



Illegal Wildlife Trade (IWT) Challenge Fund Stage 2 workshop

9th November 2018, Zoological Society of London

Workshop Proceedings

On 8th November, a workshop was held at the Zoological Society of London. The workshop content focused on the necessary steps for the IWT Stage 2 application, the importance of gender consideration, the effective use of project design tools, and the importance of good evidence and appropriate indicators. The aim of the workshop was to provide advice and support relating to producing a successful application and to provide a forum for applicants to gain a better understanding of the key considerations of the IWT Advisory Group.

This note covers the frequently asked questions as well as those specific to different areas of the application and answers along with participant feedback on the workshop.

The presentations from the day plus the exercise handout can be accessed via the Darwin Initiative website [here](#).

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Workshop Agenda

Time	Agenda Item
09:30	Arrivals and Registration (Tea and coffee on arrival)
10:00	Introduction to the Workshop <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Purpose of the workshop - How the day will work - Introductions - exercise
10:00	Welcome by the IWT Challenge Fund Secretariat <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Welcome by Defra - Changes for Round 4
10:15	Introduction to the Workshop <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Purpose of the workshop - How the day will work - Introductions - exercise
10:30	Overview of Frequently Asked Questions/Common Issues <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Common administrative and finance queries - Collection of questions received from applicants and responses
11:00	IWT Advisory Group Presentation: What Makes a Good Application? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Presentation by a member of the IWTAG - Q&A
11:30	The Importance of Gender in IWT Projects <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Integrating gender into IWT projects
11:45	Communicating your Ideas <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Framing your project appropriately - Translating complexity into simplicity - exercise
12:00	Lunch
13:00	Project Design Tools <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Why use project design tools - Logframes and theories of change - Introducing effective logframe development - exercise
14:10	Tea and Coffee Break
14:20	The Importance of Good Evidence and Appropriate Indicators <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identifying SMART indicators - Collecting and reporting evidence - Means of verification - exercise
15:30	Q&A, Feedback and Wrap Up
15:45	Workshop Close



Key points or common issues arising from the morning sessions

Overview of Frequently Asked Questions/Common Issues

Finance and Admin

Q. Matched funds can be difficult to collect paper work on - can you please confirm if matched funds need to be audited?

IWT Challenge Fund requires that IWT funding only is audited – matched funds do not need to be audited.

Q. Are there any funding restrictions if there was a military coup during the project's lifetime?

We recognise that IWT projects work in difficult contexts. If something outside of your control influences the implementation of your project, get in touch with us and we can discuss the options available to you. There are no specific funding restrictions in place.

Q. Allowable auditing costs are £1,500 - experience shows that this may not be high enough, can we budget higher?

No, you may not budget higher than £1,500 from IWT funds. Experience shows that this should be sufficient, so we would recommend shopping around if you cannot find a better price. If you must exceed this price, these costs will need to be met from other sources.

Q. Do you want all details or letters of support for all partners including non-key partners?

We would recommend that letters of support are provided for all key partners, but it is not essential to provide information on non-key partners.

Q. Would an MoU or email be acceptable as a letter of support from a project partner?

If you are unable to secure a specific letter of support in time to submit with your application, then an MoU or email would be acceptable. However, where possible, letters of support which are tailored to your proposed project should be provided as these can add value to your application.

Q. As letters of support are often difficult to obtain, could you submit them at a later date?

If you receive letters of support following the application deadline, please get in touch with IWT-Fund@ltsi.co.uk as there could still be scope for these to be considered alongside your application.

Technical

Q. Can you provide more advice on making logframe indicators SMART?

A useful exercise to test whether your logframe indicators are SMART is included in the exercise handout from the workshop, available [here](#).



Q. What is a killer assumption?

A killer assumption is an assumption which would fundamentally influence successful project implementation – if it does not hold true, your project will fail. This could be mitigated against by carrying out additional work and it is possible this needs to be done (i.e. certain preconditions need to be met) before project start. Inclusion of killer assumptions may indicate a significant weakness in project design.

General

Q. Is association with a UK based institution required?

No, it is not mandatory for projects to involve UK based institutions.

Q. How important is it to get in contact with the in-country Embassy/High Commission?

We recommend contacting local embassies for a number of reasons. They are often well placed to advise on other initiatives working in-country and can also be strong project ambassadors for your project once funded. Foreign and Commonwealth Office posts may engage to a greater or lesser degree so if you have made contact but haven't received a response, please note this in your application.

Q. Could the embassy be one of the supporting letter providers?

Yes.

Q. Should the project references be a donor or from the lead organisation?

Project references (for previous projects) should include the contact details for the client or donor rather than your own organisation.

IWT Advisory Group Presentation: What Makes a Good Application?

Q. To what extent does the IWT Advisory Group accept changes in the focus countries – would I explain this in the cover letter?

If you are proposing a change in focus country between Stage 1 and Stage 2, this should be clearly explained in the cover letter. Pay particular attention to whether the new countries proposed are Upper Middle Income Countries as you may be required to meet additional criteria, as outlined in the guidance.

Q. What is the key criteria that projects are evaluated against?

The assessment criteria used by the Advisory Group when reviewing applications are outlined in section 8.2 of the guidance.



The Importance of Gender in IWT Projects

Q. How can IWT projects contribute to reducing inequality between persons of different gender?

The presentation slides provide more information on how IWT projects can consider gender during both their proposal development and implementation.

Projects should, as a minimum, demonstrate a 'do no harm' approach to gender issues. This requires proposals to demonstrate an understanding of local realities and social norms in the project site.

The Darwin Initiative website, the sister scheme to the IWT Challenge Fund, contains the project documents for [all Darwin projects](#) and can be searched for examples of conservation projects engaging with gender issues. The [Darwin Gender newsletter](#) from June 2015, provides further examples of projects engaging with gender.

Key points or common issues arising from the afternoon sessions

Project Design Tools

Key observations from participants in the logframe and theory of change exercises included:

- The importance of using consistent language in logframes to ensure the various components of the logframe are as easy to identify as possible.
- It is often challenging to distinguish between project activities and outputs.
- Some activities seem repetitive, perhaps because they deliver against multiple outputs, and some outputs don't appear to have obviously relevant outputs. This could be an indication that there is a gap in the project logic.
- Assumptions are not always clear – clearly articulating assumptions can help demonstrate the project logic and strengthen the project logframe.
- Sometimes the problem/impact/outcome statement can seem vague or broad. It can therefore be hard to tie the project activities or outputs back to them, with a risk that there are gaps in the logic.
- The project logframe is one means of ensuring that gender considerations are effectively integrated into project design.

The Importance of Good Evidence and Appropriate Indicators

Key observations from participants in the indicators and evidence exercise included:

- Indicators must be specific. Where they are not, it becomes difficult to identify where on the logframe they should be placed.
- Indicators should be selected that are comprehensive enough to measure all aspects of a project's outputs and outcome.
- Developing effective indicators takes time. Don't leave it until the last minute!
- When developing indicators it is useful to engage the people who will ultimately be tasked with monitoring project progress.
- Identifying baselines is a crucial part of indicator development. If you do not yet know all of the relevant baselines for your intervention it is important to make it clear when, and how these will be identified.



Other Questions

The “Guidance for applicants” should be your first reference point if you have queries when developing your application. This can be accessed via Flexi-Grant and also on the GOV.UK website: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/illegal-wildlife-trade-challenge-fund-2018-application-round>

Finance & Admin

You will find most information regarding financial requirements for your applications and, if successful at Stage 2, financial management of your projects in the document below.

- The “Finance for Darwin and IWT” document can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/illegal-wildlife-trade-challenge-fund-forms-and-templates-for-existing-projects>

Q. Can you provide more details on the rules guiding the capital items and financial risk management as well as on the open access policy?

Capital costs paid from IWT funds should be no more than 10% of the total grant, except in specific cases where higher capital expenditure is essential for the project and justified in the application. Please note, the purchase of land or the erection of permanent buildings are not eligible under this budget line.

Financial risk management: this should look at how your organisation will manage financial risk including bribery and corruption, foreign exchange, natural disaster (which may render records unreadable) and refer to security of records etc. This will also include reference to auditing procedures and internal processes to ensure risk is managed.

Open access policy: See section 1.13 of the Finance guidance. If costs may fall after the end of the project, but in the same financial year, this is manageable. If costs may fall later, it is recommended that you use matched funding for these costs as Defra cannot meet costs in a financial year in which the project is not active.

Q. Will (if approved) the grant be paid in advance or arrears?

The Finance Guidance clearly outlines the financial requirements of projects once they are up and running. Payment schedules are outlined in section 4 of this guidance.

Q. What level of co-funding is required/acceptable?

There is no mandatory level of co-funding. Remember that in-kind support, for example the use of facilities or staff time, can count. Where no co-funding is proposed your application should explain why this is the case.



Q. What level of salary and operational coverage is acceptable in proportion to activities?

We expect organisations to take a sensible approach to staffing projects in line with their own approach. We indicate that we would normally expect the Project Leader to include at least 10% of their time, otherwise we leave it to applicants to bring in the staffing levels required.

Q. How does the IWT Challenge Fund/Defra budget for travel costs, particularly for overseas lodging and meals & incidental rates?

You should apply the approach that your own organisation would take. If you do not have specific rates you can propose what you feel suitable, but this could for example be guided by rates published by DFID or the EU.

Q. What are the audit requirements?

For any total award over £100,000, you are required to organise an independent examination/audit of the grant provided to the lead organisation from the IWT Challenge Fund at the end of the project. A total of £1,500 (maximum) can be allocated in the final financial year of the IWT project budget for these costs. The amount is ring-fenced, and any underspend may not be reallocated elsewhere in your budget. Further information is available in the finance guidance document.

Q. For some potential partners, it may only be possible to secure letters of commitment after funding has been obtained. In these cases, would Defra prefer that these partners be left off the application, or is it possible to include potential partners at this stage?

Please include all key project partners in your application. We understand it can be hard to secure letters of support before submitting your application, so please note where you have attempted to secure a letter of support but may not have received this yet. If you receive a letter of support just following the submission deadline, please share this with us as there may still be scope for it to be considered.

Technical

Q. What are the key project components required for a successful application to IWT? Where do we give major attentions during stage 2 preparation?

There is no simple formula for a successful proposal however there are a few key considerations which should be a focus when writing your proposal. Ensure your application is clearly written and that your logframe reflects your narrative proposal and includes SMART indicators. Provide strong letters of support from key partners and stakeholders, especially where these are crucial to the implementation of your project. Please also ensure you have responded to any feedback received on your Stage 1 application – by incorporating this into your application form and signposting how you have done this in your cover letter or by noting in your cover letter why you did not feel it was appropriate to take this feedback on board.

Q. How can I best show the impact of my project?

Your project Outcome is the overall goal of your project within the IWT funding timescale. You can show achievement of your Outcome through indicators in your logframe, substantiated by evidence in your reporting. Your stated impact is a longer-term goal that your project is contributing towards but will not be achieved within your project lifetime. With a clear theory of change, you should be able to articulate the links between your project Outcome and longer-term impact, but there is no requirement for indicators at the impact level.

Q. Success stories of previous projects – what made them successful?

We recently carried out an assessment of Final and Annual report reviews for Darwin Initiative projects, which follow a similar structure to IWT Challenge Fund projects. Outlined below are some factors that provide guidance on how to successfully plan, implement and report for your proposed project.

Planning:

- Develop a realistic M&E framework, taking into account the length of the project
- Evaluate Outputs and Outcomes using indicators – ensure to highlight any indicators that may not meet the SMART requirements.
- When it comes to partnerships, focus on quality over quantity – it is often better to have fewer partners and better relationships. Fewer partners may result in better coordination, communication and performance.
- Clear and defined baselines – and ability to recognise gaps in baseline knowledge

Implementation:

- Utilise technical change requests – allows projects to continue to score highly and re-establish targets despite unpredictable changes.
- Engage with local communities – providing materials in local languages, encouraging community ownership, and community consultations were proven to be the most successful forms of engagement
- Project adaptability – ability to overcome unforeseen challenges/changes to original project plan

Reporting:

- High quality reporting - outline the reasoning behind project successes, focussing not just on strengths but also shortcomings
- Include sufficient evidence in annual and final reports – if possible translate/summarise key documentation being used as evidence



Q. To what extent are the applicants allowed to modify their original submission to address the questions from the selection committee?

Please directly address all feedback received on your Stage 1 application, whether this is to flag how it has been incorporated into your project or to explain why it was not appropriate to do so. There are no firm guidelines on the extent to which your project can change between Stages, however significant changes not requested in your feedback letter should also be explained in your cover letter.

Q. What emphasis is put on sustainability in IWT applications?

We ask for specific information on your project's sustainability in your Stage 2 application, which is assessed in the whole along with the rest of your application. We need to see evidence you have considered the immediate and longer term sustainability of your project to understand why the investment is well-placed.

Logframe specific questions

Q. Key points to be considered while working on logframe

- Ensure narrative and logframe are complementary
- Ensure the approach and solution respond to an identified problem. Using a theory of change can help map this pathway and identify various risks and assumptions
- The logframe should be clear and concise, whilst capturing what you want to achieve with your project. Make indicators SMART and involve your team in logframe development – this is a tool that is meant to be used!

Q. How comfortable are Defra/IWT Challenge Fund with qualitative vs. quantitative indicators (for example, a qualitative assessment of community engagement or interest on a topic)?

We encourage the use of both quantitative and qualitative indicators – whatever is most appropriate to the context.

General

Q. For countries with multiple IWT Challenge Fund programmes that span different challenge rounds, to what extent do Defra encourage or require cross-programmatic cooperation?

Where appropriate, we would encourage cross working or discussion between projects, particularly when projects are focusing on similar issues or engaging with the same stakeholders. Often, in-country embassy posts can help facilitate this. We ask you to comment on existing work in your application forms to show that you are aware of what else is happening and to encourage you to avoid duplication or to encourage efficiencies if appropriate.



Q. Is it acceptable to explain and reason why local communities are not more involved with the project, or does there need to be a direct link made to be eligible for funding?

Involvement of communities can help ensure a project's success in a number of ways, not least by improving local ownership of an intervention. If you feel this is not appropriate in your context, it would be worthwhile clearly outlining why this is the case.

Q. For this intervention, as it centres on demand reduction through a Behaviour Change Campaign, it will be difficult to assess the impact the project has in rural areas within the project's timeline. Is it substantial to just explain why this is?

Yes, if you don't feel that there will be direct benefits within the lifetime of your project then it is important for you to explain this. You may find it helpful to develop a theory of change which could help you articulate how your project's work will result in benefits in the longer term.

Q. If successfully funded, what are the reporting requirements?

The Stage 2 workshop mostly focuses on application requirements, whereas the New Projects workshop has more of a focus on requirements of projects once they are up and running. You can see slides from the last New Projects workshop online here:

The reporting requirements are laid out in the current Terms & Conditions of the funds which can be found here, along with the current reporting templates:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/illegal-wildlife-trade-challenge-fund-forms-and-templates-for-existing-projects>

Q. How do Defra anticipate each implementer connect their programs with achievement of the Global Goals for Sustainable Development – in other words, are there specific reporting requirements for IWT Challenge Fund programmes?

Yes – the annual reporting form for current projects includes a specific question on the SDGs (N.B. forms are subject to edits each year). At a wider level, it is currently a UK Government priority to report on our progress against SDGs, and the IWT Challenge Fund feeds into this at a departmental level. Defra is also planning to undertake programme-level M&E for both the Darwin Initiative and IWT Challenge Fund which will look specifically at how the funds are addressing the SDGs.

Q. Issues of corruption and political instability are factors that affect many/all IWT projects yet are often out of the scope of projects to address. How best to account for these within the project in terms of mitigation etc.

Recognition of the possible issues is important, as is mitigation as far as possible. We recommend keeping in contact with the relevant FCO posts as they will usually have the most up-to-date information, and in terms of addressing this in applications, projects should acknowledge any potential risks in their applications and, and factor in some flexibility to workplanning and plenty of time to carry out activities which may be affected.



Selected Workshop Feedback

“The workshop was well presented. And the break-out sessions were very informative, they offered great clarification on some of the sections of the application.”

“Everything was clearly presented and easy to follow. The presentations were not fussy and I found them to be very engaging.”

“Useful session, thank you! It would be good to see more examples of successful project indicators for the trickier topics.”

“More examples of what constitutes a good indicator would be useful.”