

RECOMMENDATIONS

How to avoid typical mistakes made by applicants (based on experience of other EU and CBC programmes)

Before filling out an application form please read these recommendations very carefully. Your application will be 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) is identified as not fulfilling the eligibility criteria specified in the guidelines, the application may be rejected on that sole basis.

In order to pass **STEP 1 or ADMINISTRATIVE and ELIGIBILITY CHECKS** please make sure that you met 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.

To pass the **ELIGIBILITY** verification, please check if:

1. The checklist for the application form has been duly completed.
2. Your organization satisfies the eligibility criteria in section XXX
3. Your partner(s) satisfy the eligibility criteria in section XXX
4. Your affiliated entity(ies), if any, satisfy the eligibility criteria in section XXX
5. Lead partner and partners are registered and located in the eligible area of the programme
6. The supporting documents listed below were submitted in accordance with the Guidelines

- The applicants statutes
- The statutes or articles of association of the applicants and the affiliated entity(ies)
- The applicant's external audit report (if applicable)
- The Legal Entity File (if applicable) has been duly completed and signed by the applicants and the supporting documents requested have been enclosed.
- A Financial Identification Form (if applicable).
- Copy of the applicant's latest accounts (if applicable).

!! Only after passing ADMINISTRATIVE AND ELIGIBILITY checks your application will undergo EVALUATION OF ITS QUALITY

STEP 2: EVALUATION OF THE QUALITY OF APPLICATION

The quality of the applications, including the proposed budget and capacity of the applicants and affiliated entity(ies), will be 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.

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?*

!! Remember:

As the capacity of both the applicants and, if applicable, affiliated entity(ies) is evaluated it is important to remember that:

- applicants and affiliated entity(ies) have experience in project management
- applicants and affiliated entity(ies) have sufficient knowledge and expertise of the issues to be addressed.
- applicants and affiliated entity(ies) have sufficient management capacity
- applicants and affiliated entity(ies) have stable and sufficient sources of finance

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)

TYPICAL MISTAKES:

- The project is not relevant with the chosen objective and priority(ies). Objectives of action do not correspond to the objectives of Programme's objective and priority(ies).
- The project and proposed scope of activities do not correspond to the described problems. Project does not constitute an answer to existing problems and needs of target groups in the area to be supported.
- Problem(s) described in the project is actually existing and not supported by relevant reports from research/analyses or statistical data from the field in question;
- Needs of target groups' and final beneficiaries' are not real and well described as well as the way the project's contribution to the improvement of their situation / solution of problem.
- Cross border impact of the action should be strong – it is the crucial element of each proposal which assessment can determine the final decision on the grant award.

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?

TYPICAL MISTAKES:

- Activities are not consistent with outputs and results
- Results do not prove the achievement of the objectives
- Action plan is not feasible (e.g. most of activities planned at the same time, no time allocated for tender procedures, etc.)
- The management of the project not described, monitoring system and evaluation activities are missing
- Indicators are not properly identified / measured
- Action plan is not clear and inconsistent with the activities
- Proposed indicators are not feasible
- 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

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?)*

TYPICAL MISTAKES:

- 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
- Limited springboard or multiplier effects
- Sustainability of expected results is not sufficiently justified

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?*

TYPICAL MISTAKES:

- Some of the activities are not reflected in the project budget or are difficult to be identified
- Inconsistencies in the amounts within the Budget tables.
- The ratio between expected results and project costs is not satisfactory
- Budget is not realistic - too high / too low costs 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 non-transparent (lacks appropriate justification)

STEP 3: VERIFICATION OF ELIGIBILITY OF THE APPLICANT AND PARTNERS

The eligibility verification based on the supporting documents requested by the European Commission will only be performed for the applications that have been provisionally selected according to their score and within the available financial envelope.

- The Declaration by the applicant will be 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 may lead 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 will be 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.

If you want to learn more about typical mistakes made by applicants you can go here - Lecture on excellence in EU Project Proposal Writing by Prof. Dr. Steve Quarrie. November 08, 2011.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6n6V-Utoa1E>

EU translation and drafting resources

http://ec.europa.eu/translation/index_en.htm