

There are 1,198,500,000 people alive now in China.

To get a feel for what this means, simply take yourself – in all your singularity, importance, complexity, and love – and multiply by 1,198,500,000.

See? Nothing to it.

—Annie Dillard, *For the Time Being* (1999)

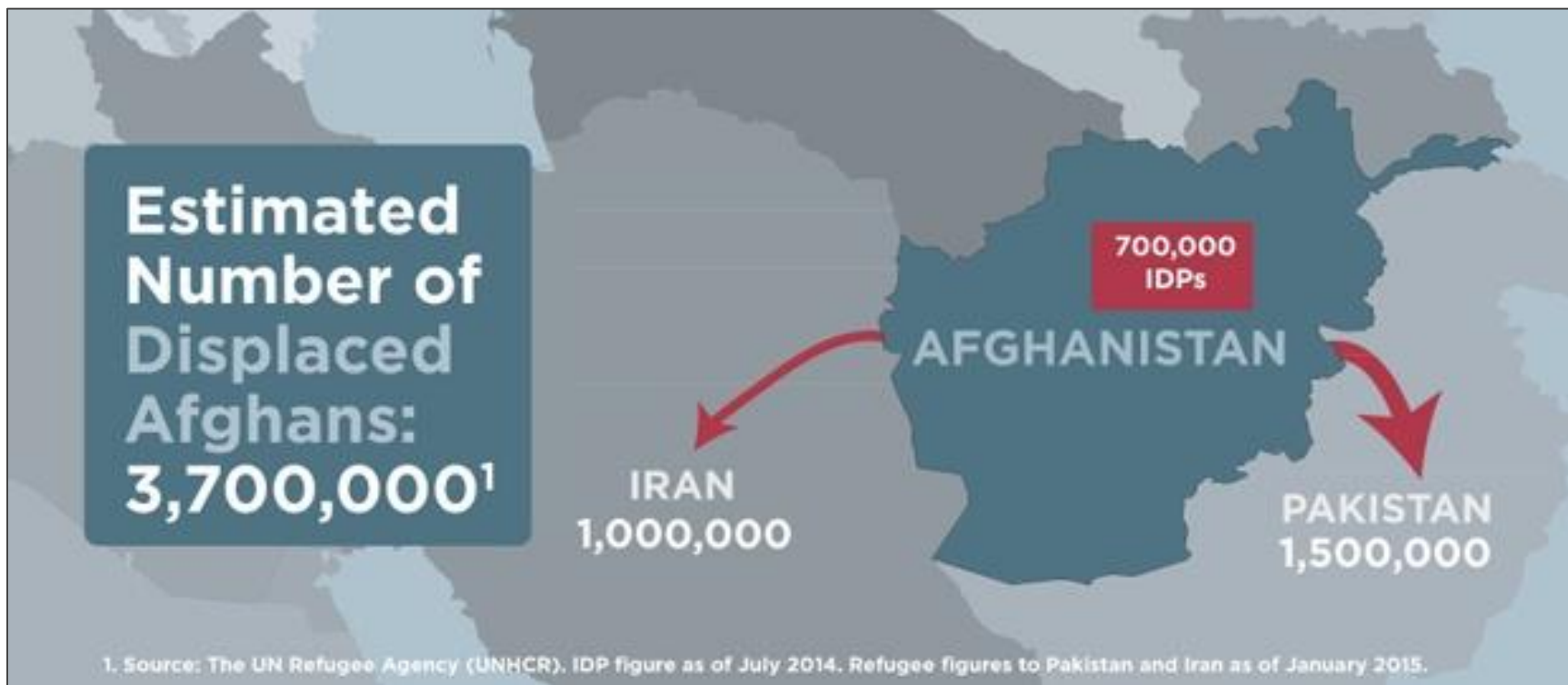
Reconciling Ahern

A critical look at what grant writers can (and can't) learn from direct mail

Shane Pekny

November 8, 2019

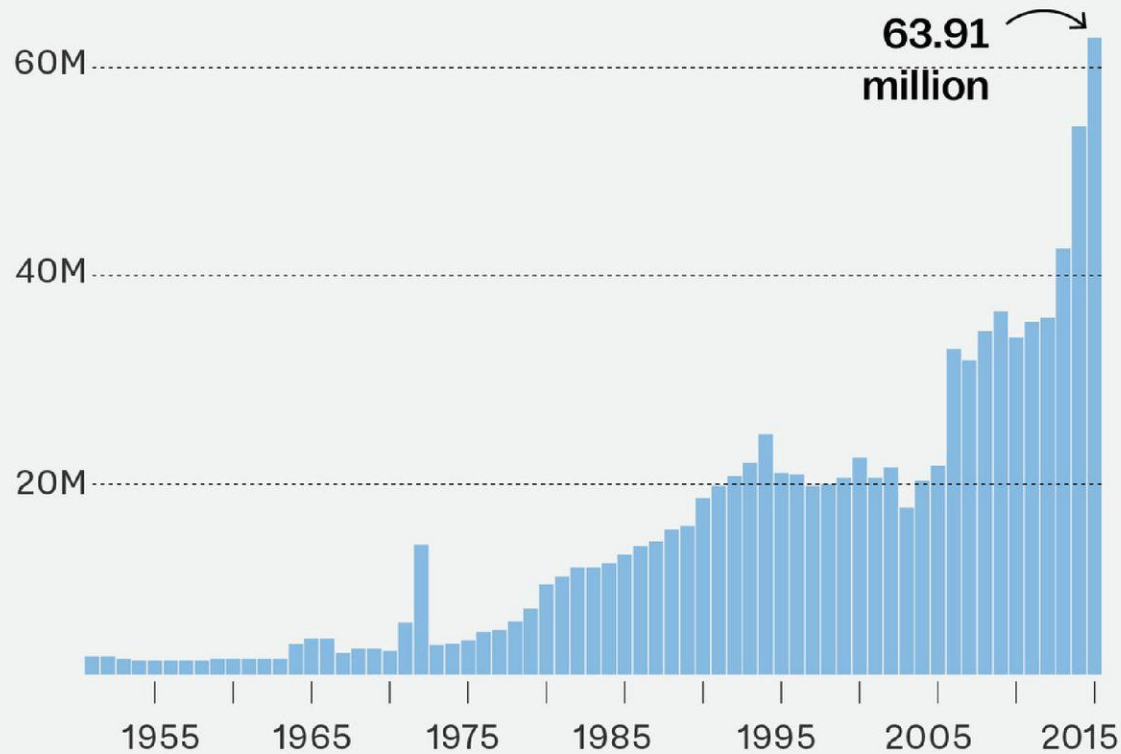




Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs, Brown University
<https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/costs/human/refugees/afghan>

The refugee crisis is at historic proportions

Persons of concern, including refugees, asylum seekers, internally displaced persons, and others



Source: UNHCR

Vox

Vox

<https://www.vox.com/world/2017/1/30/14432500/refugee-crisis-trump-muslim-ban-maps-charts>



Al Jazeera
<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/01/deadline-looms-afghan-refugees-pakistan-180131072420673.html>

Subject: Open Arms: Refugee family is arriving this Sunday, July 16
From: Shane Pekny (spekny@yahoo.com)
To: Open Arms Ministry Team
Cc: Krynn Pekny (krynnpekny@gmail.com)
Bcc: ...
Date: Tuesday, January 15, 2019, 8:51 AM CST

Open Arms Ministry Team:

Exciting news! We've been asked by Lutheran Family Services to sponsor a new refugee family who will arrive in Omaha this Sunday evening, July 16. Here is what we know so far:

- They are a family of four, including two young children, from Afghanistan.
- The father was an interpreter for the U.S. military and therefore put his life in danger.
- This family's search for peace and safety has lasted seven years, but it is now almost over.

Here's how you can help:



The Omaha World-Herald / Rebecca S. Gratz

https://www.omaha.com/akhtari-family-arrives-in-omaha-from-afghanistan/collection_3b4becd2-6f3e-11e7-a124-a3b3344cae8f.html



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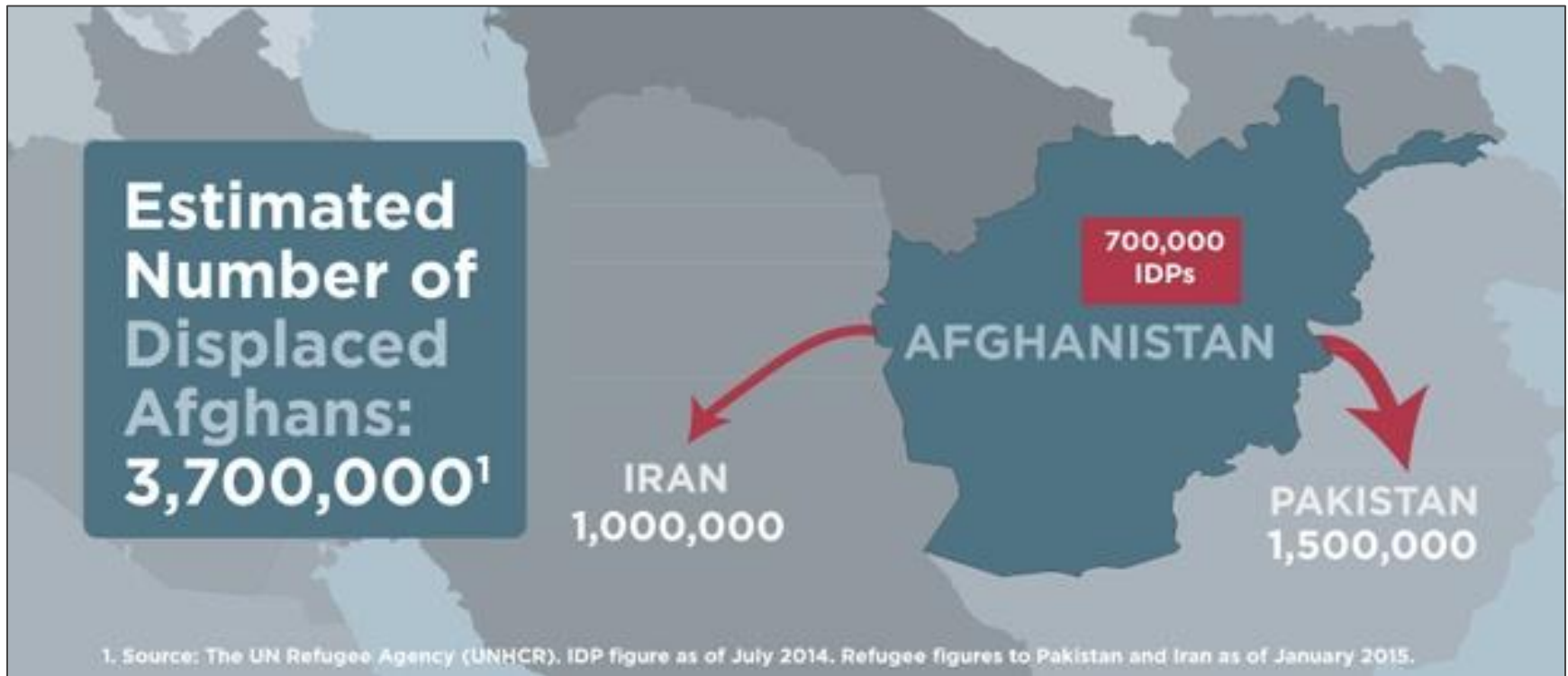
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About me

Past 16 years of experience:

- Habitat for Humanity
- Goodwill Industries
- University of Nebraska Omaha
- Boys Town
- Part-time teaching, magazine writing
- Prior experience and training in journalism

Most important lesson:

- Focus on the audience.

My goals:

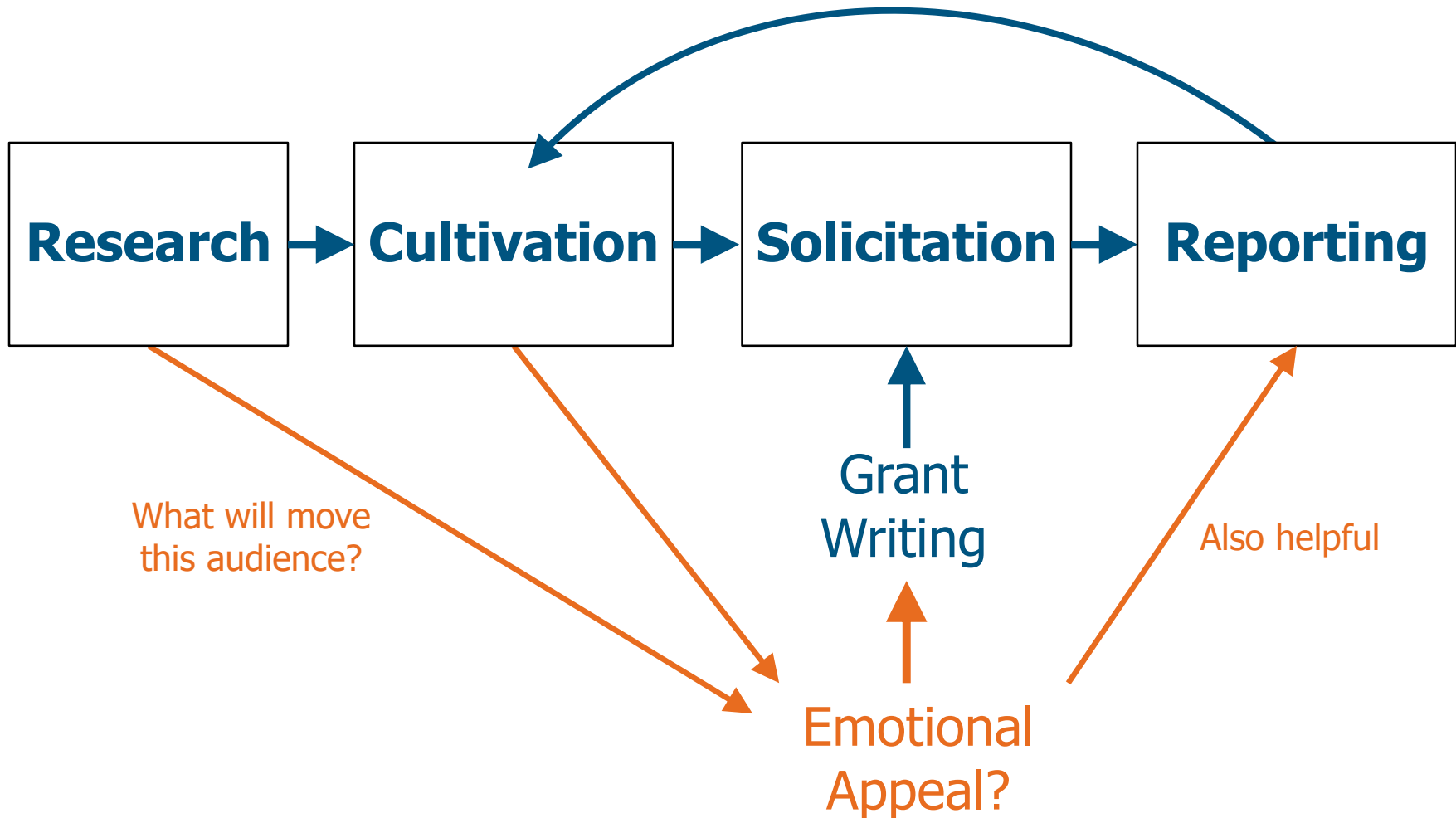
- Be clear, concise, and compelling.

Goals for today

- Understand the identifiable victim effect.
- Determine whether and when it applies to grant writing.
- Learn ways to incorporate emotional appeals into your grant writing.

The context

Grant writing is just part of the process



Key terms

Compassion fade

Compassion decreases as the number of people in need increases.

Identifiable victim effect

We are more compassionate toward single, identifiable victims than statistical victims.

Statistical victim

A large, perhaps nebulous, population-level problem expressed in numbers.

Determined victim

Selected for help, even if not vividly identified.

Vividness

Level of detail in the description of a victim.

Social distance

Perceived proximity or similarity between contributor and victims.

System 1 thinking

Affective, spontaneous, or instinctive response or judgment. Immediate, physical, emotional.

System 2 thinking

Slower, deliberative response.
Based on moral or logical reasoning.

Reference group

The total population in need, some subset of which we are being asked to help.

Person in need

When a group is more unified and **coherent**, having its own identity, such as a family...

Or for a **single individual**, whom we perceive as being maximally unified...

Our reaction

We form stronger or more extreme judgements.

We form judgments more quickly.

We have greater confidence in our judgments.

Person in need

When a person has been **determined**, meaning we know they have been chosen to receive help...

Even without knowing anything about them...

Our reaction

We are more generous.

(Shown in both lab and field test with Habitat for Humanity fundraising letter.)

(Small and Loewenstein 2003)

Person who breaks rules

When the violator is **determined**, rather than as yet determined...

Our reaction

We feel more angry.

We administer greater punishment.

(Small and Loewenstein 2005)

Person in need

Our reaction

Individual: When presented with more **vivid** information – name, age, photo...

We are more generous.

Group of eight: When presented with more **vivid** information...

The identifying information makes no difference.

Person in need

Our reaction

When:

- More similar to us.
- Physically closer.
- More specifically and vividly identified.
- Individual rather than a group...

Social distance
shrinks.

(Associated with stronger emotional response, greater acceptance, more empathy.)

Person in need

Potential causes:

- Vividness.
- Whether harm has occurred yet.
- Certainty of harm.
- Proportion of **reference group** that will be helped...

Our reaction

Some evidence:

Certainty causes us to be more generous.

Strong evidence:

Helping a larger proportion of the reference group causes us to be more generous.

Large reference group

Nationwide, traffic accidents kill **50,000** annually.

We can install safety equipment to save **25** of these lives. How important is that to you?

Small reference group

At a specific intersection, traffic accidents kill **25** annually.

We can install safety equipment to save all **25** of these lives. How important is that to you?

Person in need

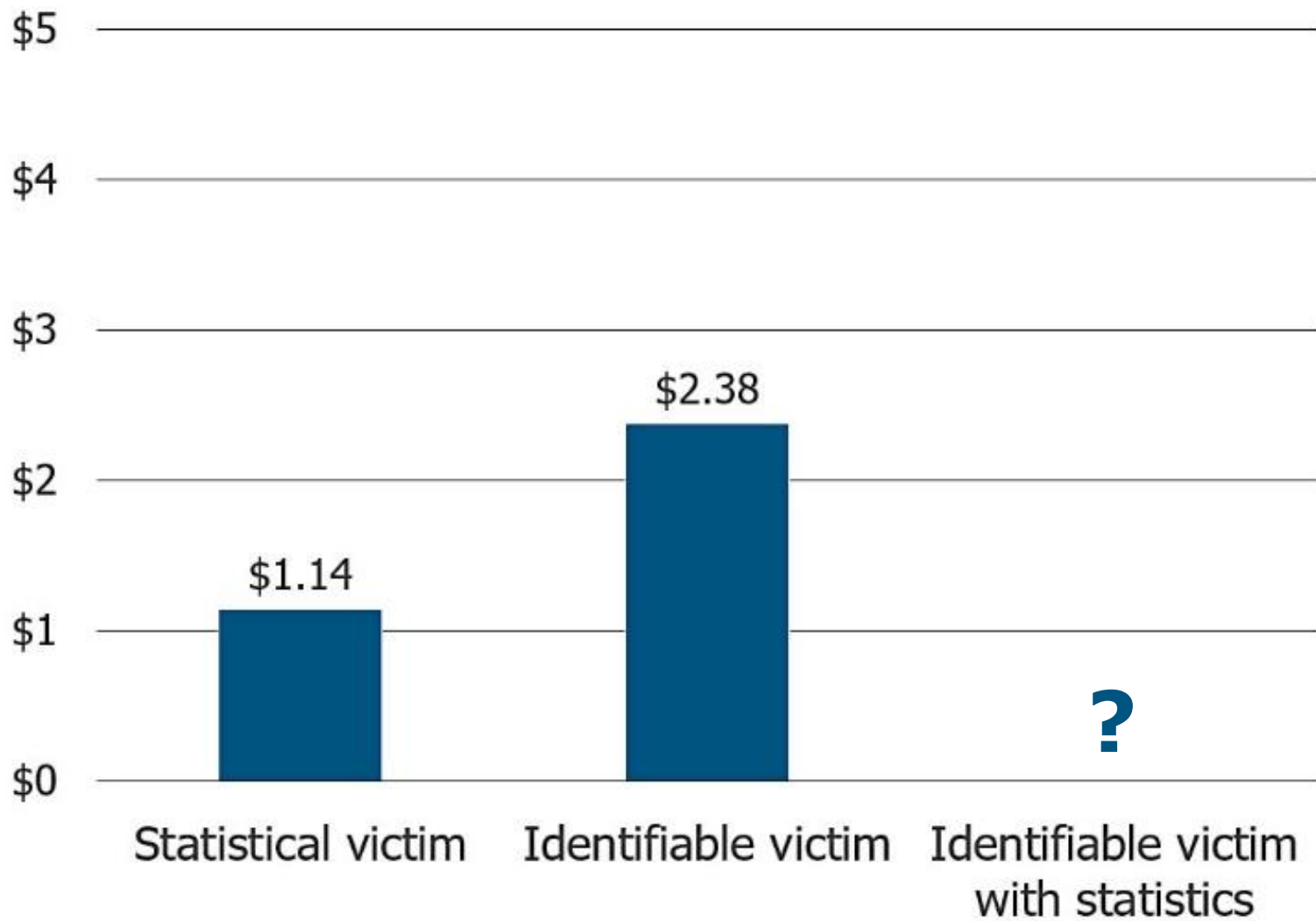
When it's **two people**
instead of one...

Our reaction

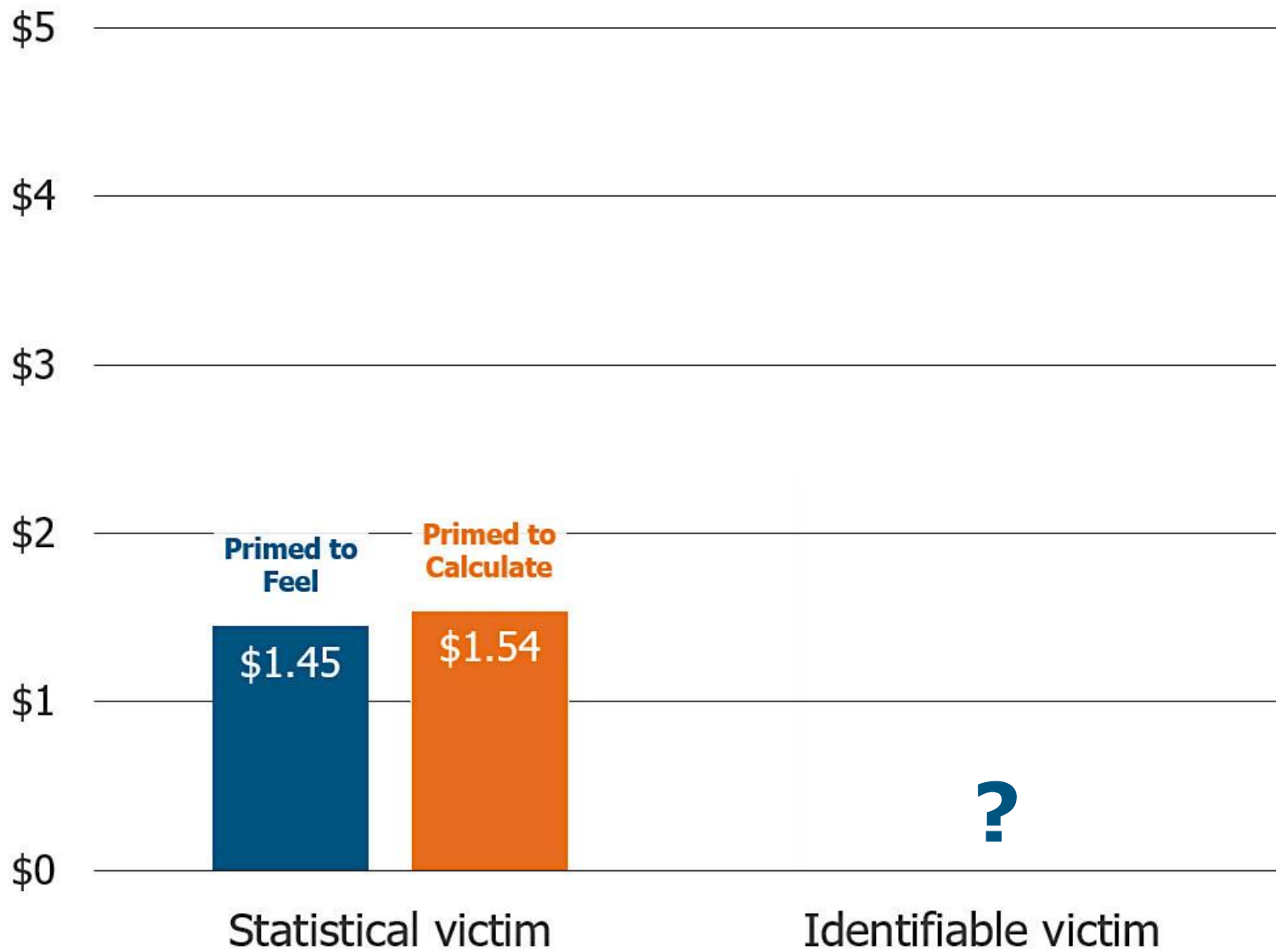
Our compassion fades.

(Measured in charitable experiments, self-reported feelings, and even involuntary physiological reactions.)

(Västfjäll et al. 2014)



(Data source: Small, Loewenstein, and Slovic 2006)



(Data source: Small, Loewenstein, and Slovic 2006)

Person in need

When directly taught about the **identifiable victim effect**...

Our reaction

We are less generous toward individuals.

Our generosity toward groups stays the same.

(Small, Loewenstein, and Slovic 2006)

Person in need

When considering appeals **separately**...

Our reaction

We use spontaneous, **System 1** thinking.

We give **more** overall.

When considering appeals jointly or **comparatively**...

We use deliberative, **System 2** thinking.

We see differentiators in stark relief.

New details matter.

We give **less** overall.

So where does that leave grant writers?

- We kind of want System 1 thinking.
- Yet our funders often can't avoid System 2.
- An emotional appeal *might* help, probably can't hurt, but has limits.

Let's carefully consider:

1. The decision-making process
2. The perception of our clients
3. Reference group effects

1. The decision-making process

- Out of our control:
 - What information do they request?
 - Personal and discretionary, or public and obligatory?
 - In isolation or comparative?
 - Primed to feel or primed to analyze?
- Deeper interactions? Site visit?
- Bottom line:
 - *Know your audience.*
 - *Lead with your best.*

The Pekny Family Foundation

- Grant is discretionary.
- No formal guidelines or scoring rubric.
- No deadlines or formal cycles.
- Open to site visit, other interactions.



System 1 engaged

U.S. Department of Labor

- Funds already allocated to agency.
- Detailed scoring rubric.
- Considering many applicants jointly.
- No other interaction.

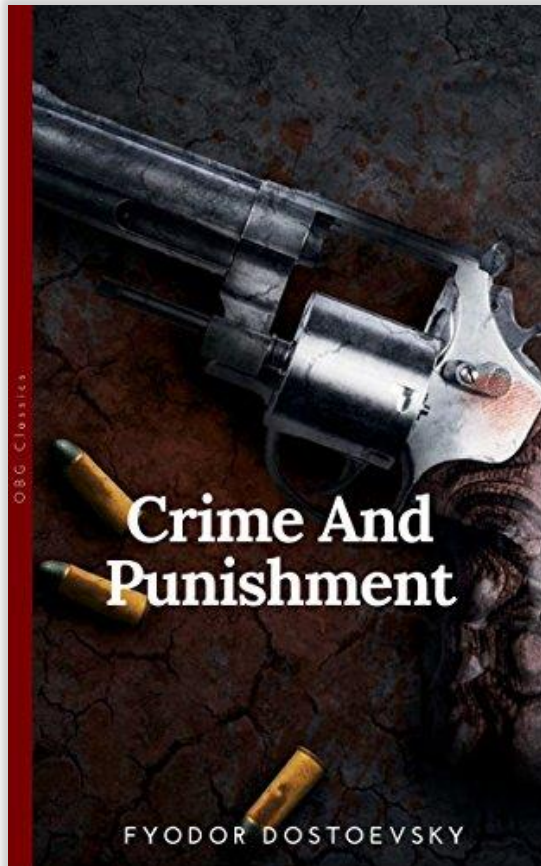


System 2 engaged

2. The perception of our clients

- Somewhat under our control
- Options for identifiable, vivid clients:
 - Adding a story
 - Integrating a story
 - Giving a quote
 - Imagery
 - Links to multimedia
 - Site visit

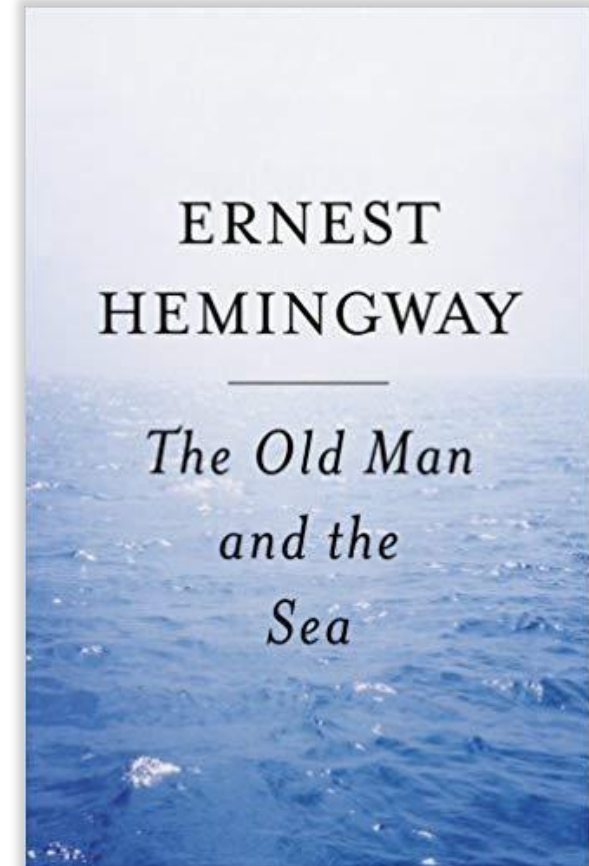
What it's like to be a...



Ex-offender
(736 pages)



Military veteran
(243 pages)



Senior citizen
(127 pages)

2. The perception of our clients

- Story-telling tips:
 - Vivid, specific, five senses.
 - Individualize the work, or stay coherent.
 - Start with a turning point.
 - No magical results; show the work.
 - One success story proves little.
 - Complete but short.

2. The perception of our clients

Social distance:

“Imagine you were a runaway teenager, addicted to heroin, sleeping under a bridge in downtown Omaha...”

“Imagine your teenage daughter didn’t come home last night, and she won’t answer her phone...”

2. The perception of our clients

- Integrating a story:
 - First paragraph: “When Jenny first came to Boys Town...”
 - Later on...
 - “Just like Jenny, most of the students have fallen far behind academically...”
 - “Jenny and her classmates attend the Reading Center...”
 - “When Jenny was ready to leave Boys Town...”

2. The perception of our clients

A few words can tell a whole story:

“Construction feels like you’ve accomplished something.”

— Juan Lopez, Senior at Boys Town High School

“My biggest fear was people forgetting about me.”

— Graduate and Aftercare Participant
Boys Town High School Class of 2018

2. The perception of our clients

- Link to multimedia:
 - Let Marketing help!
 - Reviewers may be reading online.
 - Get HTML short codes:
 - tinyurl.com
 - Clickable in .pdf *and* readable
- More engagement
 - Site visits
 - Stewardship beyond reporting

3. Reference group effects

- What do we mean by the reference group?
 - Total population needing help
 - Total amount of money needed
 - Larger problem = smaller relative impact

3. Reference group effects

- Completely under our control.
- Reference group can be arbitrary or assumed; you should create it intentionally.
- Maximize the donor's impact.
- "Right-size" the request.
- Avoid the "drop in the bucket" problem.
- Can't *avoid* statistics altogether, so use statistics for a small reference group.

Drop in the bucket

Contribute \$10,000 to \$1 million operating cost of program.

This funding will help 25 at-risk students.

This funding will help 25 at-risk students in Omaha.

Right-sized

Contribute \$10,000 to \$25,000 cost of the supplies we need.

This funding will help 25 of the 50 students at Omaha South High who are most at-risk of dropping out.

Drop in the bucket

Every year, more than 47,000 Americans take their own lives.

Your \$10,000 grant will help us achieve our \$1 million fundraising goal and serve 1,000 families...

Right-sized

Last year, 248 Nebraskans took their own lives.

Your \$10,000 grant will serve 10 families who would otherwise go without...

Will you be one of the 72?

Yahoo/Inbox 



Warren for President <info@elizabethwarren.com>

To: spekny@yahoo.com



Oct 14 at 12:50 PM



WARREN

In the weeks and months to come, it's absolutely crucial that we grow our movement as much as possible. That means expanding our operations across the country, hiring more organizers, and spreading our message of big, structural change.

So we've set a goal of reaching 2 million contributions, and with your help, we can make it happen.

To stay on track to hit this goal as soon as possible, we need 72 more people from Nebraska to make a donation today. Will you be one of the 72? Chip in \$3 or anything you can today:

If you've saved payment info with ActBlue Express, your donation will process automatically:

DONATE NOW: \$3

DONATE NOW: \$10

DONATE NOW: \$25

DONATE NOW: \$50

DONATE NOW: \$100

OTHER AMOUNT

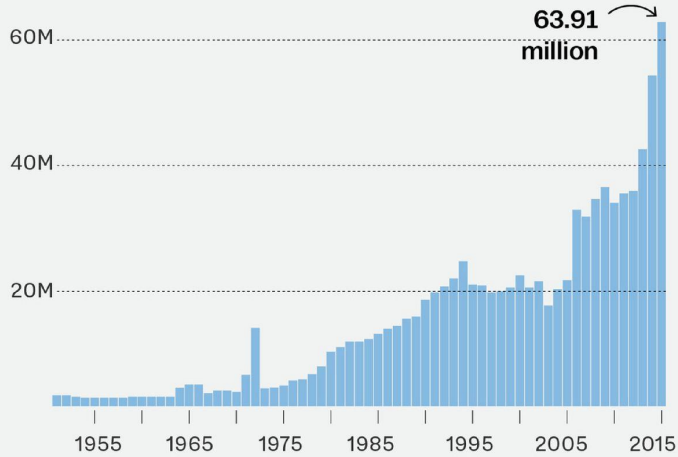
When Elizabeth takes the debate stage tomorrow, she'll be making the case for big, structural change

Drop in the bucket

Real

The refugee crisis is at historic proportions

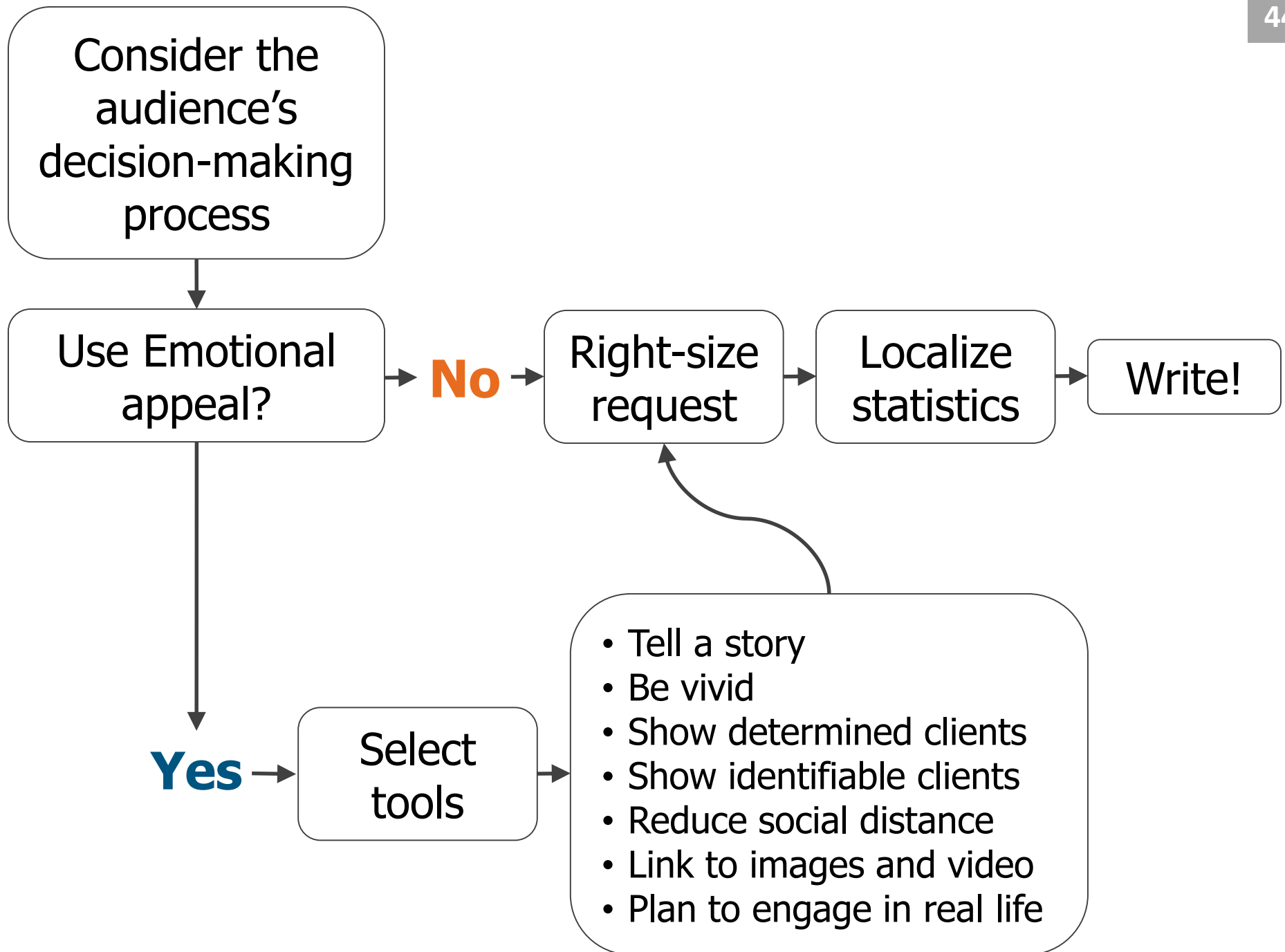
Persons of concern, including refugees, asylum seekers, internally displaced persons, and others



Source: UNHCR

Vox





Key questions for discussion

1. Do you have a compelling story to share about an identifiable individual or family?
 - What challenges prevent you from creating that story?
2. What was the reference group in your last grant proposal?
 - What other options do you have for a reference group?
3. What characteristics increase the social distance between your donors and clients?
 - How could you shrink that social distance?

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