

# The Darwin Initiative



## FAQs & Common Issues: the 'easy wins'



Department  
for Environment  
Food & Rural Affairs



Funded by  
UK Government

# Administrative Eligibility



- Word counts will be strictly enforced
- Supporting docs including:
  - Letters of support *including applicant organisation*
  - Last 2 sets of signed/audited accounts
  - Budget table (matches request and certification in application)
  - Past experience and awards (if new to Darwin as a lead) including contacts for references
  - CVs for key personnel: *partners and project team*

# Darwin objectives



- Outlined in full in guidance
- Which convention & why
  - CITES is *only* relevant for specific trade projects and not just because you are working on a CITES listed species
  - Can you demonstrate communication with the Convention focal point – perhaps by letter?

# Finances



- Does the budget add up and do the figures on the application and spreadsheet match?
- Large % matched funding unsecured – risky
- It is good to see a significant % of funds going directly to host country partners/costs – but no specified amount
- % of funds on M&E (between 5% and 10%)
- Capital costs normally <10%
- ‘Consultancy costs’ and ‘Other’ – provide detail
- Make sure you only include audit costs for the lead organisation and only in the last FY
- Refer to Finance for Darwin&IWT document
- Allow for exchange rates to fluctuation – but no ‘contingency’

# Project team expertise



- Include CVs or ToRs of team members *critical* to delivery
- Ensure skills presented match the work proposed
- Tailor CVs to ensure *skills* are clear and avoid long lists of publications
- Relate CVs presented to budget table i.e. roles or names
- Avoid submitting teams with too many ‘TBC’ posts

# Monitoring and evaluation



## Common problems that could be avoided

- A weak theory of change – your solutions should match the problems outlined

*“The stage 2 application should include a clear Theory of Change detailing how research outputs will lead to implementation”*

- Failure to provide outcome indicators for *both* biodiversity *and* poverty

*“This policy level project needs to find a way of measuring impacts on poverty reduction - the logframe as it stands does not do this”*

- Measure progress *throughout*, not just the final few months

*“Outputs 1-4 don’t have any interim milestones (i.e. start and end line only) and so tracking progress will be difficult”*

- Does not demonstrate how you will *measure* what has changed i.e. not SMART

# Monitoring and evaluation



## Common problems that could be avoided

- Setting a target when there is no baseline

*“with the exception of one outcome level income indicator, the logframe is devoid of targets. With no indication of project scope or targets, it is not possible to assess sustainability of the proposal”*

- Including *untested* assumptions that are critical

*“It would be good to have an assurance that producers are willing to work with the project, rather than this appearing as an Assumption”*

- Not being clear *who* will undertake M&E or *when*

# Attention to Risk



Ensure you fully consider the risks and threats to your project including

- Fraud
- Bribery
- Natural disasters eg weather, disease, physical
- Staff retention and reliance on key people
- Change of government/partner personnel
- Exchange rates

These are *different* to the Assumptions in the logframe.



# Other common issues



- Partnerships take time – new partnerships vs old and time taken to establish working relationships
- Avoid ‘template’ letters of support
- Don’t underestimate how long it may take at project start up to finalise agreements, visas, staff recruitment etc.
- Attribution vs contribution and measuring change
  - “high level of matched funding means attribution of achievements to DI funding will be challenging”
- Research projects often have unclear communication strategies and should consider who the audience is, how will they use the results, when will they be engaged etc.

# Other issues cont.



- Don't assume the reviewer can read your mind – decisions are made on the evidence you provide in your application so be clear how you will address the Conventions, or what species you will be working with
- Equity – have you considered it?
- If the project is part of a larger programme explain the distinctiveness of Darwin
- Respond to feedback – as a cover letter or within text
- Make use of graphics or web links if you have more to say and cannot reduce your word count any further, but within reason

# Questions? General



- Are there any specific changes to requirements this year?
- Why do I need a letter of support from my organisation?
- Previous work: Does work need to have been completed?
- Can we add more boxes to provide details if there are not enough?
- Question 17a. Harmonisation: Is this question asking about existing work the lead applicant is doing, existing work by any partners or any existing work in project area?
- What level of coordination is expected from partners working on similar projects or receiving Defra funding?

# Questions? Financial



- Can we change the budget between Stage 1 and Stage 2?
- Overheads: What is considered a reasonable level?
- How important is it to show co-financing?
- How do you set staff costs? E.g. hourly rates, formulae ...
- Is there specific guidance on capital costs?
- What are the audit requirements?
- Assessment of costs: what does this mean? Just VFM?
- What level of internal control should finance have over the project?