

**GUIDE FOR
APPLICANTS**

INTERREG VA

Cross-border Programme for Territorial Co-operation
2014-2020, Northern Ireland, Border Region of Ireland
and Western Scotland

&

PEACE IV

EU Programme for Peace and Reconciliation 2014-2020,
Northern Ireland and the Border Region of Ireland

Contents

INTRODUCTION

Section 1 **What We Fund and the Difference We Want to Make**

- 1.1 Background
- 1.2 Programme Rules.....
- 1.3 Contribution to the results and outputs of the programme
- 1.4 Who can apply
- 1.5 Financial Information
- 1.6 Match Funding Contribution.....
- 1.7 Simplified Cost Options

Section 2 **How to Apply**

- 2.1 Calls for applications.....
- 2.2 Timeline for an application.....
- 2.3 Application Process
- 2.4 Development Workshops.....
- 2.5 Stage two development support

Section 3 **How We Will Assess Your Application**

- 3.1 Assessment model
- 3.2 Assessment Criteria
- 3.3 Admissibility Check
- 3.4 Stage one application form criteria.....
- 3.5 Stage Two Assessment Criteria.....
- 3.6 Scoring and quality threshold.....
- 3.7 Training in Horizontal Principles
- 3.8 Use of technical studies and external input.....
- 3.9 Assessment criteria for stage one and stage two

Section 4 **How To Complete The Application Form**

- 4.1 Online applications
- 4.2 Guidance on the application form questions

Section 5 Project Approval and Review Process

5.1 Steering Committee

5.2 Project Approval

5.3 Review Process

Annex 1a: Review Procedure for Unsuccessful Applicants
– PEACE IV Programme

Annex 1b: Review Procedure for Unsuccessful Applicants –
INTERREG VA Programme

DRAFT

INTRODUCTION

The Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB) is a North/South Implementation Body sponsored by the Department of Finance and Personnel in Northern Ireland and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in Ireland. It is responsible for managing two EU Structural and Investment Funds Programmes – PEACE IV and INTERREG VA - which are designed to enhance cross-border co-operation, promote reconciliation and create a more peaceful, social and economic prosperous society.

This document offers guidelines on how to apply for funding to PEACE IV and the INTERREG VA Programmes. It is addressed to those who wish to be:

- **Lead Partner** - organisations, institutions, or bodies which propose to lead in the implementation of a project¹ supported by the Programme;
- **Partners** - organisations or institutions which will be closely involved in assisting in the implementation of the project (or its component projects) that is co-ordinated by the Lead Partner.

When making an application, the Lead Partner and project partners should be informed by this document. **This document must be read in conjunction with the following documents all of which contain important supplementary information:**

- The specific call for applications;
- The Programme Rules;
- The Cooperation Programme / or the Citizens' Summary of the Cooperation Programme.

The Programmes are open to any organisation(s) that can contribute to the results and outputs of the Programmes with the capacity to manage an EU funded project. The assessment process will assess both of these aspects.

¹ The project is the sum total of the activities funded and described in the Letter of Offer. The project may consist of one large stand-alone project or a number of component projects.

INTERREG VA

Through the INTERREG VA Programme the Managing Authority aims to build greater economic and social cohesion across the territory of Northern Ireland, the Border Region of Ireland and Western Scotland by supporting projects in the areas of: Research and Innovation; Environment; Sustainable Transport; and Health.

All of the INTERREG VA projects must be cross-border. We wish to support new and innovative projects which would not be possible without EU funding.

We anticipate applications from a wide range of organisations including Public Sector Bodies; Government Departments; Voluntary and Community Sector Organisations; Universities and Institutes of Technology; Colleges of Further Education. This list is not exhaustive.

PEACE IV

Through the PEACE IV Programme we wish to support projects that promote social inclusion, combat poverty and discrimination and make a lasting difference in building greater cohesion between communities. In particular, projects should be able to demonstrate how they will foster enhanced peace and reconciliation in Northern Ireland and the Border Region of Ireland.

PEACE IV will place a strong emphasis on promoting cross-community relations and understanding. All projects will be required to identify how they will contribute towards the achievement of the results and outputs that the Programme sets out to achieve in order to promote a greater level of reconciliation and understanding in Northern Ireland and the Border Region of Ireland.

SECTION 1

WHAT WE FUND AND THE DIFFERENCE WE WANT TO MAKE

1.1 Background

The PEACE IV and INTERREG VA programmes are funded through the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) within the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF). This Guide for Applicants is to assist potential applicants to these Programmes. The Citizens' Summary provides a short summary of each Programme and you should refer to the Citizens' Summary before completing your application.

1.2 Programme Rules

The Programme Rules describe and explain the rules of INTERREG VA and give guidance on all phases of the project lifecycle. In the spirit of simplification, a common set of rules have been developed for the INTERREG and PEACE Programmes. The Programme Rules are the day to day operating rules and are intended to be an essential reference guide providing support and assistance to projects.

The Programme Rules detail the location of the activities which may be supported and what is eligible for funding along with other detailed rules you should be aware of before you make an application. The ability to comply with these rules is essential and failure to do so can result in financial implications for your project.

The rules are based on relevant European regulations, and in particular the regulations that relate to European Territorial Cooperation.

The rules are especially relevant to Lead Partners who are expected to be familiar with their content. Furthermore, Lead partners should use the rules for information purposes and distribute the information to all project partners to ensure the smooth and correct implementation of the project at all levels.

The Rules provide detailed guidance on key issues, including:

- responsibilities of lead partners;
- eligibility of expenditure;

- simplified cost options;
- budgeting;
- procurement;
- State Aid;
- risk management;
- information and communication;

monitoring and reporting.

1.3 Contribution to the results and outputs of the programme

For the 2014 – 2020 funding period, one of the notable changes is what is known as the '*results and output orientation*' of the INTERREG VA and PEACE IV Programmes. This represents a significant shift from the 2007-2013 funding period. In order to be considered for funding, applicants must now demonstrate how their project can assist in achieving the defined results and outputs set out within the Cooperation Programme² (CP) and which are specifically detailed in the call for applications. Therefore, it is not sufficient to present only an activity-based programme; applicants must also clearly describe what the results and outputs of the activities will be and how they will be tracked and measured to demonstrate how they have contributed to the result and output indicators contained in the CP.

Specific objectives established for INTERREG VA and PEACE IV reflect the desired positive change that the particular Programme wishes to promote and also relates to the identified needs of the INTERREG VA or PEACE IV Programme area.

Result indicators track the progress towards achievement of the specific objective. Given the nature of the result indicator, it will be influenced not only by projects funded by the Programmes, but will also be influenced by other policy and funding initiatives external to the Programmes. They not only relate to programme beneficiaries, but to the whole target population.

Output indicators relate to goods and services provided with support from the funding. They are the direct products of Programmes. They are tangible and can be

² Electronic copies of the PEACE IV and INTERREG V Co-operation Programmes are available to download from the SEUPB website – www.seupb.eu. A Citizens Summary is also available.

counted and answer the question: “What did we spend the money on?” The output indicators contribute directly to the achievement of the result indicators.

You must demonstrate how your project will deliver the specified outputs and make a contribution to the result indicator(s) as detailed in the call for applications.

1.4 Who can apply

Each call for applications will specify, according to the strategic priority, the type of organisation that can apply. Generally the Programme will be open to all types of applicants, the critical issue in the capacity of the applicant to contribute to the achievement of results and outputs of the Programme.

Applicants will need to nominate a Lead Partner for their project. This Lead Partner will act as the link with the Joint Secretariat in SEUPB and will take responsibility for the management of the project. The role and responsibilities of Lead Partners is comprehensively covered in the Programme Rules.

1.5 Financial Information

Your application should include all of the costs i.e. the total budget which are directly required to deliver your project. The Programme Rules cover in detail the costs categories which are eligible. You should pay particular attention to eligibility rules to ensure that the costs you apply for can be reimbursed. The budget proposed in the application will be robustly tested during the assessment of your project.

1.6 Match funding contribution

It is important that your project can fund the entire activities detailed in the application form. You will be asked to detail how you intend to finance the project and from where that funding will come. As the arrangements for match funding may differ between calls, each call for applications will provide details on the level of match funding, if any, you will be required to contribute to your project and the form it may

take. The Programme Rules provide further references to match funding contribution.

1.7 Simplified Cost Options

The 2014 – 2020 Programmes will proactively promote and implement simplified costs. This includes the use of flat rates, unit costs and lump sums. The use of simplification rules will significantly reduce the level of verification required for financial transactions. More detail on the simplified cost options are provided in the Programme Rules.

Calls for applications will identify opportunities for simplified costs appropriate to that call and will encourage projects, where possible, to adopt unit costs in their project.

Where unit costs are being proposed, you will still be required in your application form to detail your costs across the six budget lines to demonstrate that you can meet the requirements of any simplified cost model applicable to that call.

SECTION 2

HOW TO APPLY

2.1 Calls for applications

A call for applications will be announced for each theme under each Programme in the regional newspapers and on the SEUPB website. Some calls will have a fixed closing date while other calls will be made on a rolling basis over a longer period of time. Calls for applications will have a high degree of focus and will detail the outputs required as well as the financial allocation for each call.

To access funding the applicant needs to complete the online application form provided and submit any additional information requested. All projects will only be assessed on the information provided in the application form. (Note: in the event of the on-line application form not being operational for the first calls, an application form will be made available)

2.2 Timeline for an application

Your application will be assessed by the Joint Secretariat of the SEUPB. The decision regarding funding will be made by the Steering Committee. (See section 5 for more details). There are strict time targets in place, which have been agreed with the EU Commission, for the time it should take to make a decision on your application.

The Steering Committee aims to make a final decision on your application within 36 weeks from the closing date of the call in the case of a fixed closing date, or from receipt of application in the case of a rolling call. The dates of the Steering Committee Meetings will be published at the time of the call.

If the target processing times are not achieved, we will keep you informed and explain on the SEUPB website the reasons why we have not met the target. Applicants for Stage One will receive notification of the outcome for their application within 8 weeks of the closing date for applications. Successful applicants will have

6 weeks to submit their Stage Two application. The assessment of Stage Two will not exceed 22 weeks.

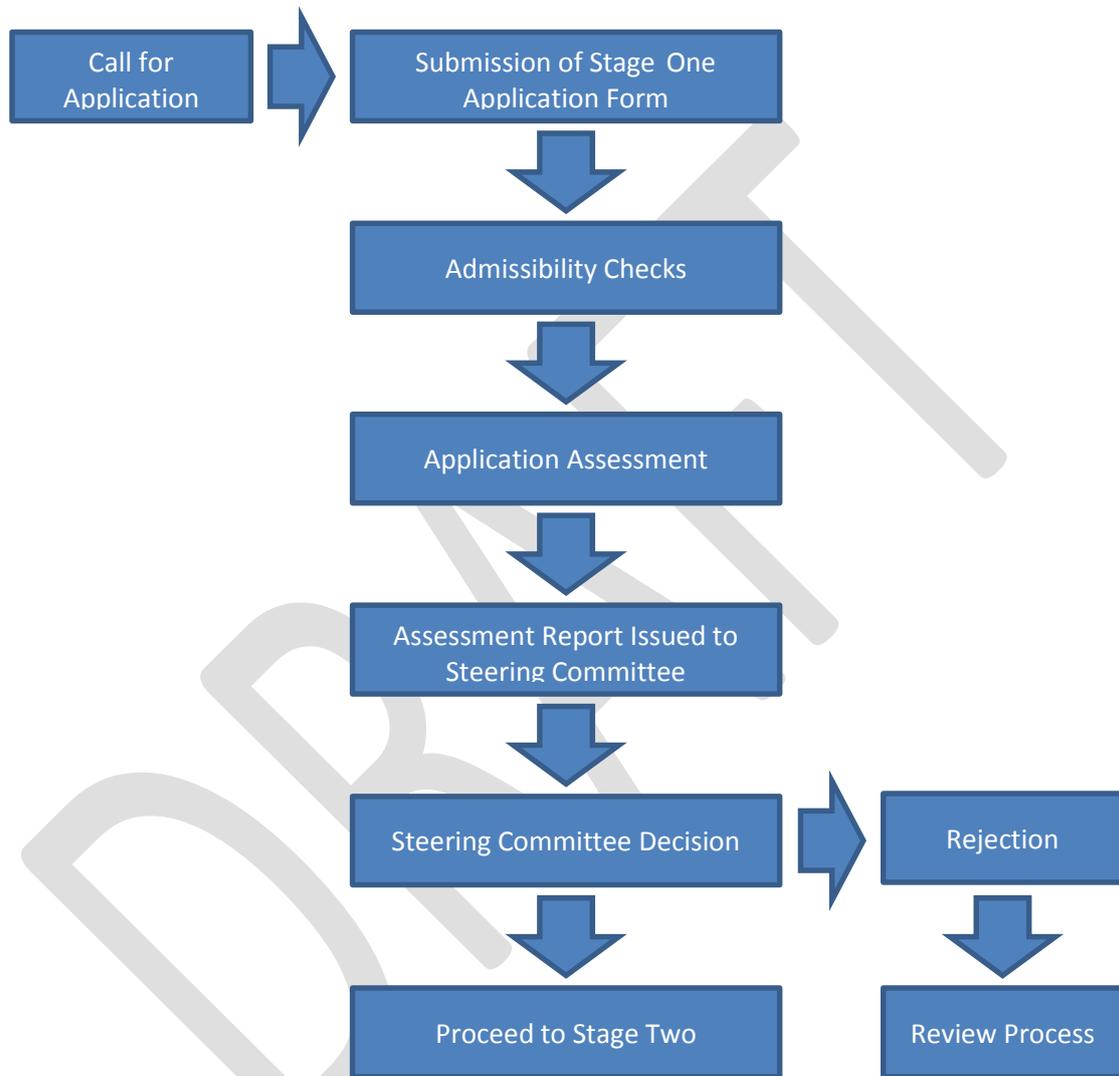
For example:

Call closes 1 st January	1 st January- date for commencement of 36 weeks
Notification of outcome of Stage 1 within 8 weeks of closing date for call	Steering Committee held by the latest 26th February, and applicant notified.
Stage 2 business plan process begins 27 th February. The applicant has 6 weeks to complete the business plan required for Stage 2.	Business plan submitted by 9 th April
Stage 2 - 22 weeks to assess and issue LoO.	Steering Committee held to make final decision by 10 th September, and applicant notified.
Entire process 36 weeks	1 st January - 10 th September

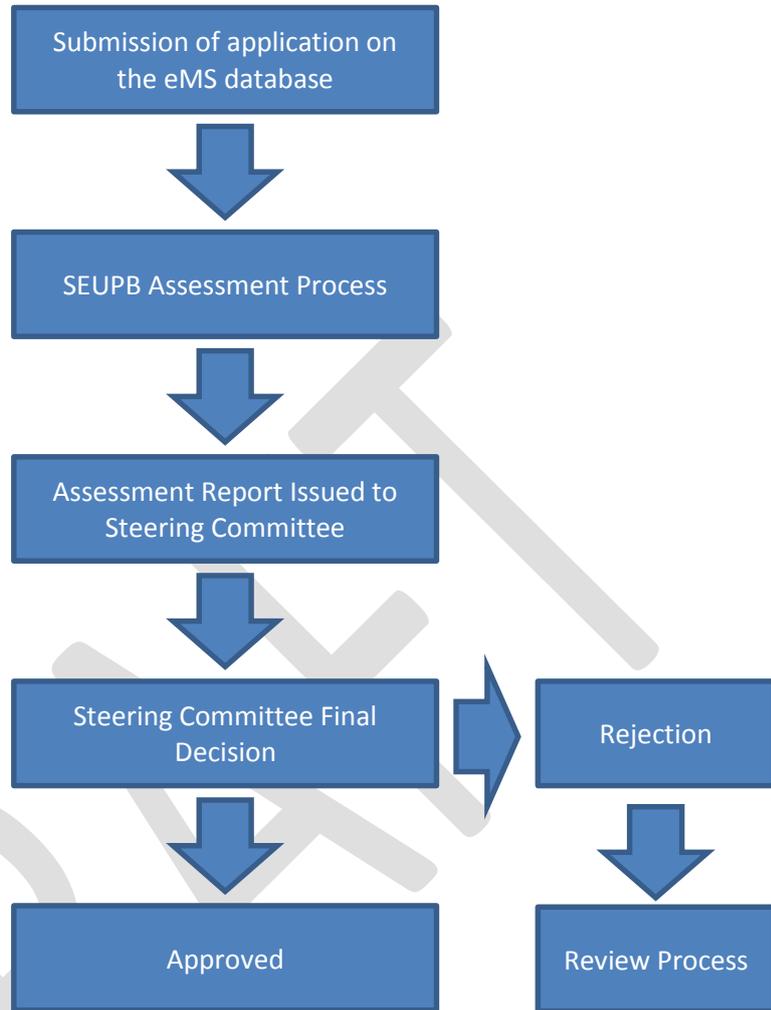
2.3 Application Process

A description of the steps in the application process is as follows:

Stage One – Application Process



Stage Two – Application Process



2.4 Stage Two development support

Applicants who are successful at Stage One may meet with the Joint Secretariat to discuss the specifics of each application. This may be organised as a workshop, project surgery or an individual meeting. This will ensure that all applicants are aware of the detailed requirements for their eMS application and have a full understanding regarding the application process.

The information provided by the Joint Secretariat during the application phase is purely for guidance to maximise your project's chance of success against the published criteria. The decision to fund a project is taken by the Steering Committee and therefore applicants should not consider the advice offered as an indication of Steering Committee support for the project.

2.5 Training on Horizontal Principles³

There will be specific training available to applicants on issues regarding the promotion of equality between men and women and non-discrimination. This will also include the provision of toolkits and advice, drawing upon valuable resources that have been funded and developed in previous Programme periods.

There will also be training available to applicants with regard to best practice in sustainable development in order to positively influence project design and implementation in line with the Union's aim of preserving, protecting and improving the quality of the environment

³ Horizontal Principles, in the context of EU funded work, are core principles of importance that cut across and have relevance to all areas of the work of EU funded projects. In the case of the PEACE IV and INTERREG VA Programmes these principles are Sustainable Development and Equality.

SECTION 3

HOW WE WILL ASSESS YOUR APPLICATION

3.1 Assessment Model

The Joint Secretariat of the SEUPB is responsible for assessing your application. The Joint Secretariat may commission external technical experts to assist them depending on the nature of the Project. The Joint Secretariat will also liaise closely with the relevant government departments in Northern Ireland, Ireland and Scotland (for INTERREG) during the assessment process. The final decision on applications is made by the Steering Committee.

The primary purpose of the assessment process is to assess the potential of the proposed project to deliver the specified results and outputs of the relevant programme in a cost effective manner. Thereafter, it will be used to rank projects according to an agreed scoring methodology.

3.2 Stage One Assessment

The Cooperation Programme provides the high level criteria against which each application will be assessed. Details will be included in the call for applications, including the specific objective and the relevant result indicator(s) and output indicators which applicants will be required to meet.

3.3 Stage one: Admissibility Check

The following admissibility criteria **must** be met by all applicants.

Admissibility check
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The application must be submitted by the agreed closing date and time.2. Are all sections of the application fully authorised by Director/CEO or equivalent?

3. Has the project been physically completed or fully implemented prior to the application for funding (regardless of whether payments have been made by the beneficiary)? Completed projects are ineligible.
4. Does the project benefit the eligible region?

If applications fail the admissibility check the applicant will be invited to withdraw the application. Should the applicant fail to withdraw the application it will be presented to the Steering Committee on the grounds of its inadmissibility.

The Steering Committee will review the application and clearly record the basis for its decisions based solely on the admissibility check. The applicant will be informed. No further assessment will be undertaken on a project proposal which fails to meet the admissibility check.

If an application passes the admissibility check it will be assessed by the Joint Secretariat.

3.4 Stage One: Assessment Criteria

Stage One assessment will be a strategic assessment and will determine the viability and merit of the project before proceeding to a more detailed assessment of the project in Stage Two.

For stage one, applicants must demonstrate relevance to five criteria, each with an equal weighting, against which applications will be fully appraised and scored (0 to 5). These are:

	Criterion	Weighting
1.	Contribution of the project to the defined results and outputs of the programme	20%
2.	Quality of Project Design	20%
3.	Quality of cross-border co-operation with demonstrable added value	20%
4.	Quality of the project team and implementation arrangements	20%

5.	Value for Money	20%
----	-----------------	-----

In order to be successful at Stage One, a minimum score of 15 (60%) must be achieved, with individual scores for each of the criteria must not be less than 3. If the value of the budget requested by projects which score above the threshold exceeds the availability of the budget, the threshold may be raised.

Unsuccessful applications at Stage One will be formally rejected with a clear reasons for rejection. Applicants rejected at Stage One will have the right to a review, conducted by written procedure.

Successful Stage One applications will be invited to submit a Stage Two application. An invitation to make a Stage Two application is no guarantee that funding will be approved.

3.5 Stage Two: Assessment Criteria.

At Stage Two you will be required to submit a Business Plan which will provide more detailed information about your project. A document *providing an overview of what we would expect to see in your Business Plan is available separately*. The Business Plan must contain sufficient information for a robust assessment to be carried out. There will be limited opportunity to address any queries or provide clarification during the assessment process; therefore the applicant must make sure that the Business Plan is complete at time of submission. The assessment will be based on the information provided.

All Stage Two applicants must fulfil the following requirements in order to proceed:

- You must have been successful at Stage One;
- You must submit their Business Plan by the stipulated closing date;
- The Business Plan must include all information as outlined in the Business Plan template, including all annexes;
- The scope and scale of the project must be in line with the Stage One approval;

- Appropriate levels of match funding must be identified, if required. If possible, the match funding should be secured at this time, but, as a minimum, the Joint Secretariat will seek assurances/letters of the availability of match funding.

The Stage Two criteria may involve the use of a number of assessment techniques, such as economic appraisal, technical studies, cost analysis etc . to inform the decision making process. No scores are carried forward from Stage One.

At Stage Two the application will be scored (0 to 5) against the following criteria and using the weighting set out below;

	Criterion	Weighting
1	Contribution of the project to the defined results and outputs of the programme	20%
2	Quality of project design	20%
3	Quality of cross-border co-operation with demonstrable added value	20%
4	Quality of the project team and implementation arrangements	10%
5	Value for Money	20%
6	Contribution to Sustainable Development	5%
7	Contribution to Equality	5%
	Total	100%

In order to be successful at Stage Two, a minimum score of 3 for each criterion is required.

3.6 Scoring and quality threshold

Scores will be awarded according to a pre-determined rating system depending on the evidence provided by the applicant provides to satisfy the criteria. If the value of

the budget requested for projects which score above the threshold exceeds the availability of the budget, the threshold may be raised.

Score	Assessment	Descriptor/Indicator
0	Nil Response	Response failed to address the question.
1	Very Poor	A very poor response with limited evidence of capacity to deliver against the criterion.
2	Poor	A poor response with some evidence of capacity to deliver against the criterion, but overall it is below the standard expected in order to be awarded funding.
3	Acceptable	A satisfactory response with evidence of capacity to deliver to an acceptable standard against the criterion.
4	Good	A good response with strong evidence of capacity to deliver above the minimum standard expected against the criterion.
5	Excellent	An excellent response with very strong evidence of capacity to deliver well above the minimum standard expected the criterion.

The Joint Secretariat's recommendation to the Steering Committee will be based on the scored assessment of the information contained in the application form against the published criteria, which may be informed by the results of any technical assessment, financial appraisal or feasibility study that may have been deemed necessary. The decision as to whether or not to fund the project rests entirely with the Steering Committee.

3.9 Assessment criteria for Stage One and Stage Two

Assessment Criteria	Description
Criterion One: Contribution of the project to the defined results and outputs of the programme	This criterion will assess whether or not the application contributes sufficiently to the programme results and outputs. The call for applications will describe, in particular, what is expected under this criterion as the results and outputs will be tailored for each specific theme.
Criterion Two: Quality of Project Design	This criterion will assess how the proposed project demonstrates overall quality in its pre-planning, design and strategy for implementation. The Joint Secretariat will assess whether or not the proposal is designed in a way that the outputs and results can be achieved and maximised. We will

	consider the quality of the project in terms of its effectiveness, efficiency and coherence.
Criterion Three: Cross-Border Co-operation ⁴	<p>This criterion will assess how applicants have considered the added value of implementing their project on a cross-border basis in line with the renewed emphasis on cross-border work by the Commission for this programming period (2014 – 2020).</p> <p>All INTERREG VA projects must be cross-border in nature. They must show why the project is needed on a cross-border basis and how it will be enhanced through cross-border delivery.</p> <p>In order to demonstrate this, partners applying to the INTERREG VA Programme <u>must demonstrate cross-border co-operation in the development and implementation</u> of their project. In addition, they must fulfil a minimum of at least one of the following on a cross-border basis: <u>joint staffing and/or joint financing</u>⁵.</p> <p>Applicants to the PEACE IV Programme are encouraged to place an increased emphasis on cross-community and cross-border work.</p>
Criterion Four: Quality of the project team and implementation arrangements	This criterion will assess the quality of the partnership, its relevance and the implementation arrangements for the proposed project. Governance arrangements of the Lead Partner and partners will be considered. (See Section 4 of the Programme Rules).
Criterion Five: Value for Money	This criterion will assess if the development and implementation of the outputs is proportional to the challenge or opportunity addressed and the expected benefit/impact/return on investment. This criterion will robustly test the proposed project budget.
Criterion Six: Contribution to Sustainable Development (Stage Two only)	This criterion will assess how the project (in both its planning and implementation) promotes sustainable development and creates sustainable communities by safeguarding, and requiring the sustainable use of existing resources to enhance the long-term management of, and investment in, human, social and environmental resources for future generations.
Criterion Seven: Contribution to Equality	This criterion will assess how the project (in both its planning and implementation) shows due regard for the need to promote equality of opportunity and adherence to the equality legislation in relevant jurisdictions and EU Regulations. Projects must adhere to the legal obligations applying under

⁴ In considering this criterion applicants are encouraged to refer to the “*Impact Assessment Toolkit for Cross-Border Co-operation in Ireland*” developed by the Centre for Cross-Border Studies, Armagh in conjunction with the Euro-Institut in Kehl, Germany. <http://www.crossborder.ie/?p=2951>

⁵ As required by Article 12 (4) of Regulation (EU) No. 1299/2013 [ETC].

(Stage Two only)	Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 ⁶ , the Employment Equality Act (1998) ⁷ and the Equal Status Act (2000), as amended by the Equality Act (2004) ⁸ , and Section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014 ⁹ in Ireland and the Equality Act (2006) in Scotland ¹⁰ .
------------------	--

DRAFT

⁶<http://www.equalityni.org/ECNI/media/ECNI/Publications/Employers%20and%20Service%20Providers/S75GuideforPublicAuthoritiesApril2010.pdf>

⁷<http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/1998/en/act/pub/0021/>

⁸<http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/2004/en/act/pub/0024/>

⁹<http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2014/act/25/section/42/enacted/en/html#sec42>

¹⁰http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/3/pdfs/ukpga_20060003_en.pdf

SECTION 4

HOW TO COMPLETE THE APPLICATION FORM

4.1 Online applications

All applicants need to submit their application online (Note: if the on-line system is not operational an application form will be made available on the website). If you find difficulty completing the application form online, please contact the Joint Secretariat to discuss alternative possibilities.

The narrative sections of the application form are restricted to a given number of characters.

The application form questions are designed to match the assessment criteria. Section 4.2 of this document provides information on how each question should be answered.

4.2 Guidance on each of the application form questions

Application Question	What should you include in your application form?
A1. Fit with the PEACE IV / INTERREG VA Programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You must select the priority, investment priority and strategic objective to which your project applies. • A reference number will be generated for you when you complete the form online. • Provide a title (name) for your project. • Provide a start and end date for the project. The duration should be in line with any specifications in the call for applications. You should plan to start the project no earlier than nine months from the closing date for submission of applications to your particular priority. The end date for the project is the date by which all outputs must be achieved, all claims submitted, and all final evaluations complete.
A2. Project Location	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide detail on the geographical area within which proposed project will take place • State areas of activity outside eligible area and impact on the eligible area • Confirm value of budget to be spent outside of eligible area
B1 Project Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Select the Programme specific results and outputs to which your project will contribute to.
B2 Project Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Briefly outline your project, what it aims to do and achieve. • Identify the need for your project and the change you wish to achieve. • Identify specific activities/actions you will undertake and their link to the outputs and results.. • This should be a succinct account of the project, it must capture the essence of what is being proposed and should be easily understood.
B3 Cross Border Cooperation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe how the project will apply principles of joint development, implementation, financing and staffing. • Show how the proposed results and outputs could not (or perhaps could only to some extent) otherwise be achieved without co-operation on a cross-border basis; • Demonstrate if and how the project will bring significant added value for the partners by working on a cross-border basis;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Show how cross-border working will bring new solutions that go beyond the existing practice in the sector on a single jurisdictional basis.
B4. Quality of the Project Team and Implementation Arrangements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe the proposed partnership, level of expertise included; the sectors that are represented; and the territory that is covered. Identify the proposed operational management structures, including staffing and reporting
C1. Partnership Overview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> List all the partners involved in the project
C2. The Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide detail on the partners involved
D1. Financial Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For the INTERREG VA Programme the budget should be completed in Euros. You should use the exchange rate website as quoted in the Programme Rules. Outline the financial management and reporting systems Explain cash flow arrangements Identify major procurement exercises
D2 Budget Simplification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe unit cost proposal (if relevant). If you are using unit costs quoted in the call, you do not have to complete this section.
D3. Staff Costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All totals in this the following sections should be carried forward to E2. Further details of what can be included in each cost category is included in the Programme Rules. Provide a list of the staff proposed for the project; positions, grades, salary scales and partner who is employing the staff member.
D4. Office and Administration Costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This question should be completed only by those applicants who have applied any methodology other than the flat rate of 15% of direct salary costs.

D5 External Expertise and Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detail costs for external expertise and services (see Programme Rules for further details)
D6- 8. Other Costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detail breakdown of costs as per headings (see Programme Rules for further details)
D9 Sustainability of the Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outline the exit strategy for the project when the funding period concludes
E1 Project Summary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide short overview of the project summarising section C of the form
E2 Budget Summary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide details of budget, funding sources and match funding • Please ensure all the totals are consistent with the proceeding sections.
F1 and F2. Lead Partner Declaration and Freedom of Information Statement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Electronic signatures are acceptable for the Lead Partner Declaration and the Freedom of Information statement.

SECTION 5

PROJECT APPROVAL AND REVIEW

5.1 Steering Committee

The Monitoring Committee has delegated its responsibility for project selection to a Steering Committee as provided by Article 12 of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013.

The Steering Committee is constituted on a cross-border basis to reflect the principles of partnership. The Joint Secretariat is the secretariat for the Steering Committee. There is single Steering Committee for each Programme.

The functions of the Steering Committee include:

- Approve calls for applications;
- Make decisions on project applications and the allocation of grant award;
- Ensure that projects approved for funding address key aims and requirements of the Programmes;
- Make decisions demonstrating the most efficient use of grant aid and ensure delivery of the outputs required within the Cooperation Programme;
- Ensure project approvals are within the financial confines of the relevant theme;
- Ensure all decisions are in accordance with EU Regulations and Programme requirements;
- The final decision making body to allocate monies to projects.

The INTERREG Steering Committee is structured on the following basis:

Sector / Organisation	Number
Chair (SEUPB)	1
Member States (DFP, DPER and Scottish Government)	3
Accountable Departments /Policy Department	3
Regional/Sub-Regional/Local Government Interests, one from each jurisdiction; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Northern Ireland Local Government Association (NILGA) • Northern & Western Regional Assembly (NWRA) • Scotland Europa & Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) 	3
Cross Cutting Interests/Social and Economic Partners, one from each category: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equality Organisations • Environmental Organisations • Voluntary and Community Sectors • Trade Unions • Business • Agriculture, Rural Development and Fisheries 	6
Total	16

The membership of the PEACE Steering Committee will be established and published when the Programme is approved.

5.2 Project Approval

The Steering Committee (SC) will make a decision at all stages of the process. At Stage One, the SC will either reject the application or approve the application to proceed to Stage Two of the process.

Following Assessment of the Stage Two Business Plan, the Steering Committee will make a final decision to either:

- 1. Approve without conditions** - where the result of the assessment is satisfactory and no further action is required; or

2. **Approve with condition(s)** - where minor issues have been identified the project may be required to address specific issues prior to the Letter of Offer being issued, or specific conditions may be attached to the Letter of Offer; or
3. **Reject** the application. .

5.3 **Review Procedure for Unsuccessful applications.**

All unsuccessful applicants have a right of review and detailed in Annex 1A and 1B.

DRAFT

Annex 1a Review Procedure – PEACE IV Programme

Review Procedure for Unsuccessful Applications

1.0 Introduction

This procedure sets out the process for Project Review that will be implemented in the event that an applicant wishes to appeal the decision of the Steering Committee. The applicant must always be the Lead Partner.

- 1.1 The procedure will be administered by a Review Panel which will be constituted independently of the Steering Committees.
- 1.2 The purpose of the Review Procedure is to ensure that the decisions taken and procedures followed by Steering Committee for individual applications are applied fairly and consistently. This procedure is intended to provide an independent process through which an applicant will have the opportunity to seek a review of the decision of the Steering Committee at Stage 1 and/or Stage 2 of the application process on one or both of the following grounds, namely that:
 - The outcome was a decision that no reasonable person would have made on the basis of the information provided to the Steering Committee; **and/or**
 - That there was a failure in adherence to procedures or systems that materially affected or could have materially affected the decision.

Appeals on any other grounds will not be considered.

2.0 The Review Procedure

- 2.1 Following the decision to reject an application, the applicant will be officially notified by SEUPB's Joint Secretariat (JS) in writing, outlining the Steering Committee's reason(s) for the decision.

- 2.2 The applicant will also be provided with:
- the detailed information on the scoring of the project;
 - an opportunity for a de-briefing as outlined in point 2.3 below;
 - a copy of the Review Procedure for Unsuccessful Applicants.
- 2.3 A de-briefing meeting will be offered by JS. If accepted, this meeting will take place within 20 working days following receipt of a rejection letter. The meeting can be conducted either over the telephone or in a face to face meeting with the applicant alone. At the de-briefing meeting, the applicant will be informed of and afforded the opportunity to discuss the basis of the scoring of their application and the Steering Committee's decision including the reasons for rejection of their application.
- 2.4 At the conclusion of the de-briefing meeting the applicant will be informed of their right to request a review of the Steering Committee's decision and will be provided with a copy of this Review Procedure for Unsuccessful Applicants.
- 2.5 A review **can only be** submitted to the Managing Authority ("MA") following a de-briefing by a member of staff from JS.
- 2.6 Where an application for a review is submitted the MA will manage the Review Process in order to ensure that reviews are carried out in a timely and efficient manner and in accordance with this procedure.
- 2.7 Formal requests for reviews **must be** submitted using the Review Request Template which can be accessed via <https://www.seupb.eu/piv-funding-calls>
- 2.8 The completed template must be returned **no later than 15 working days** after the date of the de-briefing meeting. Applicants are required to email the completed template (in Word format) to: **reviews@seupb.eu**
- 2.9 The MA will **only** consider the information that was available during the assessment process i.e. the information in the application form. No other

additional/new information that was not part of the original application will be considered.

- 2.10 If, in the reasonable opinion of the MA, a review application contains new information, such new information shall be redacted from the review submission and will not be included or considered by the Review Panel.
- 2.11 The MA will convene the Review Panel, which is independent from the Steering Committee and which will be made up of members of the Monitoring Committee as follows:
- The INTERREG Review Panel will comprise of five members, none of whom were involved in the original selection process; the Chair of the Monitoring Committee, three other Monitoring Committee members and one independent representative.
 - The PEACE Review Panel will comprise of four members, none of whom were involved in the original selection process; the Chair of the Monitoring Committee, two other Monitoring Committee members and one independent representative.
- 2.12 The MA will act as secretariat to the Review Panel and will provide advice and guidance as required. The Review Panel may seek independent legal or other professional advice if required.
- 2.13 The Review will be completed within eight weeks of receipt of the request for a review, unless it is not practicable to do so, in which case the applicant will be informed by the MA at the earliest opportunity of the expected date of completion of the review.
- 2.14 Any decision of the Review Panel will be binding on the applicant and the Steering Committee and shall not be subject to any further Review or appeal within the Programme.

3.0 Conducting the Review – Stage One rejection

- 3.1 The process detailed below applies to projects rejected at Stage One of the application process. Those projects that have been rejected at Stage Two will be reviewed through the process outlined in Section 4.0.
- 3.2 At Stage One review, **only** written evidence provided within the Review Request Template will be considered by the Review Panel.
- 3.3 On receipt, MA will review the completed template to check for, and redact any new/additional information.
- 3.4 Following review and acceptance, MA will then forward the template to the JS who will be required to complete their response sections, **within 10 working days**. The completed template will then be included within the Review Panel Pack.
- 3.5 Neither the applicant nor the JS will be invited to attend the Review Panel meeting, nor will they have an opportunity to orally present their case to the Review Panel.
- 3.6 The Review Panel will receive all documentation **at least 10 working days** in advance of the meeting. This will include signed documentation relating to all stages of the selection process and the record of the reasons for the Steering Committee decision. The Review Panel will also receive a copy of the completed Review Request Template.
- 3.7 In reaching its determination the Review Panel will **only** consider the information that was available during the assessment process i.e. the information in the application form. No other additional or new information that was not part of the original application will be considered.
- 3.8 The Review Panel will have the authority to make one of the following decisions;
- A Uphold the decision of the Steering Committee to reject the application;

- B Overturn the decision of the Steering Committee and approve the application to Stage Two;
 - C Defer their decision based on the need for further information.
- 3.9 The Review Panel will reach a consensus determination. In the absence of a consensus determination, (amongst the Committee Members and Independent), the Chair will make a final decision based on the options above.
- 3.10 The Review Panel will convey its decision to the applicant in writing **within 10 working days** of its meeting. The written notification will include rationale for the decision. If option C is initiated, the Review Panel will write to the applicant indicating what further information is required, a timeframe for provision of such information and an anticipated date for final resolution which will be subject to the timely provision of the further information sought.
- 3.11 If an applicant is successful in their review application, the progress of their application to Stage Two will not be prejudiced as result of the additional time taken to complete the review process.

4.0 Conducting the Review – Stage Two rejection

- 4.1 The process detailed below applies to projects rejected at Stage Two of the application process.
- 4.2 At Stage Two review, the applicant will also be required to complete the Review Request Template in line with the timeframe stated in section 2.8.
- 4.3 On receipt, MA will review the completed template. If any new evidence is identified within the submission, MA will write to the applicant denoting the inadmissible evidence.

- 4.4 Following review and acceptance, MA will then forward the template to the JS who will be required to complete their response sections, **within 10 working days**. The completed template will then be included within the Review Panel Pack.
- 4.5 The Review Panel will receive all documentation **at least 10 working days** in advance of the meeting. This will include signed documentation relating to all stages of the selection process and the record of the reasons for the Steering Committee decision. The Review Panel will also receive a copy of the completed Review Request Template.
- 4.6 At Stage Two review, the applicant and the JS will have the right to attend the Review Panel meeting. No legal representation or other advisers external to the applicant's organisation are permitted to attend the meeting.
- 4.7 The Review Panel can proceed even if either the applicant, the JS, or both are absent.
- 4.8 At the meeting, the applicant will present their case for review to the Panel. If the applicant requires the use of electronic presentation software, this should be submitted to the MA **no later than three working days** before the date of the meeting.
- 4.9 The presentation should last no longer than 10 minutes; and should be consistent with the submitted Review Request Template.
- 4.10 The JS will have up to 10 minutes to respond to any such presentation.
- 4.11 The Review Panel may ask questions to either party for further clarification.
- 4.12 The applicant and the JS will then withdraw from the room and the Panel will discuss and reach a consensus determination.
- 4.13 At Stage Two, the Review Panel will have the authority to make one of the following decisions:

- A Uphold the decision of the Steering Committee to reject the application;
- B Overturn the decision of the Steering Committee and approve the application for funding;
- C Defer their decision based on the need for further information;

4.14 The Review Panel will reach a consensus determination. In the absence of a consensus determination, (amongst the Committee Members and Independent), the Chair will make a final decision based on the options above.

4.15 The Review Panel will convey its decision to the applicant in writing **within 10 working days** of its meeting. The written notification will include rationale for the decision. If option C is initiated, the Review Panel will write to the applicant indicating what further information is required, a timeframe for provision of such information and an anticipated date for final resolution which will be subject to the timely provision of the further information sought.

5.0 Other Information

5.1 The SEUPB shall ensure that sufficient funds have been retained from the Programme budget for allocation to those projects which have a successful outcome to their review.

Annex 1b Review Procedure – INTERREG VA Programme

Review Procedure for Unsuccessful Applications

1.0 Introduction

This procedure sets out the process for Project Review that will be implemented in the event that an applicant wishes to appeal the decision of the Steering Committee. The applicant must always be the Lead Partner.

- 1.1 The procedure will be administered by a Review Panel which will be constituted independently of the Steering Committees.
- 1.2 The purpose of the Review Procedure is to ensure that the decisions taken and procedures followed by Steering Committee for individual applications are applied fairly and consistently. This procedure is intended to provide an independent process through which an applicant will have the opportunity to seek a review of the decision of the Steering Committee at Stage 1 and/or Stage 2 of the application process on one or both of the following grounds, namely that:
 - The outcome was a decision that no reasonable person would have made on the basis of the information provided to the Steering Committee; **and/or**
 - That there was a failure in adherence to procedures or systems that materially affected or could have materially affected the decision.

Appeals on any other grounds will not be considered.

2.0 The Review Procedure

- 2.1 Following the decision to reject an application, the applicant will be officially notified by SEUPB's Joint Secretariat (JS) in writing, outlining the Steering Committee's reason(s) for the decision.
- 2.2 The applicant will also be provided with:

- the detailed information on the scoring of the project;
 - an opportunity for a de-briefing as outlined in point 2.3 below;
 - a copy of the Review Procedure for Unsuccessful Applicants.
- 2.3 A de-briefing meeting will be offered by JS. If accepted, this meeting will take place within 20 working days following receipt of a rejection letter. The meeting can be conducted either over the telephone or in a face to face meeting with the applicant alone. At the de-briefing meeting, the applicant will be informed of and afforded the opportunity to discuss the basis of the scoring of their application and the Steering Committee's decision including the reasons for rejection of their application.
- 2.4 At the conclusion of the de-briefing meeting the applicant will be informed of their right to request a review of the Steering Committee's decision and will be provided with a copy of this Review Procedure for Unsuccessful Applicants.
- 2.5 A review **can only be** submitted to the Managing Authority ("MA") following a de-briefing by a member of staff from JS.
- 2.6 Where an application for a review is submitted the MA will manage the Review Process in order to ensure that reviews are carried out in a timely and efficient manner and in accordance with this procedure.
- 2.7 Formal requests for reviews **must be** submitted using the Review Request Template which can be accessed via <https://www.seupb.eu/iva-funding-call-information>.
- 2.8 The completed template must be returned **no later than 15 working days** after the date of the de-briefing meeting. Applicants are required to email the completed template (in Word format) to: **reviews@seupb.eu**
- 2.9 The MA will **only** consider the information that was available during the assessment process i.e. the information in the application form. No other additional/new information that was not part of the original application will be considered.

- 2.10 If, in the reasonable opinion of the MA, a review application contains new information, such new information shall be redacted from the review submission and will not be included or considered by the Review Panel.
- 2.11 The MA will convene the Review Panel, which is independent from the Steering Committee and which will be made up of members of the Monitoring Committee as follows:
- The INTERREG Review Panel will comprise of five members, none of whom were involved in the original selection process; the Chair of the Monitoring Committee, three other Monitoring Committee members and one independent representative.
 - The PEACE Review Panel will comprise of four members, none of whom were involved in the original selection process; the Chair of the Monitoring Committee, two other Monitoring Committee members and one independent representative.
- 2.12 The MA will act as secretariat to the Review Panel and will provide advice and guidance as required. The Review Panel may seek independent legal or other professional advice if required.
- 2.13 The Review will be completed within eight weeks of receipt of the request for a review, unless it is not practicable to do so, in which case the applicant will be informed by the MA at the earliest opportunity of the expected date of completion of the review.
- 2.14 Any decision of the Review Panel will be binding on the applicant and the Steering Committee and shall not be subject to any further Review or appeal within the Programme.

3.0 Conducting the Review – Stage One rejection

- 3.1 The process detailed below applies to projects rejected at Stage One of the application process. Those projects that have been rejected at Stage Two will be reviewed through the process outlined in Section 4.0.

- 3.2 At Stage One review, **only** written evidence provided within the Review Request Template will be considered by the Review Panel.
- 3.3 On receipt, MA will review the completed template to check for, and redact any new/additional information.
- 3.4 Following review and acceptance, MA will then forward the template to the JS who will be required to complete their response sections, **within 10 working days**. The completed template will then be included within the Review Panel Pack.
- 3.5 Neither the applicant nor the JS will be invited to attend the Review Panel meeting, nor will they have an opportunity to orally present their case to the Review Panel.
- 3.6 The Review Panel will receive all documentation **at least 10 working days** in advance of the meeting. This will include signed documentation relating to all stages of the selection process and the record of the reasons for the Steering Committee decision. The Review Panel will also receive a copy of the completed Review Request Template.
- 3.7 In reaching its determination the Review Panel will **only** consider the information that was available during the assessment process i.e. the information in the application form. No other additional or new information that was not part of the original application will be considered.
- 3.8 The Review Panel will have the authority to make one of the following decisions;
- A Uphold the decision of the Steering Committee to reject the application;
 - B Overturn the decision of the Steering Committee and approve the application to Stage Two;
 - C Defer their decision based on the need for further information.

- 3.9 The Review Panel will reach a consensus determination. In the absence of a consensus determination, (amongst the Committee Members and Independent), the Chair will make a final decision based on the options above.
- 3.10 The Review Panel will convey its decision to the applicant in writing **within 10 working days** of its meeting. The written notification will include rationale for the decision. If option C is initiated, the Review Panel will write to the applicant indicating what further information is required, a timeframe for provision of such information and an anticipated date for final resolution which will be subject to the timely provision of the further information sought.
- 3.11 If an applicant is successful in their review application, the progress of their application to Stage Two will not be prejudiced as result of the additional time taken to complete the review process.

4.0 Conducting the Review – Stage Two rejection

- 4.1 The process detailed below applies to projects rejected at Stage Two of the application process.
- 4.2 At Stage Two review, the applicant will also be required to complete the Review Request Template in line with the timeframe stated in section 2.8.
- 4.3 On receipt, MA will review the completed template. If any new evidence is identified within the submission, MA will write to the applicant denoting the inadmissible evidence.
- 4.4 Following review and acceptance, MA will then forward the template to the JS who will be required to complete their response sections, **within 10 working days**. The completed template will then be included within the Review Panel Pack.

- 4.5 The Review Panel will receive all documentation **at least 10 working days** in advance of the meeting. This will include signed documentation relating to all stages of the selection process and the record of the reasons for the Steering Committee decision. The Review Panel will also receive a copy of the completed Review Request Template.
- 4.6 At Stage Two review, the applicant and the JS will have the right to attend the Review Panel meeting. No legal representation or other advisers external to the applicant's organisation are permitted to attend the meeting.
- 4.7 The Review Panel can proceed even if either the applicant, the JS, or both are absent.
- 4.8 At the meeting, the applicant will present their case for review to the Panel. If the applicant requires the use of electronic presentation software, this should be submitted to the MA **no later than three working days** before the date of the meeting.
- 4.9 The presentation should last no longer than 10 minutes; and should be consistent with the submitted Review Request Template.
- 4.10 The JS will have up to 10 minutes to respond to any such presentation.
- 4.11 The Review Panel may ask questions to either party for further clarification.
- 4.12 The applicant and the JS will then withdraw from the room and the Panel will discuss and reach a consensus determination.
- 4.13 At Stage Two, the Review Panel will have the authority to make one of the following decisions:
- A Uphold the decision of the Steering Committee to reject the application;
 - B Overturn the decision of the Steering Committee and approve the application for funding;

C Defer their decision based on the need for further information;

4.14 The Review Panel will reach a consensus determination. In the absence of a consensus determination, (amongst the Committee Members and Independent), the Chair will make a final decision based on the options above.

4.15 The Review Panel will convey its decision to the applicant in writing **within 10 working days** of its meeting. The written notification will include rationale for the decision. If option C is initiated, the Review Panel will write to the applicant indicating what further information is required, a timeframe for provision of such information and an anticipated date for final resolution which will be subject to the timely provision of the further information sought.

5.0 Other Information

5.1 The SEUPB shall ensure that sufficient funds have been retained from the Programme budget for allocation to those projects which have a successful outcome to their review.