

# **Cross-cultural Communication**

# Learning Objectives



Cultural awareness and sensitivity



Non-verbal communication and cultural etiquette



Communication styles and strategies to effectively convey messages across cultural boundaries

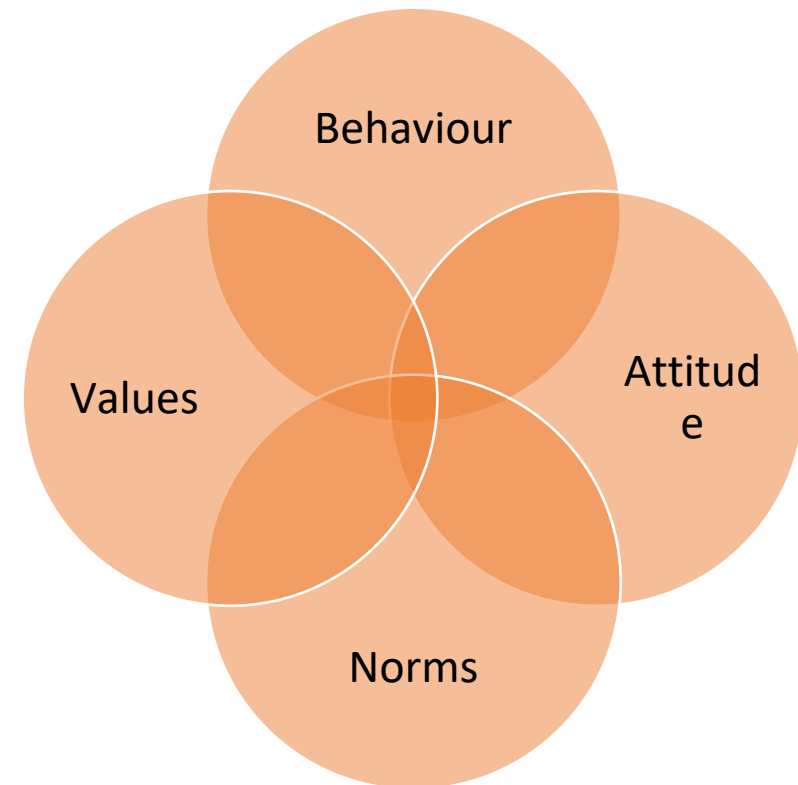


Culturally informed conflict resolution strategies to navigate disagreements and build consensus

# What is Culture?

- Culture is learned and shared knowledge that shapes an individual's behavior and world interpretation
- Different cultures lead people to "see" and respond to the world in diverse ways
- Humans continuously acquire culture, consciously and unconsciously, throughout their lives
- Culture profoundly influences and is a powerful factor shaping how people think, communicate and behave at the negotiating table

- Culture comprises of 4 broad elements:



# Cultural Awareness and Sensitivity

- Navigating cultural differences is crucial for successful FTA negotiations
- Cultural awareness and sensitivity enables to:
  - Recognize communication styles within different cultures
  - Respect and understand hierarchical structures present in various cultural contexts
  - Manage time and deadlines considering cultural perspectives on punctuality
  - Value relationships and trust-building as integral to successful negotiations
  - Adapt negotiation tactics to align with cultural preferences and norms
  - Bridging cultural gaps strengthens relationships and contributes to successful outcomes

# Importance of Cultural Awareness for Trade Negotiators

- Cultural awareness helps negotiators to:
  - Recognize the impact of culture on personal perceptions
  - Enhance responsiveness to culturally diverse counterparts
  - Improve mentorship and supervision by being more sensitive and accessible
  - Stay alert to cultural differences and similarities in multicultural negotiations
  - Foster cultural awareness among the next generation of trade professionals

# How to Negotiate with Cultural Sensitivity? I

Before FTA Negotiations commence officials must develop an understanding of the culture of the FTA Partners

- **Reflect on cultural background of the partner country**
  - Understand cultural values, beliefs, and customs
  - Reflect on upbringing and cultural influences
  - Recognize personal cultural biases and prejudices
- **Expand knowledge of the Partner country's' cultures**
  - Read books, watch films, attend cultural events
  - Take classes on different cultures
  - Engage with multicultural communities and organizations

# How to Negotiate with Cultural Sensitivity? II

- **Learn about cultural communication styles of trade partners**
  - Research communication styles and norms of different cultures
  - Seek cross-cultural communication training
- **Develop empathy and active listening skills**
  - Practice active listening
  - Repeat back to ensure understanding
  - Ask clarifying questions
  - Show empathy and respect for others' perspectives

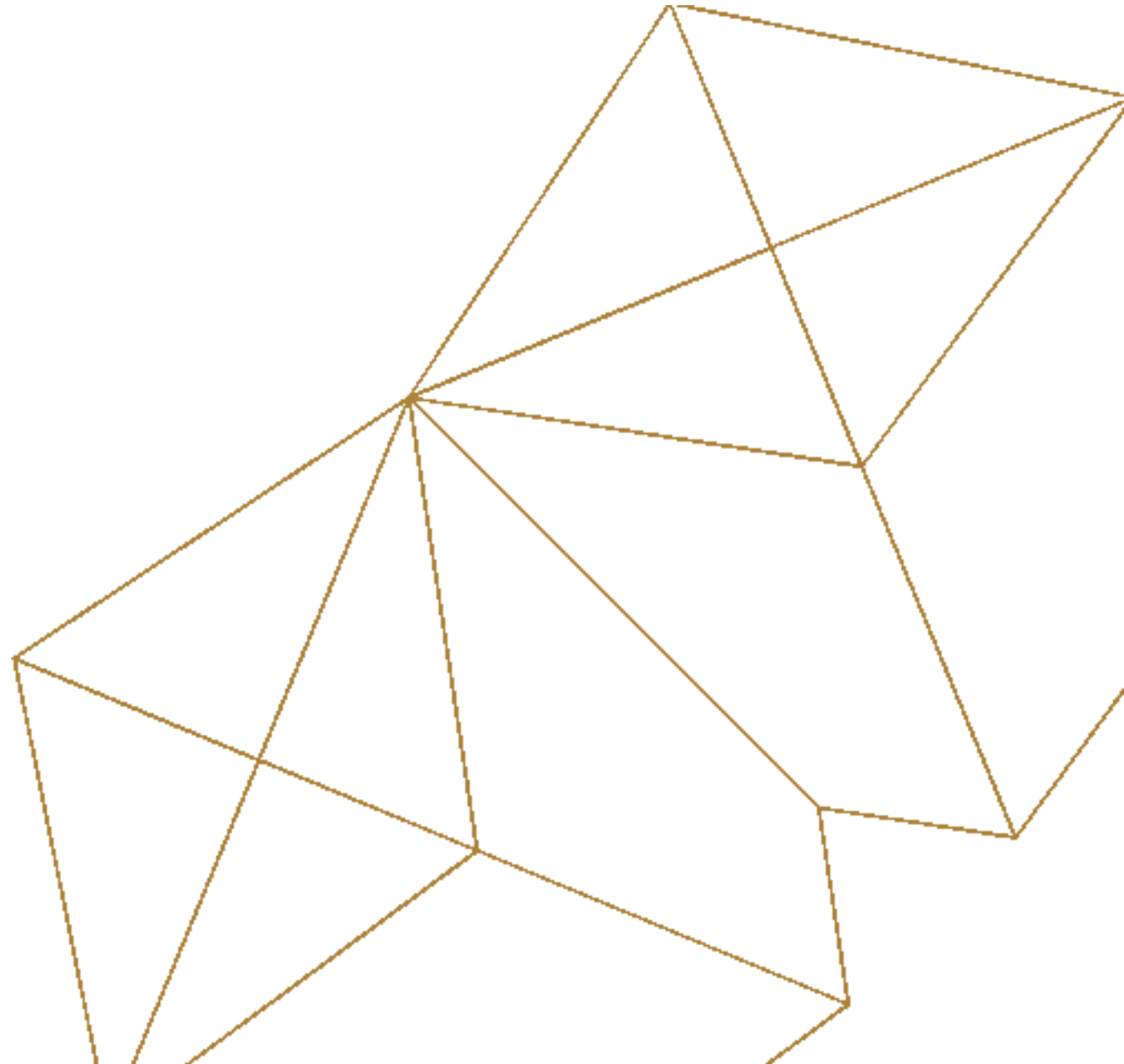
# How to Negotiate with Cultural Sensitivity?

## III

- **Take action to promote cultural awareness during FTA negotiations**
  - Speak out against discrimination and prejudice
  - Support diversity and inclusion negotiating initiatives
  - Encourage cross-cultural understanding and collaboration
- **Establishing consistency in communication styles when expressing negotiating positions**
  - Review existing materials/sources for consistency
  - Ensure a uniform style in verbal, non-verbal and written communication Complying to National Communications and Presentation Guidelines
- **Continuously educate yourself about FTA partner countries**
  - Stay informed about current events and cultural issues
  - Read news from different sources
  - Seek diverse perspectives and opinions



# Communication Styles



# Types of Communication

- Verbal:
  - Vital during FTA negotiations, verbal communication engages spoken interactions across diverse settings spanning informal discussions to formal meetings, from face-to-face talks to virtual platforms (MS Teams, Zoom, etc.)
- Written:
  - Written communication, encompassing emails, memos, reports, and contracts during FTA negotiations, ensures clarity in conveying complex information
- Listening:
  - In negotiations, understanding the opposition's perspective through active listening is essential for achieving a mutually beneficial outcome
- Non-verbal:
  - Nonverbal communication encompasses vocal (pitch, volume, rate) and non-vocal elements (gestures, facial expressions, eye contact), providing a holistic understanding beyond verbal statements
  - Non-verbal cues offer valuable information alongside spoken words during FTA negotiations

# Non-verbal communication and cultural etiquette

# Characteristics of Non-Verbal Communication

- Non-verbal communication lacks explicit rule systems like grammar in verbal communication
- Non-verbal communication:
  - More involuntary compared to verbal communication
  - Tends to be more ambiguous than verbal communication
  - Often perceived as more credible than verbal communication
- Non-verbal communication forms and integral part of cultural etiquette
  - Cultural etiquette refers to the set of accepted behaviors, manners, and customs within a particular culture or society
    - Example - Non-verbal cues are part of, such as bowing or proper handshakes, are part of cultural etiquette in various cultures that convey respect and politeness

# Non-Verbal Communication in FTA Negotiations

- Non-verbal communication serves several functions during FTA negotiations:
  - Influences verbal communication by complementing, reinforcing, substituting, or contradicting verbal/written messages
  - Plays a role in asserting country positions and influencing other Parties
  - Regulates conversational flow by signaling the beginning and end of turns, facilitating interaction transitions among negotiators
  - Affects relationships by conveying emotions, establishing social bonds, and contributing to relational maintenance

# Non-Verbal Communication Styles - I

Awareness of diverse communication styles across cultures is crucial to prevent misunderstandings in cross-cultural interactions with diverse FTA counterparts

## Tone, Volume and Speed of Speech

- Culture influences appropriateness in volume, tone, and expressiveness
- Speech characteristics like loudness, speed, and expressiveness vary across cultures, impacting perceived politeness or rudeness

## Eye Contact

- Culture determines whether making eye contact is considered polite or rude
- The significance of eye contact in indicating attentive listening varies across cultures

# Non-Verbal Communication Styles - II

## Use of Pauses and Silence

- Culture can influence whether pauses and silence are comfortable or uncomfortable

## Facial Expressions

- Cultural norms influence whether low facial expressiveness is deemed normal or perceived as a lack of understanding, interest, or resistance

## Emotional Expressions

- Cultural influence extends to how open individuals are in discussing their feelings
- Even in emotionally expressive cultures, there may be reservations about expressing emotions

# Non-Verbal Communication Styles - III

## Directness

- Culture can influence whether directness is valued or considered rude

## Formality

- Cultural norms shape preferences for respect and formality
- The perceived value of personal interactions may vary, with some cultures emphasizing warmth, while others prioritize respect and formality

## Context

- Culture determines whether communication is high or low context
- In low-context cultures, meaning relies heavily on words, while high-context cultures convey meaning through subtle verbal and non-verbal cues



# Culture-based Negotiating Styles

- Cultural factors play a significant role in shaping the dynamics of FTA negotiations
- Successful negotiators recognize and navigate cultural differences effectively which enables them to:
  - build constructive relationships,
  - foster understanding,
  - facilitate agreements that align with the cultural contexts of the involved parties
- The following examples explore different negotiating styles influenced by the FTA Partner's culture

# Example – Culture-based Negotiating Styles

## **US Negotiating Style**

- U.S. negotiators often rely on individualist values, emphasizing autonomy and independence
- They tend to be competitive, with a preference for starting negotiations with an unrealistic offer and maintaining a fallback position
- American negotiators exhibit energy, confidence, and persistence, enjoying argumentation and discussing broad applications of ideas
- Their focus is often on one problem at a time, concentrating on areas of disagreement rather than commonality
- They prefer closure and certainty over open-endedness or ambiguity in negotiations
- It's important to note that these generalizations may vary based on the context, sector, and individuals involved in negotiations
  - Contextual factors such as whether the negotiation is personal, commercial, community-related, or on a larger public scale can significantly influence negotiation strategies among Americans

# Example – Culture-based Negotiating Styles

## Japanese Negotiating Style

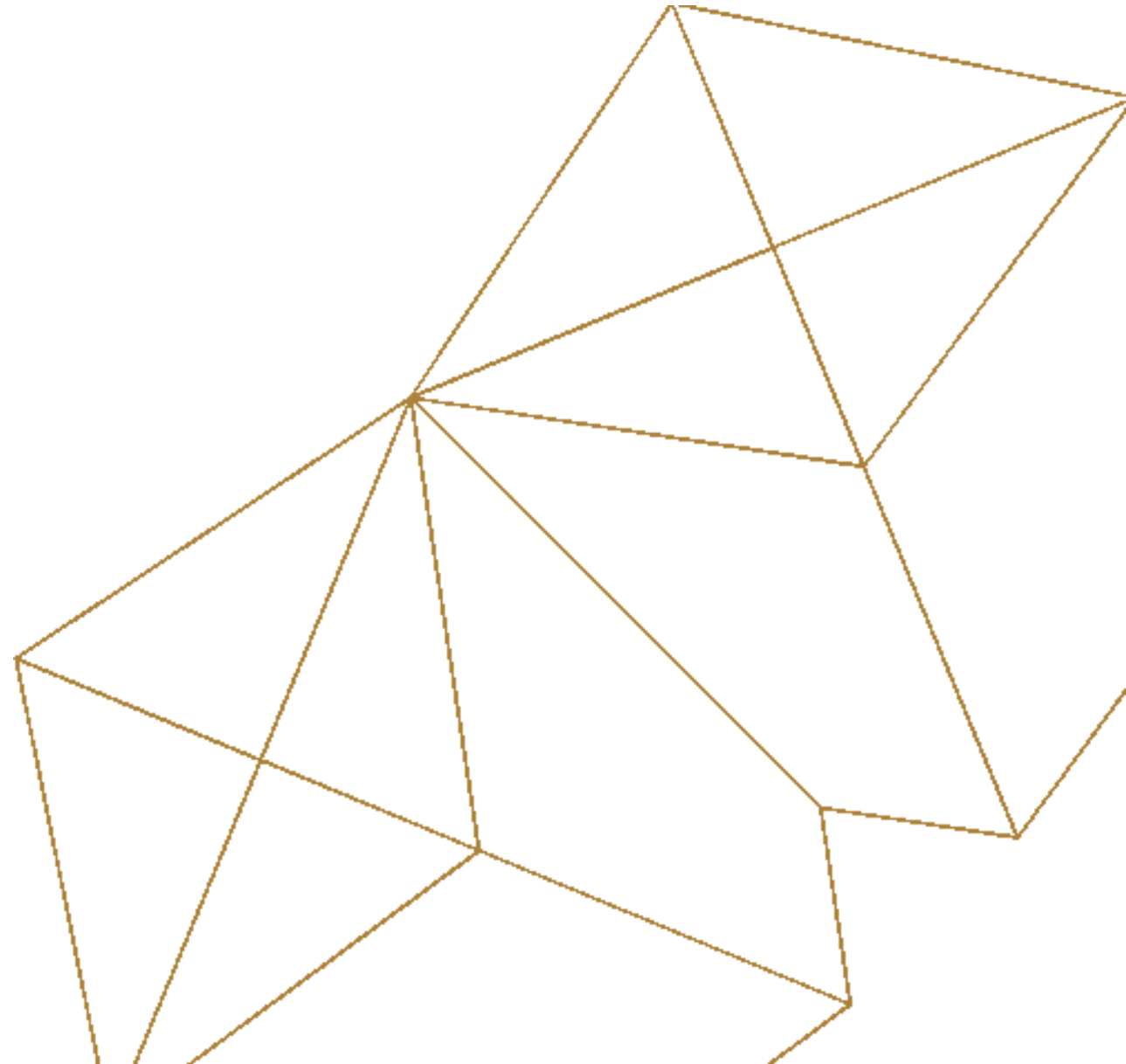
- Japanese negotiation styles are influenced by values such as focus on group goals, interdependence, and a hierarchical orientation
- Japanese negotiators prioritize awareness of group needs and goals, showing deference to higher-status individuals
- Politeness, relationship-building, and indirect use of power are notable characteristics of Japanese negotiators
- Face-saving is crucial in Japanese negotiation, leading to an emphasis on politeness and avoidance of confrontation
- Japanese negotiators disclose less about themselves and goals compared to French or American counterparts
- Relationships established before negotiation are highly valued, with less emphasis on literal meanings of words
- Japanese negotiators are less likely to make procedural suggestions compared to their U.S. counterparts

# Example – Culture-based Negotiating Styles

## **Latin American Negotiating Style**

- Role expectations in Latin American negotiation prioritize responsibility to others over schedules and task accomplishment
- The negotiation approach aligns with a polychronic orientation to time, high-context communication, and communitarianism
- In Central America, a holistic approach is preferred in responding to conflict and negotiation, contrasting with a linear, analytical approach
- When seeking help with negotiations, Central Americans prefer insider partials over outsider neutrals, valuing trust, confidence, and cultural insight over other credentials or expertise
- The concept of "confianza" (trustworthiness) is crucial, emphasizing mutual knowledge, confidence, and the assurance that confidences will be kept within established relationships

# **How to Develop an Effective Communication Strategy for FTA Negotiations?**



# Developing Communication Strategy for FTA



- Review the communication styles in practice

- Setting clear objectives

- Catering for the audiences

- Ensuring effective internal communication

- Maintaining consistent messaging

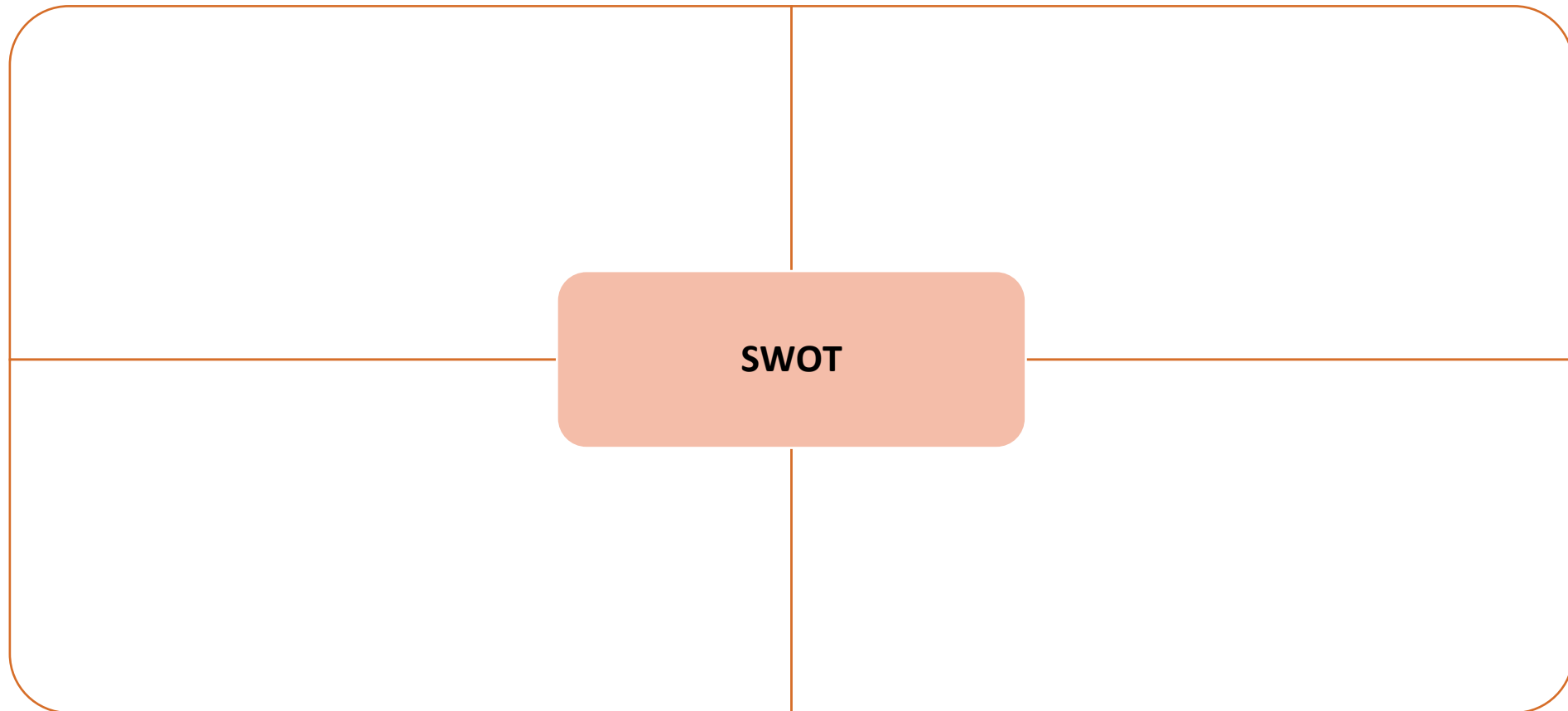
- Utilising effective channels and tools

- Accounting for budget and resources

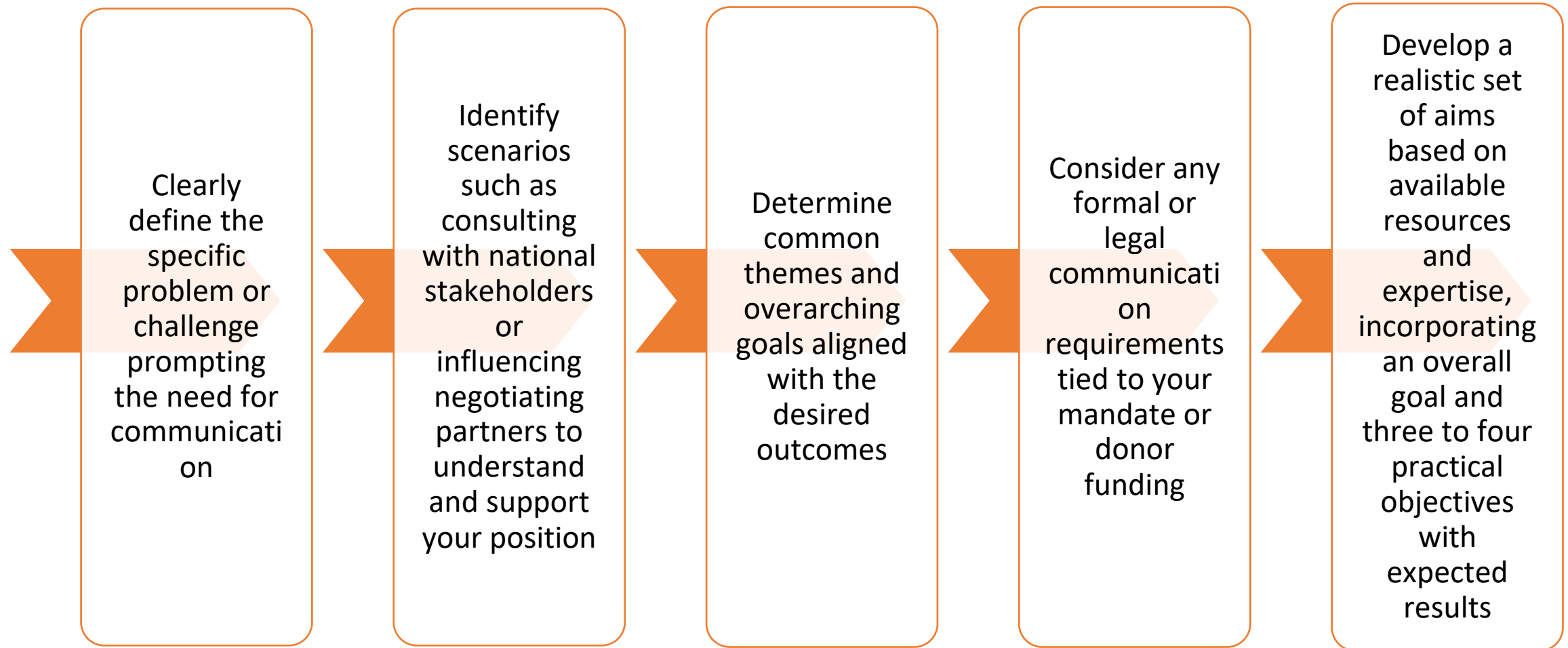
- Curating a timeline

# Step-By-Step Guide – Review

Use the SWOT Framework to review of and draw learnings from existing communication styles in practice:



# Step-By-Step Guide – Objective of Communication Strategy





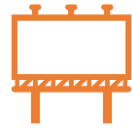
# Step-By-Step Guide – Communication Strategy for Diverse Audiences during FTA talks



## Identify Key Audiences

Define and prioritize audience groups critical for effective communication

Understand more about these audiences to tailor messages and communications



## 'Pull' vs. 'Push' Approach

Assess whether audiences have a 'pull' or 'demand-led' interest in communication or if a 'push' or 'supply-driven' approach is needed

Consider if audiences fall into both 'pull' and 'push' categories



## Reaching Audiences

Select target audiences strategically, focusing on those crucial for your communication objectives

Explore imaginative approaches to reach challenging targets, leveraging personal and professional networks



## Involving Key Colleagues

Engage key colleagues within your ministry and other relevant ministries involved in trade to collaborate in identifying audiences



## Stakeholders in Trade

Understand the diverse stakeholders in trade, categorizing them into 'primary' and 'secondary' audiences

Primary audiences may be prioritized for active support or engagement, while secondary audiences may become important in later

# Step-By-Step Guide – Internal Communications

Internal communications planning is essential for fostering transparency, engagement, and support within the organization, contributing to the overall success of trade policy initiatives

- Objective of Internal Communications:
  - Keep ministers, politicians, and internal stakeholders informed about trade policy and negotiations
  - Obtain constructive feedback from internal stakeholders
- Getting Started:
  - Dedicate time and resources to internal communications at working levels for long-term benefits
  - Define stakeholders as 'internal' if they are involved in trade policy work and act as brokers to engage with a wider set of relevant stakeholders

# Step-By-Step Guide – Communicate Messages

## Define Key Points

- Clearly outline essential messages aligned with project or organizational goals

## Tailor for Audiences

- Adapt messages to suit diverse audience interests and needs

## Prioritize Clarity

- Keep messages clear, simple, and easily translatable for wider reach

## Ensure Consistency

- Maintain message consistency across platforms for a cohesive narrative

## Emphasize Positives

- Highlight positive outcomes and benefits associated with your initiative

## Proactive Addressing

- Anticipate and address concerns in messages to build trust and transparency

## Engaging Language

- Use relatable language and storytelling techniques for audience engagement

## Call to Action

- Conclude with a clear call to action or an invitation for audience participation

## Feedback

- Establish a feedback loop for continuous improvement in your messaging strategy

## Mechanism

# Step-By-Step Guide – Communication Channels and Tools used for FTA talks



## Face-to-Face Priority

Personal interactions with stakeholders are crucial, consider private briefings



## Essential Toolkit

Develop a low-cost toolkit: one-page factsheet, key messages, bios, FAQs, and case studies

Maintain an updated website with clear information in multiple languages

Utilize social media, e-updates, and newsletters for cost-effective communication

Engage with media strategically, including radio, TV, online, and blogs



## International Reach

Build personal contacts at international trade meetings

Seek coverage in specialist media and collaborate for increased visibility

Plan early for major international events to secure coverage

# Step-By-Step Guide – Budget and Resources

Developing a communication strategy requires funds, but it doesn't always demand large budgets. Some considerations include:

- **Varied Costs:**
  - Costs vary by country and depend on local conditions
  - Government allocation depends on perceived trade importance
- **Clear Appraisal:**
  - Provide a clear cost-benefit analysis to ministers
  - Seek benchmark costs from your organization
- **Cost-Effective Approaches:**
  - Emphasize alternatives beyond extensive advertising
- **Utilize In-House Resources:**
  - Leverage expertise across departments.
  - Tap into free market research within the organization
- **Explore Free Channels:**
  - Use existing free channels like government publications
  - Be creative in leveraging available resources for effective messaging

# Step-By-Step Guide – FTA Timeline



Establish clear deadlines for achieving overall objectives



Identify milestones, events, and dates crucial to success



Consider timing in relation to major international events or political meetings



Decide when to start communication efforts during trade negotiations



Consider three main phases:

Introduction of proposed policy or potential deal

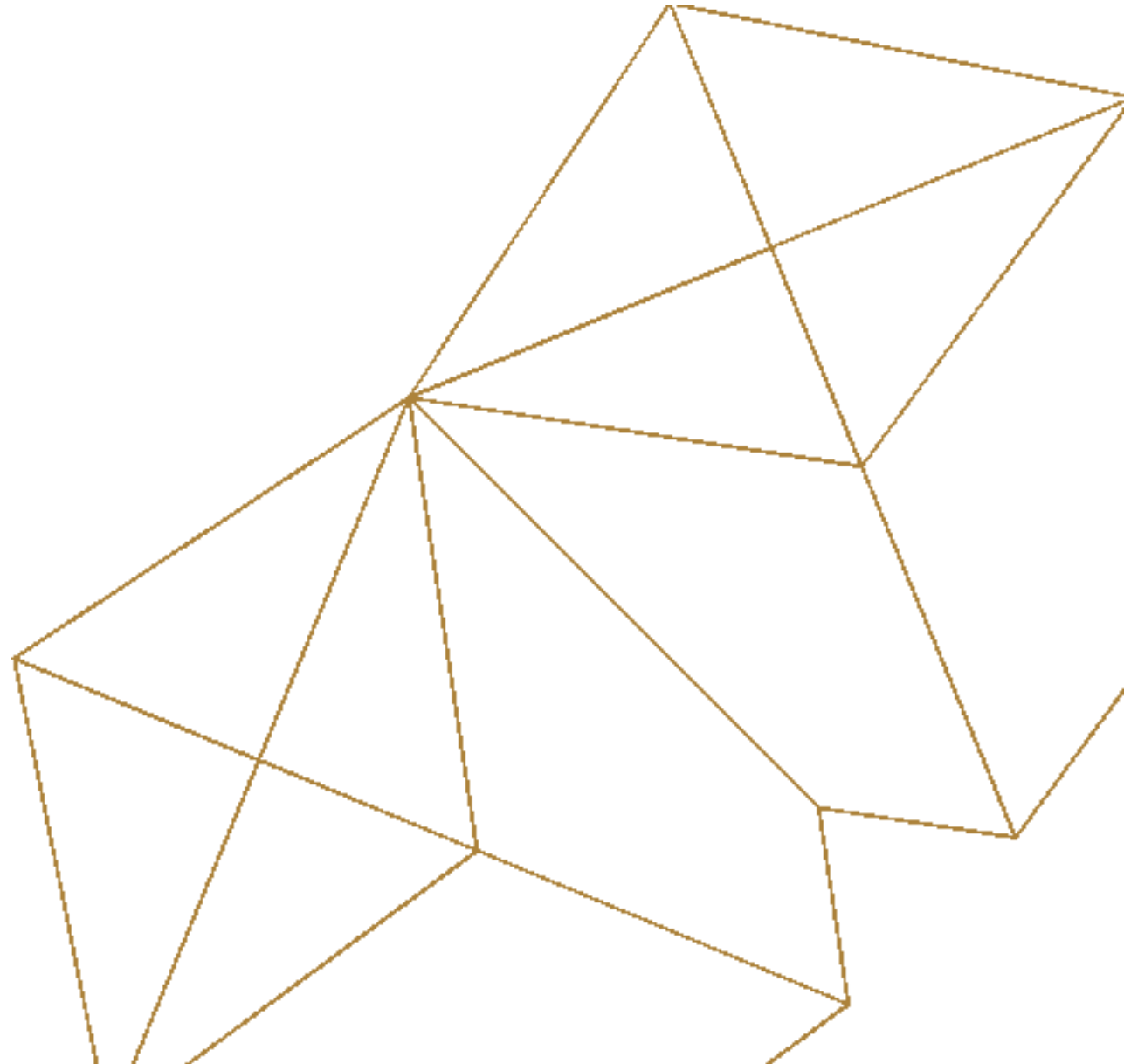
Announcement of a finalized deal or policy

Post-implementation communication



Review key messages, audiences, and channels as the communication strategy evolves through different phases

**Culturally Informed  
Conflict Resolution  
Strategies to Navigate  
Disagreements and  
Build Consensus**



# Cross-Cultural Conflict Resolution Strategy - I

- Recognize that fairness perceptions can be biased
  - Sense of what would constitute a fair conflict resolution can be biased and differ among FTA Partners
  - It is often difficult to see a situation from another person's perspective
  - When embroiled in a conflict, we need to try to overcome our self-centered fairness perceptions
- Avoid escalating tensions with threats and provocative moves
  - There's a time and place for litigation, but threats and other attention-getting moves during negotiations, such as take-it-or-leave-it offers, are often a mistake



# Cross-Cultural Conflict Resolution Strategy - II

- Overcome an “us versus them” mentality
  - Begin conflict management efforts by highlighting the common FTA goal of reaching a fair and sustainable agreement
- Look beneath the surface to identify deeper issues
  - Cultural differences can be barriers but also opportunities for creating valuable agreements
  - Cross-cultural conflicts provide chances to capitalize on different preferences, priorities, beliefs, and values
    - This is likely to strengthen the relationship and add new interests to the table

# Cross-Cultural Conflict Resolution Strategy - III

- Separate negotiable from non-negotiable
  - Conflict management can be particularly intractable when core values or non-negotiables of an FTA Partners are involved
  - Flexibility can be brought in by clearly differentiating what is critical and what is not
- Avoiding stereotypes:
  - Instead of stereotypes, focus on prototypes—cultural averages on dimensions of behavior or values
  - Recognize the variability within each culture and avoid making assumptions about negotiators based on stereotypes

# Cross-Cultural Conflict Resolution Strategy - IV

- Interpreting others' behaviors:
  - Overcoming the tendency to interpret through one's own cultural lens requires learning about the other FTA party's culture
  - Research customs and behaviors of the FTA Partners
- Unique cultures in teams and FTA partners:
  - Within the same FTA Partner, different negotiating teams can have unique cultures and behaviors
  - Study the context and the person on the other side of the table by considering their unique cultural background