



European Union

European Regional
Development Fund
Investing in your future

Minutes of the Stage Two PEACE IV Review Panel Meeting

Wednesday 8th September 2017, 1.00pm
SEUPB Offices, Belfast

Project Applicant – Rural Development Council (RDC)
Project Title – The Rural Respecting Difference Programme (RRDP)

In Attendance:	Gina McIntyre	SEUPB (Chair)
	Sean Kelly	MC Panel Member
	Ivan Cooper	MC Panel Member
	Robbie Davis	Independent Member
	Grainne Vallely	SEUPB (observing)
	Mark Feeney	SEUPB (observing)
	Tara McCormick	SEUPB (minutes)

1. Introductions

The Chair welcomed Members to this Stage Two Review Panel meeting of the PEACE IV 2014 – 2020 Programme.

2. Register of Interests/Conflicts of Interest

The Review Panel noted that Ivan Cooper and Deirdre McCormilla of the National Children's Network have met previously but determined this did not represent a conflict of interest.

3. Review

The Chair reminded the panel that the applicant has requested a review on both grounds, i.e. –

- (a) The outcome was a decision that no reasonable person would have made on the basis of the information provided to the Steering Committee (SC), and;
- (b) There was a failure in adherence to procedures or systems that materially affected or could have materially affected the decision.

The Review Panel noted the Steering Committee decision to reduce the Sustainable Development score from 3 to 2. This amendment reduced the overall score below the funding threshold and forms the basis of the applicant's appeal.

The Chair confirmed that in line with Section 4.0 of the Review Procedure, the panel would consider ten-minute presentations from both the applicant and the Joint Secretariat (JS); both parties then joined the meeting.

The Chair introduced the Panel to Teresa Canavan and Olga Gallagher, representing the RDC, Denise McCormilla of the National Children's Network, and John Greer and Paul Boylan, representing the Joint Secretariat (JS).

The project representatives proceeded to provide a ten minute PowerPoint presentation which outlined their reasons for requesting a review of the Steering Committee decision. The main points of the presentation were;

- The application was designed using SEUPB's sustainability assessment toolkit, as provided during SEUPB pre-application training;
- The original (JS) assessor concluded the application satisfactorily met the requirements of Sustainable Development (Criteria 6) criteria;
- *Criteria 6* - The two areas which affected the scoring – (a) exit strategy/sustainability and (b) economic stability/ duplication of the Early Years Programme – are irrelevant under the Sustainable Development criteria;
- The application clearly outlined the time-bound nature of the project and sustained impact beyond the project lifetime through building capacity, supported by evidence from a previous pilot;
- The application differentiated between the project audience and settings and those of the Early Years/ Shared Education programmes on numerous occasions and SEUPB monitoring should have mitigated concerns regarding duplication of funding;
- While the review request focuses on the scoring of Criteria 6, Criterion 1, 2 and 3 also merited a higher score;
- *Criteria 1* – The application and subsequent correspondence clearly states the measures taken to ensure equal participation across all communities;

- *Criteria 2* - Queried the definition of “minimal expectations”, as minimum numbers were not defined in the call for applications;
- *Criteria 3* – Referred to the strong cross-border nature of the project and queried which further action could have been taken to increase the score of three.

The Chair thanked the applicants for their presentation and invited the JS to provide a ten minute verbal response, which included the following main points;

- The Steering Committee conduct assessments under a highly competitive call, and the JS believe the scores awarded under all criterion are reasonable and proportionate to the level of detail provided in the application;
- Other successful applications under the call stated the gender, community backgrounds and numbers of BME participants, provided third party support of transformative effect or provided evidence of the lasting change in attitude; the RDC did not provide this information;
- Defined “minimum requirements” in relation to Criteria 2 and stated the requirement for greater detail on participant numbers, the length of engagement, participants backgrounds etc., in gaining a score above 3 and;
- The JS and Steering Committee understand the sustainable development scoring to be inclusive of a robust exit strategy and an ability to mainstream project activities post-funding.

The Chair thanked the JS for their presentation and opened the meeting to further questions and discussion.

Teresa Canavan and Deirdre McCormilla made the following statements regarding the JS presentation;

- Regarding external evidence, the application included submission of an independent evaluation and numerous references to external research which contributed to project design;
- The application provided robust evidence of sustainability and continuation of project activity post-funding. The representatives queried whether mainstreaming is defined as in conjunction with Government departments;
- Explained the time-bound, capacity-building nature of the project and the sustainability of the training offered;

- Discussed the current focus on early years funding in Ireland, including the implementation of the Better Start Programme;
- The Irish Government have developed an Early Years framework which supports the sustainability of early years service, and lessons learned from this Programme will further support the sector, and;
- Expressed concern over the expectation of mainstreaming as the only viable option in developing a robust exit strategy; not all projects will be mainstreamed;

John Greer and Paul Boylan provided the following responses:

- The Steering Committee believe the application did not sufficiently elaborate on the intention of building capacity to ensure sustainability, in comparison to other successful projects;
- The external evidence provided was a Post Evaluation report and considered weak in comparison to evidence provided by other projects in the call, and;
- Exit strategy must be considered under economic efficiency.

The Panel queried whether other projects received similar scores, defining whether they received funding, and received confirmation that there was another project which had dropped below the funding threshold.

The Panel queried whether all other projects approved under this call will mainstream into government funding.

The JS confirmed other projects under the call have taken a mixed approach, and referred to NIACRO and Politics Plus as examples of projects which intend to mainstream project activity into Government funding.

The Chair thanked the applicant and the JS, and they withdrew from the meeting. During discussion, the Review Panel made the following points;

- The Panel agreed the scores under Criterion 1, 2 and 3;
- Amending the sustainable development score to a 2 appears to have been a disproportionate intervention;
- The Panel were impressed by the applicant's presentation;

- The amendment to scoring did not represent a breach of procedure;
- The Panel did not believe they had received compelling or comparable evidence supporting amendment of the score;
- The Panel believed the information provided under sustainability within the application had provided reasonable evidence to merit the original score of 3

The Review Panel concluded that the Steering Committee assessment did not represent a failure in adherence to procedures or systems.

In summary, on the grounds of reasonableness, the Review Panel concluded they had not received sufficient reasoning or evidence to justify the movement of the Sustainable Development scoring from 3 to 2. Therefore the score should remain at 3, with an overall assessment score of 60.

The Chair thanked the Panel and concluded the meeting.