

The Darwin Initiative



FAQs & Common Issues: the 'easy wins'



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs



Administrative Eligibility



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

Darwin objectives



- 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 is the same figure on the application form?
- Large % matched finance unsecured – risky
- It is good to see a significant % of funds going directly to host country partners/costs
- % of funds on M&E (5% is reasonable)
- Capital costs <10%
- ‘Consultancy costs’ and ‘Other’ – what are these?
- Make sure you only include audit costs for the lead organisation and only in the last FY
- Refer to Finance for Darwin 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
- Failure to provide outcome indicators for *both* biodiversity *and* poverty
- Does not demonstrate how you will *measure* what has changed i.e. not SMART
- Measure progress *throughout*, not just the final few months
- Including *untested* assumptions that are critical
- Setting a target when there is no baseline
- Not being clear *who* will undertake M&E or *when*

Attention to Risk – *New this year*



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
- 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

Questions?



- How do you set staff costs? Eg hourly rates, formulae ...
- Can we change the budget between Stage 1 and Stage 2?
- Are there any specific changes to the requirements this year?
- Why do I need a letter of support from my organisation?
- Assessment of costs: what does this mean? Just VFM?
- Overheads: What is considered a reasonable level?
- How important is it to show co-financing?
- Previous work: Do the projects need to have been completed?
- Can we propose a budget over £400,000 (over 4 years) to address feedback from Stage 1?
- Can we add more boxes to provide details if there are not enough?