

Questions
First Level of Control Seminar for INTERREG IVB and IVC projects
12 May 2009

Questions on the Northern Periphery Programme

- 1. Why does it take so long time between Project Approvals to Letters of Offer being issued?**

The Northern Periphery Programme that the Managing Authority of the programme has had some staffing issues and this has led to delays in issuing Letters of Offer.

- 2. Will Northern Ireland rules allow for the retention of documents in electronic format?**

No, at the moment, the Northern Ireland Audit Office rules do not allow for retention of documents in electronic format. All hard copies of original documentation must be kept.

- 3. Is existing staff time from a public body eligible expenditure?**

Existing staff time can only be claimed as part of a project if it can be shown that the time spent on the project is wholly additional and at an additional cost.

- 4. Is there flexibility in budget lines?**

Any changes in budgets should be agreed with Lead Partners and the secretariat of the programme.

- 5. If a project employs a person on a three year contract to work on the project and a three year project is starting late (due to the delay in the issuing of a Letter of Offer) and the end date of the project is before the end of the employment contract, how should this be dealt with?**

The project partner should be work with the Lead Partner and it may be possible to ask the Secretariat of the programme for an extension to the end date of the project. This should then coincide with the end of the employment contract.

- 6. Is it possible to claim for expenditure on alcoholic beverages under NI rules?**

Northern Ireland rules state that 'it will also be permissible for refreshments and alcoholic beverages to be served with evening meals where the event is residential. In all cases,

expenditure on refreshments and alcoholic beverages should be capped at 25% of the total bill'. Projects should also check their programme rules on this issue as some programmes do not allow expenditure on alcoholic beverages.

7. Does the Northern Ireland Guidance Note on Eligibility of Expenditure issued in April 2009 apply retrospectively to INTERREG IVB and IVC projects?

Northern Ireland guidance on eligibility of expenditure has been in place prior to the start of the current programme start date. The Guidance Note dated April 2009 is for the purpose of clarification and aims to provide more information on how the rules apply to INTERREG IVB and IVC projects. This guidance applies to expenditure from the start of the current programme period.

8. How frequently are claims paid?

The Northern Periphery Programme requests claims from Lead Partners every six months. However, the Managing Authority of the programme is considering asking projects to submit more frequent claims.

9. Is it possible to attend a conference outside the Northern Periphery Programme Area?

Yes, it is possible to attend a conference outside the programme area, if you have received the prior authorisation of the programme secretariat and you can demonstrate that attendance at the conference is required for the project outcomes.

10. How does a project allow for changing exchange rates?

For the Northern Periphery Programme, sterling expenditure should be converted using the monthly Commission rates for the last month in the reporting period. Other programmes however, may apply different rules on sterling exchange conversion.

11. Who is responsible for reporting on N + 2?

The responsibility for reporting on N+2 lies with the Managing Authority of the programme.

12. What Certification is required for Public match funding?

Public match funding expenditure will be verified in accordance with the same eligibility rules and standards of evidence that is applied to all project expenditure.

13. What happens when the deadline is missed for a claim period?

If a claim period is missed, the claim can then be submitted at the end of the next claim period, which will mean a delay in receiving payment.

Questions on the Atlantic Area

1. Is donated time by government organisations acceptable as Match funding

Public sector organisations must provide documented evidence that they have incurred real additional costs for the purpose of the project, in order for that expenditure to be considered as eligible match funding.

2. Is it possible for partners to carry out internal invoicing?

Claimed expenditure claim based solely on invoices from another project partner is not allowed as eligible expenditure. Expenditure by project partners must be evidenced by original documentation showing real additional expenditure having been incurred and paid. Sub contracting between partners within the project partnership is not eligible.

3. Is expenditure on equipment eligible?

Expenditure on equipment is eligible provided it is solely for the purpose of the project and it does not have an economic life beyond the project end date.

4. Is unpaid voluntary work eligible expenditure?

Unpaid voluntary work is ineligible for grant aid reimbursement.

Questions on North West Europe / Urbact / INTERREG IVC

1. To what extent should the National Controller be responsible for non-financial elements of First Level of Control? Eg Publicity

The National Controller is responsible for obtaining confirmation that a project partner's outputs and objectives have been delivered as part of the First Level Control process. This

would include seeking assurance that the rules on publicity have been complied with by the project.

2. What is the Responsibility of the Lead Partner for the repayment of irregularities incurred by other partners?

The lead partner is responsible, in the first instance, for repaying to the Certifying Authority any irregular expenditure which has been claimed and paid to the project. It is the lead partner's responsibility to recover any repayments from their partners.

3. A UK wide organisation registered in England where the project activity takes place in NI. Who is responsible for providing First Level Control?

First Level Control responsibility is determined by in which jurisdiction the project expenditure and benefits occurs and should be agreed with the Joint Technical Secretariat.. If for example an employee is working on an approved project in Northern Ireland but is paid from the UK head office then the project is responsible for providing the required documentary evidence to the Controller in Ni to enable the expenditure to be verified.

4. How can a large organisation identify the cost of items bought in bulk for a project eg office supplies, laptops?

It is the responsibility of the project partner to provide the documentary evidence in support of their expenditure claim. Even with bulk purchases of office equipment it should be possible provide adequate evidence of the price paid to the equipment supplier.
