

# Finding Your Focus

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*Developing a values-based social impact approach*



**HOW** do you figure out what to focus on, when there are so many pressing issues in the world?



Today we're going to take an important step to develop a **focus statement** for your activism which is anchored in your values. This can help you:

- **Avoid overwhelm**
- **Clarify** for yourself (and others) why you are engaged in the causes you care deeply about
- **Identify** what aspects of a big, complex issue you want to work on
- **Prioritize** how to best use your unique skills and assets



# Overview

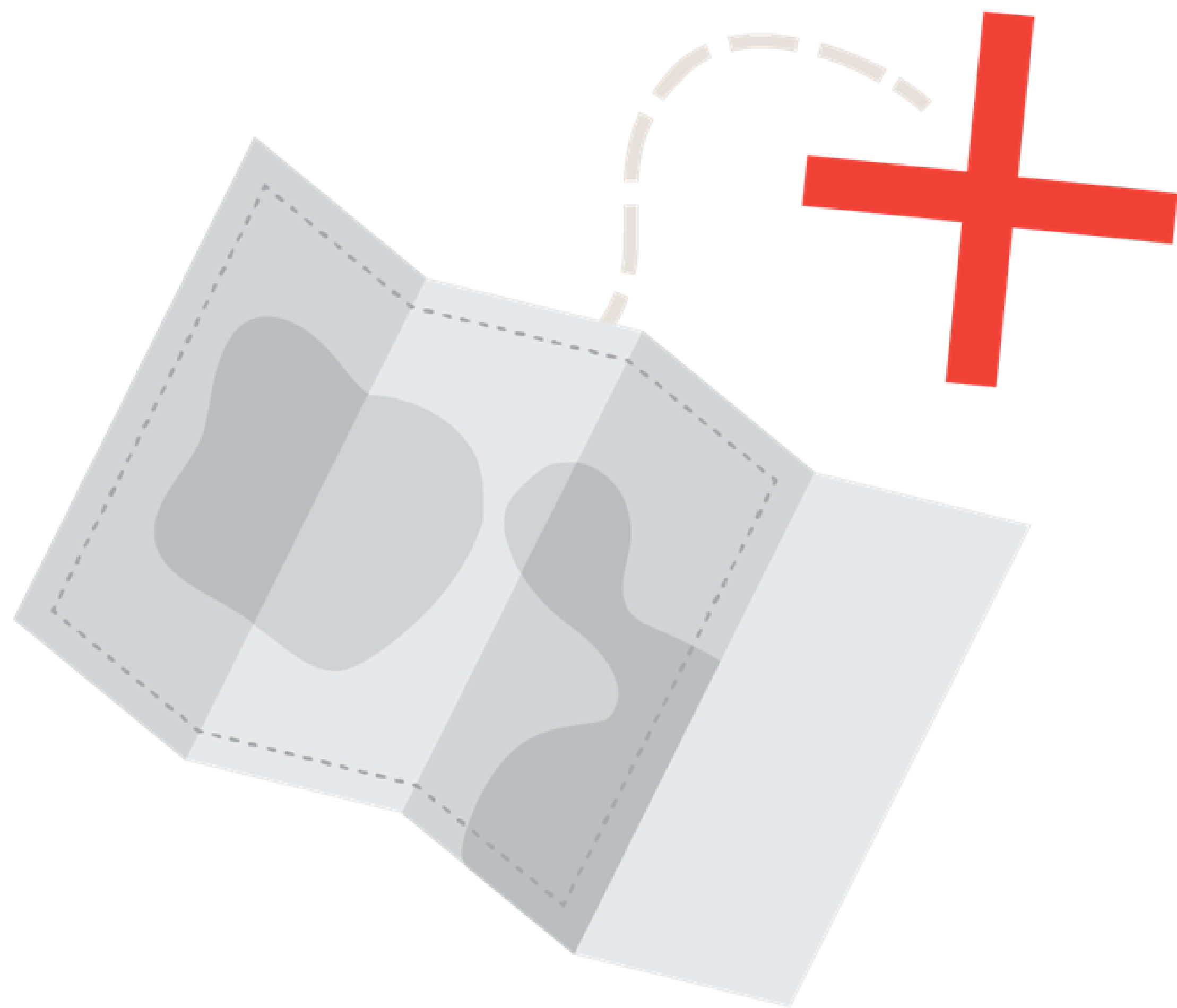
- There are **7 steps** to this exercise, each taking between 2-5 minutes.
- It begins with **Reflection**, followed by some exploration of your **Values** and the **Causes** you care about.
- This exercise ends in creating your draft **Focus Statement**. It's kind of like an organizational mission statement – but it's for YOU.



# Preparation

- Time: This exercise can be done in as little as **20 minutes**, or longer if you choose to do it with others and allow for discussion.
- Supplies: **Pen, Paper, Timer**
- Note: There are NO “wrong” answers. Be in brainstorming mode. You can always refine what you’ve written later.





**Let's get started.**

***Grab your pen, paper  
and timer.***



# STEP 1

## REFLECTION

- Set timer: 5 minutes
- Jot down a handful of moments or life experiences that have shaped you – maybe someone you love has had an illness, maybe you're really passionate about deserving young people getting a great education, maybe you love and want to protect nature?
- When you look out at the world, what makes you sad, angry, afraid, determined, passionate, inspired?

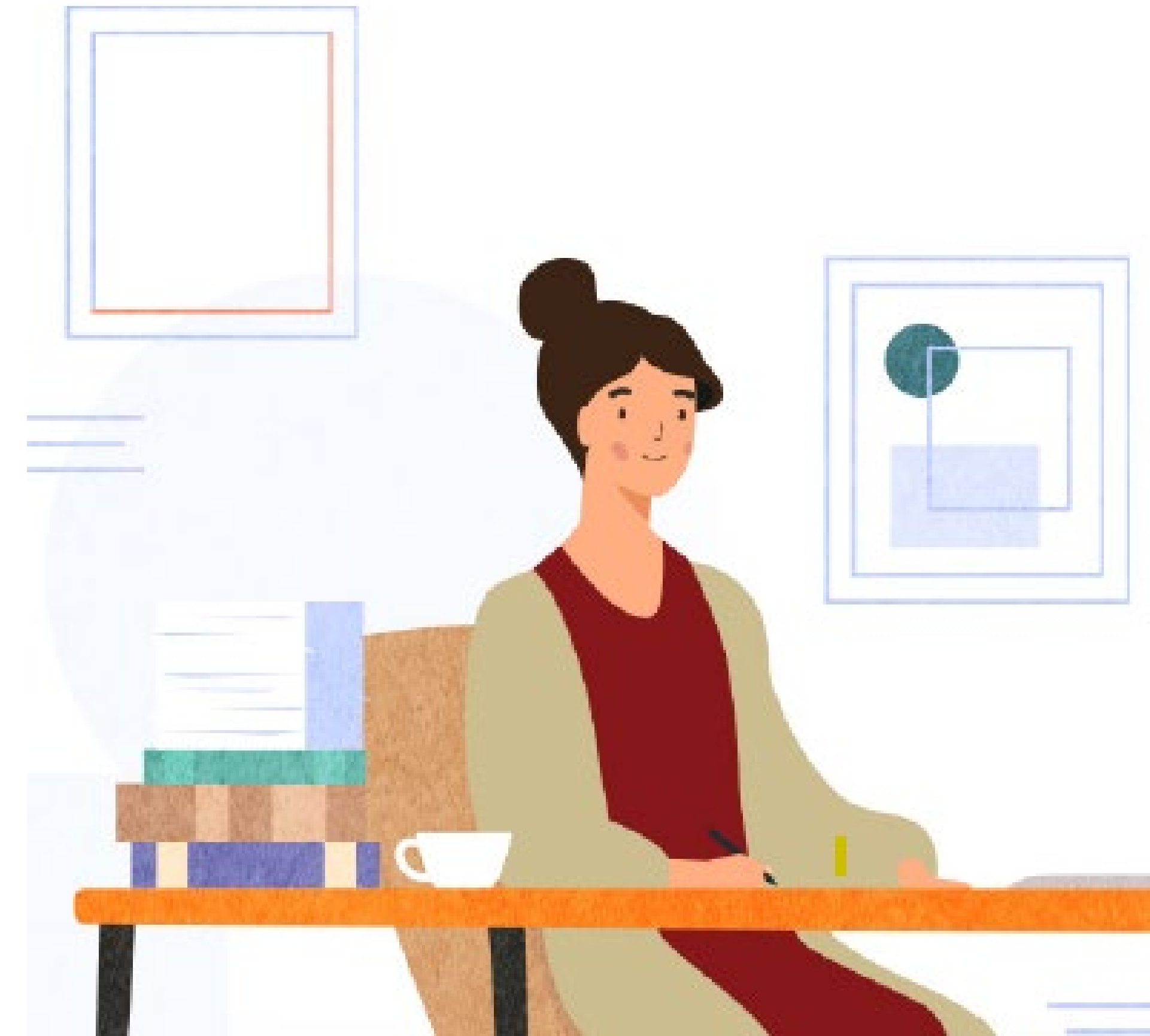


START TIMER. WHEN TIME IS UP, GO TO NEXT SLIDE.

## STEP 2

### VALUES BRAINSTORM

- Set timer: 3 minutes
- On the next slide, you will see a list of values.
- On your piece of paper, quickly write down **ALL** the values that you relate to strongly.
- Don't overthink it!  
Circle anything that speaks to you.  
Add your own!



GO TO NEXT SLIDE AND START TIMER.



# VALUES

ACCOUNTABILITY	COMMUNITY	COURAGE	CREATIVITY
DIGNITY	DIVERSITY	EMPOWERMENT	EQUITY
FAIRNESS	FREEDOM	GENEROSITY	HONOR
HUMILITY	INNOVATION	INTEGRITY	JOY
JUSTICE	KINDNESS	LEADERSHIP	LOVE
PATRIOTISM	PEACE	RESPECT	SERVICE
STEWARDSHIP	WELLBEING	TRUSTWORTHINESS	SPIRITUALITY

## STEP 3

### IDENTIFY YOUR CORE VALUES

- Set timer: 2 minutes
- Look at all the values that just wrote down.
- **Circle 1 - 3** of them.
- Choose the values that speak to you the MOST, or that are at the root of all the other values you wrote down.

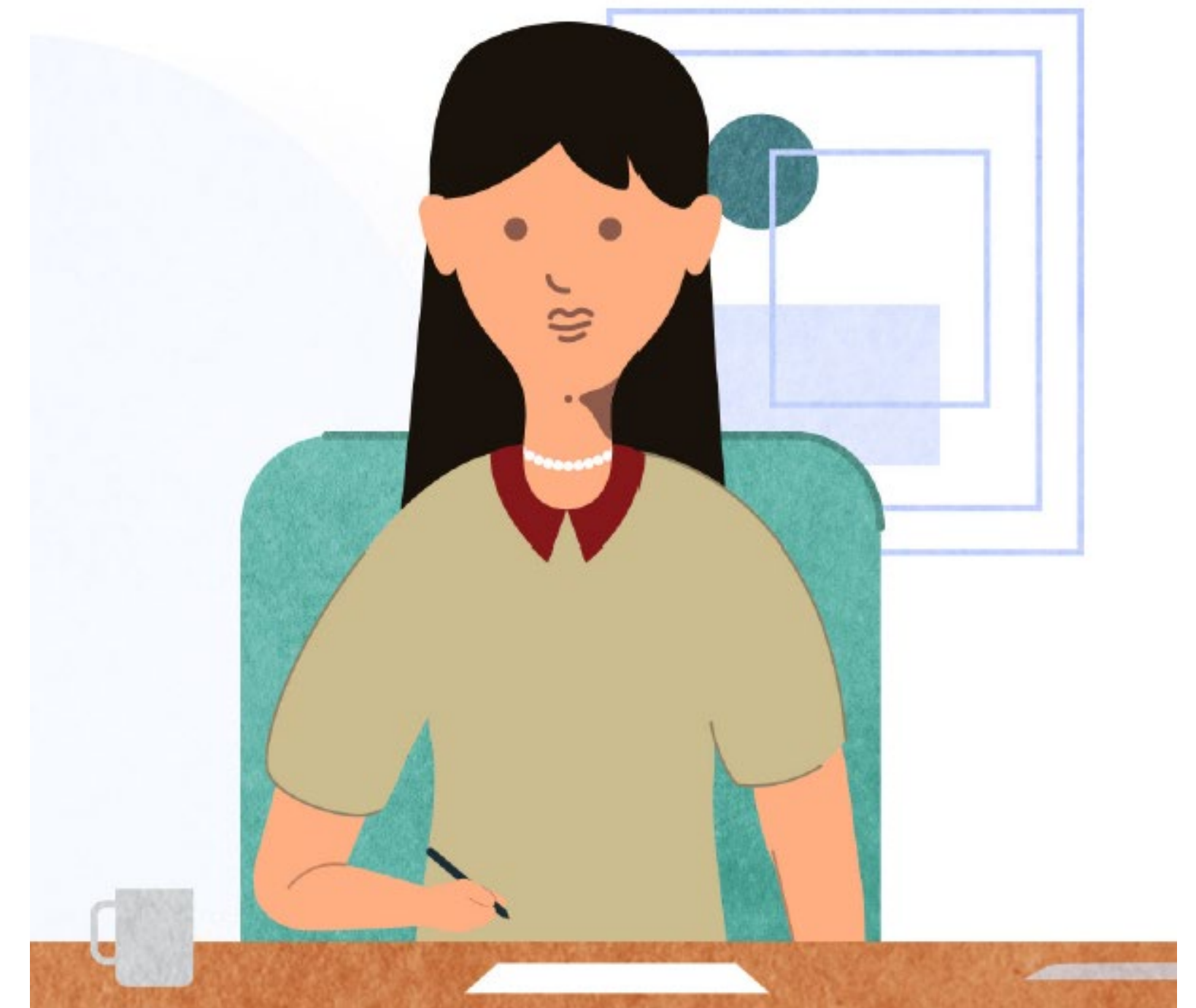


GO TO NEXT SLIDE AND START TIMER.

## STEP 4

### CREATE YOUR **VALUES STATEMENT**

- Set timer: 2-3 minutes
- Take the **1-3 core values** you circled on your piece of paper and insert them into the sentence on the next slide.



GO TO NEXT SLIDE AND START TIMER.

# Your **Values** Statement

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If [*Value 1*], [*Value 2*], and [*Value 3*]  
were flourishing in the world,  
it would significantly address  
the problems I care about.

*Example: “If **equity**, **kindness**, and **generosity** were flourishing in the world, it would significantly address the problem/s I care about.”*





## STEP 5

### IDENTIFY YOUR CORE CAUSES

- Set timer: 2 minutes
- Next let's think through the **issue** areas or primary **causes** that are important to you.
- Feel free to add in your own or get specific. For example, education is a huge category, you may want to specify “early childhood education” or “college success for lean-resourced students.”



GO TO NEXT SLIDE AND START TIMER

# CAUSES

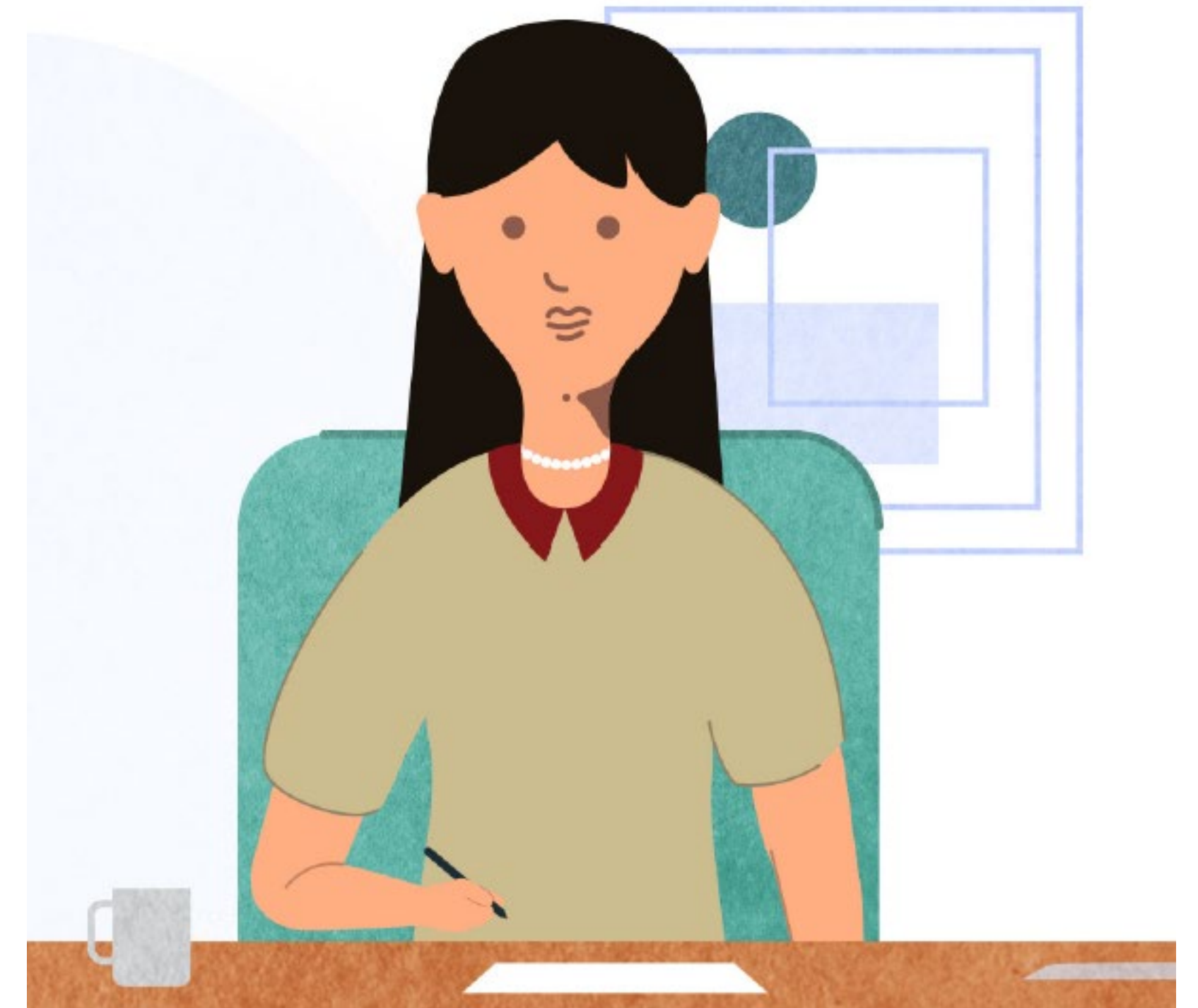
ANIMAL RELATED	ARTS, CULTURE & HUMANITIES	CIVIL RIGHTS & ADVOCACY
DISASTER PREPAREDNESS & RELIEF	EDUCATION	ENVIRONMENT
FOOD & NUTRITION	HEALTH	INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT
LAW & SOCIETY	SOCIAL SERVICES	OTHER



## STEP 6

### CREATE YOUR **CAUSES** STATEMENT

- Set timer: 3 minutes
- Take 1-3 of the **causes** you wrote down that are most important for you at this time, and insert them into the sentence on the next slide.
- Note: the causes you prioritize can change over time. It may help to consider what you want to focus your efforts on in the next few years. Feel free to consider a longer time horizon.



GO TO NEXT SLIDE AND START TIMER.

# Your **Causes** Statement

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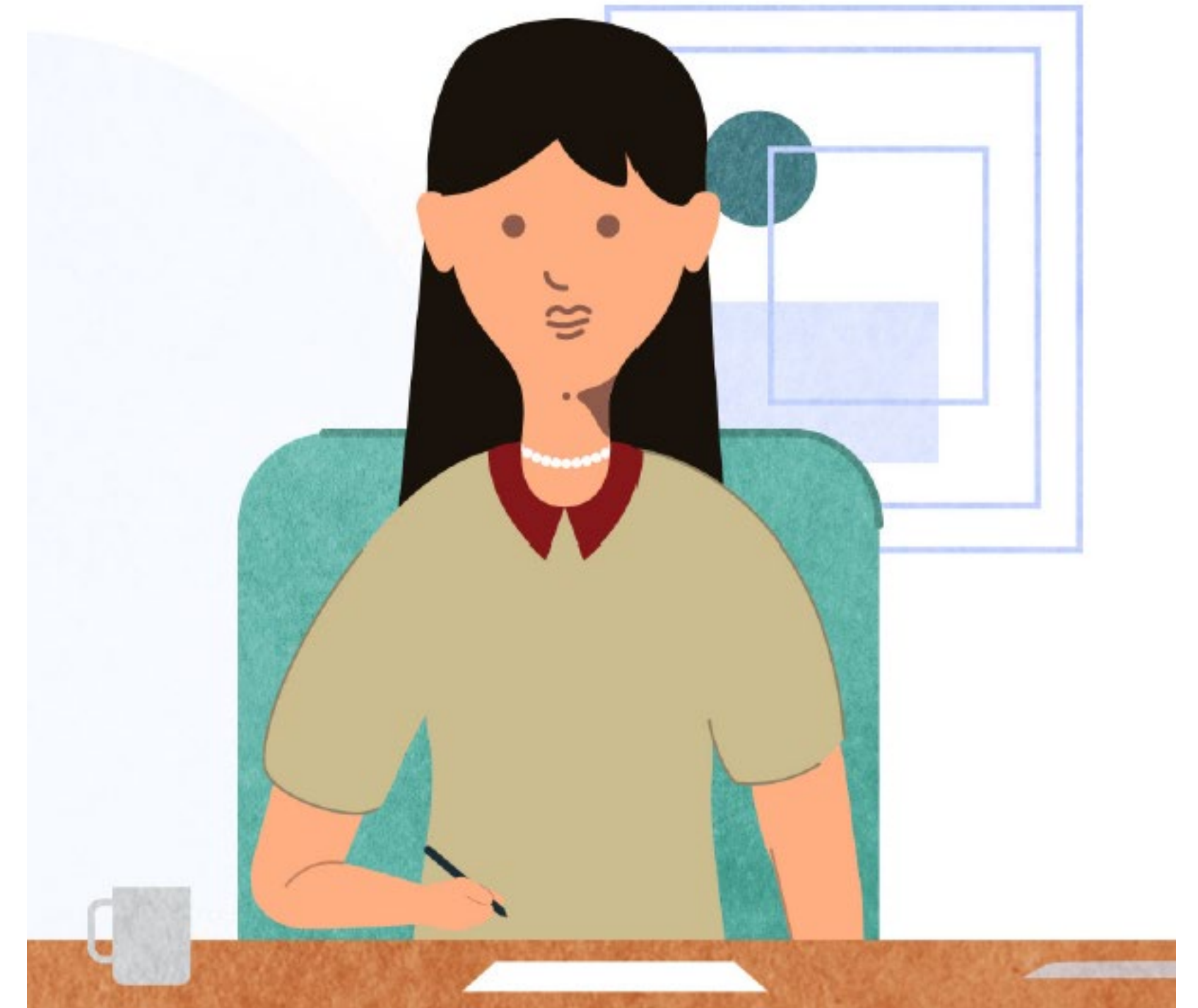
If I could make a difference on  
[*Cause 1*], [*Cause 2*], and [*Cause 3*],  
I would be pleased to have  
made some contribution to that effort.

*Example: “If I could make a difference on **climate change** and on  
**achieving economic justice for Indigenous communities**, I would  
be pleased to have made some contribution to that effort.*

# LAST STEP!

## CREATE YOUR **FOCUS STATEMENT**

- Set timer: 5 minutes
- Now let's pull this all together in your focus statement. Take the **VALUES** and the **CAUSES** you wrote down, and insert them into the sentences on the next slide.
- Optional: if you're ready, in this step you may also want to call out the **who** and **where** you want to focus on. Who are the communities you wish to support? Where do they live?



GO TO NEXT SLIDE AND START TIMER.

# YOUR FOCUS STATEMENT

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My name is [*your name here*]  
and I am [*committed to/believe in*]  
[***Value 1***], [***Value 2***], and [***Value 3***].

I aim to [*address/support/eradicate*]  
[***Cause 1***], [***Cause 2***], and [***Cause 3***]  
for [*target population*]  
throughout the [*world/country/local geographic area*].



# Congratulations!

Creating a **focus statement** is an important step in working towards meaningful social change. What's next?

- Write it on a note to keep by your desk, and share it with others (friends, family, grantees, your financial advisor, etc).
- Use it to develop a more in-depth **theory of change**, which can help you choose what kinds of organizations to get involved with, consider time horizons for impact, and think through which approaches to social change inspire you (front lines activism, long term policy change, communications, research, etc). If you are interested in this:
  - New Philanthropy Capital has a free 10-step guide to developing a TOC:  
<https://www.thinknpc.org/resource-hub/ten-steps>
  - Center for the Theory of Change has further resources and sample TOC's: <https://www.theoryofchange.org>



# THANK YOU...

*for caring, for taking time to be thoughtful, and for being at work on bettering yourself and the world. We need you, and we need each other. May good things come of our collective efforts.*





*A donor-oriented facilitators version of the “Find Your Focus” exercise was developed by Heather Lord ([PhilanthroMeme.com](https://PhilanthroMeme.com)) and a team of scholars and researchers at Stanford University. All are welcome to use or adapt these materials, and Stanford asks that you please include this text:*

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