Darwin Initiative Stage 2 workshop

9th January 2018

Workshop Proceedings

Agenda

	Agenda Item
09:30	**Arrivals and Registration** (Tea and coffee on arrival)
10.00	**Welcome by the Darwin Secretariat** - Welcome by Defra - Changes for Round 24
10:15	**Introduction to the Workshop** - Purpose of the workshop - How the day will work - Introductions - exercise
10:30	**Overview of Frequently Asked Questions/Common Issues** - Common administrative and finance queries - Collection of questions received from applicants and responses
11.00	**DEC Presentation: What Makes a Good Application?** - Presentation by a member of the Darwin Expert Committee - Q&A
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**
16:00	**Workshop Close**

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

Key points or common issues arising from the morning sessions

Welcome by the Darwin Secretariat

Q. What if we are unable to obtain letters of support from partners by the submission deadline?

We understand that gaining letters of support is not always an easy, or quick, process. If you are expecting, but have not yet received, letters of support from key stakeholders, you should make this clear in your Stage 2 application. If your application is subsequently recommended for funding then you will be required to submit all letters of support before a funding award is made.

Q. What is the likelihood of success at Stage 2?

This depends upon the level of funding available and the quality of applications received. Based on previous rounds it seems likely that the success rate will be around 1 in 3, or 1 in 4.

FAQs and Common Issues session

Finance and Admin

Q. Can we change the budget between Stage 1 and Stage 2?

Yes, changes can be made to proposed budgets between Stages 1 and 2, although any significant changes should be clearly explained in the application form.

Q. Can we change personnel between Stage 1 and Stage 2?

Changes in personnel between Stages 1 and 2 are acceptable. It is important to ensure that all project teams contain the necessary range of skills to effectively deliver the proposed project.

Q. Overheads: What is considered a reasonable level?

The finance guidance for Darwin and the IWT Challenge Fund sets limits on overheads. Within these limits 'reasonable' is not defined as all organisations have different approaches to overheads. Further detailed information on this is available in Section 1.3 of the finance guidance.

Q. How important is it to show co-financing?

Co-financing for your proposed project is highly desirable, but is not obligatory. Where there is co-financing/matched funding, there are no requirements for it to be at a particular level. For projects with co-financing it is important to ensure the elements of the project funded by Darwin are specific, clearly identified and accounted for. It should be clear which activities will be funded by Darwin and which activities will be co-financed.

Q. How do you set staff costs? E.g. hourly rates, formulae …

No set format is specified for this. You should use whichever approach you would normally use within your organisation. It is important to be sure that you are able to provide evidence of any costs charged, e.g. through provision of timesheets.

Q. Is there specific guidance on capital costs?

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. What are the audit requirements?

For any total award over £100,000, you are required to organise an independent examination/audit of the grant provided to the lead organisation from the Darwin Initiative at the end of the project. A total of £1,500 (maximum) can be allocated in the final financial year of the Darwin/IWT project budget for these costs. The amount is ring-fenced and any underspend may not be reallocated elsewhere in your budget. Further information is available in the finance guidance document.

Q. Assessment of costs: what does this mean? Just value for money?

Given the diversity of Darwin projects, value for money is a difficult attribute to assess consistently. However, members of the expert committee are experienced in developing, leading and implementing Darwin projects so will have a clear idea of what constitutes reasonable costs for different types of intervention in different locations.

Q. What level of internal control should finance have over the project?

We would expect any organisation to manage their project funds to at least the same level of rigour as they apply to their organisation's finances, and to a level that would be acceptable by an auditor.

Q. Do Darwin projects need to follow UK government guidelines on per diem/Daily Subsistence Allowance rates?

There aren't strict requirements or guidelines when it comes to travel and subsistence (T&S) costs under Darwin projects, however we ask that costs are reasonable. In section 1.5 of the Finance guidance it states "T&S costs should be clearly justified and offer the best value available. Defra may ask you to justify or reduce your T&S request if they believe it is excessive".

General

Q. Are there any specific changes to requirements this year?

Key changes to the requirements this year, not picked up by many applicants at Stage 1, are that the maximum length of project for this round is 2 years and 9 months, and that projects should plan to start on or after 1 July 2018. They may not start earlier.

Q. Why do I need a letter of support from my organisation?

A letter of support from your own organisation demonstrates that you have received the necessary approval from within your organisation to submit your application. This is particularly relevant in the case of large organisations such as universities or INGOs, but is a requirement for all lead applicant organisations.

Q. Previous work: Does work need to have been completed?

It is not a requirement that previous work funded under the Darwin Initiative be completed prior to the submission of your application. It is recognised that in some cases it is important that there is continuity between projects. However, where work is still ongoing, it is important to be able to demonstrate successful progress. Funding through the Darwin Initiative is not awarded to enable the completion of tasks not completed under previous projects.

Q. Can we add more boxes to provide details if there are not enough?

Some sections on the application form allow applicants to 'include more rows if necessary'. In these instances please use common sense and limit the addition of boxes to information that is critical to your application form. In relation to staff members, for example, it is useful to include all key team members but not necessary to list all of the individuals involved in your project.

Q. 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?

This question refers to relevant work in the project area by any of the applicant organisations.

Q. What level of coordination is expected from partners working on similar projects or receiving Defra funding?

Demonstrating an understanding of other geographically or technically relevant interventions will help to strengthen your application. Where other relevant work is ongoing it is important to demonstrate complementarities with your intervention whilst avoiding duplication of effort. We encourage projects to talk to one another and if there are opportunities for working together or making efficiencies from economies of scale or making judicious use of flights, we would encourage this also. But there is no specific requirement.

Q. Are the Stage 1 and Stage 2 applications considered alongside each other or does Stage 2 stand alone?

Your Stage 2 application should be a stand-alone document. Do not assume any prior knowledge as the reviewers may not be the same as at Stage 1.

DEC Presentation: What Makes a Good Application?

Q. The presentation emphasised the need to make sure that alternative livelihoods proposals are robust, why?

We receive a large number of applications for alternative livelihoods projects. Many of these are weak. For applications focused on alternative livelihoods it is really important to ensure that the theory of change is sound. For example, in ecotourism interventions: are tourists interested in visiting the area? Is the infrastructure in place to enable them to do so? Have links with tourism operators been explored? Similarly for non-timber forest products and handicrafts, it is vital to demonstrate that there is a market for the proposed products.

Q. How should we address feedback from previous rounds?

Feedback from previous rounds and from Stage 1 should be clearly addressed in either in the body of the application form or in a covering letter.

Q. How can we best relate our project to the CBD?

The CBD has an excellent website https://www.cbd.int/. This represents an invaluable resource for identifying key issues of relevance to the CBD. For example, although there is no Aichi target covering tourism, many relevant materials and guidelines can be found on the CBD website.

Q. What does a good ecotourism project look like?

This will be very context specific but there are some common traits of strong ecotourism projects. These include the identification of a clear market, the presence of the necessary business skills (e.g. in private sector enterprise development) on the team, and (if possible) letters of support from tourism operators.

Q. How do we achieve a balance between research and action in our proposal?

This will vary from application to application, however projects that focus on research alone will struggle to demonstrate a clear pathway to impact. Proposals with a strong research focus should take care to ensure that means of disseminating research beyond traditional academic channels are considered and factored into project design.

Q: Should we focus on one particular topic rather than combining two or more topics?

Multifaceted projects will not necessarily score more highly than those focused on a single key issue. This is very project dependent, however applications should not focus on more than one issue simply for the sake of it; there should be a clear logic underpinning all interventions.

Q. Are proposals judged on how realistic logframe targets are?

Most members of the DEC are, or have been, Darwin project leaders. They are therefore well aware of the time and resource constraints facing projects, and what is realistically achievable. Including unrealistic logframe targets is not a good idea.

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

The best approach to this is to include the original letter of support in the organisation's local language, alongside an English translation.

The Importance of Gender in Darwin Projects

Q. In matriarchal societies do you need to make sure that men are not disadvantaged?

Yes. Any project intervention should, as a minimum, adopt a 'do no harm' approach.

Q. Would you have to show and demonstrate gender considerations for men?

When we ask you to consider gender, we want you to demonstrate understanding of the full context in which you are working – i.e. both men and women, and the broader aspects of social inclusion.

Q. We have been advised not to consider gender in our proposed project, as other issues, such as race, are more important in the project context.

Although it is not necessary to change the focus or design of your project, you still need to demonstrate in the narrative of your proposal that you have considered gender issues in relation to your work.

Q. Will you make these slides available?

Slides for the gender presentation and all of the presentations from the workshop are available here.

Q. Can you please provide us with some links to examples of Darwin projects that clearly address gender issues?

The Darwin website contains the project documents for all Darwin projects and can be searched for examples of projects engaging with gender issues. The example mentioned in the presentation is project 22-009. The Darwin Gender newsletter from June 2015, provides further examples of projects engaging with gender.

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.
- Weak logframes make it difficult to clearly understand what a project intervention is actually going to do. An effective logframe should be understandable without the need for additional narrative description of the project.
- It is often challenging to distinguish between project activities and outputs.
- Although a project's impact should be the higher level objective the project is contributing to, it is important to ensure that the impact statement retains a degree of specificity.
- 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. Do you have any well-being survey procedures/templates or reference documents to use in local communities to assist evaluation?

We recommend you look at similar projects or online as there are extensive resources available.

Q. How do indicators for the Outcome vary from those for the Outputs in the Logframe?

Indicators should be able to track progress against the Outcome or Output they are measuring. In both cases, indicators vary from activities in that they provide some measure of quality (rather than just demonstrating an activity has been completed).

Q. Should you only have the one indicator for one Outcome?

You should have indicators to measure all aspects for your Outcome statement, so we would normally expect an Outcome statement would have at least 2 or 3 indicators.

Q. Even if you have a good logframe and application narrative, do you think a graphic is still required? Would it benefit the application?

Each application is different. We would encourage the use of images if it helps, but this is by no means necessary. We recognise graphics can be clear and easy ways of demonstrating complicated concepts. However, please be sensible when using these and don’t include significant numbers of words within graphics as this could be perceived as trying to circumvent word counts.

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