



Guidelines for completing funding applications for conservation projects

To find out more about funding for Overseas Territories: visit <http://www.jncc.gov.uk/page-4582>

To find out more about OT and CD: visit <http://www.jncc.gov.uk/page-4373>

To find out more the Joint Nature Conservation Committee: visit <http://www.jncc.gov.uk/page-5287>

Guidelines for completing funding applications for conservation projects

Drafting a project from scratch and completing an application form, especially if it involves several partners, can often be a daunting concept. Furthermore, the period of time between the 'calls for proposals' and the deadline for application submission is sometimes only a matter of weeks. Hence submitting a good application in a short timeframe may seem like an almost impossible task. Luckily, the main funds associated with the Overseas Territories (OTs) biodiversity have deadlines at set dates each year, see below, leaving time to plan on an annual basis.

Darwin Challenge fund: February (<http://darwin.defra.gov.uk/>)

Darwin Main Project (Stage 1): August (<http://darwin.defra.gov.uk/>)

OTEP: November (<http://www.ukotcf.org/OTEP/>)

Below, is a collation of top tips generated from experiences of assessing, constructing, supporting and writing funding applications.

8 Top Tips

- Draft a project idea well in advance
- Find out if a similar project has been undertaken before and who by
- Read all the donors supporting information e.g. previously funded projects, guidelines, all application questions before completing the application
- Make sure you answer the questions clearly, simply and logically
- Make sure you demonstrate your project solves a problem has near and short term impacts, is achievable and value for money.
- Complete a logframe –even if they don't ask for one !
- Circulate a draft to colleagues in advance of the deadline to receive feedback and revise the application if necessary
- Good luck

Before applying for a fund.

- **Do** have ideas for a project^{*1}, however rough, at least 6 months before the funding application deadline. This should be a simple one-page document containing; why the project is important (the justification/background) the problem you aim to address, the solutions you are offering (objective; purposes; results), the process of how you will do it (activities) and how much you need to do it (budget).
- **Do** your homework, find out if a similar project been already undertaken before. Can this project build on an existing project or knowledge? If another organisation is hoping to undertake a similar project find out whether it is mutually beneficial (and practical) to make a collaborative application. In many instances donors prefer collaborative projects as they generally provide better value for money and collaborations demonstrate to the donor that you have researched your project. As an applicant a collaborative project will generally reduce competition and increase chance of success.

- **Do** find and match your project to the appropriate donor. Donors supporting OT projects can be found within the JNCC OT funding database (<http://www.jncc.gov.uk/otfundingdatabase>). Make sure the fund is still open; some donors have temporarily suspended funds due to the current economic climate etc.
- **Do** check the application submission deadline date.
- **Do** check eligibility criteria before completing the application form. There is no point in spending time on completing an application form if you are not eligible for the funding.
- **Do** check whether the funding source covers **all** the project costs or whether the donor requires you to provide financial (or in-kind contribution e.g. staff time). Note: the term 'matched funding' on an application indicates a contribution is required from you. This is usually expressed in as a percentage of the total project costs and typically ranges from % 20%-50%.
- **Do** find out if there are any evaluation criteria i.e. the criteria that the donor will use to assess your application. Your application will need to address all of these criteria. Unhelpfully, evaluation criteria are not always clear on the application form.

Writing the application:

- **Do** read through the entire application form and guidance once before you start completing it. Many applications ask several, very closely linked questions, which are not always placed in a logical order throughout the application
- **Do** try and locate example applications/previous successful applications so you can use these as a guide.
- **Make** sure you read the questions properly and answer only the question being asked, don't go 'off track' in your response. If the question contains words/phrases that are in **bold**, ensure that you pay particular attention to address these. Repeat these words (**in bold**) in your answer.
- **Notice** what type of key descriptive words the donor uses in the application and repeat these words in your responses. For example if they use the term capacity, biodiversity etc. use these key words in your response. Place the **key words in bold**, highlighting the fact you are addressing each question. If possible check the donors website to familiarise yourself with the direction and major themes of the organisation and if relevant reflect these in your application.
- **When** describing your project make sure scientific terms are backed up with layman's text and make the text clear and concise. Photos of species, landscape etc can also be provided to get a point across. Do provide the full version of any acronyms e.g. Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) right at the start of the application
- . Usually one of the first questions on an application will ask 'Why is this project important? Or a version thereof. Your response needs to include an 'impact statement' that will a) emphasise the importance of your project and b) make your application stand out from the rest. **Make** sure the impact statement is attractive but also honest and demonstrates both near term as well as lasting impact

- **Do** describe how you are going to undertake your project in a logical stepwise progression. Describe tasks to be completed with measures of success (indicators) that lead to the projected outcome. Assessors are looking for a project with a clear methodology and reasoning that has the ability to deliver. If your project is complex, provide the detail under (logical) sub headers so that the text is easy to read and the key points are clear.
- **Do** spend time on making sure you complete a logical framework/logframe. A logframe is a key aspect to the application, it is a project overview, completing this should help you plan your project. However it can be a major stumbling block to an applicant as sometimes the terminology is not intuitive ^{*2.}
- **Make** sure you do not over budget or under budget for a project and that you demonstrate value for money. The donors will have a 'good feel' for how much a typical projects costs, over budgeting will send out the wrong signals to the donor, as will under budgeting. Under budgeting may also leave you out of pocket. Also try and be flexible with your budget so you can either scale up or down your project to suit different donors budgets.
- **Try** to avoid working up to the deadline, do a draft, circulate to a colleague/s for comment and revise. Try and get feedback from at least one person who has no connection with the project. a fresh pair of eyes is helpful when picking up small errors and to confirm whether your application is clear to a third party.
- **Make** sure you submit the application and all the supporting documents e.g. CV's letter of support, quotes by the deadline. Some funders want the application delivered by post whilst others accept e-mail applications; make sure you have allowed time for the application to arrive within the deadline. If possible prepare supporting documents well in advance so they can just be updated or tweaked as necessary and not created de novo each time you do an application.
- Not successful, seek feedback so you can make better applications in the future. If you are successful, well done and remember to always maintain good communications with the donor and provide reports, if required, in a timely fashion.

Additional considerations for funding applications with multiple partners

- **If** your project comprises of several partners, do contact them first and ensure that they are happy to be a partner.
- **Some** funding applications require letters of support from each partner on headed note paper. Make sure you leave enough time to contact, agree and receive letters of support prior to the submission deadline.

Help is at hand/additional support

JNCC can provide many different areas of support with funding applications for free. For further information contact Nikki Chapman:
nikki.chapman@jncc.gov.uk.

Appendix 1

****1Typically a draft project plan and hence application would consider all or some of the following***

- **Background-How did you get to this point?**

What have you and other done so far to address this?

What other groups or individuals have an involvement or interest in this issue or might be affected by the project you propose

Why is this new project important? Does it have wider significance or applicability?

Can you locate the project in a local, regional and, if appropriate international context? The donor will be interested to know whether the project has implications at these levels.

Relevance

Why you?

What previous experience do you have in this subject? How credible is it that you think you can do this?

Why do you want to do the project? What is your specific interest in this project?

Why them?

How do your proposals relate to the donor criteria and interests? Are you convinced your project qualifies?

Are you sure you can tell the potential funder what they want to hear (including all the right buzzwords)? Make sure the donor doesn't need to say, 'so what?'

Objectives; What is it you want to achieve and how will you know that you have achieved it?

What are your overall goal and your project purpose? What is the project expected to achieve and what are the long-term impacts?

Who are you doing it for? Who are your main beneficiaries likely to be?

Process: What is it that you are going to do and how will you know that you have done it?

What will the results be? What will be different when the project is completed?

What activities are you proposing to do? How will these actions influence the problem(s) you have identified?

How much will it cost?

Are you sure the budget includes all the real costs?

Is the project feasible within the resources you propose?

If matching funds are required, where will these come from, are they secure?

What will you do if the donor doesn't come up with the money?

How will you manage the project?

How do you propose to manage the project/s? Are you sure that this is feasible?

What is the timescale for the project?

How do you propose to monitor its progress? What are the milestones, indicators or success and Means of Verification?

How will you fulfil the funding source requirements (including acknowledgments, publicity profile, reporting and financial control)?

How will you know when you have finished the project? Will you do a self assessment of the project or will there be an independent evaluation?

Long-term, sustainability

Will the results be of wider applicability/ of value to others? Will there be any multiplier effects?

What will the future of the project be? Does it need to continue after the end of the proposed funding period?

If not how will it be sustained?

If it does need to continue, how will it be managed and funded? By whom?

If this is not you, do you have a feasible exit/handover strategy? What are the main risks and assumptions with this project?

- *Reference:* Institutional fundraising for Conservation projects, Caroline Pridham, Birdlife.

***2 Brief overview of Logical framework terminology**

- Examples of successful applications and associated logframes can be found at <http://www.ukotcf.org/OTEP> (OTEP) and <http://darwin.defra.gov.uk> (DARWIN)
- Some of the terminology within the logical frame work may be confusing, below contains examples that briefly provides an insight into the type of information required.
- Measurable indicators: quantifying outputs at each step of the project e.g. 25 brochures, 60 eggs,
- Verification: providing proof that the work has been undertaken and where can that proof can be found e.g. report, legislation, building, training etc.
- Important assumptions: what needs to be in place/state constant for the project to succeed e.g. 6 staff to implement the project
- Risk – What could go wrong and put the project at risk e.g. staff turnover, the project manager leaves etc.