

A Taste of Success

Examples of the Budget Work of NGOs

**CIDE,
Mexico**



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BUILDING ORGANIZATIONS AND NETWORKS: CIDE, MEXICO

Background

El Centro de Investigación y Docencia Económicas (CIDE) is an academic institution dedicated to research and education in Mexico. For several years, CIDE has been conducting research on different aspects of the budget, including fiscal decentralization, social policy and local-level finance. In order to introduce a common objective to its multifaceted work, CIDE created a Budget Project programme that focuses on transparency and accountability in the budget process and establishing meaningful indicators by which to assess public spending. CIDE is concerned that a broad spectrum of society understands and can participate in the budget process.

This case of the Mexican institution CIDE provides a good example of how effective training and budget education can greatly enhance the level of public debate about the budget.

Issue

The political changes in Mexico in recent years have allowed for more discussion of the national budget than ever before. Because budget information is unfamiliar territory for most people in Mexico, however, the public debate over government allocations has been highly politicized and lacking in sound analysis. To counter this problem, CIDE has attempted to infuse the debate with serious, technical analysis of budget policy and to train journalists, government officials, and civil society to engage in their own analysis in order to raise the level of debate in Mexico. It has also released several publications designed to increase understanding of the budget process throughout the nation.

Action

CIDE has organized several training courses for individuals concerned with the budget process in Mexico. During the first course, attended by government officials, journalists, and NGO representatives, CIDE spent two days going through budget issues in general terms and introducing participants to the basic tools of budget analysis. Beyond these basics, CIDE stressed the impacts of budget decisions to give participants a sense of why this debate is important. The second course was designed specifically for journalists and was offered when the government issued the budget to better equip the journalists to report on the debate. The third course was aimed entirely at NGOs to educate the staff on the relevance of budget issues and prepare them to undertake budget work themselves. Between 1998 and 2000, CIDE has organized over ten courses, training more than 300 participants.

CIDE has also designed training manuals or guides on basic classifications of the budget and on the complex laws and rules for public spending in Mexico. In addition, CIDE has developed four informational brochures about the budget that have been distributed as inserts in one of the major newspapers and made available in public places such as libraries and restaurants. The brochures explain why the budget is important, discuss how the budget affects the life of the average citizen, and provide a more technical explanation of how money is spent in Mexico. CIDE has also produced a book on the budget process and the current administrative budget reforms within the executive branch.

Results

As a result of CIDE's public education efforts, in addition to the direct education and training that occurred, a great deal of interest has been generated about the budget process. After the first informational brochure was put out, CIDE received a large number of requests from journalists and public officials for interviews and training. Since then, the Gender and Equity Commission of the Mexican Congress has invited CIDE to give training courses on budget issues, and three different Commissions of the Chamber of Deputies asked CIDE for advice during the last budget approval process. The Treasury Ministry also invited the organization to research the ongoing budget reform of the executive branch. The information presented in the brochures has been quoted by the press, members of congress, and public officials.

The courses offered to the media have helped establish productive communication between the press and CIDE. Journalists regularly have asked the organization to review articles or to give a statement on current policy issues. This has helped raise the level of reporting on budget issues and increased the amount of information and analysis available to the public.

Lessons

Some of the lessons from CIDE's experience with successful training efforts include:

- *One thing leads to another.* Designing and delivering training courses is an excellent tool of organizational development. By providing a range of courses, CIDE was able to assess quickly the best means to deliver budget training to various groups, establish critical relationships with the key players in the budget process, and secure the organization's role in Mexico's budget debate more firmly.
- *Audience.* The first course CIDE offered was open to journalists, government officials, and NGO representatives. While reaching as broad an audience as possible is desirable, CIDE found that the different levels of knowledge about the budget process across various groups, as well as their different agendas for attending the course, made it extremely difficult to provide information and training that was valuable to everyone. CIDE therefore decided to proceed with more targeted courses.
- *Timing.* One of the biggest stumbling blocks to meaningful participation in the training sessions was the timing of the classes. CIDE offered its course for journalists after the budget had been released and while it was being debated in Congress. This meant that

many of the journalists who would have benefited from the course had to spend their time reporting on the debate instead. Being aware of constraints on participants' time and understanding when information is most valuable is critical to successful training. The best timing for the course might have been a month or so before the release of the budget.

- *Delivery.* How the training is delivered is an important consideration. CIDE's courses were primarily two day-long classes, which can be a significant drain on participants' time, particularly for government officials and the press. At the same time, it is difficult to cover the necessary information in less than two days. In the future, CIDE will consider ways to deliver the training in a way that best complements participants' schedules, such as delivering the training in part-day sessions.

For more information about CIDE, visit the website at <http://www.cide.mx> or contact the organization directly:

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Further information can also be found at the following links:

“The Work of CIDE in Mexico”, a presentation by Juan Pablo Guerrero, Director
February 22, 1999, Cape Town, South Africa
<http://www.internationalbudget.org/conference/cide.htm>

Training Course syllabus, CIDE, Mexico

The syllabus for a training course might be useful to examine if you are putting together your own course. The title of the CIDE course was "Tools for the analysis of the federal public budget." <http://www.internationalbudget.org/resources/guide/guide-11.htm>