

GOOD PRACTICE:

“Top 10 things to get right when setting up an ESIF project”

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1. READ THE CALL (AND THE APPLICATION FORMS)!

Then read it again, then get someone else to read it and then compare your understanding of what is really required! Is there ambiguity? Ask Questions!

'What do they really, really want?'

- Read through the application form and annexes – what information is needed.
- *Remember – local versus national criteria! Cover both angles.*
- LEPs have set targets – residual funds need to target both the allowed provision but also residual outputs unallocated.

2. WHAT DO YOU WANT TO DO / WILL DO REGARDLESS OF EXTRA FUNDING?

- Be honest about the options: don't just cite 'do nothing' as this is often known to be unreal – most parties do something!
- Don't try to squeeze the project idea just to suit the funding.
- Try to build a portfolio of pre-prepared project bids for use when the right funding opportunity comes along or to at least stimulate ideas.
- Remember there will be post-ESIF funds!!

3. HOW AND WHERE DOES THE PROJECT ADD VALUE TO YOUR INSTITUTION?

- This is critical.
- These need to be clearly defined and unambiguous.
- Remember: this is very different to “additionality”.
- Map and quantify how project activities contribute to KPIs



4. IS THERE REAL & DEMONSTRABLE MARKET DEMAND (AND FAILURE)?

- This case needs to be highly evidenced.

“The plural of anecdotes is not data”: a story may be good but it is not evidence!!

- How, what and when will this project make inroads?
- Demonstrate/illustrate how the project activities will lead through to outputs/results.
- What other providers of similar or related activities are out there?

Talk to them. Funders are looking for connectivity/ progression not duplication.

5. INCREASINGLY FUNDING STREAMS SEEK 'BUSINESS-LED' OR SHAPED APPLICATIONS.

- Who are your external or 'business ambassadors' who can help champion the project? Engage them in the bid development, promotion and in project governance.
- Consider using potential businesses users/ previous beneficiaries/ stakeholders to act as sounding boards for new project ideas.
 - These can give immense credibility to your application.

6. CONSIDER BUT CHOOSE PARTNERS CAREFULLY – WHAT DO THEY ADD TO THE PROJECT?

- Increasingly funding calls relate to economic challenges that are typically beyond any one single Institution's response and require partnerships to be practical and draw on resources/strengths.
 - Q. What do they add to the project?
 - Q. How will you manage them?

7. CONSIDER THE BID'S TARGET AUDIENCE I.E. WHO WILL READ THE BID?

This can be quite a diverse and varied list: HEFCE, LEP, DCLG and DWP etc.,

- Adapt your communications to suit the organisation and level of reader – play to their agenda/objectives.
- Keep it simple to read – use bullet points +/- or diagrams rather than bulky text.
- Careful on terminology – some phrases can be hot-spots to others.
- Don't assume the 'appraiser' will have prior knowledge of the sector, subject area or geographical area, nor of your Institutional competencies.

8. WHAT DOES THE PROJECT DO IN SIMPLE TERMS?

- What will the funders/stakeholders get for their investment?
- Be clear on why the associated costs are reasonable and ideally the minimum needed to achieve the activity and outcomes.
- Consider clear flow diagrams to show and map the beneficiary journey re support/services they will receive; quantify these; and what resultant outcomes or follow-on activities these can lead to. It is not always obvious.

9. ENGAGE YOUR MANAGEMENT TEAM EARLY

- Get buy-in re the resources needed to undertake the project.
- Be clear how the activity adds to the Institutional goals and vision
- Be honest about the risks.
- Allow sufficient time for approvals. Funding call openings are short!
- Provide information summaries they can use in turn with internal/external stakeholders

10. BE REALISTIC AND MINDFUL OF TIMESCALES

- Call time periods are typically very short – @4 weeks!
- Allow for considerable slippage at the beginning E.G. relatively long appraisal time; recruitment authorisations and delays to getting staff in post etc.
- Don't underestimate the time needed to create or access the market.
- Diminishing delivery time. Remember – ESIF now has potential penalties for underperformance!
- Try to build in scalability into the project – you may not get the funding wished for.

EXTRA +1:

11. BE PREPARED TO WALK AWAY!

- Sometimes it's just not worth the risk or time.



FINAL TIP:

If your funder or LEP uses the term “simplification”

... don't believe them!



THANK YOU

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