Darwin Initiative Stage 2 Workshop

8th November 2018, Zoological Society of London

Workshop Proceedings

On 8th November, an in-person workshop was held at the Zoological Society of London. The workshop content focused on the necessary steps for the second stage of the Darwin application, the importance of gender consideration, the effective use of project design tools and appropriate indicators. The aim of the workshop was to provide advice and support relating to producing a successful application and to provide a forum for applicants to gain a better understanding of the key considerations of the Darwin Expert Committee.

This note covers the frequently asked questions as well as those specific to different areas of the application and answers, and participant feedback on the workshop and activities.

The presentations from the day plus these proceedings can be accessed via the Darwin website here.

Contents

Workshop Agenda

	Agenda Item
09:30	**Arrivals and Registration** (Tea and coffee on arrival)
10.00	**Introduction to the Workshop** - Purpose of the workshop - How the day will work - Introductions - exercise
10:15	**Welcome by the Darwin Secretariat** - Welcome by Defra - Changes for Round 25
10:30	**What is the Darwin Expert Committee looking for?** - Key considerations used by the DEC when reviewing applications
10.50	**Overview of Frequently Asked Questions/Common Issues** - Common administrative and finance queries - Collection of questions received from applicants and responses
11:30	**The Importance of Gender in Darwin Projects** - Integrating gender into Darwin projects
11:45	**Communicating your Ideas** - Framing your project appropriately - Translating complexity into simplicity - exercise
12:00	**Lunch**
13:00	**Project Design Tools** - Why use project design tools - Logframes and theories of change - Introducing effective logframe development - exercise
14:10	**Tea and Coffee Break**
14:20	**The Importance of Good Evidence and Appropriate Indicators** - Identifying SMART indicators - Collecting and reporting evidence - Means of verification - exercise
15.30	**Q&A, Feedback and Wrap Up**
15:45	**Workshop Close**

Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs

DARWIN INITIATIVE

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Key points or common issues arising from the morning sessions

Welcome by the Darwin Secretariat

Q. Should I upload a supporting document for each of my project partners if I have more than the maximum number on Flexi-Grant?

Consider which of your partners are key to project success and prioritise these in the partner section. On Flexi-Grant, there is a box at the end of the Partners section where you can list other partners if you exceed this maximum number.

Q. Can we make changes to the logframe between Stages 1 & 2?

Yes, we would expect you to make changes to your logframe between Stages 1 and 2 as almost all logframes we see at Stage 1 can be improved. At the very least, you should now be including detail at the activity level – at Stage 1 the most detail we asked for was at the Output level.

FAQs and Common Issues session

Finance and Admin

Q. Are references from larger projects preferred over smaller ones? We have some which are larger and some which are smaller.

Not necessarily – if you do not have enough references of the same size, we would like you to include at least one reference which is about the same size or larger than the funds you are requesting from Darwin. However, you may also include smaller references if these are similar to the types of projects you are proposing through Darwin. They should show a mix of financial capacity and technical expertise similar to your proposed project.

Q. How do you cite references in the application?

We allow you to upload a PDF of additional materials to support your application. This can include references or citations – please label these clearly so it is obvious where they link to your main application. You may also include, for example, a map of the area in which your project is working however please note that you should not use this document to provide content which should be in the main application form, or to get around word counts.

Q. How do you recommend separating the budget for M&E and day-to-day activities?

In the application form we ask for an estimation of budget for M&E, however in your budget this can be captured in a number of places, including staff time. Developing an M&E plan can help you understand the level of effort or additional resources which may be required to, for example, collect and report the data in the logframe indicators.

Q. Should you attach cover letters as a pdf to Flexi-Grant?

Yes, please upload your cover letter alongside your Flexi-Grant application.

Q. Should the project's exit strategy be included in the Outcome?
There is a separate section of the application form where you can provide information on your exit strategy. Your Outcome statement can only be a maximum of 30 words long and should capture what your project aims to achieve within its lifetime.

General

Q. Will LTS be available to answer queries before the submission date?

Yes, however we would encourage you contact us as soon as possible rather than waiting until nearer the submission deadline.

Q. 'Methodology' asks how we build on existing initiatives. 'Funding' asks if this builds on existing initiatives. What different information are you looking for in each?

A key distinction here could relate to previous research and sectoral best practice being referenced in the methodology section vs other projects working in your project area (geographical or technical) in the funding section. However there may be some overlap between the two, depending on the particular context you are working in. The funding section is seeking to ensure that there will be no duplication of costs and to encourage efficiencies if relevant and you can work alongside existing work.

Q. Does the certification form require a wet signature on the pdf or an e-signature?

An e-signature is sufficient here, but you may scan a wet signature on this application page if preferred.

Q. When referring to projects that are 'new to Darwin', what does that mean?

We mean that your organisation has not been awarded a Darwin Initiative project before.

Q. Does increased local participation count towards wellbeing and poverty alleviation?

When we talk about wellbeing and poverty alleviation we are not just talking about increased income, so broader aspects related to improved governance or participation could also contribute.

What is the Darwin Expert Committee looking for?

Q. How do we prove that indigenous people will be included? With a letter of support?

Yes, a letter of support can help demonstrate the buy-in of a particular stakeholder group. However if this is not appropriate or possible then you can outline in your application form how the appropriate people will be involved in your project. Scanned handwritten letters are fine as long as there is a translation provided if necessary.

Q. For non-income indicators of poverty alleviation does the Darwin Expert Committee (DEC) require several for a proposal to be competitive?

The DEC take a number of factors into consideration when scoring applications, and don't necessarily require a high number of poverty alleviation related indicators if this isn't appropriate to your proposed project. Ensure you include indicators relevant to your proposed Outcome and Outputs and that are able to demonstrate that you have achieved what you set out to do. This should also link back to the identified problem statement.

Q. How should we deal with letters of support from non-English speaking stakeholders?

Please include original letters of support accompanied by English translations. They do not need to be authenticated or professional translations.

The Importance of Gender in Darwin Projects

Q. How can Darwin projects contribute to reducing inequality between persons of different gender?

The presentation slides provide more information on how Darwin projects can consider gender during both their proposal development and implementation.

Projects should, as a minimum, demonstrate a 'do no harm' approach to gender issues. This requires proposals to demonstrate an understanding of local realities and social norms in the project site.

The Darwin Initiative website contains the project documents for all Darwin projects and can be searched for examples of conservation projects engaging with gender issues. The Darwin Gender newsletter from June 2015, provides further examples of projects engaging with gender.

Q. Should organisational information on gender also be included in the application?

Yes, you can include information on how your organisation takes gender into account however the significant focus of your response to the application form question on gender should be specific to your proposed project rather than generic organisational information.

Q. How do we best address gender equality issues sensitively in traditional patriarchal societies?

We recognise that it can be hard to ensure equality through your projects when you are working in particularly unequal contexts. You should ensure that you can articulate the particular context in which you are working and, whilst being sensitive to existing cultural norms, do the best you can to address gender inequality through your projects – for example by ensuring the involvement of women, even if participation is not 50:50.

Key points or common issues arising from the afternoon sessions

Project Design Tools

Key observations from participants in the logframe and theory of change exercises included:

- The importance of using consistent language in logframes to ensure the various components of the logframe are as easy to identify as possible.
- It is often challenging to distinguish between project activities and outputs.
- Some activities seem repetitive, perhaps because they deliver against multiple outputs, and some outputs don't appear to have obviously relevant outputs. This could be an indication that there is a gap in the project logic.
- Assumptions are not always clear – clearly articulating assumptions can help demonstrate the project logic and strengthen the project logframe.
- Sometimes the problem/impact/outcome statement can seem vague or broad. It can therefore be hard to tie the project activities or outputs back to them, with a risk that there are gaps in the logic.
- The project logframe is one means of ensuring that gender considerations are effectively integrated into project design.

The Importance of Good Evidence and Appropriate Indicators

Key observations from participants in the indicators and evidence exercise included:

- Indicators must be specific. Where they are not, it becomes difficult to identify where on the logframe they should be placed.
- Indicators should be selected that are comprehensive enough to measure all aspects of a project's outputs and outcome.
- Developing effective indicators takes time. Don't leave it until the last minute!
- It is useful to engage the people who will ultimately be tasked with monitoring project progress, in the development of indicators.
- Identify baselines is a crucial part of indicator development. If you do not yet know all of the relevant baselines for your intervention it is important to make it clear when, and how these will be identified.

Q. Can there be more than one Outcome?

No – Darwin Initiative projects can only have one Outcome statement which should be achieved within the lifetime of the project.

Q. What is a killer assumption?

A killer assumption is an assumption which would fundamentally influence successful project implementation – if it does not hold true, your project will fail. This could be mitigated against by carrying out additional work and it is possible this needs to be done (i.e. certain preconditions need to be met) before project start. Inclusion of killer assumptions may indicate a significant weakness in project design.

Q. How directly are indicators supposed to be linked to biodiversity with projects that can't realistically expect changes in the project's lifetime?

Being able to clearly articulate your project's Theory of Change – how its activities link to the outputs, how the outputs will work together to achieve the project outcome, and how, post project, the outcome will contribute to the overall project impact – can help identify appropriate indicators able to capture progress towards an improved biodiversity status, even if this change itself can't be measured within the lifetime of the project.

Q. What do you mean by 'Means of Verification'?

Means of verification is the evidence you will use to show that indicators have been achieved.

Other questions received

The "Guidance for applicants" should be your first reference point if you have queries when developing your application. This can be accessed via Flexi-Grant and also on the GOV.UK website: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/darwin-initiative-applying-for-main-project-funding

Finance & Admin

You will find most information regarding financial requirements for your applications and, if successful at Stage 2, financial management of your projects in the document below.

- The "Finance for Darwin and IWT" document can be found here: http://www.darwininitiative.org.uk/resources-for-projects

Q. What is the level of detail needed in the budget?

The Finance Guidance and the spreadsheet are your best guide. We expect the space provided in the spreadsheet will be adequate, however if you need to add individual lines please get in touch and we can help.

Q. Could you please clarify which overhead costs are eligible?

These are set out in the guidance. When in doubt, take the approach normally acceptable to your organisation and then ensure that you don't request amounts that take the figures over the limits set in the guidance. We cannot comment on specific points as applicants come from a wide variety of organisations which work in different ways.

Q. As the reviewers of our proposal have provided feedback requesting we increase the number of locally employed staff, will this mean we can amend the budget parameters?

Yes, there is scope at this point to review your budget to ensure it is fit for purpose.

Q. At the second stage do we have an opportunity to amend the budget?

Yes, but if the overall or annual figures differ significantly, make sure it is clear why this is the case.

Q. What are the rules around capital investments?

Capital costs paid from Darwin funds should be no more than 10% of the total grant, except in specific cases where higher capital expenditure is essential for the project and justified in the application. Please note, the purchase of land or the erection of permanent buildings are not eligible under this budget line.

Q. Can you provide an overview of key financial requirements and formats for Stage 2?

The key financial requirements at Stage 2 are to complete the budget spreadsheet (ensuring the figures here match the figures included in your application form) and submit your organisation's accounts.

Q. Are you able to provide further advice and recommendations for efficient budgeting?

We recommend applicants follow the processes of their own organisation as far as possible and remember that you should be able to evidence all costs through receipts, timesheets, etc. Don't make your budget planning too complicated and do ensure you keep clear records of foreign exchange rates used. The number of rows in the budget template provides an indication of the level of detail we are looking for. Review your budget regularly and ensure that you can track Darwin spend separately from funding from other sources, as you will need to report on Darwin only costs.

Q. Is it acceptable/normal [i.e. do many previously funded projects do this] to include funding of a PhD student in the budget – if the project appears to lend itself to this?

You can include costs for someone working on the project who happens to be undertaking a PhD, but you cannot include academic costs (i.e. fees).

Q. Would this multi-year funding for awardees be guaranteed through the Brexit transition?

Yes, any funding awarded in this round will be committed for the duration of the project.

Q. What is the process for reforecasting and, if necessary, transferring funds between project years?

It is good practice to review your budget on a regular basis. If the timing of activities changes, or the spread of your award changes for other reasons, you can submit a rebudget request to ask for the budget profile to be realigned. This is done through a Change Request and must be clearly justified but approval is not guaranteed so please ensure your budget is fit for purpose from the start.

Q. How do other applications for funding, independent of Darwin but for the same proposed project, influence the original Darwin application?

The Darwin Expert Committee (DEC) look at other funding being sought for the project and consider whether the Darwin element of the work will be clearly attributable to Darwin. They also consider any risk associated with high amounts of unconfirmed funding, but these do not normally mean the project cannot be funded.

Q. Due to the period in which applications are reviewed by Darwin, from point of submission (specifically Stage 1), it is possible that further project developments may arise that could result in the alteration of aspects detailed within the original application. How is, or how should this be, dealt with and what are the options to the proposing organisation whilst maintaining the integrity of the proposed but ensuring benefit to the project?

We recognise this is the case. You are free to reformulate the application at Stage 2, but if there is a significant change you should make clear why this is the case. You can do this in a cover letter if it needs specific explanation. At each stage, the DEC are looking for the strongest applications and so we would encourage you to revise your proposal if this will strengthen your proposal.

Q. Please address the importance of letters of support and which letters are key?

Letters of support (LoS) outline appropriate involvement and buy-in from organisations included in your application. See Darwin Guidance sections 5.5 and 5.6. LoS are required from all main partners, PLUS the applicant organisation.

Technical

Q. What is most important to the Darwin Initiative when deciding which projects to fund?

There is no single characteristic which is the most important when deciding which project to fund. The assessment criteria used by the DEC when reviewing applications is included in section 11 of the Guidance for applicants. As a general point, applications should be well written, robust and have clear objectives, meeting at least one of the criteria for the round.

Q. What is the best way to answer Q12 of the Stage 2 application form: "links to biodiversity conventions, treaties and agreements"?

Be clear about which Conventions/Treaties your project will address and how i.e. don't just list the numbers, but explain how the project will address them. Involve the local focal points if possible.

Q. Can we support livelihoods through wellbeing (including supporting governance) rather than just income?

Yes, when we talk about improved wellbeing we don't just mean monetary benefits. Be clear how you will work to improve, and measure, increases in the other aspects of wellbeing you may propose.

Q. I'd like to know how the scheme values (or measures) reductions in 'poverty of opportunity' in addition to simple financial poverty.

Darwin welcomes applications working to reduce all aspects of poverty, not just financial poverty. See section 3.2 of the guidance.

Q. How much weight do you place on red listed species (in our case the biodiversity we are working on is at "risk of extinction" (not IUCN terms)) at the country level but not red listed globally?

The DEC takes a range of different criteria into consideration when assessing an application, but note that one of the priorities for this round is "helping prevent the extinction of known threatened species, and improve and sustain their conservation status". However, threat is not simply assessed by red list status. Ensure your application clearly outlines the threats faced by your focus species, and where possible link back to national priorities.

Q. What are the key DFID priorities at this stage and therefore what are they looking for from their perspective?

All funds for main projects now come directly to Defra from Official Development Assistance funds, and respond more directly to Defra priorities but also take into account broader Government policy priorities. Where relevant, these priorities have been incorporated into the guidance – see section 3.1 of the guidance.

Q. Have the submission requirements or evaluation criteria or stage 2 changed in any significant ways from previous years?

Apart from the requirement to provide all material through Flexi-Grant and the request for CVs and letters of support to be provided in collated pdf versions, the submission requirements are largely the same. Audited accounts should be attached, not sent as a weblink. The evaluation criteria have not significantly changed.

Q. To what extent would you support Stage 2 applications that seek to encourage collaboration among different disciplines e.g. with the health sector?

Interdisciplinary work is encouraged, however not necessarily expected if it is not appropriate to your proposed project.

Q. If unsuccessful at Stage 2, is reviewer feedback provided, and is there an opportunity to revise and resubmit the improved proposal the following year?

All applications that are considered viable will receive feedback. You can submit an improved application once, thereafter another submission will only be accepted if the work has significantly changed.

Q. What section should we include a Theory of Change in? Should it be in diagrammatic form or written out?

Your Theory of Change doesn't need to be included in your application. However, the process of developing your Theory of Change can help you develop your logframe and articulate your answers to other questions in the application form. If you think it would be helpful, you could include a simple diagrammatic version of your Theory of Change as supplementary materials to your application.

Q. Are you able to provide guidance with developing a logframe suitable for a proposal such as ours that aims to influence policy at the national level?

With policy level applications, being able to articulate your Theory of Change can become particularly important. We would recommend you include indicators which are able to demonstrate your project has achieved the necessary conditions for future policy implementation and effect, and be able to articulate how the overall process will go on from there. Ensure that all logframe indicators can be measured within the timescale of your project.

Q. How to write a logframe for a project with indirect impacts on biodiversity and poverty (i.e. a project focussed on production of evidence, training, inputs to policy making, rather than actions "on the ground").

Similarly to policy related projects, a clear Theory of Change can support here. Indicators related to training should not just relate to attendance at training courses or the quality of training but, at the Outcome level, how this changes how people carry out their jobs.

Q. Are you able to share a worked example of a logical framework?

During the workshop we worked through some example logframes. Examples of other logframes can be found on the Darwin website: http://www.darwininitiative.org.uk/project/

Q. It would be nice to have demonstrated examples of good practice monitoring and similarly, interesting to see tools used in project reporting

If you are successful at Stage 2 we also host a workshop for New Projects which has a focus on project reporting tools. However, it is important to consider how you will use a logframe whilst it is under development – for example, by considering how you will measure your indicators and who will take responsibility for this to ensure it is a realistic tool.

Q. How do we make sure that our logical framework is up to Darwin's standards?

Ensure you respond to Stage 1 feedback if received and check that your indicators are SMART. If successful at Stage 2, you may also be provided feedback to help you strengthen your project's logframe before beginning implementation.

Q. Examples of good and not so good logframe indicators?

In the exercise hand out we have included some examples of good and not so good logframe indicators.

General

Q. Can a project be adapted over the course of implementation as lessons are learned from M&E?

Yes, and we very much encourage projects to adapt their approach as needed based on findings from M&E.

Q. Darwin requests project completion dates, however, it is often the case that projects aim to continue past this to ensure maximum impact within the focus region. How should this be articulated to Darwin and how does this impact the funding for the project?

The date you give in your application is the date at which Darwin funding will end. We encourage ongoing work using other funding, and recognise this often happens. We suggest that this is addressed in the exit strategy section of the application form.

Q. Do you have quotas for successful projects (per country, or per species group, etc.)? If yes, how are these quotas calculated?

No: funding is normally based on the strongest applications received. There are no quotas, beyond the total funding available within any given financial year.

Q. What is the strategic direction of the Darwin Initiative

Each round, the Defra team responsible for the Darwin Initiative (the Official Development Assistance team) consults with the Darwin Expert Committee, along with Defra policy teams and wider cross Government teams to determine the strategic direction of the fund. This looks at both the short-term (next round) and the longer term (next spending review period and beyond). Broadly, the strategic direction of Darwin is to contribute to the goals laid out in the 25-year environment plan, and the various international conventions that the UK is party to.

Q. How are we expected to adapt things based on Stage 1 feedback?

You should use the feedback to strengthen your application but if you do not believe the advice given is appropriate to your situation, please comment on this in a cover letter.

Q. If projects are delayed or paused due to unforeseeable reasons (weather systems, country stability etc.), what is the procedure for the proposing organisation and what options do they have regarding the funding from Darwin?

If this is relevant at this Stage and you are not able to submit a Stage 2 application, please advise us as soon as possible. You will be free to apply again in future, but will have to apply from Stage 1.

If this is relevant after award, you can talk to LTS about the implications of delays and submit a formal request to rebudget the project if appropriate through a Change Request.

Selected Workshop Feedback

"The workshop was very hands on and the worked examples were very helpful."

"It was great having the LTS International staff there to answer the questions directly and the interactive exercises were quite useful."

"Providing a really good logframe example to work with during the activity for people who aren't familiar with them would be more useful than a flawed example."