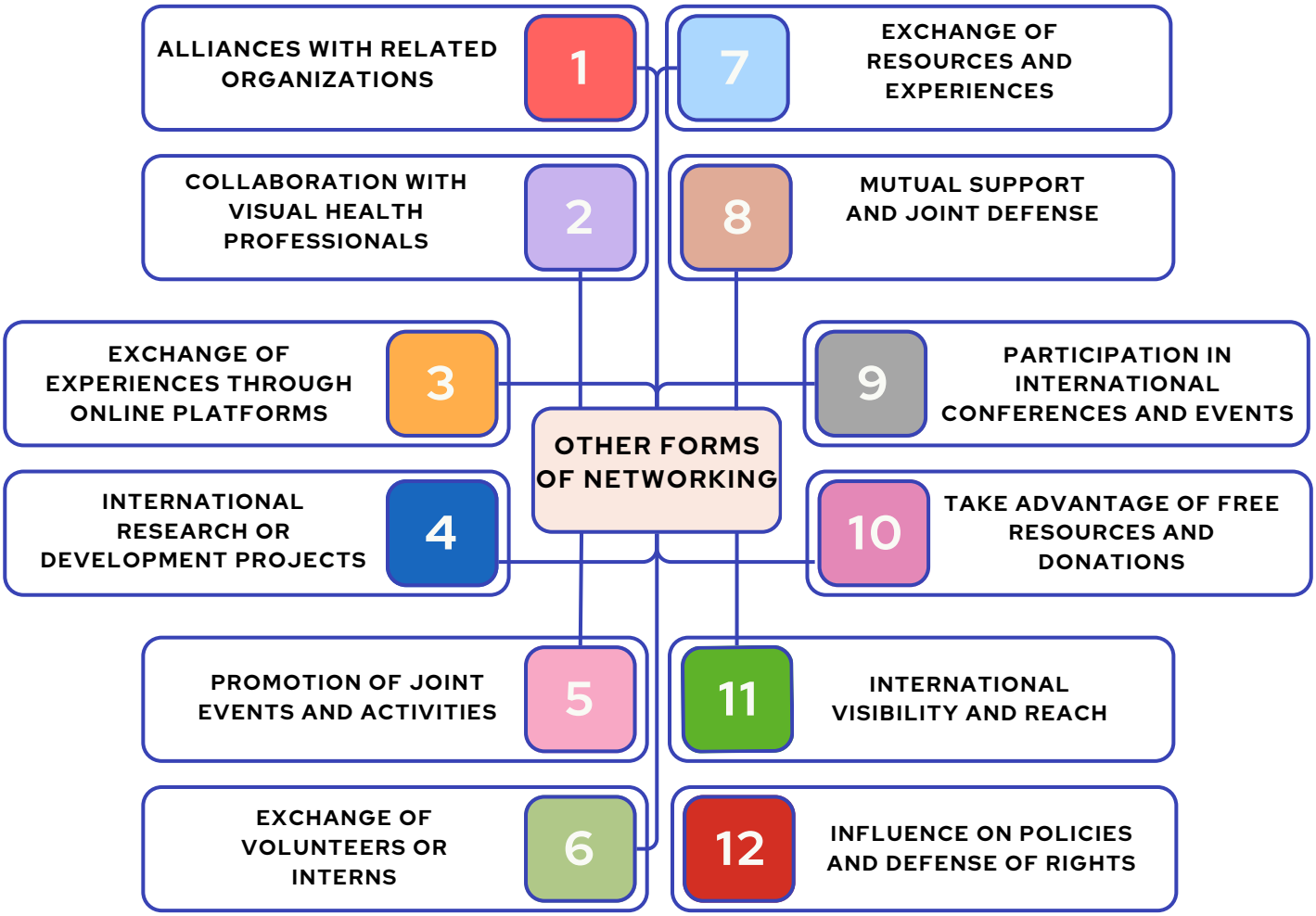
- **Mutual support and joint advocacy:** Joining an international network allows for mutual support and collective advocacy for the rights and needs of people with low vision worldwide. Collaborating in promoting inclusive policies globally, participating in international consultations, and working together to address common challenges faced in different countries.

- **Participation in international conferences and events:** Attend conferences, events, and international meetings related to visual impairment and inclusion. These events provide opportunities to learn from international experts, share experiences, and establish contacts with organizations and young people with low vision from different countries. Participation in these events can be virtual or in person, depending on circumstances and available resources.

- **Utilizing free resources and donations:** Look for opportunities to access free resources and donations that can support the networking efforts of your association. This may include seeking grant programs for non-profit organizations, soliciting donations from companies or individuals (some people really empathize if you present a good project), or searching for free resources online, such as educational materials or communication tools.

- **Visibility and international reach:** **It provides you with the opportunity to increase your international visibility. This can help you spread your messages, programs, and achievements to a wider audience, which can generate new opportunities for collaboration and support.**

- **Influence on policies and advocacy for rights:** **By joining forces with an international network, the association can have a stronger and more effective voice in promoting inclusive policies and advocating for the rights of people with low vision. Collaboration can strengthen your ability to advocate for positive changes at the local, national, and international levels.**



It's important to remember that working within a network doesn't always require significant financial resources. Most of the time it does, of course, because if you want to participate in conferences, you have to invest to travel to the country where these events take place. However, the main focus should be on collaboration, communication, and the exchange of knowledge and experiences. It's true that nowadays the universal language is English, so wherever you are, you should understand that learning this language is necessary to effectively convey your message and especially to collaborate within an international network. By establishing strategic relationships and leveraging available resources, even with limitations, you can effectively work within a network to promote inclusion and improve conditions for people with low vision.

Remember that each community and context may require different approaches. Additionally, it's important to continuously evaluate and adjust strategies to maximize the benefits of your association's networking efforts.

TOOLS FOR NETWORKING

There are various digital and technological tools that can facilitate networking. Here are some of them, and I'm sure you already know them:

COMMUNICATION AND COLLABORATION PLATFORMS:

- Slack: It's a platform for instant messaging and team collaboration that allows real-time communication, organization of thematic channels, and file sharing.

- Microsoft Teams: It's a communication and collaboration tool that offers chats, video conferencing, calls, file sharing, and the ability to work on joint projects.

- Google Workspace (formerly G Suite): It provides a suite of online collaboration tools, such as Gmail, Google Drive, Google Docs, Google Sheets, and Google Meet, which allow collaborative work on documents, spreadsheets, presentations, etc.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT PLATFORMS:

- Trello: It's a visual project management tool based on cards and lists. It allows you to organize tasks, assign responsibilities, set deadlines, and track project progress.

- Asana: It offers a project management platform that facilitates planning, task assignment, progress tracking, and team collaboration. It allows for setting reminders, attaching files, and establishing task dependencies. I love it too!

VIDEO CONFERENCING TOOLS:

- Zoom: It's a popular video conferencing tool that allows for virtual meetings, video chats, webinars, and screen sharing. It's useful for conducting online meetings with association members, external collaborators, and experts.

- Google Meet: It's a similar option to Zoom, allowing for group video calls, scheduling meetings, screen sharing, and real-time collaboration.

DOCUMENT COLLABORATION PLATFORMS:

- Google Docs: Allows for the creation, editing, and sharing of documents online collaboratively. Multiple users can work simultaneously on a document, make comments, and track changes.

- Microsoft Office 365: Provides a suite of tools, such as Word, Excel, and PowerPoint, that enable online collaboration, file sharing, and simultaneous editing.

SOCIAL NETWORKS AND MESSAGING APPS:

- Facebook: It can be used to create private groups where association members can interact, share information, events, and resources.

- WhatsApp or Telegram: Instant messaging applications that facilitate direct and fast communication among association members, allowing the sharing of information, documents, and the organization of activities. In Telegram, you can even have channels where files, links, documents, etc., are shared.

- Discord: It's an application that allows group calls, video calls, and sharing links and information. You can create groups, channels, add bots to manage your community, so you can build a community.



"Communication is the best way to create strong relationships."

Jada Pinkett Smith



These are just some of the available tools, and it's important to select those that fit your specific needs and those of the individuals or organizations you want to network with. Additionally, providing training and technical support to members is recommended to ensure effective use of these tools.

What are the advantages of working in international networks?

Some of the benefits of working in international networks may include:

1. Establishment of action routes that involve the knowledge of individuals from diverse areas, perspectives, nationalities, and issues.
2. Enhanced productivity as scenarios are created where involved individuals contribute their creativity towards achieving objectives.
3. Promotion of organizational integration as different areas and teams connect with each other.
4. Development of systemic vision and cross-cutting capabilities as individuals view the organization from their area and the areas from the organization.
5. Facilitation of unusual proposals, as the integration of perspectives from each network member is favored, contributing to the deployment of different viewpoints and generating more creative solutions to existing problems.

In summary, it can be stated that working in international networks contributes to generating greater organizational efficiency by facilitating coordination, the contribution of knowledge and experience, the construction of a common perspective, and the focus on achieving common goals among individuals, teams, and areas of the organization.

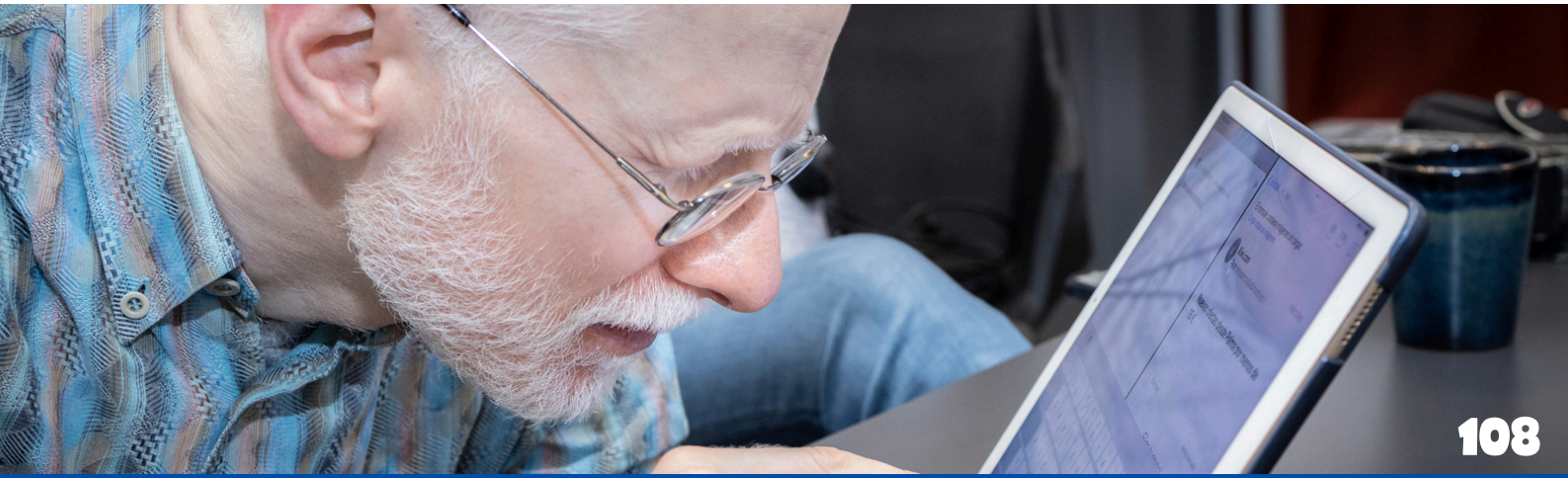
HOW TO SEEK SUPPORT IN INTERNATIONAL NETWORKS?

I am pretty sure this part is going to be the most interesting for you. Meeting people like yourselves and beyond your home, province, country, and even outside your continent must seem like the most exciting part of joining an association.

Indeed, it's as exciting as you're imagining. To have a voice, you're already seeing that you need to organize yourselves, whether by creating your association, volunteering, or participating in one. Your presence must be well-presented; in other words, you need to prepare to make a good impression. You wouldn't show up poorly dressed for an interview, or have spelling mistakes when sending a letter to those you want to be heard by. Your presence and validation of your associative project are no longer just a matter for your Assembly or Board of Directors; it's a matter of those you want to meet and with whom you want to develop alliances, projects, exchanges, and everything you've read up to this point and can do. At this point of seeking support in international networks, let's see how you should express yourselves so that others recognize you, validate you, and want to be in contact with you.

This is similar to when you like someone, you've seen them but only know their name; you search for them by name on Instagram or another network, and suddenly, because the planets tend to align, you know you're going to meet, whether because you dare to send a message, because someone close to you is also close to them and you can meet, or for whatever reason the stars identify... What do you do? Well, you have to prepare for that encounter because those who know about it say there's no second chance to make a good first impression.

I know I'm going on, but I feel like this blank space I've been filling with ink, which has become my way of approaching you and your associative project, is the way I'm maintaining a close conversation, as if we were sitting on the sofa. The reason for your sighs in the romantic case I'm presenting to you is very similar to how you have to prepare to attract the attention of organizations, associations, federations, universities, companies, and the long list that is today's globalized world.



Preparatory steps before working with international networks:

IDENTIFICATION

It is essential to clearly identify your goals and needs before seeking support from international networks. Define what type of support you are seeking, whether it's financial assistance, technical resources, training opportunities, collaborations, or international visibility. This will allow you to focus your efforts and communicate your needs effectively.

To find relevant international networks related to visual impairment, inclusion, and the rights of people with low vision, I suggest conducting online research, consulting with other similar organizations, or seeking recommendations from experts in the field, wherever they may be. Choosing the right networks will increase the chances of obtaining the support you need to achieve your goals.

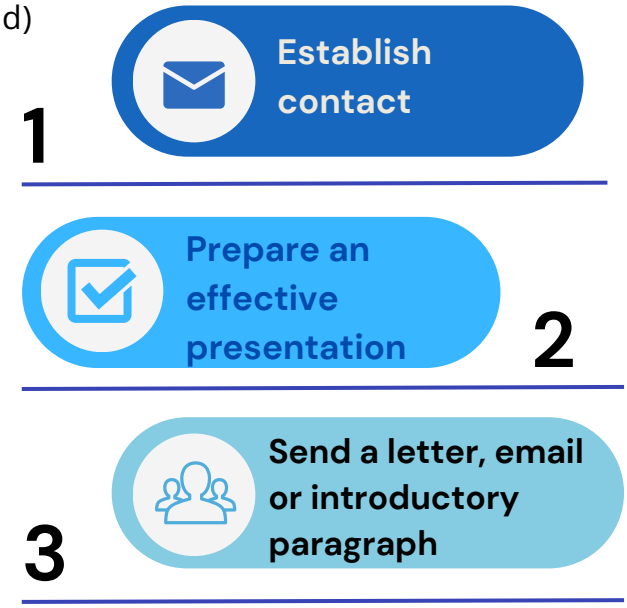
COMMUNICATION

This is the most basic, often taken-for-granted step, but it is far from effective if not done with genuine attention to detail. If you want to connect with other associations or organizations similar to yours, and with whom you wish to collaborate, contribute, and learn, it's essential to understand the associative landscape of your environment. You need to be able to identify—personally, geographically, and thematically—the other associations with which you want to initiate collaboration. For this to happen, there must be a genuine interest in knowing who they are and how they are impacting others, but also because you can introduce yourselves to the rest of the community and explain what you do.



Associations, in general terms, often lack communication and dissemination strategies for their work. It is essential to begin by considering communication (both internally and externally) as a strategic area and tool of action and organization for your association, directly linked to the achievement of its objectives. Like any strategy, you should invest time in planning it, assigning responsibilities, setting deadlines, allocating resources, and specific spaces, while respecting them, and finally, evaluating it.

Well, here are some steps to follow before you start connecting with others, and I'll also give you some examples (which can be improved) to get started.



a) Establish contact: Once you have identified relevant international networks, seek ways to get in touch with them. You can visit their websites to find contact information or search online for representatives or contacts in your country or region. If you know someone involved in those networks, you can ask for an introduction or recommendation to initiate initial contact.

b) Prepare an effective presentation: Before reaching out to international networks, prepare a clear and concise PowerPoint presentation about your association. Include your objectives, activities, and needs. Highlight the positive impact you have achieved so far and how support from the international network can help expand that impact. It's also important to demonstrate your commitment and ability to collaborate and participate in the network. Have this presentation ready in advance because if you manage to secure an in-person or online meeting, you will be asked to present it. Therefore, it's better to prepare a well-crafted presentation that makes an impact, with minimal text to keep your audience engaged and interested, just as you would like it.

c) Send a letter, email, or introductory paragraph: Write a personalized cover letter (addressed to the individual by name and their position within the organization) addressed to the international network you are contacting. In the letter, briefly explain who you are, what you do, and why you are interested in receiving their support. Highlight your association's achievements, specific support needs, and how both parties could benefit from collaborating with the international network. Ensure that the letter is clear, respectful, and well-structured.



Here are some examples of how to establish contact with relevant international networks:

CONTACT VIA EMAIL

LOGO

Dear [Contact Name],

I am writing to you on behalf of [association name] located in [country]. We are pleased to introduce our organization and express our interest in establishing collaboration with [network name] to promote the inclusion and empowerment of people with low vision.

[Association name] is a youth association for individuals with low vision dedicated to improving the quality of life for people with visual impairments in our community. We focus on providing support, resources, and development opportunities for young people with low vision to reach their full potential.

We have become aware of the exceptional work that [network name] does in the field of visual impairment, and we are impressed by the achievements and expertise accumulated over the years. We would like to take this opportunity to explore ways of collaboration and mutual learning between our organizations.

We believe that we could greatly benefit from your experience, knowledge, and international networks. We are interested in participating in training programs, exchanges of best practices, joint projects, and other initiatives that can help us strengthen our capacities and expand our impact on the inclusion of people with low vision.

Attached to this letter, you will find a presentation of our organization that provides more details about our activities, achievements, and focus areas. Additionally, we would love to have the opportunity to meet or schedule a call (via Zoom or any of these platforms) to discuss further how we could collaborate and how our association could contribute to the goals of [network name].

We sincerely appreciate your consideration and look forward to the possibility of establishing a fruitful collaboration that benefits people with low vision in our respective communities.

Best regards,

[Your Name]
[Position in the association]
[Contact Information]

Attached: Presentation of [association name]

CONTACT THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA

LOGO

I am a member of [association name], a youth organization for individuals with low vision in [country]. We are very interested in your work and would like to establish contact with you to explore possible ways of collaboration.

We focus on promoting the inclusion and empowerment of people with low vision in our community (please remember to highlight the most relevant goals). We have heard about the projects and activities you carry out, and we believe we could learn a lot from your experience and expertise.

Could you please let us know the best way to connect with you? We are eager to start a conversation and see how we can collaborate for mutual benefit.

We look forward to the opportunity to work together!
Best regards,

[Your Name]
[Position in the association]
[Link to your website or social media]

CONTACT THROUGH EVENTS OR CONFERENCES

LOGO

Hello [Network Name],

I had the pleasure of attending your [conference/anniversary/recent event] in [location]. I was deeply impressed by the work you are doing in the field of low vision, and I would like to take this opportunity to reach out to you.

I am a member of [association name], a youth organization for individuals with low vision in [country]. We share similar goals in terms of promoting inclusion and improving the quality of life for people with low vision. I would love to explore collaboration opportunities and learn from your experience and approach.

Would it be possible to schedule a meeting or call to explore areas of collaboration? I am excited about the possibility of working together and making a positive impact in our communities.

I look forward to your response and appreciate your consideration.

Best regards,

[Your Name]
[Position in the association]
[Contact Information]

CONTACT TO AN INTERNATIONAL NETWORK

LOGO

Dear [Contact Name],

I am writing to you on behalf of [Your Association Name] located in [Your Country].

We are a youth association for individuals with low vision committed to promoting the inclusion and empowerment of people with visual impairments in our community.

We have been researching international networks related to low vision and would like to establish contact with [Network Name]. We are interested in learning more about your work and exploring potential collaboration opportunities to enhance our initiatives and expand our impact.

Attached to this email, you will find a brief presentation of our association. We are open to any opportunities for engagement, training, or technical assistance that may arise from this collaboration.

We would greatly appreciate it if you could provide us with additional information on how we could get involved with [Network Name].

We remain at your disposal for any further inquiries you may have and look forward to the possibility of establishing a fruitful collaboration.

Best regards,
[Your Name]
[Position in the association]
[Contact Information]



FOLLOW-UP

Once you've sent the introduction letter, maintain regular follow-up to ensure it has been received and to inquire about collaboration opportunities or specific ways in which your association can contribute to the international network. If you don't receive a response, don't get discouraged and consider reaching out to other international networks.

GETTING TO KNOW EACH OTHER

Understanding more about others is crucial. This is where your inner Sherlock Holmes should come out. Investigate the practices, projects, and activities of the entities that have caught your attention and with whom you want to develop a network. Get to know their resources, newsletters, websites, blogs, podcasts – in essence, delve into their ideas, concerns, needs, and aspirations.

Dedicating exclusive time to exchanging experiences with other associations is paramount. Therefore, actively participate in events and activities to establish connections with an international network. This will allow you to meet other members, exchange ideas, share experiences, and learn from best practices. Moreover, participating in international events will enhance your visibility and help you build stronger relationships with other relevant organizations and stakeholders.

RECOGNITION



This refers to the possibility of feeling like members of the same entity, an organized society with common objectives, impacting the environment to transform it with shared methodologies. Through participatory action, facing the same difficulties, shortcomings, potentialities, and aspirations that allow recognition of one another above differences in their thematic and geographical areas of operation.

COLLABORATE



Moving from occasional assistance to stable collaboration. This means putting our resources at the service of others; increasing daily relationships and interactions, mutually aiding and reinforcing the achievement of objectives.

COOPERATE



Activating a global perspective to multiply the reach of action. Adding value through practice; being protagonists of shared achievements; taking significant steps towards the accomplishment of our mission, reaching beyond what you can achieve alone.

NETWORKING



When you reach this practice of joint participation, you can affirm that goals and objectives no longer have meaning, scope, operability, or reason for being on their own. Moreover, to carry them out, you need others, teamwork, common evaluation, and joint systematization of action. Enriching your own identity when you identify with others and approaching social knowledge construction from the network, managing and using it to operate productively on reality and achieve an interpretative consensus, an understanding of reality that guides agreed-upon actions.

The process of seeking support in international networks can take time and effort. Maintain a perseverant attitude and seize all opportunities that arise. International collaboration can provide many advantages, such as access to resources, mutual learning, and the possibility of having a broader impact on the inclusion of people with low vision.

As your association will be young, you may wonder how the network can benefit from collaboration. Here are some potential benefits that your association can offer them:

01

FRESH PERSPECTIVES AND NEW IDEAS:

As a young association, you are likely to have a fresher perspective and innovative approaches to addressing the challenges of low vision. This can bring new ideas and approaches that the other party may find valuable to enrich their own initiatives.

02

ACTIVE PARTICIPATION AND ENTHUSIASM:

Young or new associations are often full of energy and enthusiasm. Your commitment and dedication can inspire and motivate other members of the international network, encouraging greater participation and collaboration between parties.

03

POTENTIAL FOR GROWTH AND NETWORK EXPANSION:

The other party can benefit by contributing to its growth and development. They can provide guidance, share contacts and connect your association with other key players in the low vision field, allowing you to expand your own networks and reach.

It is incumbent upon you to clearly communicate these potential benefits when establishing contact with the international network and highlight how collaboration can be mutually enriching.

04

COLLABORATION IN PILOT PROJECTS:

Your association may offer the opportunity to collaborate on pilot or experimental projects. By being open to new ideas and approaches, they can be an ideal partner to test and evaluate new interventions or joint programs that can have a significant impact on the low vision community.

05

DIVERSITY AND REPRESENTATIVENESS:

By joining an international network, your association can bring diversity and representativeness to the network. They can share perspectives and challenges specific to their region or country, which enriches the global understanding of the needs of people with low vision and helps inform network decisions and actions.



"Many ideas thrive better when transplanted into a different mind than the one where they originated."

Oliver Wendell

ACTION PLAN

Chapter 5



"Youth is the hope of the future."

JOSE RIZAL

Don't think I was only going to provide information for you to look up. I've guided you so that you have a clear idea of how to create an association, and you've seen that it requires your active participation for a good associative project to be established, sustained, and endure over time, reaching, if you decide so, worldwide recognition. As you already know, your condition, which is considered uncommon due to the scarcity of people in the world who have it, implies that if you want to make changes, you must create the conditions yourself to carry them out, wherever you are. Not the other way around, meaning if you're waiting for conditions to automatically come to you, you'll be waiting indefinitely.

You're already young adults, or at least, if you're reading this, you probably consider yourself a young adult, whether you're 15 or 18 years old. The time when your parents took care of you and managed things for you in school or institute has passed. You've probably experienced the frustration that arises when the system doesn't adapt to your needs for accommodation. It's even possible that you've felt anger and discomfort because you're not considered in decisions about investments or technological changes, or because the minimum conditions in the health system are not suitable for you, or if they are, they don't benefit you at all.



I have taught you throughout this 4-chapter process (which I intended to be short, clear, and to the point) that complaining doesn't add much value, but actions do, and that the actions you take today will determine not only the quality of your future but also that of others who, like you, share this condition. Sometimes, you can work to make things better not only for your own benefit but also for those who will come after you. Do you understand what I mean?

Your life with low vision can be a critical issue if you don't have what you need to adapt to the environment you're in. You, yes, you, the young people with low vision who face bullying, rejection, and isolation, who live amidst the indifference of those with normal vision (although we may have our doubts about that), are the ones who must drive the change they want to see in the world, as I mentioned in Chapter 1. Just like Gandhi did, you need to cultivate patience, but above all, perseverance.

After reviewing everything we've discussed here, including the importance of taking the first steps to create your association and working in collaboration not only among yourselves but also with other organizations and international networks, I'll focus on what I barely mentioned in Chapter 2. In other words, we'll see here how to develop an action plan, which is a strategy, and what the priority tasks are. I'm sure you have many questions, and yes, I know you're excited, eager to start and make your association visible. To achieve this, you need to be well-prepared.

This chapter is about that. The movie hasn't started shooting yet, you have the actors, you have the management team, you know what this association is about, but if you don't have a clear strategy, you don't know where to start, all that enthusiasm can weaken, and you may find yourselves going around in circles. The action plan is what will allow you to establish order, clarity on what you need to prioritize to get started.

In the action plan, you will detail precisely how you plan to achieve your goals. It's the best way to systematically address them and keep association members, the board of directors, volunteers, and everyone else involved in this project focused and aligned with the goal. It's a popular project management technique that will help you outline exactly how you will achieve your objectives. Let's get started!

MISSION, VISION, AND VALUES

The preliminary step to legally establish yourselves is to gather to define the mission, vision, and values of the association. This acts as a logbook, a compass that will prevent you from getting lost along the way. In this manner, you can understand and define the steps you need to take and the order in which to take them. Apple and Microsoft are similar companies with significant differences, and each defined its mission, vision, and values with which they want to be identified. This is what makes two companies, associations, schools, hospitals, engaging in similar activities, look and feel different.

MISSION

The purpose of the association. The motive, the reason for its existence. It is defined in the present and must be specific. It answers the basic question of 'why.' A mission basically defines three topics:

- What the association aims to achieve in its environment or in the social system in which it operates.
- What the organization intends to do.
- For whom the organization will do it.

An example could be this: The mission of the Cool Youth with Low Vision Association is to enhance the quality of life of all its members through comprehensive support, promotion of inclusion, and fostering autonomy. We are committed to providing a safe, stimulating, and enriching environment where they can develop their potential, achieve their personal goals, and make significant contributions to society.

- The definition of its strategic objectives and philosophy is based on or supported by the mission; likewise, it will help you establish short and long-term goals to achieve the cause's mission, which defines the present and future activities of your association.

- The concept of mission is fundamental and must be in complete harmony with the vision of the future they want to achieve.



VISION

Vision is like writing a letter to the Three Wise Men. It answers the question of what they want to become. It's the goals they wish to achieve and provides a framework for what their association aims to accomplish and hopes to achieve in the future. Additionally, it enables the entire team to work together and provides direction to the organization. The vision identifies the impact they wish to achieve, so I suggest they think about the accomplishments they desire. The vision will enable them to achieve the mission and objectives. It's the passion that drives everything. The vision should be brief and easy to understand and remember, as well as inspiring. It should convey a triumphant idea, something positive that summarizes the goal they want to achieve in the next three years.

An example of their vision could be written as follows: "To be recognized as the association that promotes the inclusion, well-being, and empowerment of young people with low vision in our country. We will work every day to create a society that values and respects diversity, and where young people with visual impairments have equal opportunities to develop their talents and live to the fullest of their potential and well-being.

We aspire to be a reference point in advocating for the rights of all our members and promoting public awareness of their needs and capabilities."



DEFINING THEIR VALUES AND PRINCIPLES

Did you know there's a difference between values and principles?

Values and principles are concepts with distinct definitions, although many times people tend to take them as synonyms and confuse them. Both concepts refer to the behavior we assume within society. However, they do not function in the same way.

Principles are general and universal rules that society considers desirable, and according to which all individuals should govern themselves, such as the principle of freedom. They are the set of norms and rules that must be followed for harmonious social life, for any system to function properly. Principles are universal and apply to all individuals, existing regardless of whether they are known or put into practice. Moreover, they dictate human behavior toward the common good and are closely related to ethics; in fact, they are the basis of human values. Laws are also created based on them. There are at least 6 basic types of principles, including the principle of life, freedom, humanity, good, equality, and morality.

In summary, principles are a kind of guide that tells us what is right and what is not.

On the other hand, values are attributes or qualities that each of us perceives as positive, not universal but personal. They are attributes or qualities that we consider desirable within a particular culture. They are ways of judging or interpreting specific situations from moral or ethical points of view, chosen freely and personally.

All people have values, and therefore they can be multiple. They are not universal or immutable. The nature of values can be religious, familial, cultural, moral, economic, etc. They define the importance that each person gives to specific aspects of life and how we relate to others. When we act according to our values, we feel satisfied, and when there is no coherence between what we think and feel, we can experience great discomfort and feel burdened. We could say that they define us. In your case, the values defined in your association will help differentiate you.

It is important to understand that values are not static; they can change throughout life, with the experiences they will have. They are acquired from childhood through the education received in their family and at school or institute, but also arise from the legal or religious framework that prevails in the social environment where they interact daily.

There are several types of values: ethical, such as solidarity; moral, such as monogamy; religious, such as "God is love"; civic, such as respect; familial, such as gratitude; personal, such as being open-minded.

It is important for you to understand how a definition can help define the personality and characteristics of the association. Why? Because if you do not know what is important to you as an association, you will not know what you need and will not know what to expect from others (whether from members or from external sources to the association).



Values serve as a guide to know if you are close to your standards or as lost as a crab in a garage.

To know how to manage your association project and confidently showcase your services, you have to be clear about what you want with your association.

I am not only referring to the purpose of it (although that too), I mean, what motivates you? What invites you to continue each day? Why do you do what you do? What is the reason for that choice and not another?

Defining values helps you to self-understand and to evaluate what suits you, what you like, what attracts you, or, in other words, what you demand from others.

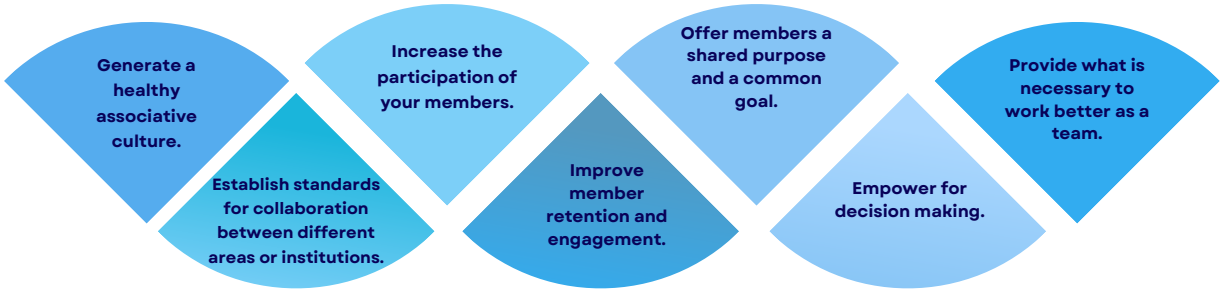
Keep in mind that your personal values serve as a mirror. When you say that a person is a certain way (for better or for worse), it is because you are measuring them against your own values. For example, if we say that someone is unpunctual, it is because we value punctuality. Something important I must ask of you: do not confuse your own values with those of your association, do you understand? One thing is how you are as individuals who are part of an association, and another is the organization or institution you are going to create. This happens in life itself; one thing is to be parents and another is to be children. As parents, you will have your own values, and your children will have theirs, and they may be similar, but they are not the same, do you see where I'm going? Let your values help you define those of your association, because remember that you are doing it to create a common good, where you resonate and truly feel understood, supported, and accompanied. But they cannot be a carbon copy to create the personality you want your association to have.

On the other hand, the values of your association can unite you with other associations similar to yours. For example, if you decide that you value the inclusion of young people with low vision, you can seek allies or collaborators in associations where inclusion is a shared value.

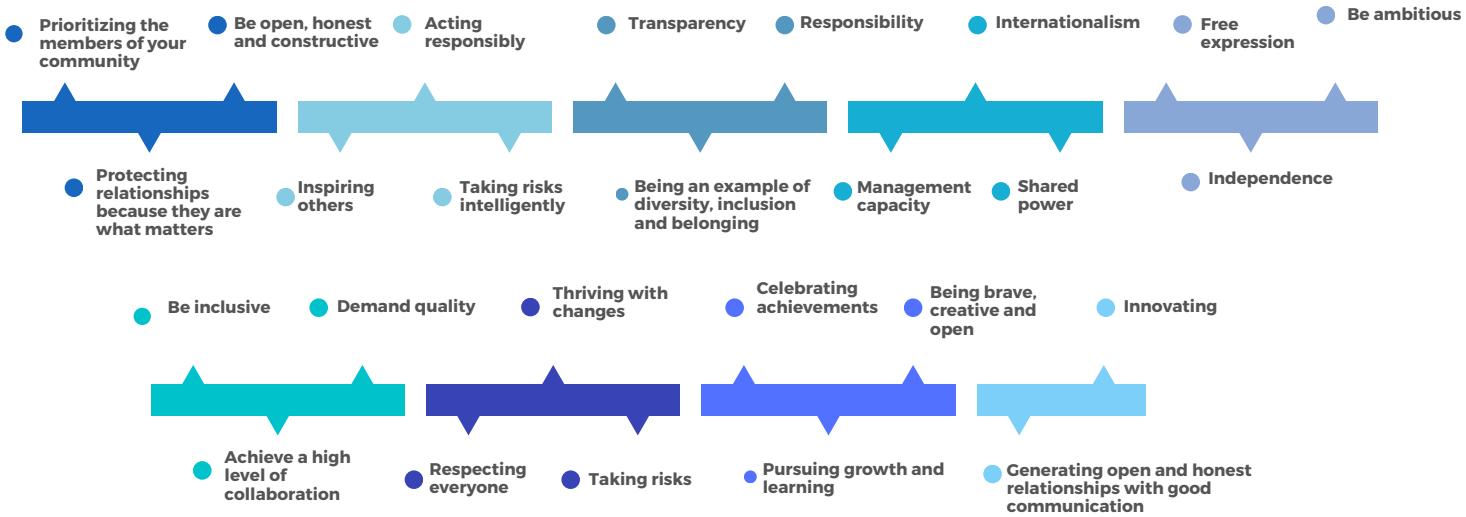
Having a variety of values in different categories is normal. They will always act as a guide for your understanding, but what I really want you to consider is asking yourselves questions like: Do these values empower you and bring you closer to what your association desires? Or, on the contrary, do they limit you in achieving the goal you want to reach? It is not necessary to collaborate with everyone, even if at first you want to make yourselves known; it is important to analyze it properly. I believe that questioning yourselves in this way is a way to stay on course as guided by your compass.

If you are aware of what you want to achieve with your association in a reasonable, lucid, and organized manner, you are more likely to be effective and successful. On the other hand, if you have never considered what you want with your creation, you will go about it aimlessly, without standards of what you desire. You will constantly judge what you do as bad and criticize your decisions, or lack thereof, and you will end up frustrated with your association project. Do you understand? The obstacle is the path, do not forget that.

In summary, defining solid values will help you:



How your values can be reflected, some examples:



And everything you can define, but that commits you, helps you, and doesn't exceed 10. These are just examples that should align with your mission and vision. They will help you plan the actions you need to undertake to create your Action Plan.

Action plans are used when you are convinced of the strategy your association needs and have a strategic plan (composed of mission, vision, values, and overall objectives) where strategic objectives for three to five years are defined, on which the entire organization will work. Once you have created a strategic plan, you can use an action plan to describe, step by step, how you will achieve them. In doing so, you will provide a framework for tracking all the individual tasks that need to be completed to achieve them.

However, action plans are not only used in strategic planning. You can also use them to systematically achieve goals in other areas, such as with volunteers.

Make sure to create your action plan in task management software; nowadays, there are several software options that allow you to easily share tasks and schedules with the team and track pending tasks completed. I mentioned some in the previous chapter. This way, instead of manual status updates and unclear deliverables, you will have a centralized source of information for everything you need to do to achieve your goals. With responsible parties, deliverables, measurements, deadlines, or achievements reached, etc.

Creating the Strategic Plan

What I suggest is that you start with a 3-year plan. To do this, you should already have a clear understanding of the mission, vision, values, and general objectives of your association. This process builds on what we discussed in Chapter 2 about creating an association from scratch. The strategic plan is an effective tool because it begins with a rational, reflective, and participatory decision-making process. The development phase, the moment of truth, is not just about paperwork and legal formalities but involves planned and effective actions to address the significant present and future challenges. This document should be dynamic, open to possible modifications, inspiring, and adaptable to the different realities that may arise during its validity.

S.D.O. Matrix and CAME Diagnosis

To start this construction, you should begin with your initial situation, meaning analyzing and highlighting the current situation to make the appropriate strategic decisions and determine the objectives you want to achieve and how to achieve them.

I recommend that you conduct a SWOT analysis (defining the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of your association project) among yourselves, which is an internal and external analysis that will allow you to define your initial strategic objectives.

This tool, invented in 1960 by the management consultant Albert Humphrey at the Stanford Research Institute, enables the analysis of the external environment and internal characteristics of any project. In your association, it allows you to obtain a graphical representation of:

Weaknesses

- They constitute the limiting aspects of the association's development capacity, due to its internal characteristics.
- Favorable internal factors.
- unique skills and characteristics of the association.
- What makes us stand out?

Threats

- They are all those external factors that can prevent the execution of its strategic objectives or endanger the viability of its execution.
- Obstacles and difficulties in the association's environment.
- Analysis of the competition.

SWOT Analysis

Strengths

- They bring together the set of internal resources, positions of power and any type of competitive advantage typical of the associative project.
- Internal shortcomings and limitations.
- What can we improve?

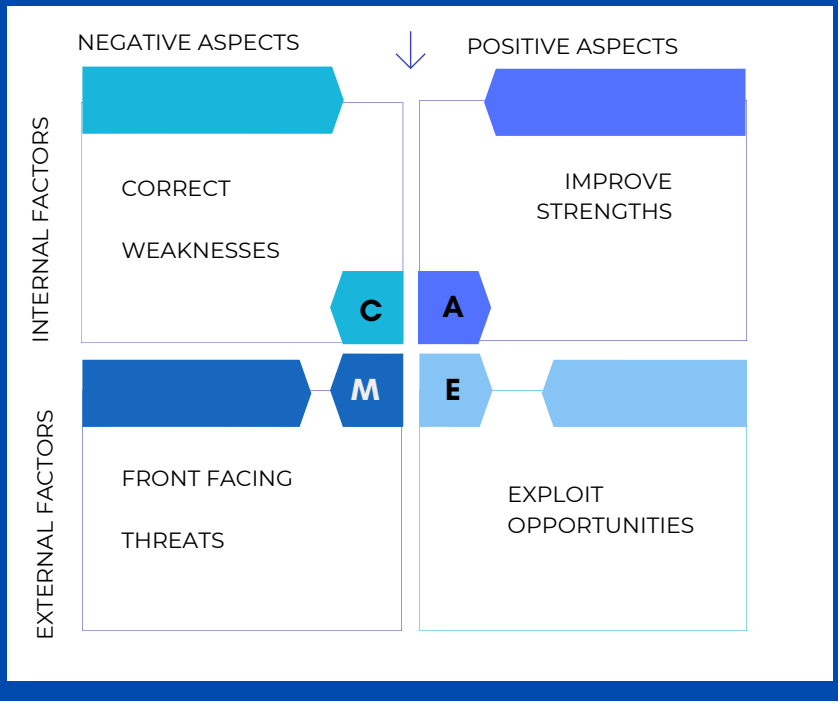
Opportunities

- They are the factors outside their association that favor their development or provide the possibility of implementing improvements.
- Difficulties in the association environment.
- What differentiates us as an association from other similar ones?

An interesting challenge would be for you to examine the reality of your association project in an impartial and objective manner. Since it is newly created, there are occasions when:

- **Weaknesses and threats that may affect you are minimized.**
- **Strengths are overvalued precisely because it is newly created, or there is an excessive estimation of the opportunities present in the external environment.**

The result is always the same. Unnecessary risks are assumed, either due to passivity in decision-making or because projects are undertaken without adequate guarantees of success. Therefore, what really matters now is for you to take action. If you want to have a truly complete vision of the reality of your association, one of the best techniques is to conduct a SWOT analysis, which will allow you to perform a CAME diagnosis, created by Albert Humphrey himself. As I write, I realize that this chapter will be full of acronyms, which I hope will help you understand and organize better. Conducting this SWOT analysis should be accompanied by this diagnosis so that those who are still unsure of how to make that declaration they signed in the constitution of their association a reality can feel secure, support the cause, and inject themselves with our famous passion!



Apply the CAME guidelines (Correct, Address, Maintain, Exploit) in each of the quadrants of the SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) as follows:

- Correct weaknesses: Perhaps being new as an association, you can find a good partner with experience or volunteer to learn and gain experience.
- Address threats: What will you do if they arise? Should the association come to an end? Are there alternatives? What are they? Develop a contingency plan to address them.
- Maintain strengths: so that you differentiate yourselves and your intentions are realized.
- Exploit opportunities: to turn them into strengths and advantages that benefit you.

Surely you can compare yourselves with some existing associations. In this way, it is much easier to realize that, for example, some supposed strengths of your association are not so relevant, as other associations also have them. That is why it is important to work as a team, to have a brainstorming session that allows you to differentiate yourselves.
The same can be extrapolated from the rest of the areas of the SWOT matrix and its complement CAME. When conducting a comparative analysis and diagnosis, it is much easier for you to realize the factors that are truly relevant and priority.



Setting objectives

Any team that has achieved something extraordinary first had to set goals to reach that achievement. Teams that set SMART goals can achieve great things, like manufacturing more efficient and sustainable appliances or making our oceans safer for whales and dolphins. When setting goals, they can visualize where they want to go and give their best to reach it.

But reaching an ambitious goal is not just about aiming for the stars; you also need a path to get there. That's where SMART goals come in. SMART is an acronym in English through which the basic characteristics of goals are explained. They should be Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Time-bound. This approach can help you define and set great goals.

With this method, I can assure you that all goals, from initial objectives to broader goals for your association, have everything they need to achieve them.

Let's get started!





S.M.A.R.T. method

S - Specific: Specific means that the goal must be formulated precisely. What is it that really needs to change? By avoiding unclear statements or overly broad and complicated descriptions, you ensure from the outset that the work is being done in the right direction. Ideally, a precise phrase should be sufficient for the goal using this method.

Practical example of a specific goal: Organize an event to raise awareness about low vision to increase knowledge and understanding among 70 members of the local community.

M - Measurable: The goal to be achieved must be measurable and evaluable. Only then can it be clearly determined whether the goal has been successfully achieved. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are of great relevance for this. You must define the criteria for evaluating their fulfillment.

Practical example of a measurable goal: Record the attendance of at least 70 people at the event and collect feedback to assess the level of knowledge acquired.

A - Achievable: The goals set must be achievable because the belief that they can be achieved can be a great source of motivation. In other words, the goals should be ambitious enough to inspire those involved to give their best. However, care must be taken not to go too far, or we may never reach the end of the tunnel. An achievable goal will answer questions like:

- **How can we achieve this goal within the time we need?**
- **To what extent is the objective realistic considering other limitations such as financial factors?**

Practical example of an achievable objective: The association will have the support of local partners and collaborators to organize the event.



R - Realistic: There's nothing more unproductive than setting an objective that lacks practical sense or won't contribute to growth. Therefore, SMART objectives must be relevant to the expected outcomes.

Practical example of a realistic objective: The objective aims to raise awareness and understanding about the challenges, potential, and capabilities of young people with low vision in our community.

T - Timely: The T objective of SMART refers to setting a deadline and a cutoff date to achieve the objective. Without it, tasks can be lost or delayed until they become unmanageable. However, a deadline may not make sense for all objectives, such as financial or technical goals.

Practical example of a timely objective: The awareness event will take place within the next 6 months.

Integrating SMART objectives into a plan offers many advantages. Firstly, it allows you to stay focused on the task at hand, knowing what needs to be done and when to do it to achieve success or learn from it. Additionally, it saves a lot of time, as the project is built on a solid foundation. SMART objectives enable you to better define your association's project, understand its evolution, realize its feasibility, and ultimately invest the right amount of time and money in it.

As a result of the report obtained from your SWOT analysis, CAME diagnosis, and using the SMART methodology, you are now in a position to establish your objectives for the next 3 years and generate various strategies to make the most of your association's circumstances. The majority of strategies to implement can be summarized as follows:

SURVIVAL

Which focus on facing threats, preventing weaknesses from increasing.

01

DEFENDING

Its objective is to preserve one's strengths and face the threats presented by the environment.

02

ATTACK AND POSITIONING

In this case, everything possible is done to make the most of the strengths, taking advantage of whatever opportunities the environment offers.

03

REORIENTATION

Sometimes it is necessary to change course, and to do so they have to take advantage of the opportunities that arise and thus correct the intrinsic weaknesses of their association.

04

Here's the translation of the example provided:

Strategic Objective: Provide emotional and psychosocial support to young members of the association.

Strategy 1: Establish a support and emotional guidance program. Actions:

- Hire a mental health professional to provide individual and group therapy.
- Organize support groups regularly for young people to share their experiences.
- Develop educational resources on mental health and acceptance of low vision.

Strategy 2: Facilitate the creation of support networks among young people. Actions:

- Organize social events and recreational activities to encourage interaction among young people.
- Create an online platform for young people to connect and share resources.
- Establish mentoring programs where young people with low vision can guide others.

responsible persons:

- Project Coordinator: Responsible for planning and coordinating the association's activities, as discussed in Chapter 3.
- Volunteer Team: Assist in organizing events and provide support during activities.



ACTION PLAN

1. What do they want to achieve and what are their expectations? What will they work for?

The establishment of these objectives will have been based on the formulation of initial hypotheses that broadly respond to three different scenarios:

- Pessimistic
- Optimistic
- Realistic

2. Actions to be developed to achieve the objectives: What needs to be done to achieve the objectives?

It is convenient to organize them by areas, projects, or types of action. Actions should be scheduled, at least quarterly, and preferably monthly.

3. Resources: With what, with whom, how many?

4. Methodology, operation: How should it be done? Control, monitoring, and evaluation.

How will the fulfillment of the work plan be monitored? What modifications are necessary to achieve the objectives?



ACTION PLAN OUTLINE

TABLE 1: OBJECTIVES (WHAT)

GOALS	RESPONSIBLE	ACHIEVEMENT DEADLINE	PRIORITY

TABLE 2: STATEMENT OF OBJECTIVES

ACTIONS	MONTH 1	MONTH 2	MONTH 3	MONTH 4	MONTH 5	MONTH 6	MONTH 7	MONTH 8	MONTH 9	MONTH 10	MONTH 11	MONTH 12
AIM 1												
ACTION A												
TASK A.1												
AIM 2												
ACTION B												
TASK B.1												

TABLE 3: ACTION PLANNING (HOW)

GOALS	ACTIONS	RESPONSIBILITY WHO?	COST HOW MUCH?	EXPECTED RESULT

TABLE 4: START-UP AND LAUNCH OF THE ACTIVITY (WITH BUDGET CONTROL)

GOALS	ACTIONS	RESPONSIBILITY WHO?	COST HOW MUCH?	EXPECTED RESULT

TABLE 5: CONTROL OF TASKS AND/OR ACTIVITIES CARRIED OUT

GOALS	AREA	PRIORITY	TASK	RESPONSABILITY	TERM	DONE YES /NO	RESULTS

TABLE 6: TASK CONTROL BY OBJECTIVES

GOALS TASK ACTIVITIES	RESPONSABILITY PERSON AREA	TERM	CHANGES	RESULTS



TABLE 7: WEEKLY MEETING MODEL FOR MONITORING TASKS AND ACTIVITIES

WEEK OF ___ TO ___

AREA	SERVICE PROJECT	GOAL	TASK	RESPONSABILITY	TERM	RESULTS

This is an example that you can improve according to your needs.

Lastly, to make this content more comprehensive, I include in this chapter two equally important topics: time management and costs.

TIME MANAGEMENT

Once you have clarified your priorities and established the best way to track tasks, we move on to the day-to-day management of your time to carry them out. For this, I propose a methodology that is better than making a checklist, and this is to block date and time for each task on your calendar. By this, I mean:

- If it's not on the calendar, it doesn't exist.
- Each task should have a start and end time (nowadays, with mobile devices, it's easy to do this for personal matters, so you can apply it to what you need to do in the association, especially so that if you share on the platforms I have suggested, your colleagues know when you are available).
- Break down large tasks into several blocks of delivery.
- Prioritize important tasks early in the day.
- Schedule three to five daily tasks and add ad hoc tasks (such as calls or sending emails). You can use Google Calendar.
- Differentiate your calendar by types of activities: not all activities have the same importance, for example, you can use different colors.



Of production

which are those that contribute to the strategies required for each objective to be achieved.

Strategic

They are all those that produce or can produce income and that must have absolute priority.

Generic

are all administrative tasks

Now, as you start implementing, you can see that if you have too many gray areas in your calendar, you are not focusing on what is priority. You can see this at a glance.

Create a system of criteria for accepting or rejecting new tasks to execute. You will learn from experience that not every opportunity is good if it brings distraction. It is not true that a single collaboration will change your way of achieving your central goals, so do not allow anyone to manipulate you into doing things that do not add value to your association project.

You can rely on these questions to help decide the type of opportunities worth accepting, and if they do not meet these requirements (and others you can determine), then you can confidently say no:

- Do we have time in our calendar for this invitation without it affecting our priorities?
- Is this aligned with the vision and style of our association?
- Are we accepting this only out of fear of missing out on opportunities?
- Should we overload ourselves with work to fit this opportunity into our calendar?
- Does this positively contribute to our strategic objectives, bringing us closer to achieving them?
- Is it respecting our values, conditions, needs?

By developing your own criteria system, you can feel more confident, trust more, consolidate better to develop actions, and not lose track, especially in the initial phase.



Even with the best organization of your time, there will be activities that fall through the cracks. That's why it's important to have days on your agenda or calendar to catch up. This could be a Thursday every 15 days, for example. This way, all responsible parties can catch up, and those pending activities won't distract them. It provides a designated time in the agenda to address, complete, or eliminate those tasks.

Finally, here are some questions to help you stay accountable for achieving your objectives. These questions can guide you in assuming your activities and actions each week. Initially, I recommend making this a weekly habit. With time and achieving early goals, it will become more organic:

- What worked well this week? Sharing successes empowers everyone and facilitates learning and improvement.
- What could have worked better? This question challenges you to identify areas for improvement.
- What was the easiest task to accomplish?
- What was the most challenging task?
- What activities should we continue doing, and which ones should we stop doing?
- What strategic activities were completed this week?
- Which ones were not completed, and why?
- What were the biggest distractions?
- How can we eliminate them next week?
- What were the moments of peak performance?

There is a limited number of activities that will yield the results and satisfaction you seek. Remember that the greatest satisfaction comes from finishing what you've started.

THE COSTS

Well, let's get down to business! Let's start with what you might need to get started. It's like going to the gym – the more muscle you have, the more weight you can lift. But be careful, you wouldn't go to the gym on the first day and lift the heaviest weights right away, you could get injured! You need to start with an optimal weight that allows you to do several repetitions correctly. The same goes for capital – you can't invest everything at once. There will always be unforeseen expenses, or perhaps it will take longer than expected to reach profitability.

You should aim for something well below your capabilities. If you have $20,000, it's advisable to consider starting with $10,000. You'll be more comfortable working with that, have room to maneuver, and be able to handle unforeseen expenses or emergencies.

EXPENSES

There are two types of initial costs. Launch costs and maintenance costs:

1. Launch: This is what you will pay (or assign a value to if you do it yourselves) once and it will serve as an initial investment for launching your association. Some typical items may include:

- Logo design
- Website development
- Computers, equipment, and software
- Initial raw materials: such as paper, office supplies in general.
- Incorporation expenses (if applicable in your country, fees must be paid)
- Taxes, permits, and notaries

2. Maintenance: This is what you will pay every month. If they are quarterly or annual, they must be distributed over the twelve months of the year. Some typical items may include:

- Salaries
- Rent for the premises or space
- Utilities (water, electricity, internet...)
- Insurance
- Loans or credits
- Travel expenses

And how are we going to achieve this? Is that the question I hear?

INCOME

Easy, you will have membership fees and you will need to develop activities that generate income to obtain resources. Oh, and what is the price that should be charged for it?

A very common mistake is that we often mix up 4 very similar terms: high price, low price, expensive, and cheap.

Cheap services/products: can have a high or low price.

High price: by offering something of great value at a lower price than usual, the perception will be of a "bargain" and it is ideal to start.

Low price: Offering services/products with a low price and also cheap, the minimum service at the minimum price.

Expensive services/products: can also have a high or low price.

- Low price: this is a strategy called "skimming", where early adopters pay high prices for the product or service offered, which will eventually adopt a lower price to maximize profits.

- High price: Offering services/products with a high price, they are premium aimed at an audience with high purchasing power, such as fundraising gala dinners at a hotel or convention center (all of this must be paid for with the sale of tickets). Another activity is auctioning off artwork from a talented friend who is a good painter, meaning here you have to carefully consider what product or service you can offer that can generate interest in your environment for people to participate.



You must be very clear about what can bring you income, for this you must know your environment, culture, target audience well, so as not to be blindly groping. One source of income is membership, but in my opinion, this should be inclusive. It is important that members feel welcome and have specific activities to generate the income they need.

BREAKEVEN POINT

This is known as the breakeven point, which is the minimum number of sales, trainings, activities, etc., for the profit to be zero. Let me give you an example:

The formula is simple and always the same:

Fixed Costs / (Price - Cost)

If you were to sell shoes, the formula would be represented as follows: (1000 / (50 - 25)) = 40

You would need to sell 40 pairs of shoes every month to cover expenses and start making money. Now let's introduce the salary of an employee (additional €1000): (2000 / (50 - 25)) = 80

The question you would ask yourself if you were selling shoes is: Is it feasible to sell 80 pairs of shoes per month? Or do we need to reconsider the price? Do you understand where I'm going with this?

Therefore, I recommend that you think about 5 categories of topics or activities that you can develop to generate the income you will need and freeze at this point. There are solutions for everything in this life.

THE CROWDFUNDING TOOL

Monetization largely depends on what you offer, and there's a market analysis tool called crowdfunding. It's a tool that allows you to study the market and determine if there's demand for your association's project. You can finance your project through crowdfunding while investigating its viability.

Thanks to crowdfunding, you can verify if there's interest in your project, as people will implicitly indicate if the price you're asking for your services is properly set or if they can even finance it. Even I, as a guide, am a project that has been validated and funded by a group of associations thanks to crowdfunding.



For this tool, the first thing you should consider is:

1. The Story: How and why you want to create an association.
2. The Goal: The amount of money to be raised to carry out the association's project.
3. The Reward: The service or product offered in exchange for each membership.

There are various types of crowdfunding, but since you are newly established, I suggest exploring:

Donation-based crowdfunding, where no return is offered to the people who contribute funds to the project. Therefore, these individuals are purely altruistic donors.

This type of crowdfunding involves no quid pro quo for the individuals financing the project. Fund donors do so solely to see the project funded, typically for charitable or humanitarian projects.

Donation-based crowdfunding is crucial globally, particularly evident during times of major crises caused by natural disasters or other events affecting specific populations.

Can there be a return in donation-based crowdfunding?

Indeed, there can be, but it's an emotional return for having helped an individual or group, and it can also materialize in providing donors with information on how the assistance has been carried out through the use of the funds raised.

Alright, guys! You've got everything now. I hope you have clarity on what it entails to work on your association, everything you can do, and how to do it; well, almost everything. Remember, passion is important. I'm thrilled to shed light on things for you, to be of service. In the next chapter, you'll get to see what an international project is, which might be very interesting for you. See you then.

WAYS TO MAKE YOUR PROJECT A REALITY: THE E+ PROGRAM

Chapter 6



"We are all in this life to make a long-term wish (or project) come true; anything else is just a mere distraction."

MARK ZUCKERBERG

As your Guide, I must tell you that you can find various ways to carry out your association project. This chapter aims to explain how one of them works: the Erasmus+ Program (European Region Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students), aimed at European Union member countries or associated countries. However, at the end of this chapter, I will also provide other information that you can investigate and consider if you are in Latin America.

As an introduction, I can tell you that **ERASMUS+** not only aims to promote mobility and cooperation in the educational field, providing the opportunity for students, teachers, educational staff, and young people to participate in experiences abroad. The program seeks to strengthen the skills, knowledge, and competencies of participants, while also promoting intercultural understanding and diversity. However, it is not just about educational mobility. Therefore, it is essential to pay attention and have a clear understanding of what can be achieved with this program from the perspective of an association.



As it is written in the program guide document, the link to which I will provide you, "The Erasmus+ program is one of the European Union's most visible success stories. It is based on the achievements of over thirty years of European programs in the fields of education, training, youth, and sports, covering both the intra-European dimension and that of international partnerships."

GENERAL OBJECTIVE OF ERASMUS+

As it is written in the program guide document, whose link I will provide, "The Erasmus+ program is one of the European Union's most visible success stories. It is based on the achievements of over thirty years of European programs in the fields of education, training, youth, and sports, covering both the intra-European dimension and that of international partnerships."

The overall objective of the Program, as stated in the document, "is to support, through lifelong learning, the educational, professional, and personal development of individuals in the fields of education, training, youth, and sport, within Europe and beyond its territory, thereby contributing to sustainable growth, quality employment, and social cohesion, as well as fostering innovation and strengthening European identity and active citizenship."

Benefits and advantages

The international experience: those who participate in the program have the opportunity to live and study in another country, which provides them with valuable experience to open up to the world, to know and feel other cultures and ways of life.
It is important to inform you which countries are included so that you have them in mind. There are, of course, the 27 countries that make up the European Union:

AUSTRIA	BÉLGICA	BULGARIA
CROACIA	REPÚBLICA CHECA	DINAMARCA
FINLANDIA	FRANCIA	ALEMANIA
HUNGRÍA	ITALIA	IRLANDA
LITUANIA	LUXEMBURGO	MALTA
POLONIA	PORTUGAL	RUMANÍA
ESLOVENIA	ESPAÑA	SUECIA
CHIPRE	LETONIA	ESTONIA
GRECIA	PAÍSES BAJOS	ESLOVAQUIA

The other six countries that are not part of the European Union but are part of the program are:

- **North Macedonia**
- **Iceland**
- **Liechtenstein**
- **Norway**
- **Serbia**
- **Turkey.**

Associated countries

According to the Erasmus+ website, these countries have been divided into zones, as practically you can go anywhere in the world.

You can find all the information on this link:

European Commission

Advantages of the program

- Personal and professional development: The program promotes the personal and professional growth of participants by helping them develop language skills, adaptability, resilience, and an open mindset. It's important to note that sometimes it's challenging to adapt to a new culture or even learn a new language. That's why the program guide explains these aspects thoroughly, including a list of potential obstacles. Its purpose is to serve as a reference for taking measures to increase program accessibility and reach people with fewer opportunities.

- Scholarships and financial aid: The ERASMUS+ program offers scholarships and financial assistance to help participants cover travel, accommodation, and living expenses during their stay abroad.

- International network of contacts: Participants have the opportunity to establish an international network of contacts that can be beneficial for their future.

- Improving language learning: Immersion in a different language environment allows participants to improve their skills in the foreign language. Although having a basic understanding of the language they want to perfect is recommended, nowadays, at least in European Union countries, individuals must have English certification to access various aids or programs.

Disadvantages of the program

- Competition and limitations: Due to the program's popularity, spaces may be limited, and competition can be high, especially in popular destinations.
- Culture and adaptation: As mentioned earlier, adapting to a new country and a different culture can be challenging for some participants.
- Procedures and documentation: The application process and gathering the necessary documents to participate in the program can be cumbersome and require time and effort. Many of these documents will need to be translated by an official translator, apostilled, or fulfill other country-specific requirements. Participants must have patience if they decide to take part.



PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

The Erasmus+ program (E+) indeed offers opportunities for mobility and cooperation in the fields of education, training, youth, and sports. However, it is not solely focused on education; it encompasses other areas and key action strategies as well. Here is a summarized and detailed explanation of the programs, services, and overall functioning of the Erasmus+ program:

1. AREAS OF ACTION

The E+ program is divided into different areas of action:

- School Education: Promotes mobility and collaboration between schools from different European countries, facilitating exchanges for training or research purposes, as well as the development of joint projects.

- Higher Education: Provides opportunities for mobility for students, academic staff, and administrative staff in higher education institutions. This includes study exchanges, internships, courses, and cooperation projects.

- Vocational Education and Training: Offers mobility opportunities for students and professionals in vocational education and training, such as work placements, training courses, and collaboration projects. It's worth clarifying that in the EU, vocational education and training are an alternative to university higher education, where students choose technical studies at medium or higher level, qualifying them for work.

- Adult Education: The program supports mobility and collaboration in the field of adult education, including the exchange of good practices, educator training, and participation in educational events.

- Youth: Promotes the active participation of young people through exchange projects, volunteering, and training, fostering active citizenship, intercultural dialogue, and social inclusion. This is my case; this is where I was born as a project for guiding young people with low vision. The partners of this project applied for and won this project so that you could be reading me today.

- Sport: Supports projects and activities related to sport, including athlete mobility, collaborations in the sports field, and the promotion of educational values through sport.

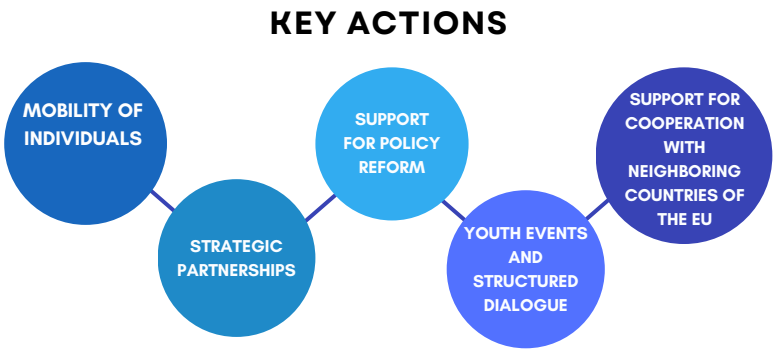


2. KEY ACTIONS

Within the E+ program, there are different key actions that focus on specific objectives. It is the way in which the strategic possibilities they offer are organized.

These actions are:

a. Mobility of individuals: It's one of its greatest advantages and that's why it's emphasized so much. It provides mobility opportunities for students, teachers, trainers, young people, and volunteers, allowing them to gain international experiences and develop skills that enable them to have better opportunities for professional and/or social inclusion.



It's the opportunity to step out of your comfort zone, out of the box, out of your country, to broaden your vision and open yourselves to thinking and acting from different perspectives. You have the world at your fingertips or, as the experts say, the sky is the limit.

b. Strategic partnerships: It promotes cooperation between organizations from different countries, aiming to develop joint initiatives (see? here's that collaboration among the partners of this project I was talking about), share best practices, and enhance the quality of education and training. This point is crucial for you. Strategic partnerships in the youth field, for example, support collaboration between youth organizations and other organizations to develop projects that promote youth participation, intercultural dialogue, non-formal learning, and active citizenship. Does it sound interesting to you?

c. Support for policy reform: It contributes to the development of innovative policies and practices in the fields of education, training, and youth through the mobility of individuals, exchange of experiences, and research. It's an interesting challenge when you have and want to make changes for the benefit of a collective.

d. Youth events and structured dialogue: Here we go again, something that involves me and you. It facilitates the participation of young people in events and projects that promote dialogue, social inclusion, active citizenship, and decision-making on issues that affect them. Projects can be presented requesting to learn structured dialogue with political institutions that make decisions, arguing that this learning can promote youth participation in decision-making and dialogue with political decision-makers at local, national, and European levels, addressing issues that affect them and seeking to promote their active participation in society.



e. Support for cooperation with neighboring countries of the EU and associated countries: Provides opportunities for collaboration with non-EU countries to promote international cooperation in the field of education, training, youth, and sports.

The conditions for approving a project with non-partner countries under the Erasmus+ program may vary depending on the specific call and the requirements set by the corresponding National Agency or Office. However, below are some general conditions that are usually evaluated when considering the approval of a project:

- Relevance and quality of the project: The project must address a relevant need or challenge in the educational, training, youth, or sports field in your region. It should have a clear, coherent objective and be aligned with the goals and priorities set in the call. The quality and innovation of the project are valued, as well as its potential contribution to the development and improvement of education and training.

- Coherence and European added value: The project must demonstrate significant and substantial cooperation between partners from participating countries in the Erasmus+ program and non-partner countries (you already have the list). The European added value of collaboration between different countries and the international perspective of the project are taken into account.

- Clear objectives and outcomes: The project must have clear, achievable, and measurable (S.M.A.R.T.) objectives, as well as concrete and realistic outcomes expected to be achieved. The coherence between objectives, proposed activities, and expected results is valued.

- Quality of design and implementation: The quality and feasibility of the project design are evaluated, including activity planning, work methods, management approach, and task distribution among partners. The capacity and experience of the partners to successfully implement the proposed project are also considered.

- Impact and sustainability: The expected impact of the project on participants, involved organizations, and the relevant field (country or region) is valued. The project is expected to generate long-term results and promote sustainability, for example, through result dissemination, transfer of good practices, and integration of results into educational policies and practices.

- Budget and financial management: The project must have an adequate and realistic budget that aligns with the proposed activities. The financial feasibility of the project and the partners' capacity to properly manage the allocated financial resources are evaluated.

Therefore, you may encounter associations or foundations that are members of the EU while you are located in America, and you can collaborate on a win-win project.



3. FUNDING AND APPLICATIONS

The E+ program provides funding for projects and activities through calls for proposals. Organizations chosen by the program, such as universities, youth organizations, vocational training centers, and nonprofit associations or foundations, can submit their projects and request funding to make them a reality, thus participating in the Program.

I am one of them, and you should know that I was born thanks to a group of associations with members with low vision who came together, presented their project where all collaborate, and have gestated and given birth to me so that you are reading me right now. What I want to tell you is that it is indeed possible to join forces with other associations or foundations, with universities or training centers, to make the changes you want to see in the world. The project that has given me a voice is called "TOGETHER FOR INCLUSION: YOUTH WITH LOW VISION FOR ACTIVE PARTICIPATION, AWARENESS, AND ASSOCIATIONISM IN THE WORLD."

The calls for proposals establish eligibility criteria, deadlines, and specific requirements for each action. Applications are evaluated based on the quality, relevance, and impact of the proposed project. Therefore, what you have in the previous chapters will help you if you decide to do it.

4. BENEFITS AND RESULTS

The E+ program provides its participants with numerous benefits and outcomes, such as the improvement of personal and professional skills and competencies, gaining international experience, strengthening networks and collaborations, exchanging best practices, and fostering European and global citizenship.

Furthermore, it contributes to the development of educational and training policies, promotes inclusion and equal opportunities, and fosters intercultural understanding and diversity.

It is important to note that the details and procedures may vary by country, as well as the specific action within the program. Therefore, it is advisable to consult the official website of the E+ program in your country or contact the institution or organizations responsible for the program to obtain more precise and updated information on how to participate in your region.

Unfortunately, as I mentioned earlier, but here I bring more options, the Erasmus+ program is not directly available for Latin America, as it is a program of the European Union aimed at European countries. However, there is a possibility for institutions and organizations in Latin America to participate in international cooperation projects with European partners.

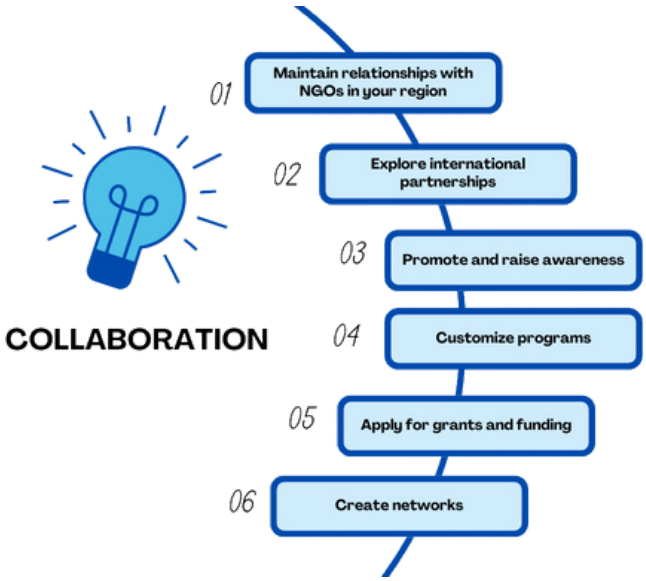
Here are some ways in which Latin America can benefit from the Erasmus+ program:

1. Partnerships with European institutions: Organizations in education, training, youth, and sports can establish collaborations and partnerships with European institutions eligible for the Erasmus+ program. These partnerships allow participation in joint projects, staff exchanges, student mobility, and collaboration in training activities.

2. International cooperation projects: Organizations in these regions can be partners in international cooperation projects funded by the Erasmus+ program. These projects involve collaboration between European and non-European partners, enabling the exchange of good practices, knowledge transfer, and joint implementation of activities. There is significant growth potential with this type of experience.

3. Collaboration with regional projects: In Latin America, there are associations and foundations that already have European partners with regional impact projects that have been developed with the Erasmus+ program. It is advisable to explore these regional projects and, if they are related to your association's goals, take advantage of the opportunities they offer for collaboration. These are just some ideas.

- Maintain relationships with NGOs in your region: Reach out to local and international organizations focusing on the rights of people with your condition or similar conditions and that already have projects that could benefit you. They may also have information about available programs and sources of funding.



- Explore international partnerships: Look for collaborations with international organizations, embassies, or foundations that promote projects aligned with what you want to implement. They may have programs designed to facilitate mobility and educational opportunities for young people with low vision. As I've mentioned in each chapter, the relationships you can establish and develop are essential for achieving your goals.

- Promote and raise awareness: Launch awareness campaigns about your needs and aspirations as young people with low vision in your region. Advocate for inclusive educational policies and programs that can benefit you.

- Customize programs: If you don't have access to regional programs directly, consider adapting or customizing existing initiatives to address your needs. Often, associations and institutions need your help and involvement to generate initiatives because they may not be aware of what you need. Working together with them is a strategy that can lead to more associations and institutions collaborating with yours. This could involve working with partners who have experience in these types of situations to create tailor-made opportunities.

- Apply for grants and funding: Seek and apply for grants from international foundations, development agencies, and organizations that support the inclusion of young people with this condition, as well as their development.

- Build networks: Establish a network of like-minded organizations, individuals, and advocates who share your goals. Collaborate to create a stronger collective impact. Keep lines of communication open with potential partners, donors, and stakeholders. Regularly inform them of your association's progress and the impact of the activities you undertake.



Remember that creating and expanding opportunities for the members of your association requires dedication, collaboration, and a long-term approach. Be prepared to face challenges and adapt your strategies based on the specific context and region in which you operate.



And, in Europe, how does it work?

The Erasmus+ program operates similarly in participating European countries. Here's how it generally works:

1. National Agencies: Each participating country in the Erasmus+ program has a designated National Agency responsible for the implementation and management of the program at the national level. These agencies are responsible for disseminating information, managing calls for proposals, collaborating with other national agencies from other countries, selecting and funding projects, and providing support to participants. In some countries located in the Western Balkans, Eastern and Southern Mediterranean, Central Asia, and Russia, there are national offices that perform the same functions as an agency.

2. Key Actions and Eligible Sectors: As you already know, the Erasmus+ program is structured around key actions and eligible sectors. Key actions are specific categories of projects and activities that can be funded through the program. These include individual mobility, strategic partnerships, support for policy reform, youth events and structured dialogue, and cooperation with partner countries. The eligible sectors encompass school education, higher education, vocational education and training, adult education, youth, and sport.

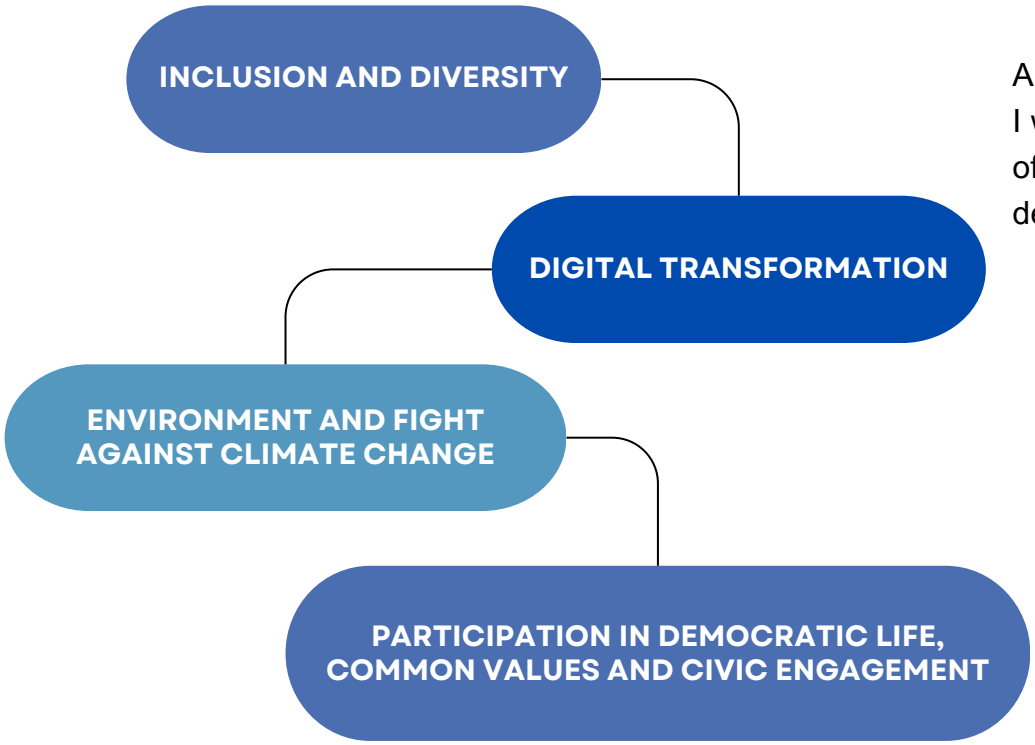
3. Calls for Proposals and Funding Application: The Erasmus+ program launches its calls for proposals specifying the criteria for evaluating the eligibility of your project, proposal submission deadlines, and requirements for each action and sector. Educational institutions, youth organizations, training centers, and other relevant actors can apply for funding to participate in projects and activities under the program. Applications are evaluated based on the quality, relevance, and impact of the proposed project.

4. Financing and Support: The Erasmus+ program provides funding to cover various costs such as mobility, travel expenses, accommodation, organizational support (if you submit a project, you can include salaries in this section), activity development, training, research, among others. Beneficiaries receive financial support to implement their projects, as well as guidance and technical assistance from National Agencies and Offices.

5. Results and Benefits: The Erasmus+ program aims to promote quality and innovation in the fields of education, training, youth, and sport. The funded projects and activities contribute to the acquisition of skills and competencies, strengthen cooperation and exchange of good practices, improve the quality of education and training, promote social inclusion, foster active citizenship (remember we talked about this in chapter 1?), and facilitate international mobility of students, educational staff, youth, and professionals.

As you can see, although there may be some disadvantages, its benefits and opportunities far outweigh the potential drawbacks. If your association meets the requirements, do not hesitate to take advantage of this incredible opportunity for personal growth!

ACTION PLAN



About each of these priorities I will provide a brief summary of what you will find in more detail in the guide:

- **Inclusion and Diversity**: The program aims to promote equal opportunities and access to them, inclusion, diversity, and equity in all its actions.

Organizations and participants with fewer opportunities are the raison d'être of the program's objectives, and with them in mind, it provides mechanisms and resources at their disposal. When designing their projects and activities, organizations interested in submitting their projects must adopt an inclusive approach, making them accessible to a diverse range of participants.

- **Digital Transformation**: The growing need to harness the potential offered by digital technologies for teaching and learning, as well as to develop digital skills for all. This is their top priority. Developing a high-performance digital educational ecosystem, by building capacities and fostering understanding in all types of educational and training institutions about how to leverage the opportunities offered by digital technologies for teaching and learning at all levels and sectors, and how to develop and implement digital transformation plans for educational institutions, which positively impacts them, considering that one of the barriers they face is access to educational material suitable for their needs. So, you know that you can submit a proposal in collaboration with other associations or institutions that allow you to create these spaces where the necessary textbooks for your learning are digital, as well as access to screens and other tools that allow you to feel included in the educational environment.

- **Environment and Fight Against Climate Change:** The Erasmus+ program will be a key instrument for developing knowledge, skills, and attitudes on climate change and supporting sustainable development both within and outside the European Union.

- **Participation in Democratic Life, Common Values, and Civic Engagement:** The Program supports active citizenship and ethics in lifelong learning; it promotes the development of social and intercultural competences, critical thinking, and media literacy. Priority is given to projects that offer opportunities for people to participate in democratic life, social engagement, and civic commitment through formal and non-formal learning activities. You can create beautiful projects that generate an interesting impact.

It is worth noting that this program was created to strengthen the participation of EU member countries and that its main objective when it was born was to strengthen the links between member countries.

WHO CAN PARTICIPATE IN THE ERASMUS+ PROGRAM?

Individuals are the main target population of the Program. It reaches these individuals primarily through the organizations, institutions, bodies, and groups that coordinate the activities. When a project is selected, the organization that submitted the application becomes a beneficiary of an Erasmus+ grant. Beneficiary organizations sign a grant agreement that entitles them to receive financial support for the implementation of their project.

Generally, organizations participating in Erasmus+ projects must be established in a EU Member State or in a third country associated with the Program.

Some actions are also open to participating organizations from third countries not associated with the Program, mainly in the fields of higher education, vocational education and training, youth, and sports.

The specific conditions for participation in an Erasmus+ project depend on the type of action supported by the Program. There are also various actions open to the participation of other labor market actors. For more information, visit the website: https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/es

If you wonder why this program does not exist in Latin America, there are several reasons why it is not available:

- Geographical Focus: Erasmus+ was designed to strengthen cooperation and mobility within the European region and its neighboring countries. The fact that the program focuses on Europe reflects the EU's commitment to enhancing education, training, and cultural exchange among European countries.

- Different Regional Programs: Several regions, including Africa and Latin America, have their own initiatives and programs aimed at promoting education, research, and exchange among the countries in those regions. For example, in Africa, the African Union and other organizations have established programs to facilitate mobility and cooperation among African countries.

- Diverse Priorities and Agreements: Different regions have different priorities, agreements, and frameworks for international cooperation. Although there may be some similarities between Erasmus+ and programs in Africa or Latin America, they are often determined by the specific needs and objectives of each region.

- Resource Allocation: The Erasmus+ program is funded by the EU budget, which is allocated based on EU policies and priorities. Expanding the program to include other regions would require additional resources and agreements.



Collaboration and Bilateral Agreements: Although Erasmus+ itself is not available in Africa and Latin America, many universities and institutions in these regions have established bilateral agreements and collaborations with European institutions, allowing students and researchers to participate in exchange programs.

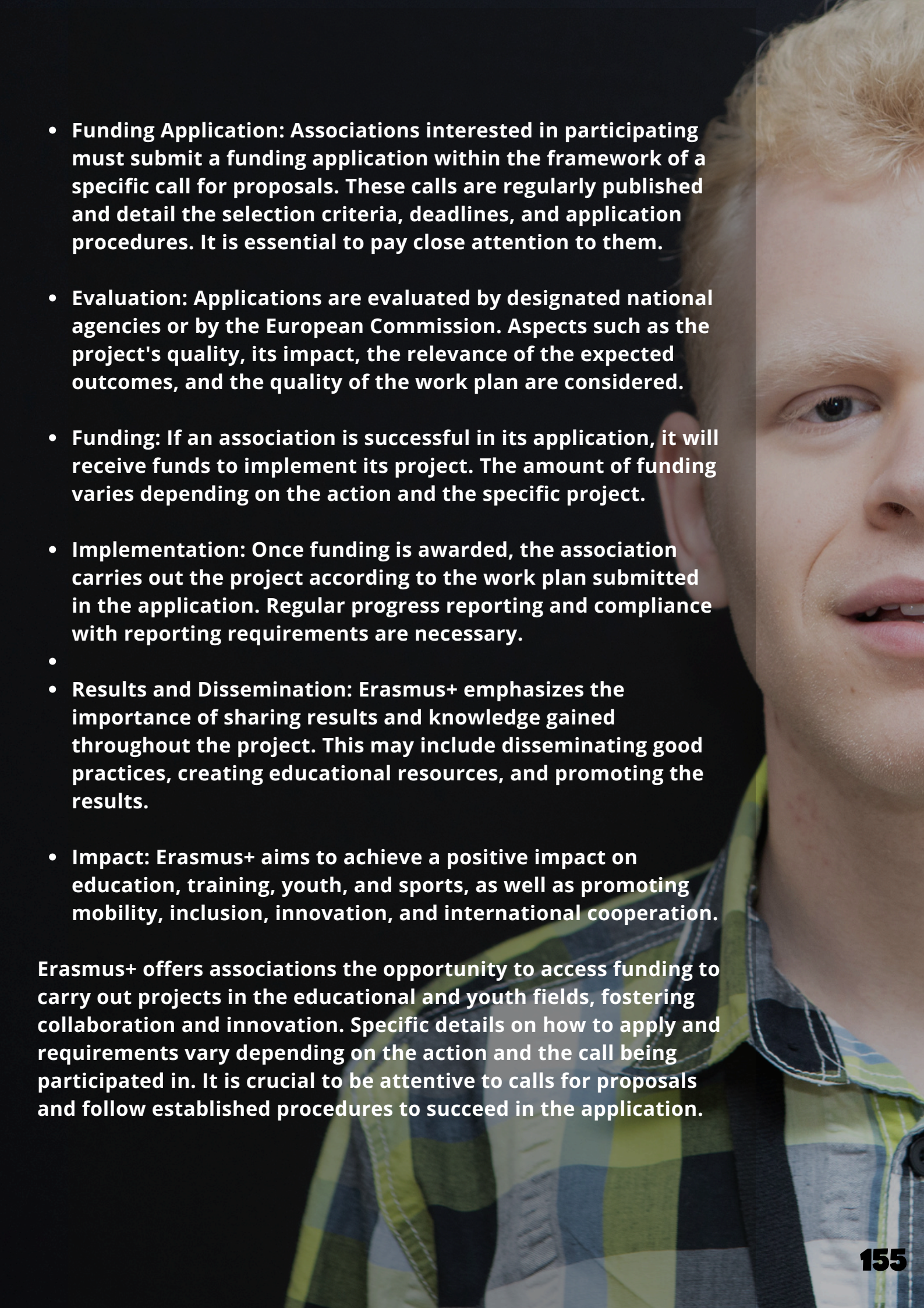
IN SUMMARY

This program offers funding and support opportunities for a wide range of activities in the field of education and training, including projects for partnerships.

Here are the key details on how Erasmus+ works for partnerships:

- **Eligibility: The partnerships eligible to participate in the Erasmus+ program are very diverse and may include educational institutions, youth organizations, businesses, local and regional authorities, among others. Eligibility varies depending on the type of action being undertaken.**

- **Actions: Erasmus+ offers different types of actions for partnerships, including Key Actions (KA), which are the most common for projects in the education and youth fields. Some of the Key Actions relevant to partnerships include KA1 (mobility of individuals), KA2 (cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices), and KA3 (support for policy reform). Each action has specific objectives and requirements that must be carefully researched and studied.**



- **Funding Application: Associations interested in participating must submit a funding application within the framework of a specific call for proposals. These calls are regularly published and detail the selection criteria, deadlines, and application procedures. It is essential to pay close attention to them.**

- **Evaluation: Applications are evaluated by designated national agencies or by the European Commission. Aspects such as the project's quality, its impact, the relevance of the expected outcomes, and the quality of the work plan are considered.**

- **Funding: If an association is successful in its application, it will receive funds to implement its project. The amount of funding varies depending on the action and the specific project.**

- **Implementation: Once funding is awarded, the association carries out the project according to the work plan submitted in the application. Regular progress reporting and compliance with reporting requirements are necessary.**
-
- **Results and Dissemination: Erasmus+ emphasizes the importance of sharing results and knowledge gained throughout the project. This may include disseminating good practices, creating educational resources, and promoting the results.**

- **Impact: Erasmus+ aims to achieve a positive impact on education, training, youth, and sports, as well as promoting mobility, inclusion, innovation, and international cooperation.**

Erasmus+ offers associations the opportunity to access funding to carry out projects in the educational and youth fields, fostering collaboration and innovation. Specific details on how to apply and requirements vary depending on the action and the call being participated in. It is crucial to be attentive to calls for proposals and follow established procedures to succeed in the application.

CONCLUSION

Chapter 7



"This is my secret. It is very simple: It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye."

ANTOINE DE SAINT-EXUPÉRY
EL PRINCIPITO

Visual impairment is not a disease but a condition that results from the alteration of the visual system, leading to a deterioration of visual function that cannot be fully corrected through conventional lenses, contact lenses, or medical intervention. In other words, it is the result of a pathology and causes limitations for individuals in carrying out daily activities. There is no cure for it.

This condition has various repercussions, particularly on a psychosocial level, affecting the family and social relationships of young people who have it.

In today's fast-paced world, where there is little time for reflection and connection, this reality affects not only young people with visual impairments but also all of us. Difficulties in keeping up with fast-paced classes, demanding physical training, or performing high-pressure work activities can have negative effects on young people with visual impairments and their surroundings. This may lead to feelings of inadequacy and economic consequences, influenced in part by negative beliefs and ignorance surrounding this particular and rare condition.

Here we see how a condition is classified as rare, as the criterion used to measure its incidence is the number of cases that occur, and because they are so few, it is referred to as such. By using the word "rare" in this way, it generates repercussions and perceptions that differ from person to person and can determine how it is faced.

Another issue is that due to its low incidence in the global population, professionals (such as doctors, educators, teachers, psychologists, entrepreneurs, politicians, etc.) do not have enough cases to conduct studies that would allow the design and promotion of campaigns to increase awareness and understanding of the difficulties and challenges faced by those who have it. As a result, political and social projects do not include them in their programs and budget allocations. First, because they lack clear and concrete support, and second, because there is not a critical mass to justify the investment needed to consider the solutions that people need. This means that young people with visual impairments must face lifelong risks of exclusion, personal and professional obstacles, often insurmountable, and they are unable to generate actions that would allow them to develop their talents and full potential.

Therefore, there is a significant gap in how to address this condition since only the visual impairments themselves are treated (macular degeneration, leukomas, cataracts, retinitis pigmentosa, diabetic retinopathy, degenerative myopia, aniridia, hemianopsia, and macular hole) as isolated cases (only 1 in every 100,000 people present it), which is insufficient to adopt measures that could improve the quality of life and well-being of those affected.

Another aspect to consider is the onset of this condition and the age at which it manifests, as this influences the psychosocial repercussions since the consequences of vision loss vary depending on the stage of life when it appears.





As is well known, the cycles of life development are directly related to the ability to acquire new learning and develop skills. Vision loss in the early years of life can affect a child's development, as the primary pillar of learning is the information obtained through the sense of sight. If vision loss occurs in later years, it can affect the development of autonomy and the social skills necessary for interaction.

Typically, young people with low vision lack self-confidence in performing daily activities, and it is the family who seeks resources or other options to help them achieve autonomy and ensure their inclusion. For this, they need the necessary information and attention so they can enhance the independence of these young people, eliminating acts of overprotection that only widen the existing gap. Unfortunately, in many countries, there is not enough information available, and in most cases, medical resources and attention are limited.

When vision loss coincides with entry into the workforce, the focus will be on the level of demand to carry out the activity and the risks that may arise for the organization.

For all these reasons and many others that you are familiar with and as we have seen throughout this document, we consider it important for young people with low vision to accept the challenge we present to them and create associations or actively participate in existing ones in their countries. This will allow them to develop a joint strategy to face obstacles and find solutions needed for optimal development of their current and future capacities.



This guide emerges as a tool aimed at raising awareness among young people with low vision, especially regarding the importance of forming associations to address the challenges of being born with this condition. Only by coming together can young people learn from each other's experiences, develop strong bonds, learn to overcome the trials of their daily lives, and empower themselves to decide, reflect, voice their needs, and take action to create the necessary conditions in their environment to raise awareness, shed light on their condition and needs, and build common bridges with their immediate surroundings to improve them.

However, developing bonds and accompanying each other on the journey is not the only intention that this guide aims to instill. The partner entities of this project know, from experience, that forming associations is the only way to raise awareness and educate about this condition, to secure collaborations with professionals (doctors, psychologists, technicians, teachers, entrepreneurs, etc.) and other entities that can support and provide the structural solutions that these young people need. This includes not only medical solutions but also educational, sports, and professional solutions where alone, it would be practically impossible.

The main challenge for the partners of this project is to inspire young people to overcome their apathy so they can create their associations or collaborate with existing ones in their country, presenting and leading projects that these associations have not yet covered, being active agents to achieve the changes that require their presence and participation. In many cases, they do not have consolidated public health services or associations/entities that can support them, thus increasing the psychosocial risks, risks of inclusion, access to resources, and necessary medical interventions for their proper development within society. There is much work to be done, and the strength of this new youth is necessary to strive for improvement in their lives.

The partners are aware of the risks that arise when young people resort to denial (as a coping strategy for this condition), hiding their condition and pretending to overcome the barriers created by society and their environment due to the lack of understanding about their condition. Fear and the effort to appear normal can lead to their exclusion, initiating a process of undervaluation where they may not see the possibility of finding within themselves the capacity to undertake an associative project, and often, their environment does not believe or create the conditions for them to do so. This guide aims to encourage them to do so.

In cases where consolidated associations exist, young people with great capacity for reflection, autonomy, critical thinking, and awareness of their role in seeking solutions that benefit them can be found. This is because they have been attending and participating in their association's activities, and these associations develop and promote their participation, overcoming the initial coping barriers. These young people accept their condition, voice their needs, are active, have strong and meaningful friendships, great empathy, and even develop life projects related to creating programs that promote the improvement of their conditions.

These young people find resources (not just financial ones) to develop a strategic plan that allows them to organize themselves, become elite athletes, participate in forums, formalize their meetings, which mainly occur to seek emotional support and socialize. This is the first step in generating the solutions they need. The process, slow and with normal ups and downs in human relationships, is generating a maturity that they recognize as the result of constant work and that brings visible results for these young people who urgently need success stories to continue generating actions. Unfortunately, we do not know many.

Throughout these pages, we have explored not only the tools and practical strategies to create an association and overcome daily obstacles but also the importance of self-acceptance and the development of a resilient mindset.

We believe that you, the young people with low vision, truly have a step-by-step guide here to take the leap and come together to create the solutions you deserve and that can facilitate the path and progress you need, not only for yourselves but also for those who come after you, and this, as you already know, will only happen if you come together.



Young people with low vision face daily obstacles and challenges in the world that can hinder their full and conscious participation in society, where they often encounter limiting expectations and stereotypes about what a person with low vision can or cannot achieve. However, throughout this guide, we have shown time and time again that determination and adaptability can overcome any barrier. You, as young people with low vision, have a world of possibilities ahead of you.

You are intelligent and capable, and we aim for you to be inspired and become influencers so that you can develop your full potential. Here is a summary of some of the main challenges we have included in the guide, as each one holds the solution within, and positive approaches can be generated to create those bridges and solutions through the creation of a youth association, inspiring awareness in your environment:

- Education: Lack of accessible teaching materials, such as textbooks in digital formats, classrooms with optimal visual supports (like the Duet Display program, which allows you to follow the teacher's whiteboard from your mobile phone or tablet), teachers not trained in inclusive teaching methods that take into account visual impairment, opening up a wide range of possibilities for training campaigns.



- Independence and Mobility: Difficulties walking in unfamiliar environments or using public transportation. In these cases, it is necessary for educational, business, and public transportation institutions to offer orientation and mobility training, as well as detailed information on accessible routes and adapted transportation. Once again, as you can see, the issue of culturalization, teaching, and training is an important pillar.

- Technology and Accessibility: There is limited access to adaptive technology and websites due to a lack of promotion and, of course, the absence of subsidies to access the necessary devices and required software that young people with low vision need. Another pillar, indeed. It requires, of course, everything you saw in Chapter 5.



- Stigma and Discrimination: Negative stereotypes and attitudes from your environment increase psychosocial risks. Training and education are required to generate awareness campaigns to change perceptions and promote inclusion. Promoting role models with low vision who have succeeded in other countries, which you can use as references or even generate a social project involving several schools in your area, could create a success story to add to the list.

- Employment Opportunities: Outreach campaigns are needed among the business community to facilitate understanding that low vision has no direct relationship with job performance, potential development, and goal achievement. Similarly, human resources departments should undergo training to enable the necessary workplace adaptations, as well as promoting the adaptation of work environments and providing tax incentives to companies that hire young people with low vision.

- Access to Information: The biggest obstacle is limitations in reading printed materials. One possible solution, with the creation of an association, would be to promote access to audiobooks (highly in demand today), reading aloud services (similar to those used by translators), and screen reading technologies.

- Mental Health and Emotional Support: Young people with low vision are at greater risk of social isolation and mental health problems. With an association, psychological support can be offered, and groups can be created to encourage attention and participation in inclusive social activities.

- Associated Costs: We understand the costs of including technologies in educational and medical care settings. Subsidizing or providing discounts for adaptive technologies could be projects of your association, as well as offering accessible medical insurance programs. You need interesting challenges so that your efforts are rewarded with solutions.

- Lack of Awareness: Lack of public awareness about the needs of people with low vision. Educational campaigns and awareness events that you can organize to increase understanding and empathy towards this condition are essential for achieving your goals.

Addressing the challenges requires a combination of approaches, ranging from adapting environments and technologies to promoting public awareness and training. Inclusion and equal opportunities are fundamental to enabling you to achieve your goals and thus contribute fully to society.

We want to emphasize that this guide is just the beginning. The journey towards independence and empowerment is ongoing. There will always be new challenges to face and new skills to acquire. We encourage you to constantly seek the knowledge and support you need to thrive. We are confident that you can find similar or sister associations with which you can even collaborate.

Furthermore, you are not alone on this journey. There is a community of people with similar experiences willing to share their knowledge and support. Do not hesitate to connect with other young people with low vision through local or online groups. Together, you can inspire each other and face challenges with strength.

Ultimately, remember that your vision extends beyond your eyes; it is your vision of yourself and your future that truly matters. You are capable of achieving your goals and dreams, and this guide is here to remind you of that every step of the way. Stay brave, perseverant, and open to new possibilities. The world is full of opportunities waiting to be explored. Go ahead, young ones, the future belongs to you! And it is not yet written!



This guide has been designed with a fundamental purpose: to empower you to face daily life with confidence and determination. What matters is attitude, perseverance, and the willingness to learn and adapt.

Furthermore, this guide is a living and constantly evolving resource. Technology and practices in the field of low vision are constantly developing, so we encourage you to continue researching and staying up-to-date with the latest innovations that can improve your quality of life.

In line with Erasmus+'s focus on inclusion, it is essential to remember that low vision should not be an insurmountable obstacle. Determination and self-confidence can help overcome any barrier, and this guide offers practical guidance to do just that. Additionally, by fostering connection with support communities and the constant pursuit of knowledge, young people with low vision can enrich their life experience and make the most of opportunities that come their way.

Erasmus+ is committed to promoting equal opportunities and the inclusion of all young people, regardless of their circumstances. This guide reflects those principles by highlighting the importance of self-acceptance, adaptability, and access to appropriate tools and resources. Young people with low vision, like any other group, have the right and potential to fully participate in mobility programs, learning, and personal development.



THANKS

Section 8

The present guide would not have been possible without the collaboration of the European Union and its co-financing through the Erasmus+ program.

Thanks to ALBA: Association for the Aid of People with Albinism for participating in awareness, collaboration, and research initiatives in various areas where individuals with the genetic condition of albinism face accessibility barriers. Also, for having this methodological guide for promoting associationism worldwide as one of its reflections.

Our gratitude to the social associations assisting individuals with Albinism and Aniridia, which cause low vision, in Italy (Aniridia Italiana), Europe (Aniridia Europe), Chile (Albinos Chile), and Argentina (Simplemente Amigos). Also, we appreciate the collaboration and assistance of the Redtree entity in this project.

Our thanks to Eurydice for providing us with an agile and reliable tool for identifying the legislative framework of the education system in the participating countries in the preparation of this guide.

Many thanks to all professionals and entities working for associationism, as well as workers in the third sector (social).

Finally, we would like to thank the young people with visual impairments resulting from their conditions and belonging to the entities participating in this project for contributing images and photographs for the layout of this guide.

AUTHORS

Section 9

PILAR PARRA RODRIGUEZ

Author of the guide.

She studied Psychology at the University of Bath, in addition to master's and postgraduate degrees such as a Master's in Emotional Intelligence or a Master's in Leadership Specialization from the Universitat de Barcelona.

Her extensive career with over 15 years of experience in project management in the field of Human Resources has specialized her in selection and management of training and talent development programs, driving organizational transformation, as well as in social project management.

Thanks to her background in organizational development, she has designed and delivered training programs for executive teams and leaders at various levels of organizations in Europe and Latin America. She has applied agile methodologies, ensuring efficient implementation and tangible results.

PABLO MONTORO SANCHIS

Editor, layout designer, and designer of the guide.

He holds a degree in Physical Activity and Sports Sciences, as well as a master's degree in management from the Universitat de València.

He is passionate about technology and communication, making it his work since 2021. He is a physical trainer and coach for individuals with low vision in the field of athletics.

In addition to designing the present guide, he is also the author and designer of the "GUIDE FOR ORGANIZING A CAMP" (2022).

MÓNICA PUERTO MUÑOZ

Reviewer and editor of the guide.

She holds a degree in Primary and Infant Education from the University of Valencia and has been working as a teacher at Escolapias Valencia school since 1993. She holds a master's degree in Management and Leadership of Educational Centers and is a member of the communication team at the Escolapias Foundation. Additionally, she is the founder and president of the Association for the Support of People with Albinism (ALBA) since 2006. Among other recognitions, she received the ONCE Accessibility Award in 2010 for piloting technological accessibility in the classroom.

She has not only participated in this guide but also in "Curricular Adaptation for People with Albinism" (2018), "Educational Environment for People with Albinism" (2018), and "Guide for Organizing a Camp" (2022).

JOSEP SOLVES ALMELA

Reviewer and editor of the guide.

He is a Professor at CEU Cardenal Herrera University in Communication. With a PhD in Information Sciences, he teaches at the Department of Communication and Journalism at CEU Cardenal Herrera University in Valencia. His research focuses on the relationship between communication, disability, rare diseases, migration, and refugees. He served as the director of the Rare Diseases Observatory (OBSER) of FEDER from 2015 to 2016, and currently directs the CEU ODISEAS Institute for Disability and Disease Observation for Social Accessibility. With over 30 years of research experience, he is also the Vice President of the Association for the Support of People with Albinism (ALBA) since 2006.

Moreover, he is the author of 5 published books on dissemination in his field.