



**CHANGES IN EPF MANAGEMENT
PROCESSES SINCE 2007.
EPF INNOVATIVE APPROACH
TO MANAGEMENT**



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**EURASIA
PARTNERSHIP
FOUNDATION**

Eurasia Partnership Foundation's (EPF) guiding vision is a South Caucasus that is peaceful, conflict free and cooperative with civically engaged citizens, socially responsible businesses, and sustainable, accountable and effective third sector organizations. EPF works on critical thinking issues and alternative education methods for many. EPF unites a team of highly motivated civil society and thought leaders and public figures, who dismantle the stereotypes in their daily activities and participate in building the correct development path for Armenia. As a 'think and do tank', which works the full circle, from policy advice to implementation, and whose remit covers a very significant part of civil society and state reform, EPF considers it a priority to boost the critical thinking agenda in Armenia.

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Critical Thinking (CrT)

War and Peace (WP)

Civil Society (CS)

Education, methodology of history, culture and values (EMHCV)

CHANGES IN EPF MANAGEMENT PROCESSES SINCE 2007. EPF INNOVATIVE APPROACH TO MANAGEMENT

In 2007, after becoming a locally-registered Foundation – an upgrade from its previous status as a representative office of the US-based Eurasia Foundation, (EF) in Armenia - Eurasia Partnership Foundation (EPF Armenia) had to undergo several changes in management structure, style and philosophy. Having no more core funds provided by USAID, EPF had to become a fundraising organization in order to survive. Beforehand, 85% of the Foundation's personnel time was devoted to grant-making and 15% to program implementation aside from grant-making; since the change, fundraising was added to every EPF position's job description. Additionally, the nature of program implementation changed: now EPF could not be a purely grant-making organization any more, therefore it had to utilize the expertise of its staff, partners, and external experts, to design and implement projects, within which the grant-making tool was retained. Grant-making went from being a pure support to local NGOs to a much more advanced tool. It gave a possibility of establishing and maintaining partnerships, building NGOs' capacities, as well as a possibility to accumulate expertise and engage in the activities of the grantees. While EF/EPF worked on grantee capacity building before 2007, since 2007 the building of grantees' capacities became another large and deep area of knowledge for EPF.

EPF continued to be one of the very few civil society leader organizations in Armenia providing local NGOs with grants, assuring the anti-corruption procedures were retained in this process, and having a highly advanced and unsurpassed grant-making system. Its corporate culture, staff loyalty, devotion and professionalism, a major part of its policies and procedures, very thorough, clean and transparent financial practices, procurement and grant-making systems, as well as a deep knowledge of the Armenian CSO landscape, were all major assets, which were inherited from EF and enhanced. At the same time, EPF became a project implementer itself. Projects were organized along both large thematic lines (Human Rights, Good Governance etc.) as well as 'vertically'; working inside the country, in any locality, for and with local grassroots constituencies, but also advocacy at the highest level with the government and international organizations. This required developing facilitation and field-related capacities, as well as research and

communication. Thus, EPF started to characterize itself as a ‘think and do tank.’

These shifts required changes in management style and structure. Pyramid-style management, where the CEO is the main decision-maker and often a ‘bottle-neck,’ was replaced by a ‘horizontal’ style of management. The Small Management Team (SMT) was constituted, which included most senior staff. In addition to its frequent meetings (at least once a month and in recent years – once a week), normal staff meetings started to be periodic (also once a week in recent years). In addition, several programmatic meetings take place daily as the need arises. EPF’s new open-scape office design is particularly suited for this kind of fast communication and rapid arrangement of meetings, as well as for conducting a major part of EPF’s capacity-building activities in its own office space.

The CEO discusses all management and governance issues with the SMT. In fact, believing that transparency and knowledge of future plans help people become leaders, EPF discusses most issues at the staff meeting, i.e. there are almost no issues that the staff is not aware of, apart from perhaps, extraordinary disciplinary issues if these happen (which they do very infrequently). Thus, the line-management and responsibility structure has been kept, while at the same time the staff’s freedom in decision-making and creativity in various programs has increased.

The other element was the need for changing the nature of the relationship inside the country. If beforehand EPF was regarded as a purely grant-making organization, it now had to become a competitor among its former peers. In addition, the public in general did not trust grant-making organizations in Armenia, as well as NGOs. Therefore, a completely new communication approach was needed. EPF relaxed the rules of communication that existed beforehand and which prohibited public external communication to be initiated by anyone but the CEO. These rules were based on strict diplomatic rules of governmental missions. Instead, EPF encouraged public communication among its staff, so that each one of them could start being regarded as a recognized expert in their particular field. At the same time, this also required additional training and skill development of the staff in order not to violate corporate principles during employees’ public communication. This approach proved to be successful, demonstrated by the fact that during several years of its operation EPF has received almost no challenges related to complaints from NGOs for being refused a grant or

of any other character. In addition, very active social media policy made EPF well-known, both locally and internationally. The benefits of this are increased trust, but also increased offers to engage in partnerships for a variety of projects that come from both local and international NGOs as well as governments and intergovernmental organizations. This also allows EPF partners to get to know each other via EPF's mediation.

These changes coincided with the boost in social media usage in the country, to which EPF has contributed as well via a number of its projects. EPF became also one of the forerunners in media literacy and critical thinking education long before worries about media abuse and conspiracy theorizing became a daily issue in Armenia. Thanks to its sophisticated communication strategy, EPF has become a successful implementer of 'riskier' projects, such as working on dialogue across the conflict divides and/or addressing the issues of all possible minorities. Such projects often go against the values of a conservative, underprivileged and poorly-educated Armenian society. But thanks to EPF's communication policies, while trolls and malign influencers have attacked EPF several times over the last decade, these attacks have been muted and did not find a large acceptance in society.

EPF's personnel undergo appraisals twice a year – a detailed appraisal, written down, at the end of each year and a brief one mid-year. These appraisals are one of the basis for decisions on changes in remuneration, but they also serve as the inspiration for designing activity plans for the staff members so that they build their career inside the organization and outside in the areas of civil society, business or even governmental work. EPF believes that every staff member is a leader, and approaches their needs based on this understanding. This also requires an advanced gender¹ and equality strategy.

The staff members have detailed job descriptions which also include such responsibilities as communication, fundraising and other duties (in addition to having specific positions of communication officers and fundraisers), e.g. for senior personnel additional duties may include representation to the international policy makers and/or dealing with the Board if the CEO is unavailable. Moreover, while the staff has clear division of responsibilities, the corporate culture of sharing information, skills, institutional memory, and program implementation is such that many staff members can replace each other if necessary. This is very important for the cases of absence, holidays, or staff leaving the job.

1 See EPF Gender Policy here: <https://epfarmenia.am/document/EPF-Gender-Policy>

However, it is also helpful for everybody to be aware of others' activities and enrich their own action plans with whatever they deem useful from the methods and activities of others. Many times such cross-fertilization of projects has resulted in important unexpected outcomes. EPF learns continually to gauge the level of this unexpected impact.

EPF's fundraising is mainly competitive; therefore, many proposals are submitted to - and refused by - donors. Those proposals, however, which are approved, may relate to a variety of expertise areas that EPF has accumulated, and they determine EPF's portfolio to a significant degree. Therefore, EPF does not position itself as an issue-specific organization but rather as a project implementer, although its expertise in such areas as Human Rights, civil society development, conflict transformation, working with grassroots, advocacy, training and grant making are recognized widely. At the same time, EPF has engaged in various activities in such areas as local government, media, youth, education, culture, and can expand its activities in any of these and many other sectors. For instance, in recent years its portfolio of working on judicial reform² has increased substantially. This, again, means that EPF staff should be able to operate in a variety of areas. In the cases of a lack of staff expertise, EPF engages outside experts. If they are engaged continually, they are in the vendor list, which is renewed every year, if they are engaged for a one-off occasion, they are recruited competitively. Similarly, EPF also relies on the expertise of its partner organizations and grantees.

EPF is not only a very experienced grant-maker, it has also specialized in working in consortia; both as a lead as well as a partner. EPF has worked in consortia with local as well as international organizations, or in mixed consortia. This experience, as well as EPF's management experience in general, is shared with other CSOs as part of its capacity-building activities. EPF has developed a special learning and teaching methodology³, based on the principles of elicitive and fractal-like learning. The essence is: every EPF staff member should be able to teach/train in something, including EPF's beneficiaries, peers and partners. The best learning occurs when a person becomes capable of sharing their skills with others; most of EPF's management tools and algorithms are modified as learning tools and shared with beneficiaries, who in

2 Information about Partnership for Justice Reform project is available here: <https://epfarmenia.am/project/partnership-for-justice-reform>

3 See EPF Education and Learning paper here: <https://epfarmenia.am/document/EPF-Education-and-Learning>

their turn, after acquiring them, both help EPF improve them as well as become trainers/teachers themselves for their own constituencies. EPF teaches its beneficiaries not just skills, and does not merely share with them management tools; it also aims to affect their values, e.g. on such issues as critical thinking, gender, non-discrimination, and tolerance. This cascade-like approach has resulted in a general strengthening of civil society management across the country. EPF's Capacity Enhancement Tool⁴ (CET), developed as a part of the USAID-supported CSO DePo⁵ project, is one of the major instruments that allows EPF and its partners to enhance their skills.

This rich palette of capacities and opportunities is presented to policy-makers, donors, grantees and partners. EPF is constantly in the business of making partners' operations as sound and robust as its own, addressing the entire cycle: from project proposal writing to fundraising to implementation, financial management, organizational development and sustainability, leadership and working with talent, reporting and project closure. As a fundraising organization, having projects of various sizes in terms of their both monetary value and duration, EPF has developed sophisticated methods of multi-donor operation. These methods relate to financial aspects (e.g. every project has a subaccount number in the bank), to satisfying various requirements of different donors (e.g. having or not having a project-specific audit), to planning and automating implementation schedules (including reporting times). In addition EPF's methods address issues such as correctly charging staff times to various projects, and to building conditions for the projects' mutual benefits. EPF's multi-donor approach is a bedrock for its relative sustainability, when EPF strives to achieve some of its main values; such as having a longer-term planning capacity and therefore being able to gauge the lasting impact and build on it. EPF has been able to achieve such results via its sophisticated management systems and thanks to its high quality staff. An important part in this process are the learning opportunities that are presented to the staff, retreats which happen at least annually if not more frequently, numerous audits, including an internal audit, as well as the Board's support and highly advanced principles of its operation.

These changes were, on one hand, innovative modern organizational management, and on the other, they were the only way for EPF to

4 See Capacity Enhancement Tool here: <https://epfarmeria.am/CSO-capacity-enhancement-tool>

5 See more information about Civil Society Organizations Development Program (CSO DePo) (2014-2019) here: <https://epfarmeria.am/project/cso-depo>

survive without major losses after the end of the core funding. They also allowed EPF to become a recognized leader on the Armenian civil society stage in project implementation. While fundraising is regarded as the responsibility of every member of staff, this does not mean that every member is writing proposals all the time. Fundraising and resource acquisition in general also include high quality program implementation, so that the beneficiaries can vouch to the donors that they benefited from EPF's activities. Very high quality administration, including finance management and anti-corruption systems, is also related to success in fundraising; as well as developing staff's skills in strategic planning, so that while implementing projects, the staff members at the same time fish out the ideas that can become next stage proposals to be presented to donors.

EPF has very sophisticated procedures for monitoring, evaluation and learning, as well as gauging results and impact. EPF's attention to knowledge, learning and institutional memory has resulted in its development of several tools, such as its proprietary Database, in addition to financial management tools, such as Hope. EPF in recent years has redesigned its approach to procurement to include clauses in contracts aimed at excluding plagiarism and on textual quality assurance before any textual product is accepted. EPF's focus on learning is evidenced also by its multi-year approach to building, revising and developing specific methodologies, such as the YouthBank ⁶method taken from a well-known international movement; but also its ever-advancing proprietary signature methods and products of training in Critical Thinking⁷, Conflict Transformation⁸, and innovation via Mardamej Innovation Camps⁹.

EPF is very thankful to all its donors for their support for all the years of its operation. These donors include USAID, EU, The Netherlands, the Swedish Sida, UK, UN and other governments and intergovernmental actors.

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6 See more information about YouthBank program here: <https://epfarmeria.am/project/youthbank>

7 Promo Clip here: <https://epfarmeria.am/video/Critical-Thinking-School-promo>

8 See Conflict Transformation School. Towards a New Generation of Peacebuilders paper here: <https://epfarmeria.am/document/CTS-infoleaflet>

9 See Mardamej Social Innovation Camp presented here: <https://epfarmeria.am/project/mardamej-social-innovation-camp>

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- Քաղաքացիական կրթության կարողունակությունները գնահատելու գործիքը մշակելու ճանապարհին, <https://epfarmeria.am/hy/document/Towards-a-Civics-Advancement-Measurement-Tool>

ՀԱՄԱՌՈՏԱԳԻՐ

Եվրասիա հիմնադրամի (ԵՀ) ներկայացուցչությունը Հայաստանում տեղական գրանցում ստանալուց և Եվրասիա համագործակցություն հիմնադրամ (ԵՀՀ) անվանվելուց հետո դրամաշտրիներ տրամադրող կազմակերպությունից տրանսֆորմացվեց ծրագրեր իրականացնող, մտագործող կազմակերպության, ինչը ստիպեց մտածել «Բրգանման» կառավարումը «հորիզոնական» կառավարմամբ փոխարինելու մասին:

Այս գրքույկում ներկայացված է ԵՀՀ-ի կողմից նորարարական արդի մենեջմենթի կիրառության հաջողությունը և ԵՀՀ-ի ճանապարհը ուղղված զարգացմանն ու կայունության ամրապնդմանը:

ABSTRACT

Ever since its transformation from the US-based Eurasia Foundation (EF) into a locally-registered Eurasia Partnership Foundation, EPF Armenia has changed from a purely grant-making organization to a project implementing “think and do tank”. As a result, the pyramid-style management was replaced with a ‘horizontal style’ of management.

This brochure illustrates the success of the practice of applying innovation into modern management, as well as EPF’s path towards development and strengthened stability.



**ԵՎՐԱՍԻԱ
ՇԱՍԱԳՈՐԾԱԿՑՈՒԹՅՈՒՆ
ԵՆՏԱՆԴՐԱՄ**

Եվրասիա համագործակցություն հիմնադրամի (ԵՀՀ) տեսլականն է նպաստել նրան, որ Հարավային Կովկասը կայանա որպես խաղաղ, հակամարտություններից զերծ և համագործակցող տարածաշրջան, և աչքի ընկնի քաղաքացիների ներգրավման բարձր մակարդակով, սոցիալապես պատասխանատու ձեռներեցությամբ ու կայուն, պատասխանատու և արդյունավետ քաղաքացիական հասարակությամբ: ԵՀՀ-ն տարիներ շարունակ աշխատում է քննադատական մտածողության և այլընտրանքային կրթության մեթոդների ասպարեզում: Այն համախմբում է մտածողության առաջնորդների, հասարակական ոլորտի գործիչների, որոնք ունեն բարձր մոտիվացիա և իրենց ամենօրյա գործունեության մեջ կոտրում են կարծրատիպերը և նպաստում հայաստանյան հասարակության համար զարգացման ճիշտ ուղիներ մշակելուն: Որպես «մտագործող» («think and do tank») կառույց, որն աշխատում է քաղաքականությունների մշակումից մինչև դրանց իրագործում, և որի առաքելությունն ու գործունեությունը ծածկում է քաղաքացիական հասարակության գործունեության և պետական բարեփոխումների շատ կարևոր հատվածը, ԵՀՀ-ն առաջնահերթություն է համարում հասարակության մեջ խթանել քննադատական մտածողության օրակարգը:

ԵՀՀ-ի նորարարական մոտեցումը կազմակերպչական կառավարմանը / Գևորգ Տեր-Գաբրիելյան, Եվրասիա համագործակցություն հիմնադրամ, 2022 թ. – 16 էջ



Մույն տեքստը մաս է կազմում «ԵՀՀ համալսարան» խորագրի ներքո հրապարակվող ձեռնարկների շարքի՝ «**Քաղաքացիական հասարակություն**» (ՔՀ) թեմայով: Շարքն ընդգրկում է զրույցներ չորս ծավալուն թեմաների վերաբերյալ.



Քննադատական մտածողություն (ՔՄ)



Պատերազմ և խաղաղություն (ՊԽ)



Քաղաքացիական հասարակություն (ՔՀ)



Կրթություն, պատմության մեթոդաբանություն, մշակույթ և արժեքներ (ԿՊՄՄԱ)

