

2021 Civil Society Fund

Frequently Asked Questions

1. When does the proposed project need to start?

The proposed project needs to start during 2021. The proposed project start date as set out in the application form should not be assumed to be confirmed. The exact start date will be formally agreed by DFA in writing and will also be reflected in the contract.

Retrospective funding is not allowed so the project cannot start until after the funding decision has been communicated by DFA.

Overlapping contracts are not allowed. As such, if an organisation is currently in receipt of funding from DFA, it cannot start its new project until the current project has formally closed and all contractual conditions have been satisfactorily met, including for example, submission of a satisfactory end of project report.

2. How much of the work needs to focus on a priority country? Is there any option to fund work in a non-priority country if it has relevance? Do you have guidance on a ratio or percentage?

There are no extra marks available for focusing on particular countries. However, the project does need to focus on or relate to [countries that are eligible to receive Overseas Development Assistance](#).

3. Does DFA prefer if an organisation continues a previously funded project?

There is currently no formal preference, although this may change in the future. However, if the proposed project is a continuation of a previous one, it would be advisable to take care to adequately address the 'Sustainability' section of the application form.

4. Will there be any flexibility in the deadline for receipt of applications, if COVID-19 related restrictions affect proposal development in a way that can't be prepared for?

The timeframe provided for completion of applications for the 2021 competition is ten weeks and there is no scope to extend the timeframe beyond this. The deadline for receipt of applications is **5 p.m. on 8 January 2021**. Applications submitted after this deadline will not be considered.

5. What is the difference between implementing partners and collaborative partners? How many should each organisation have?

Implementing partners are those that will manage project funds and will play a prominent role in project management. Collaborative partners are those that will play a key role in supporting the delivery of the project and/or in coordination, but will not directly manage project funds. There is no limit or target in relation to the number of partners.

6. Will a Certificate of Assurance need to accompany the application form?

A Certificate of Assurance does not need to accompany the application form. However, it will be required as part of the project reporting requirements.

7. Are all qualifications of all staff required in the application form?

In Section 6.1 (Organisational Purpose) of the application form, very brief details are sought in relation to the expertise (qualifications and experience) of staff at HQ level. This should reflect all staff, not just those involved in the project. If there is a large number of staff, this information provided can take the form of a broad overview.

Also, in Section 3.1 (Project Details), specific details are sought in relation to the expertise of all staff (both at HQ and at field level), who will be involved in the project, e.g. in quality assurance, oversight and/or implementation. The information provided here should be more specific than the information provided in Section 6.1. If appropriate, to save space, you may wish to avoid repetition and just cross-reference accordingly.

It is accepted that the limitations of the application form may not allow sufficient space to reflect all qualifications of all relevant staff, particularly if the project will involve a large number of personnel.

8. We noticed that organisational development costs are considered to be ineligible. Does this exclude costs relating to partner capacity building?

Organisational development, for this purpose, relates to the organisational development of the applicant organisation. Capacity building of partners is an eligible expenditure item.

9. Are costs relating to safeguarding (such as training) excluded under organisational development costs at both applicant and implementing partner levels?

Safeguarding costs would be eligible in terms of partner capacity building, but would be ineligible in terms of the organisational development of the applicant. These can be considered to be direct costs.

10. Should we include a copy of our organisation's Strategic Plan and Annual Plan either as an annex or hyperlink in the application?

These documents can be hyperlinked in the application form. However, each part of the Organisational Purpose section of the application form (6.1) must be completed and information on this is provided on page 19 of the guidance notes in the application form.

11. In terms of the requirement to provide written policies, strategies and codes of conduct of implementing partners – if in-country partners do not have these in place, can a plan be provided with a timeline for producing/providing these?

If an organisation is successful, written policies for any implementing partners will be requested as part of the conditions process. Depending on the nature of the policy document, the Department may agree a timeline for submission if a policy document is not finalised. Be sure to explicitly state in your proposal if the policy is written or not.

12. Do the policies have to be sent with the application or is it a case that they are requested if we are successful?

As per response to Question No. 11 policies will be requested from successful organisations.

13. What are the guidelines for match funding? Does the match funding need to be from the applicant (raised income from donors or other sources in Ireland) or can some of it be a grant from other organisations, outside of Ireland?

In the event of a successful application, DFA will seek evidence of match funding. In the case of funding from own sources, this may take the form of a letter from the applicant organisation, confirming that the funding is in place. It may also take the form of a copy of written confirmation from the other funders. The match funding can come from most sources (including foreign) but it cannot be 'in-kind'.

14. What evidence of the 30% match funding do you require? Is it based on the last years accounts or, for example, if there is an expected income to match the fund can evidence of this be submitted?

Please see response to Question No. 13.

15. What evidence/reassurance has to be provided on availability of an organisation's matched funding beyond Year One?

The evidence of match funding for Years 2 to 3 can be provided at the time of Annual Reporting. It should be noted subsequent grants will not be released if the Department is not satisfied that the matched funding is available.

16. How is adaptive management linked into the budget? What flexibility is possible in budget allocation?

If changes are necessary to the budget, Results Framework or implementation of a project the organisation should get in touch with their Grant Manager as any changes must be discussed with the Department in advance and approval for same sought.

17. What is the difference between Outcomes, Objectives and Outputs?

Outcomes are the overall benefits and/or changes arising in the external environment and refer to the longer term results achieved.

Objectives indicate specific statements of intent of how the overall aim of the project is to be achieved, i.e. the expected result at the end of the planned intervention.

Outputs are the main steps needed to get from current position to the achievement of results.

18. How closely should we adhere to the Results Framework template? Is it possible to adjust the template if needed?

The level of detail requested in the Results Framework should not be changed i.e. removal of headings. If there is a need to add extra lines or merge rows, this is acceptable.

19. Are external evaluations now considered a Direct Cost? What percentage of the budget should be spent on Monitoring and Evaluation?

Yes, from 2019 onwards, monitoring, evaluation and learning is considered to be a Direct Cost. The costs should be apportioned to the relevant objectives in the budget. There is no guideline on the percentage of the budget which should be spent on this, except that it should be proportionate. It is accepted that the cost may vary depending upon the nature and location of the project and the overall project budget.

20. What level of detail is required in the budget?

The budget should be as detailed as possible and should be correlated with the Results Framework. For the purpose of the application form, the budget line level can be decided by the applicant organisation. However, the activities should be clear, e.g. training; salaries; technical staff; administrative staff (list specific roles where staff are concerned), travel and subsistence/international travel/local travel; purchase/rental of local vehicles; computers; furniture; local vehicle running costs; electricity; maintenance; monitoring, evaluation, audit and learning.

21. Could you confirm the level at which the 15%/€1,000 budget flexibility limit applies?

For the purpose of the application form, the budget line level can be decided by the applicant organisation subject to the activities being specific (see above answer to Question 20). If your application is successful, any variations in expenditure within individual budget lines which are greater than 15% *and* where the variation amount also exceeds €1,000, must be approved by DFA in advance. As such, in most cases, these variations may not occur, if the budget is sufficiently detailed.

22. Can the indirect costs in one year exceed 10% of the budget for that year if this is balanced out by a lower percentage in another year?

The maximum allocation of 10% of the DFA grant to indirect costs applies to each year, this cannot be balanced out by a lower % in another year. However, if an applicant wishes to allocate some of the matched funding to indirect costs, then this is allowable.

23. Do staff costs need to be spread across each output, for example, if 5% of HQ staff time is allocated for the whole project, does this need to be broken down for each output?

Yes, staff costs should be apportioned across the outputs in the budget.

24. What is the position with regard to factoring in inflation and devaluation risks into the budget?

A 'buffer' is not allowed in the budget, only actual costs should be included.

25. For Annex 5, does this relate to the applicant organisation and implementing partner organisation?

If the salary is being charged to the project budget, then it should be included here.

26. Does DFA have a preference for how the DFA funding is apportioned, i.e. evenly spread or allocated to certain activities?

There is no preference for how the budget is allocated. However, as per the response to Question No. 22, the maximum DFA contribution that can be allocated towards indirect costs is 10%.