



- **Familiarise yourself with the Programme you are applying for**

Read the information provided on their websites.

In the chapter 'Documents and publications' of their websites, you will find some documents on the strategic framework of the programme.

Make sure that you are familiar with the objective and purpose of the programme. They should be reflected in your proposal.

- **Read the Guidelines for Applicants carefully**

You can get familiar by looking at the Guidelines for Applicants of the **ACPCultures** Call for Proposals.

You will find answers to frequently asked questions (FAQ) from each Call for Proposals, which may answer some of your own questions.

- **From the very beginning, be aware of the deadline for submission**

You can consult the multi-annual Work-programmes for grants of each particular programme.

We advise you to regularly consult the EuropAid website for the publication of calls:  
<https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/europeaid/online-services/index.cfm?do=publi.welcome>

Prepare a work plan for the completion of your proposal, where you plot the essential activities to be undertaken and the milestones to be achieved against a time schedule. Be sure to include some slack - unforeseen things will inevitably happen!

- **Also Take Into Account ...**

*...that the evaluators are the first target group for your proposal*

Bear in mind that the evaluators are the persons who will read and assess your application. Although carefully selected, they have different backgrounds and may not be specialists on the topic of your proposal. So put yourself in the evaluators' position: while everything in your proposal is so obvious for you as the author, it is not necessarily so for the evaluators, who will see only the information you provide!

*...that the evaluation will not be carried out under “luxury” conditions*

Evaluators have to work their way through a large number of proposals under strong time pressure. They will not have the time to read your proposal more than once - so make sure that this one reading is enough for them to correctly understand it!

*...that the evaluators have to make their choice among many excellent proposals*

A call for proposals and its evaluation is a competitive process. Only the best 10 - 15% will finally be selected, because of the limited amount of funding available. This does not mean that the remaining 85% are poor proposals - they are just less good. Therefore you cannot afford any weakness in your proposal: ALL parts of it must be of excellent quality!

## SOME CRITERIA FOR A SUCCESSFUL APPLICATION

### ➤ **Strictly follow the rules and provisions of the Call for Proposals**

In filling in the Application Form, strictly respect the rules as explained in the Guidelines for Applicants and in the Applicant's Guide.

DO NOT leave out or add any chapters or change their sequence. Above all, respect the limitations to a certain number of pages that are indicated for some sections.

The Application Form is not specifically designed for one single programme; the European Commission uses the same form for many different types of projects, following the applicable procedures.

You can get familiarised by consulting the Application Form of the **ACPCultures** Call for Proposals.

At certain points you may therefore not be entirely sure how to complete it. In this case, if you don't find an explanation in the Applicants Guide, first consult the **Frequently Asked Questions** on the programme's website and if you still don't find an explanation there, you can always ask at the address indicated in the Guidelines for Applicants.

### ➤ **Find a good title for your project**

The title of your project should be concise and self-explanatory in view of the proposed action.

### ➤ **Draft a convincing Concept Note**

Overcoming the first hurdle on the way to success of your proposal depends on the quality of your Concept Note. You have to convince the evaluators on just 4 pages to recommend you application for further evaluation - so what you say must be well-structured, concise, and complete!

### ➤ **Make a thorough analysis of the background of your project**

This analysis will lay the foundation for the action you propose. It must identify the essential problem areas; define target groups and stakeholders, and links and complementarities with other initiatives in such a way that the activities you plan to undertake and the solutions you propose follow logically from the analysis. If you start the preparation of your proposal with the Logical Framework, as we strongly suggest, you will automatically be led to performing this background analysis.

### ➤ **Identify clear objectives, methods, results**

Show that you have a clear idea of your project; that you know exactly what to do, how to do it and why. Again the Logical Framework Analysis will help you structure your ideas and check their logic.

➤ **Develop a well-structured work plan**

Show in your work plan that you have a realistic view of the sequence and timing of the activities to be undertaken in the performance of the project, the inputs required at each point and the results you expect to achieve. Be honest about possible constraints, and make appropriate provision for them in the work plan.

➤ **Make sure to have an appropriate project cycle management**

High quality proposals might be unimpressive regarding their provisions for Monitoring & Evaluation as a consequence of poorly defined verifiable indicators. Remember that, if your project is selected for funding, you will have to report regularly on its progress. Monitoring and evaluation should therefore be embedded as an essential activity into the very fabric of the work plan.

➤ **Calculate a realistic budget**

The budgeted project costs must be reasonable and realistic. It is common practice to use the upper grant limit as the requested contribution, creating the impression that this figure was taken as the starting point in formulating the project and then filled with activities to justify the amount. However, it is unlikely that this approach will lead to an optimally designed project. When you prepare the budget it is more logical to start from realistic considerations regarding the activities needed to successfully carry out the action and then translate them into cost. Avoid the impression that your budget was “artificially inflated” in order to obtain the maximum possible grant! An essential task of the evaluators will consist in analysing the budgets in detail.

➤ **Have a clear text structure**

The text of your proposal must be clear and concise for easy reading. It should have precise headings and sub-headings and use short paragraphs to structure it. The information you provide should be limited to what is essential for describing your proposed action and should show a logical sequence. Avoid redundancies and don't use acronyms without explanation. Little credit will be given for sweeping claims such as “this project will be entirely sustainable”. Don't forget that a proposal is not a scientific paper. Look at it from a pragmatic point of view: You want to obtain funding to do a certain well-defined work within a clear timeframe that will result in tangible outputs. This is much more like a business proposal!

Within a partnership, it is common practice that each partner will make a contribution to the proposal, in particular the text segments related to its designated role in the project. However, this implies the risk that the final product will not be homogeneous with regard to style, detail of content, presentation etc. It is therefore advisable that one person should do the final editing of the proposal to ensure the homogeneity of all texts. This person should also be responsible for doing a last check of the completeness of the application and its compliance with all the provisions of the Call for Proposals.

➤ **Use good quality language**

It goes without saying that the use of good “standard” English or French is an asset for your application. So when you have finished writing it, make sure that a native speaker does a spell and language check of your proposal. A proposal must not be formulated in a sophisticated way, but it should be easy to read and - more important - to understand. How else will the evaluators be in a position to assess your proposal?

## MAJOR REASONS FOR THE REJECTION OF APPLICATIONS



### The application was delivered after the deadline or was posted after the deadline

This is the most annoying reason of all for having your proposal rejected after all the effort it took to prepare it, so be absolutely sure to respect the deadline. Rejection of late proposals is automatic and there will be no exceptions!



### The application failed to pass the administrative check

- The compulsory format of the Application Form was not respected;
- Essential documents were missing (budget, logical framework ...);
- Partnership not eligible (no partners at all, not enough partners ....);
- Requested contribution exceeds the limit.



### Quality of the content

- The relevance of the project (to needs and constraints of the country/region and to those of the target groups and final beneficiaries) is not convincing;
- Proposal shows no clear relation to the objectives of the programme;
- Goals too ambitious and not plausibly substantiated by the proposed activities;
- Objectives, methodology and results are insufficiently elaborated and explained;
- Text is not clearly structured, lacking internal logic;
- Text is obviously written by “cut and paste”; poor final editing;
- Poor Logical Framework (internal logic, indicators, sources of verification)
- Costs appear exaggerated in relation to proposed activities and inputs.



### Impact

- Target group(s) not clearly identified or negligible in quantitative terms;
- Proposal does not elaborate on tangible outputs and results;
- Sustainability of the project not sufficiently substantiated.



### Implementation

- Insufficient management experience of the lead organisation;
- Inadequate knowledge of Project Cycle Management.

## FORMING AN ELIGIBLE PARTNERSHIP BASED ON A SOUND PROJECT IDEA

There are two possible approaches to the constitution of your partnership:

- Either you develop your project idea first and then look for eligible cultural operators that might be interested in the subject and in working with your entity;
- Or, if your entity already has well-established and tested relations with other eligible organisations, you can build on this experience and jointly develop a project idea of common interest.

You can also make use of the ‘Search Partner’ facility and the database on the [ACPCultures](#) website to promote your organisation and your specific interests there.

Whichever approach you choose the selection of partners and the constitution of the partnership must be based on clear ideas and perceptions about the project. The consortium should bring together all competences relevant for the successful execution of the project and should be committed to the action and its target groups. It is important that all partners have a high level of mutual trust - “the chemistry should be good among the partners!”



### How many members of the partnership?

There are minimum rules that you find explained in the Guidelines for Applicants, but there is no upper limit to the number of members the partnership may comprise. However, there is no point in adding partners just for the sake of it - the optimum is a partnership that combines all the required competences, where each partner has a well-defined role and where partners share project activities and benefits in a balanced way.

And remember: the more partners are involved, the more complex and difficult managing the project will become!



### Choosing the applicant organisation

One member of the partnership must be designated as the lead organisation and then becomes 'the applicant'.

Where a partnership includes both, ACP and EU organisations, this may raise the question whether there is a tactical advantage in designating an ACP organisation as the applicant. There can, indeed, be a situation, where this is the case: If at a certain stage of the evaluation process several applications receive identical scores, applications submitted by networks where the lead institution is an ACP organization or by partnerships composed exclusively of ACP organisations will be given priority over those not fulfilling these criteria. However, the more relevant consideration in choosing the lead institution of the partnership should be project management experience and capacity.

This is an important criterion in the evaluation process and should therefore be the outstanding qualification of the lead institution - whether it comes from an ACP or from an EU State.



### Formalising the partnership

The constitution of the partnership is formalised through the so-called 'partnership statements', included in section III pt. 2 of the Application Form.

Each partner must sign, date (and stamp) such a statement and in principle they should all be included as originals in your application.

Assembling the partnership statements should therefore be one of the very first activities to be undertaken once the partnership has been agreed, since experience shows that it may take considerable time to obtain them all. The signature on the partnership statement must be that of a person authorised to legally represent the institution.

An additional instrument to formalise your partnership is an internal agreement ('Cooperation agreement') that describes the purpose of the partnership, broadly defines the role and responsibilities of each partner, confirms their commitment to the joint undertaking etc. It is entirely up to you whether and how you draw up such a document; it is not part of your application nor is it a condition for its validity.

**WE WISH YOU A GOOD JOB!**