



ALTERNATIVE INVESTMENTS

Rachel Mukuze

Head of PPP Investments

Q&A

Q What led you to pursue a career in Public Private Partnerships (PPPs)?

A In hindsight, it was a happy accident and providence. I had been filling in for a client as CFO until a suitable candidate could be found, but what started as a short stint turned into a PPP love story. It was not easy to begin with. While I had finance knowledge, I hadn't a clue about PPP, and neither the experience nor the skill to do great things with the project. But I learned on the job, blessed with incredible mentors who cheered me on and held the compass when I needed it. It taught me that, given the right opportunity and support, anyone can do anything that they set their mind to. This is why I have a passion for PPPs. When you choose growth and are curious, you will learn something new every day. It may not happen overnight, but with a dash of passion, a spoon of support, a helping of kindness and a cheering squad, nothing is impossible.

Q What was the toughest project you ever worked on and why?

A My first PPP project as CFO was a tough one, because you don't know what you don't know. I learned so much through brutal truths, and am grateful for the people around me who were willing to be honest with me when I needed it. I also learned to take feedback with safe and trusted intent, and to use that insight to perform better for the team and improve my "solutionist thinking". Professional truths shared are not meant to hurt, and when shared factually and with empathy, can build you and what you can authentically bring to the table.

Q What, in your opinion, is the hardest part of a PPP deal?

A It's finding the right partners with a common vision, who will stay the course, as the ride can be rough at times.

Q What is your favourite sector to do a deal in and why?

A Public Private Partnerships are a dreamer's dream – the "what would you like it to be" moment of potential. There are so many possibilities within the PPP framework, but all of these have two distinct common outcomes – service delivery and social impact.

Q If you could change one thing on your career path to date, what would it be and why?

A The different paths we take are dictated by knowledge, skill and entrepreneurship, and I was fortunate to have had a series of jobs that led me to my current career, goals and vision for life. One thing I would change is finding a mentor to help me much earlier on this journey.

Q What piece of advice would you give a female entrepreneur looking for funding?

A **1. Know Your Funder (KYF).** Make sure that you fully understand the potential funder's requirements before preparing your presentation, so the target audience can focus on the pitch instead of trying to connect the dots.

2. Keep it simple, keep it straight. Highlight key points upfront, and do not bury them in the annexures. Focus on the Q&A and the commonality of your vision with the funders' vision.

3. Do not let the rejection of one funder kill your dream. It's not about you, or the idea, and a lot to do with the funders' mandates (KYF).

4. Use perceived negative feedback to direct positive outcomes – learn, unlearn and relearn. As clichéd as this may sound, this is the world we live in. You cannot stay married to an idea that is not working for mutual benefit.

Q What, in your opinion, is the worst thing an entrepreneur could do when pitching for funding?

A One should never present the vision without articulating the how, when, and how much. Always be transparent about what's in it for both sides – the mutual benefits.

Q What do you do to unwind | get away from the stress of work?

A I do my happy routine... Sleep. Lift. Next. Repeat.

FUN FACTS

Current book on your nightstand: *The Alchemist* (Gifted to me by a phenomenal woman. We practice alchemy daily in our lives).

Dog or cat person: Dog person.

Item not yet completed on your bucket list: Aconcagua, highest mountain in the Americas.

Preferred holiday destination: My happy places are up in the mountains above the clouds, or down at the ocean in the waves.

Three words that your colleagues would use to describe you: Quirky, smiley and unfathomable. My quirks are evident in the above! #MutualImpact. 🐾