

Support for Applicants – Common Themes

Appraisals for both ESF and ERDF Applications

The ESF Managing Authority, DWP, has recently introduced a one-stage application process. As a result it is important that applicants provide as much accurate information as possible to help avoid a large stream of additional questions.

The issues below have been identified by both the MA Appraisal Team and the Intermediate Body Appraiser.

General

- Clearly describe the **participant journey/delivery model** which is being presented and consider including a pictorial representation of this journey/model. The narrative should include how it has been tested and/or whether it has been successfully used before or whether it is testing a new approach.
- Detail how the project meets the key requirements of the **Operational Programme** and the **Call Specification**.
- Identify the **medium to long term benefits** of the project
- Provide information about the **management and controls**, including information security for audit purposes and an in depth description of the processes for drawing together claims for submission.
- Ensure consistency in the use of the **ESF logo and strapline** in presented material and additionally provide a limited narrative response to how the applicant will meet at least the minimum publicity requirements.
- Submit the **Procurement Annexes**, ensuring consistency between the Annexes and narrative/tables in the application form. Additionally clarify the procurement process to be used and how it will meet ESIF requirements.
- **Procurement Processes**. Provide detailed information about the applicant's processes of procurement ie do not simply state they have read the policies or refer the MA to their policy.

Make it easier for the Appraiser

- **Format consistency**:- if cutting and pasting from another document ensure colour/font/font size/numbering etc is in line with the Application Form

- Cutting and pasting:- **ensure a final read** through for sense/applicability etc. What was written originally may need tweaking in the new context
- Special Conditions/Queries:- consider how **responses are presented** to make it easy for the Assessor
- Focussed Response:- be as **concise as possible**. Key points can be missed if too much information is provided
- Ensure Consistency:- similar questions may be asked in slightly different contexts. Take an overview of the queries and **ensure consistency**
- MA tendency to ask a number/range of questions in letter/form/email formats:- applicant could cut and paste all of these into one document to ensure they **maintain consistency** and can refer back accurately to any previous clarifications/queries – also helpful when dealing with any issues raised by the audit team
- **ITI Strategy alignment:** clearly identify **how** the application contributes to/is aligned with the ITI Strategy
- Do not submit initial documents with **track changes/formatting issues**

Outputs & Results

- Provide **sufficient rationale** for the Delivery model, demand and Unit cost assumptions (if relevant). It is not sufficient to simply provide the Unit cost and state it is in line with the Call; there must be a clear assumption based statement on how the cost has been produced.
- Complete the **Indicator Annexe** in line with the requirements of the call. Applications have been submitted with an annexe with some of the required indicators and/or are including additional indicators not relevant to the Investment Priority the call relates to. The applicant must submit an indicator annexe which includes all of the Outputs and Results as set out in the call specification.
- Submit the **Financial and Output Annexes** with your Application
- Provide information on **how the deliverables** have been forecast or benchmarked. Do not simply refer to the Call/Op deliverables
- Outputs and Results:- again **ensure consistency** between the figures quoted on the Application Form and the Annexes

Financial Information

- Ensure **no inconsistencies** between the data contained in the application narrative and both the Indicator and Financial Annexes. Inconsistencies have been identified between the three tabs within the financial annexe – Cost Profile, Funding Profile & Funding Sources
- Check that the **cost headings** are relevant to the project. All ESF projects, for example, should use only the following headings – ESF Direct Staff Costs, ESF Other Direct Costs and ESF Flat Rate Intervention Cost (FRIC)
- Use the **correct calculation** to produce the relevant costs if using the 15% or 40% FRIC option. The methodology should show the relevant calculations.
- Detail the correct amount and type of **match** and provide the evidence
- Provide the necessary **financial documents**, with the Application form, to enable the Managing Authority to undertake the Due Diligence checks.
- Check and **ensure consistency** between the match letters and the application including the amount, the time covered by the match and the name of the provider listed in the Financial Annexe.
- Ensure the Financial Annex is fully **completed and accurate and consistent** with the Granular Budget and the Application narrative (including rounding figures up or down)
- Detail is required in terms of **State Aid** including its relevance, whether independent legal advice has been accessed, and/or the monitoring arrangements which will be in place to record the aid.

Cross Cutting Themes (CCTs)

- Provide information regarding how CCT Policy and Plans will be **embedded in the project** – not only the delivery aspect. Applications should include action planning and reporting processes
- Ensure the CCT Policies are **submitted with the Application Form**

Special Conditions and Follow Up Questions

- **Respond clearly** to Special Conditions and/or queries sent to applicant for clarification