Organizational Capacity Analysis Tool (OCAT)

Operational Guidelines and Tools
Revised July 2023

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OCAT OPERATIONAL GUIDE

1. BACKGROUND:

Every 18 months, the Freedom Fund facilitates a process by which partners reflect on the Organizational Capacity Analysis Tool (OCAT). This enables organizations to reflect on organisational strengths and areas for improvement. The Program Advisors of the Freedom Fund anchor this process for each partner. A small and separate funding allocation is available to each partner, Funding for this process is specifically allocated within the Freedom Fund grants to partners. The purpose of this document is to guide OCAT facilitators in taking partners through the OCAT.

2. PURPOSE:

The OCAT is designed to support partners to create a capacity enhancement plan to support overall organizational growth. Unlike the due diligence phase, which focuses on assessing risks and opportunities for a specific project, the OCAT provides a comprehensive analysis of the entire organization. It is important not to duplicate other organizational analysis processes within the OCAT. For instance, information from the financial review or the due diligence informs the OCAT are conducted separately but in a complementary manner to the OCAT process.

3. TIMELINE & FREQUENCY:

The OCAT is conducted every 18 months to assess the effectiveness of past actions, evaluate the progress made in capacity building, and identify any new areas that require strengthening. At the end of the 18-month implementation period, partners are requested to provide a brief reflection on the progress achieved in their selected priority areas.

4. USING THE TOOL:

The OCAT process is expected to take no more than ten hours and is conducted every 18 months.

The OCAT process includes:

- 1 hour of preparation by the facilitator and pre-reflection by the partner
- 6 to 7 hours of on-site facilitation by the facilitator (excluding lunch/breaks)
- 1 hour for summary and analysis by the facilitator
- 1 hour of follow-up communication between the facilitator and the partner, aiming to agree on the capacity building plan.

The purpose of this document is to serve as an operational guide for OCAT facilitators, assisting them in guiding partners through the tool effectively.

5. BEFORE THE ONSITE VISIT:

- Introducing the OCAT to partners can be effectively done during Community of Practice meetings.

- In order to introduce the OCAT to partners, they will be sent a cover letter detailing the purpose, process, and visit schedule. The letter will explicitly state that funding is not dependent on the analysis results, emphasizing that the focus is on identifying areas for organizational growth and development. We recommend involving four to seven staff members during the on-site analysis, including the organization's director, program staff, finance/operations staff, and a member of the field staff team. Additionally, considering the inclusion of a board member and staff with diverse perspectives can be beneficial for a comprehensive assessment. (Refer to OCAT Sample Cover Letter for guidance.)

- Prior to the on-site visit, the OCAT facilitator should establish communication with the organization's leader. This step is crucial to discuss the purpose of the OCAT and understand the organization's expectations from the process. Ensuring the organization's leadership is fully engaged and supportive before the on-site visit is essential.

- Before the on-site visit, the facilitator provides the partner with the following:

    - **Pre-Site Visit Reflection and Document Checklist.** This must be completed and returned to the facilitator one week prior to the visit. The organization's leadership should share the completed reflection with all staff participating in the analysis to ensure everyone is prepared. It is recommended that the partner gathers relevant documents before the visit, although the facilitator may not review them during the on-site visit. (See Pre-Site Visit Reflection and Document Checklist.)

    - **OCAT Tool.** All participating staff should review the OCAT tool in advance to be familiar with the topics to be discussed during the meeting and to have time to prepare their input. The organization may consider holding a staff meeting to discuss the tool in preparation for the OCAT. (See OCAT Tool.)

- In preparation for the on-site OCAT, the facilitator conducts an informal pre-visit analysis of the organization using their existing knowledge and the partner's filled-in reflection document. They identify areas of strength and potential gaps to be discussed during the visit. (See OCAT Pre-site Visit Facilitator Reflection.)

- The facilitator arranges for a notetaker to accompany them on each site-visit. The notetaker can be someone familiar with the program from outside the organization or a staff member of the partner organization. The notetaker will also be responsible for timekeeping throughout the day.

6. DURING THE ONSITE VISIT:

- The facilitator holds discretion in determining the participation of individuals in discussions for each dimension of the OCAT, deciding on-site on a case-by-case basis. Depending on the questions within each dimension, the facilitator may conduct separate or joint discussions with relevant staff members.

    - For instance, during fundraising discussions, a member of the fundraising team should be present. In the case of leadership discussions, the facilitator may encourage staff to speak more openly by asking the leader to step out if necessary.

    - At the outset of the meeting, the facilitator allocates 10 to 15 minutes to explain the purpose of the OCAT, provide an overview of the process, and briefly describe each OCAT dimension.

    - Throughout the meeting, relevant documents and the pre-visit reflection document are reviewed to identify potential capacity-building needs in each dimension.

    - During the on-site visit, the facilitator, along with the partner organisation, completes reflections and scores. The administration of the OCAT tool generally takes 6 to 7 hours, lasting no more than one full day, with breaks for lunch and tea (lunch is covered by The Freedom Fund for full-day meetings). If a full-day visit is planned, Dimension 5 should be addressed by lunchtime.

    - Due to time constraints, the facilitator need not go through the guiding principles outlined in the OCAT tool one-by-one, but they should be utilized as a guiding reference for facilitation.

- During the last hour of the on-site visit, the focus should be on the following key activities:

    - **Reflections:** Allow partners to reflect on the scores in each dimension and further develop their thoughts after discussing the OCAT. This time can also be used to consider and discuss any areas for development identified through other processes that were not addressed in the OCAT.

    - **Prioritisation:** Jointly identify key gaps and areas for improvement, including strengths that the organization wants to build upon for accelerated success. Additionally, address areas for development that were not covered in the OCAT but have been identified by the organization itself.

- **Action items:** Develop a list of prioritized capacity building actions, indicating when the partner can undertake them independently and when additional technical or financial support may be required. Note that this list is meant to inform the capacity building plan and is not a final commitment by the partner. More internal conversations may be needed by both parties to finalize the plan. By the end of the on-site visit, the following should be completed:

    - The OCAT tool should be filled out by the facilitator and the partner, ensuring mutual understanding and agreement on the scores.

    - A draft list of prioritized action items should be prepared, to be confirmed and mutually agreed upon within the agreed timeframe.
    - The facilitator should share the capacity building plan template with the partner and provide instructions for filling it out. A deadline for returning the completed capacity building plan should be set, and the final plan will be completed and agreed upon at a later time.

7. FOLLOWING THE VISIT:

- The facilitator completes the OCAT and compiles final notes based on the visit, including discussions on addressing identified gaps and leveraging strengths.

- Subsequently, the facilitator shares the completed tool with the partner for review. The facilitator may also seek input from colleagues to clarify any additional questions before finalizing the tool. During this phase, discussions about capacity building actions that the Freedom Fund can financially support are conducted, and any red flags observed during the OCAT process are addressed.

- A follow-up meeting, either through a phone call or on-site visit, is scheduled with the partners to mutually agree on a list of proposed actions they wish to undertake. The final capacity building plan and utilization of the allocated budget are confirmed. Ideally, this should be completed within one month of finishing the tool. (See OCAT Capacity Building Plan Template.)

- The facilitator proactively monitors progress against the capacity building plan.

- Formal follow-up visits with each partner are scheduled every 18 months to assess progress against the capacity enhancement plan and repeat the capacity building tool to identify new areas of need.

8. OCAT FOLLOW-UP VISIT

- The OCAT process is conducted every 18 months, and during the follow-up visit, both partners and facilitators evaluate the partners' progress.

- Partners are requested to self-evaluate their progress using the OCAT Partner's Reflection Form, which assesses whether they have completed planned activities, evaluates their progress in improving capacity in chosen priority areas, and provides reflections on the process.

- Partners should complete and submit the form prior to the follow-up visit, with no strict time limit after a round has finished.

- Simultaneously, the facilitator will fill out the OCAT Facilitator Evaluation form, evaluating partners' progress in improving capacity in their chosen priority areas. The form is for internal use only and is not intended to be shared with partners. The facilitator will provide comments on successes, lessons learned, areas for improvement, or action points for the next OCAT round.

- The facilitator is responsible for completing the OCAT Facilitator Evaluation form. This form allows the facilitator to assess the partners' progress in enhancing their capacity in their selected priority areas and provide feedback on successes, lessons learned, areas for improvement, or action points for the next OCAT round. The form is confidential and not intended to be shared with the partners. (See Program Advisor Evaluation form.)

9. CAPACITY ENHANCEMENT PLAN & BUDGET

The effectiveness of the OCAT is enhanced when grantee partners have access to dedicated capacity building funds that can be utilized to implement their capacity building plans.

- During the OCAT process, partners may identify areas of capacity building that fall into different categories:

    - Actions that require limited-to-no external technical or financial inputs, such as including more women on their board of directors. Partners can directly implement these actions.

    - Actions that require small financial inputs. Ideally, partners should have dedicated capacity building funding within their existing grants to address these needs.

    - Actions that require more substantial technical or financial support, which can be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

- If a partner faces challenges in identifying solutions for their capacity building needs, the OCAT facilitator can refer them to relevant resources or services.
- Additionally, facilitators may offer additional training or support from specialty service providers based on needs identified through the OCAT process.

10. FLOW CHART

A. Pre OCAT-Administration
<u>30 days before:</u> Introduce the concept of OCAT: ● Explain them individually. ● If there is an opportunity of informing during "Community of Practice" meeting, then utilize that. Note: Please make sure your talking points ready before introducing OCAT.
<u>25 days before</u> ● Send the cover letter after your review, make local customization if needed (in case any changes are made then please run this through with "Opportunity Hub" Team for their final review) Reference: OCAT Sample Cover Letter
<u>20 days before:</u> Discuss with organization head on planning/preparation and explain again the purpose and expected output of the process.
<u>15 days before:</u> ● Share the Pre-Site Visit Reflection and Document Checklist to partner. This document should be shared with all participants who are part of the OCAT discussion. ● Receive the Due Diligence, Safeguarding and other relevant documents from different departments of FF.
<u>7 days before:</u> ● Pre-Site Visit Reflection and Document Checklist should be received back to FF team for their own review. ● Get the list of participants from organizations along with their names, designation, and department. ● Share the OCAT Tool document to all participating staffs for preparing their thoughts. You can also ask partners to decide holding a meeting to discuss the tool
<u>3 days before:</u> ● Review of DD, safeguarding and other relevant documents and prepare findings and keep ready to discuss during OCAT administration process. ● Complete the informal pre-visit analysis of the organization based on the existing knowledge and review of the reflection document filled by partner in OCAT Pre-site Visit Facilitator Reflection Document.

- Arrange a note-taker to accompany on site-visit. The note-taker can be someone outside of the organization who is familiar with program or a staff member of the organization.

B. During OCAT Administration

Before beginning on the day:

Define different dimensions of the meeting:

- Purpose of the meeting
- Overview of the process
- Duration of the process
- Description of each step of Organization Capacity Assessment Process

Note: it is advisable to prepare a note well in advance for covering above points.

The facilitator can adapt the process during the on-site visit based on the specific circumstances. For example, they may choose to conduct individual meetings or group discussions, depending on the topic being discussed. For instance, during discussions on leadership, the facilitator may request that leaders step out to encourage open and uninhibited participation from other staff members.

Working on Dimension:

- Review the pertinent documents and pre-visit reflection document for each dimension, identifying capacity building needs within each.
- Thoroughly discuss the provided standards and guiding principles, utilizing them as a facilitation guide.
- Collaboratively complete the reflection and scoring process with participants after each dimension discussion.

The overall discussion is expected to take approximately 6 to 7 hours.
Note: Prior to commencing the facilitation, please ensure that all relevant documents, particularly those specified in the policy sections, are obtained well in advance.

In the last hour of the session:

- Reflection: Review and score the reflection points for each dimension, ensuring that any capacity building areas not covered are identified and included within the respective dimension.
- Prioritization: Identify key gaps and areas for improvement, taking into consideration any areas that may not have been covered in the OCAT.
- Action: Collaboratively develop a list of capacity building actions, outlining the technical and financial support required.

Note: It is important to note that the capacity building action list is not the final version and will need to be reviewed by the board, leaders, and participants at a later stage.
Note: Please use the Capacity Building Plan Template for preparation of plan.

By the end of the day:

Following should be achieved:

- The OCAT tool should be completed by the facilitators with the consent of the participants.
- All participants should feel comfortable with the reflections and scores for each dimension.
- A draft list of prioritized action plans should be developed, including an agreed timeframe and the necessary resources (financial and technical) required for implementation.
- All relevant documents should be filled out and agreed upon by the participants.

C. Post OCAT Administration

Within 15 days:

- A final review of the OCAT tool and prepare final notes based on the visit.
- Share the complete tool with partners, the FF line manager, and the Opportunity Hub team for reference.
- Identify any red flags or concerns that were observed during the OCAT process within the FF team.

Within 15 to 30 days:

- Schedule a follow-up meeting, either through a phone call or an on-site visit, to discuss and determine a list of actions, funding requirements, execution plan, and support needed.
- Share the final capacity building plan with the Opportunity Hub Team. Please utilize the provided Capacity Building Plan template.

Note: Please use the Capacity Building Plan template.

Follow up of OCAT- Every 9 Months (Twice in 18 months):

- During monitoring visits, informally assess the progress made on the capacity building plan.
- Conduct a formal review with partners to evaluate the progress on the capacity building plan after 9 months from the completion of the first OCAT.
- Share a Progress Report-Capacity Building Plan Template with the Opportunity Hub Team

Next Steps:

- Repeat the Organizational Capacity Analysis process every 18 months.
- Initiate discussions with the Opportunity Hub team two months in advance.
- Conduct a joint evaluation of the progress made on the capacity building plan.
- Partners should self-evaluate their progress using the Partner's Reflection Form.
- Partners are required to fill out and share the Partner's Reflection Form with the FF team for reference.
- Share the OCAT Partner Reflections form and the OCAT Program Advisor Evaluation form with the line manager and Opportunity Hub team.
- Follow the same process as outlined in the OCAT Pre-During and Post boxes.

Note***: please don't share the OCAT PA Program Advisor Evaluation Form with partners.***

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