

## LESSONS LEARNED FROM EaPTC APPLICANTS' MISTAKES

These lessons were prepared based on assessment of the recent proposals submitted for Call for Proposal under the EaP Territorial Cooperation Programme.

Every application was examined and evaluated by the Managing (Contracting) Authority and external assessors in two steps, namely: i) administrative and eligibility checks, and ii) evaluation of quality of application.

**!!** *If at any stage in the evaluation process any component of the application (the applicant, a partner or the action) was identified as not fulfilling the eligibility criteria specified in the guidelines, the application was rejected on that sole basis.*

In order to pass **STEP 1 or ADMINISTRATIVE and ELIGIBILITY CHECKS** applicant should meet all **ADMINISTRATIVE** requirements, namely:

1. *Used the correct grant application form*
2. *Filled out the declaration by the applicant*
3. *Typed and translated proposal to English.*
4. *Included one original and the required number of copies*
5. *Enclosed an electronic version of the proposal (CD-rom) with the same full application as the paper version in one file*
6. *Completed, signed, stamped and included the mandate/partnership form for each co-applicant fully in form provided in the application package*
7. *Enclosed budget that presented in the format requested and stated in Euro (€). Also, check if budget is arithmetically correct (in order to avoid mistakes, use formulas in the budget Excel file. All numbers should be given up to two decimals (e.g. 580,97 not 580,975). The budget should not contain ineligible costs.*
8. *Completed and enclosed logical framework in the required format and fully filled out.*

In addition, please make sure that:

- *Deadline for submission is met*
- *All criteria from the checklist are met*
- *Order of chapters in application is correct*
- *All sections of the application form are filled out*
- *All documents are put in one envelope – additional documents sent in separate envelope will be registered as a separate proposal with another number.*
- *When the application is sent by post, the envelope has the correct information on it as it is stated in the guidelines*
- *The proposal, attachments, and/or other documents are signed and stamped by an authorized person. No facsimile is accepted!*
- *Contact information of the Lead partner in the application form is correct, e.g. Address, e-mails and phone numbers.*

Typical **ADMINISTRATIVE** mistakes:

- *Deadline for submission is not met;*
- *Number of pages in the Concept Note exceeded (more than 5 pages);*
- *Not all sections of the application form are filled out; and*
- *Some pages were missed in the proposal.*

## MISTAKES OF ELIGIBILITY OF THE APPLICANT AND PARTNERS

*The eligibility verification based on the supporting documents requested by the European Commission.*

- *The Declaration by the applicant was cross-checked with the supporting documents provided by the applicant. Any missing supporting document or any incoherence between the Declaration by the applicant and the supporting documents led to the rejection of the application on that sole basis.*
- *The eligibility of the applicant, the partners, and the action will be verified according to the criteria set out in guidelines. Following the above analysis and if necessary, any rejected application was replaced by the next best placed application in the reserve list that falls within the available financial envelope, which will then be examined for the eligibility of its applicant and the partners.*

Why some proposals did not pass the **ELIGIBILITY** verification? Because:

1. Lead partner was established later than it is requested by Call for Proposal;
2. Co-applicant is not registered in the eligible regions even it has branches in those regions. However, this application was submitted by the head office and not by one of its branches. Thus the partnership is considered as ineligible

**!!** *Only after passing ADMINISTRATIVE AND ELIGIBILITY checks application underwent EVALUATION OF ITS QUALITY*

## LESSONS LEARNED FROM EVALUATION OF THE QUALITY OF APPLICATION

*The quality of the applications, including the proposed budget and capacity of the applicants and affiliated entity(ies), was evaluated using the evaluation criteria in the evaluation grid specified in the Guidelines. There are two types of evaluation criteria: selection and award criteria.*

**The selection criteria** help to evaluate the applicant(s)'s and affiliated entity(ies) operational capacity and the applicant's financial capacity and to ensure that they:

- *have stable and sufficient sources of finance to maintain their activity throughout the proposed action and, where appropriate, to participate in its funding;*
- *have the management capacity, professional competence and qualifications required to successfully complete the proposed action. This also applies to any affiliated entity(ies) of the applicants.*

**The award criteria** help to evaluate the quality of the application in relation to the objectives and priorities, and to award grants to projects, which maximise the overall effectiveness of the Call for Proposals. They help to select applications, which the Contracting Authority can be confident will comply with its objectives and priorities. They cover the relevance of the action, its consistency with the objectives of the Call for Proposals, quality, expected impact, sustainability and cost-effectiveness.

### Lessons Learned from Proposal Design

- The proposal does not specify to which operational objective an priority it aligns;
- Weak logic of the proposal. For example, the project and proposed scope of activities do not correspond to the described problems and/or the project does not constitute an answer to existing problems and needs of target groups in the area to be supported;
- Design is rather based on a diagnosis, than on an analysis to determine what action is to be taken;
- The need of some experts' involvement or EU-based co-applicants is not well justified;
- The proposal needs a better needs assessment, analysis of the models existing already in the regions and successful initiatives that could be capitalised on;

- The formulation is too heavy and the number of specific objectives is too high / incomparable with the overall project budget;
- Unclear definitions as the possible result of a poor translation and incorrect structure of proposal owing to disregard of the application form requirements.

## **Selection criteria:**

### **1. Financial and operational capacity**

- 1.1 Do the applicants and, if applicable, affiliated entity(ies) have sufficient experience of project management?
- 1.2 Do the applicants and, if applicable, affiliated entity(ies) have sufficient technical expertise? (especially knowledge of the issues to be addressed)
- 1.3 Do the applicants and, if applicable, affiliated entity(ies) have sufficient management capacity? (including staff, equipment and ability to handle the budget for the action)
- 1.4 Does the applicant have stable and sufficient sources of finance?

### **MISTAKES:**

- ✓ Low or no experience of an applicant in a proposed area(s) of activity;
- ✓ Strong proposal submitted by applicant/partnership with little capacity;
- ✓ Co-applicant(s) role(s) is not clear;
- ✓ Thematic scope of the action is outside of the main competence of the applicants;
- ✓ High proposal complexity for available applicant' capacity;
- ✓ Lack of management /financial capacity and technical expertise.

### **2. Relevance of the action**

- 2.1 How relevant is the proposal to the objectives and priorities of the Call for Proposals?
- 2.2 How relevant to the particular needs and constraints of the target country(ies) or region(s) is the proposal (including synergy with other EU initiatives and avoidance of duplication)?
- 2.3 How clearly defined and strategically chosen are those involved (final beneficiaries, target groups)? Have their needs been clearly defined and does the proposal address those needs appropriately?
- 2.4 Does the proposal demonstrate a cross-border character? (i.e. fulfils at least two of the following criteria: (1) joint development, (2) joint implementation, (3) joint staffing, (4) joint financing)

### **MISTAKES:**

- ✓ Interpretation of a cross border effect (joint development, implementation, staffing and financing) by some applicants was rigid;
- ✓ Some problems described in the proposals are exaggerated. For example, intolerance;
- ✓ Problem(s) described in the project are not supported by relevant data from research/analyses or statistical reports;
- ✓ Selected project target group is too narrow and/or too small;
- ✓ Needs of target groups and final beneficiaries are not realistically and clearly described, as is the way the project would contribute to improving beneficiaries' situation / solution of problem;
- ✓ There is poor analysis to justify the selection of needs to be addressed as well as the definition of target groups;
- ✓ Lack of solid analysis justifying project intervention.
- ✓ Not clear how project idea addresses regional needs;
- ✓ The proposal does not indicate criteria and process of direct beneficiaries selection - competition, special call for participation or based on interviews.

## **Award criteria**

### **3. Effectiveness and feasibility of the action**

*3.1 Are the activities proposed appropriate, practical, and consistent with the objectives and expected results?*

*3.2 Is the action plan clear and feasible?*

*3.3 Does the proposal contain objectively verifiable indicators for the outcome of the action? Is any evaluation planned?*

*3.4 Is the co-applicant(s)'s and affiliated entity(ies)'s level of involvement and participation in the action satisfactory?*

#### **MISTAKES:**

- ✓ Activities are not consistent with / will hardly lead to the described outputs and results;
- ✓ Results are unrealistic to be achieved in the proposed timeframe;
- ✓ Action plan is not feasible (e.g. most of activities planned at the same time, not enough time allocated for certain activities, etc.);
- ✓ Action plan is not clear and inconsistent with the activities;
- ✓ The partnership is not strong as there is very little evidence that the project:
  - was jointly prepared – partners should cooperate from the start, when the idea of the project appeared
  - will be jointly implemented – activities planned in the project should be implemented in cooperation between partners, division of tasks and responsibilities should be balanced
  - has a joint staff – professionals from each partner should cooperate together during the implementation of the project but without unnecessary duplication of posts
  - is jointly financed – balanced division of expenditures and of own financial contribution between partners
- ✓ The specific objectives are not well formulated – mostly activities summarising more generally the planned concrete steps, instead of defined targets to be met and verifiable as far as achievement is concerned;
- ✓ Lack of focus/clarity of what has to be achieved and too many outputs, without specified criteria of who will be involved and what should be obtained;
- ✓ The results are much better defined than the overall and specific objectives, and are supported by the activities.
- ✓ Target groups have not been selected strategically.

### **4. Sustainability of the action**

*4.1 Is the action likely to have a tangible impact on its target groups?*

*4.2 Is the proposal likely to have multiplier effects? (Including scope for replication, extension and information sharing)*

*4.3 Are the expected results of the proposed action sustainable:*

- *financially? (how will the activities be financed after the funding ends?)*
- *institutionally? (will structures allowing the activities to continue be in place at the end of the action? Will there be local 'ownership' of the results of the action?)*
- *at policy level? (where applicable) (what will be the structural impact of the action — e.g. will it lead to improved legislation, codes of conduct, methods, etc?)*
- *environmentally? (if applicable) (will the action have a negative/positive environmental impact?)*

#### **MISTAKES:**

- Notion of sustainability and its different aspects is not well understood and described
- Impact on target groups & communication strategy is not clearly defined
- Cross-border cooperation within the proposal does not contribute to the solution of the addressed problem – the problem should have cross-border character and the situation could not be improved separately by each partner on the local level

- Unclear to what extent the project is endorsed by local authorities.
- Sustainability of the project is rather costly and, given present financial conditions of project stakeholders, should be considered at risk.

## **5. Budget and cost-effectiveness of the action**

*5.1 Are the activities appropriately reflected in the budget?*

*5.2 Is the ratio between the estimated costs and the expected results satisfactory?*

### **MISTAKES:**

- Cost-effectiveness of the action is not well addressed (project expenses are higher and do not address project results)
- Some of the activities are not reflected in the project budget or are difficult to be identified
- Inconsistencies/miscalculation in the amounts within the Budget tables.
- The ratio between expected results and project costs is not satisfactory
- Budget is not realistic - too high costs, especially salaries, foreseen for the expected results
- Unnecessary / ineligible costs are included
- The costs / rates included do not reflect the regional level of costs
- The budget is poorly justified
- Potentially complex procurement activities
- Potential cash flow problems due to high level of expenses for equipment and repair works.

**Logframe** is weak – not detailed enough; no correlation between activities and results; incorrect assumptions; contradictions between risks and assumptions; misunderstanding of types of information that are required.

### **In addition,**

- Evaluation criteria were not used for self-evaluation while preparing different parts of the proposal; and
- Low or no local ownership.