

The Indian bureaucracy and technical staff are generally receptive to foreign advisors. They are willing to meet and talk with you. They are polite and hospitable, particularly at the state and lower levels of the bureaucracy. Government officials assume you have scant knowledge of the local situation. Don't tell them your solutions to local problems as soon as you meet them; they won't expect it and may resist collaborating with you. They are more interested in seeing how your assessment of the Indian situation fits with their own experiences, plans and projects. They may want to know if you are able to fund their priority proposals for which they, themselves, have scarce funds. They will want to know how flexible your procedures and funding regulations are.

Generally, they expect you to have access to large sums of money and the authority to make decisions on the spot. They prefer that you follow existing procedures or those of other international agencies. They expect conditions that are as favourable as other international agencies and with fewer strings attached. Don't dismiss their critical comments. Officials are generally appreciative of innovative methods to implement projects with overseas funding, but if your proposal is far from their expectations, they may quickly lose interest.

Suggested approach

Your first task will be to check your Indian partners' expectations and dispel any unreasonable demands. Help them understand your priorities and procedures, preferably using documents. Strive for agreement on project objectives and a work plan. Next, establish your credibility. Tell them about your expertise in, and knowledge of, initiatives in India or comparable work elsewhere.

Ideally, you should collaborate with local experts to bring about a synergy of your strengths and theirs—your skills, their field experience and local knowledge. This will allow your Indian partner to establish some ownership in the project.

When your project involves a policy issue, meet with an additional or joint secretary or the state government secretary. Organize your meetings so that you will arrive at a firm agreement after two or three sittings. For operational matters, meet with the Government of India's director or deputy secretary. This can be achieved with the assistance of an Indian associate.

At the beginning of your mission, meet with key Government of India officials, such as the joint or additional secretaries in the department your work relates to and in the Department