EPA Research Programme 2014 – 2020

EPA’s Online Grant Management and Application Portal – User Guide for Applicants

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EPA’s Online Grant Management and Application Portal - User Guide for Applicants

Introduction

This document is a guide for applicants using the EPA Grant Management and Application Portal. It describes the functionality and interfaces of the Portal to Applicants who want to submit a proposal in response to an EPA Research Call.

Anyone can register as a user on this web-based system and create online applications for project funding when EPA Research Calls are open. The system can be accessed using the following link:

https://epa.smartsimple.ie/s_Login.jsp

The system also supports online completion of proposal evaluations, in addition to ongoing management and reporting related to successful proposals.

Please read this document carefully prior to using the EPA Grant Management and Application Portal.

It is important that you have also read the related call Technical Description Documents provided by the EPA. This document does not replace, but is complimentary to the following documents:

1) EPA Research Terms and Conditions for Support of Grant Award
2) EPA Research Guide for Applicants
3) EPA Research Guide for Grantees
4) EPA’s Online Grant Management and Application Portal – Registration & General User Notes
5) EPA’s Online Grant Management and Application Portal – User Guide for Grantees

The above documents are available to download from the Portal or the EPA website (www.epa.ie).

More Information

For further information and assistance with the EPA Grant Management and Application Portal, please contact: research@epa.ie.

Disclaimer

Although every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the material contained in this User Guide, complete accuracy cannot be guaranteed. The Environmental Protection Agency does not accept any responsibility whatsoever for loss or damage occasioned or damages claimed to have been occasioned, in part or in full, as a consequence of any person acting, or refraining from acting, as a result of a matter contained in this document.
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Enabling Pop-ups

Please ensure that your browser settings permit pop-ups from the web site address displayed by the EPA’s Grant Management and Application Portal (https://epa.smartsimple.ie/s_Login.jsp).

IMPORTANT: If you do not enable pop-ups when logged on to EPA Grant Application and Project Management Portal, many functions will appear not to work simply because the associated pop-up windows cannot be displayed.

Applicant Functions - Overview

The EPA Grant Application and Project Management Portal is a web-based system which enables you to:

- Create a researcher profile via the Registration Page
- Complete and submit an EPA Grant application (when a call for proposals is open)

If your proposal has been recommended for funding following the evaluation process, you will use the EPA Grant Application and Project Management Portal to respond to any technical and financial queries raised during the evaluation of your proposal.

Post-Award (Grantee) Functions - Overview

If your proposal is awarded funding, you will use the EPA Grant Application and Project Management Portal to manage the grant award with the following activities:

- Project Management and Interim Reporting:
  - View and download/upload meeting documentation;
  - Submission of Technical Progress Reports;
  - Submission and review of Financial Cost Statements;

- Final Reporting:
  - Submission and review of Final/Synthesis Reports and Policy Briefs;
  - Submission of End of Project Questionnaire;
  - Submission of Metadata for the datasets/resources generated by your project;
  - Submission and review of Final Financial Cost Statement;

- Miscellaneous Requests:
  - Submission of no-cost time extension requests;
  - Submission of travel outside the EU requests;
  - Submission and review of budget reallocation forms.
  - Submission and review of maternity/paternity/adoptive leave requests

Please refer to the EPA’s Online Grant Management and Application Portal – User Guide for Grantees for further details and guidance on using the Portal to manage your grant awards.
Research Office/Managing Director Interaction

Staff in your organisation’s Research Office/Managing Director will also use the EPA Grant Application and Project Management Portal to authorise your proposal (except for submissions for Researcher Travel Support Grants, Event Support and Small-Scale Studies). They will review any proposal you submitted on the Portal and can:

- Authorise a proposal you have created before it is submitted to the EPA;
- Request revision of a proposal you have created before it is submitted to the EPA;
- Review and decline a proposal you have created.

**IMPORTANT:** Please note that all proposals must be authorised by the relevant person in your organisation (e.g. Research Offices for universities; Managing Director for companies, etc.) for the proposal submission to be valid.

Grant Evaluators Interaction

The Evaluation process will be carried out using the EPA Grant Application and Project Management Portal. Grant Evaluators will be able to:

- View and review your proposal
- Complete and submit an Evaluation Form

Reviewers/Steering Committee Members Interaction

Steering Committee Members will be able to:

- View and download/upload meeting documentation
- View/download Technical Progress Reports and carry out their review
- View/download Final Reports and carry out their review
Applicant Workbench

Log into the EPA Grant Management and Application Portal to load the Applicant Workbench. The Workbench is laid out in the following sections:

1) Welcome Note
2) Help Section
3) Open Calls
4) Applications & Historic Grants

5) Live Grants
Welcome Note

The welcome note includes the following:

1) The status of your organisation (i.e. approved or pending approval)
2) A link to the Research Call FAQs webpage
3) A link to contact EPA Research Staff
4) Links to subscribe to EPA Research Communication channels

Help Section

The Help Section provides links to

1) Call Documents and PDF guides
2) EPA Research Call Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ’s)
3) Other EPA Funding Opportunities
4) A link to contact EPA Research Staff

Video tutorials are also available. Click on the link in the top right-hand corner of the screen.
Open Calls

The Open Calls section lists all the current open calls. The section includes the following:

1) A list of available call topics under the headings of Climate, Sustainability, Water, Green Enterprise and Event Support
2) A View button, which opens the current call documents, including the Call Technical Description Documents
3) The date and time of the call deadline
4) An Apply button for each call topic

![Open Calls Table]

**IMPORTANT**: It is essential that you choose the correct Call Topic Reference by referring to the Call Technical Description Documents as mistakes will not be rectified.

Applications and Historic Grants

The **Draft Applications tab** displays a list of all the applications for funding that you have created via the EPA’s Grant Application and Project Management Portal but have not yet submitted, i.e. your work-in-progress applications. You can click on any application in the list of Draft Applications to view or edit an application at any point up until it has been submitted. Please note you can only create a draft application when a call for proposals is open.

The **Submitted Applications tab** displays a list of all the grant applications you have submitted but which have not been grant awarded. You can click on any application in the Submitted Applications list and view a particular application. Please note you can only submit an application when a call for proposals is open.

The **Historic Applications and Grants tab** directs you to applications which are no longer active, including completed grants and proposals which missed deadlines.

![Applications & Historic Grants Table]
Live Grants (Awarded Grants)

The Live Grants section lists all your active grants and includes tabs for their associated activities. Use the arrows at each end of the tab row to navigate through the different headings:

- **Technical Progress Reports** facilitates the submission of technical progress reports for grant awarded projects via a pre-generated list of Technical Progress Reports as required during the lifetime of the project.

- **EPQ and Datasets** facilitates the submission of End of Project Questionnaires (EPQs) and Datasets for grant awarded projects.

- **Cost Statements** facilitates the submission of financial reports for grant awarded projects via a pre-generated list of Financial Reports (Cost Statements) as required during the lifetime of the project.

- **Budget Reallocation Requests** facilitates the submission of budget reallocation requests for grant awarded projects.

- **Misc. Requests** facilitates the submission of other requests such as Travel Outside the EU for grant awarded projects.

- **Meetings** displays a list of the meeting activities associated with your EPA grant awarded projects. You can click on any activities in the Meetings list to view the information related to a particular meeting.

- **Final Reports** facilitates the submission of Final Reports, Synthesis Reports, Policy Briefs and State of Knowledge Reports (Research Fellowships only) for grant awarded projects.

- **Event Feedback Form** facilitates the submission of feedback forms and invoices in relation to the Event Support Grant awards.

- **Maternity/Paternity/Adoptive Leave Requests** facilitates the submission of applications for leave requests of this type.

Please refer to the [EPA’s Online Grant Management and Application Portal – User Guide for Grantees](#) for further details and guidance on using the Portal to manage your grant awards.
The Online Application Form

Create your Online Application form

Log in to the EPA Grant Application and Project Management Portal and scroll to the Open Calls section to view a list of the calls for which applications can be submitted.

To begin the application process, select Pillar tab which relates to the call topic reference that you wish to apply for (e.g. Climate, Sustainability, Water). In the following example the chosen call topic reference is Water 2018 Project 2. To open the online application form, click the Apply button at the end of the row:

**IMPORTANT:** It is essential that you choose the correct Call Topic Reference by referring to the Call Technical Description Documents as mistakes will not be rectified.

Please note that:

- You can only submit an application using the online application form
- Applications can only be submitted when a call for proposals is open.
- You can only submit one proposal per call topic reference.
- Application forms for Event Support grants (rolling calls) are also available under the Open Calls section.

Your form will load automatically after a few seconds and a unique proposal number will be generated. The form will be displayed under two tabs entitled General and Project. To complete the application form, click on the Project tab.
Information required

To complete and submit an Online Application form, you will be requested to:

1. Complete Text Fields
2. Complete Numerical Fields
3. Populate Dynamic Pop Up Fields
4. Complete fields with Dropdown Menu options
5. Upload documents using the templates provided
6. Where relevant, assign project participant(s)
7. Complete the Declaration Section

**IMPORTANT:** Please familiarise yourself with the Online Application form layout and fields to be completed online before writing the proposal.

Mandatory fields

Mandatory fields are indicated by a red asterisk (*). You can leave a mandatory field blank while an application is at the Draft status. However, when you attempt to submit the application, the submission will be rejected unless you enter data into all mandatory fields.

Examples of mandatory fields are shown in the screenshot below:

Field Tips

Hovering over a question mark icon (?) will display a tip relating to the information required for the field. In the following example the tip is providing details on the data format required for this field:
Collapsing/Expanding Sections

The system provides the ability to expand or collapse certain areas or sub-sections of the form. The Expand and Collapse functionality is provided by the + and – icons displayed to the left of the screen area they control.

- Clicking on the – symbol will collapse the form area;
- Clicking on the + symbol will expand the form area.

Downloading the Templates

The templates for documents to be uploaded are available from the HERE links on the form. To download a template:

1. Click on the HERE link as shown in the following screenshot:

2. Save the template on your computer to be completed offline

**IMPORTANT:**
- Before writing your proposal, please take note of the specified file format and page limits for uploads
- Where a template is provided, it must be used to submit an application – any deviation will invalidate the proposal

Complete the Online Application form

Complete the online fields as indicated on the online form taking note of the following:

- **Dropdown fields**: Please select one of the options available from the dropdown menu.
- **Free-text fields**: Please note that in some cases, word limits are applied to free-text fields e.g. Project Title, Research Summary and Statement on Expected Outputs
- **Text limits** are usually indicated underneath the Text fields. This figure will reduce as you enter your text and the remaining available word count of the text field will be displayed as shown in the following screenshot:
If the text that you have entered/ copied in the text box is above the limit, the following error message may appear:

**IMPORTANT**: Please note the word limits before writing your proposal. If copying and pasting text into a text field with a word count limit, only the words up to the word-count limit will be copied into the field. *Any extra words will not be copied.*

- **Tick-box fields**: Please select one (or more, where applicable) of the options available from the tick boxes available on screen.
- **Numeric fields**: Complete this type of field using numeric characters only (i.e. do not include commas, full-stops or symbols).

**IMPORTANT**: Please ensure the Total Cost of Project Requested is equal to or greater than the Total Grant Aid Requested as you will not be able to submit your application if this is not the case.

- **Dynamic Pop-Up Fields**: The completion of a dynamic pop up field is required to add a list of key words to the proposal.

1. Click on the **OPEN** button
2. To add keywords, click on the + button in the pop-up box

![Keywords]

3. Add the keyword into the text field – to delete an incorrect keyword click on the X button

![Keywords]

4. Click on + Button to add additional key words (up to a maximum of 10)
5. Click on the SAVE button
6. Click the CLOSE button – the key words will be added to your form

• **Auto-Populated Fields**: Some fields will auto-populate from the information supplied on the Applicant Registration form – see following example where the address fields have auto-populated. **You cannot amend this type of field**:

![Applicant Details]
• **Date Fields**: Date Fields are an example of auto-populated fields on the application form.

**Adding Project Participants**

In the section of the online application form entitled Adding Project Participants and their Organisation, you can select the project participants to be associated with your proposal.

![Adding Project Participants and their Organisations](image)

All project participants must be registered on the EPA Grant Application and Project Management Portal. Your proposed participant will need to provide you with their EPA Personal Identification Number (PIN) as you will need it to complete the form (refer to the Registration & General User Notes guide for more information). The EPA PIN is displayed on your user profile.

**IMPORTANT**: Check if your proposed partner is a Registered User of the EPA’s Online Grant Management and Application Portal as soon as possible.

**Proposed project participant has an EPA Pin**

1. Ask your proposed participant to provide you with his/her PIN.
2. Click on the Click Here to Add a Participant button in the field entitled: Adding Project Participants and their Organisations.
3. The Assign Project Participant window will open as shown in the screenshot below. Complete the fields.
4. Click on the Retrieve Project Participant button

5. The project participant’s details will appear on the window.

6. If this information is correct, please click on the Add Project Participant to Application button.

7. A confirmation pop-up window will appear on the screen as shown.

8. Click the OK button to close the pop-up window

9. Click on the Close button on the Assign Project Participant window.

10. Click the Save Draft button on the application form to update the information. The name of the project participant who has been associated with the application will appear in the Project Coordinator and Participants Table:
11. Repeat the above steps to add additional participants
Proposed project participant does not have an EPA Pin

The proposed project participant must register.

1. Click on the Request button in the Request Participant Signup field as shown in the screenshot below:

   ![Request Participant Signup](image)

2. The Adding a Project Participant Window will open as shown in the screenshot below. Complete the Requested Fields

   ![Adding a Project Participant](image)

   **IMPORTANT:** Please ensure that you are entering a valid email address in the field: Requested Participants E-mail Address as a Registration Request will be emailed to your proposed project participant.

3. Click on the **Send Request** button. The Send Request button will now change to **Email Sent**.

4. Your proposed participant will receive an automated email asking them to register on the EPA Grant Application and Project Management Portal. **You should contact the Project Participant to ensure this step is carried out as soon as possible.**

5. When the proposed project participant has registered and provided you with their EPA PIN, you can add your project participant on your application (see Section: Proposed project participant has already an EPA Pin).
Uploading Files

There are several upload fields in the Application Form. For more information on the Upload Facility, please refer to the Registration & General User Notes document for guidance on uploading files.

**IMPORTANT:** you will not be able to submit your proposal if you upload the wrong file format or do not respect the page limit.

Declaration

When you are satisfied that you have fully completed your application, you can complete the declaration:

1. Read the declaration statements carefully
2. Confirm your agreement by ticking the boxes highlighted in the following image
3. Click the Save Draft button

Saving your Draft Application

You can save your application as many times as you wish using the Save Draft button at the bottom of the form. You can return to a saved application by scrolling to the Applications and Historic Grants section on your home page and selecting the Draft Applications tab, as shown in the following screenshot:
To open your draft application, please select the Open button located next to the correct application.

Submit your Application for Approval by your Organisation

**IMPORTANT:** Only Click Submit when you have checked that you have completed all the form and uploaded all your documents (including the Budget Spreadsheet). Clicking the Submit button will submit your proposal for authorisation by your organisation (except for submissions for Research Travel Support Grants, Event Support and Small Scale Studies).

Pre-Submission Checklist

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Checklist:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>✓ Check you have completed all compulsory fields</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Check you have selected the correct call topic reference and project type</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Check the Total Project Cost Requested is greater or equal to the Total Grant Aid Requested.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Check you have uploaded all the requested documents using the correct template where provided, and respected the file format and page limits where relevant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Check you have uploaded your budget template</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Check you have completed the Declaration Section</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**IMPORTANT:** you will not be able to submit your proposal if you upload the wrong file format or do not respect the page limit.

Submission of your proposal for authorisation by your organization

1. To ensure that your application form reflects all your changes, click the Save Draft button before submitting the proposal.
2. Click on the Submit button at the bottom of the screen to submit your application for authorisation by your organisation.
3. The following message below will then appear. Click on OK to confirm you wish to submit the proposal, or click on Cancel if you wish to amend your application.
When you click on the OK button your proposal will be checked automatically for missing data, wrong file formats and page numbers for the upload field with a page limit.

If it has been completed correctly, the on-screen message highlighted below will appear, confirming that an e-mail has been sent to your Research Office/Managing Director requesting them to authorise the proposal. You will also receive an automated email from donotreply@epa.ie confirming that your proposal has been successfully submitted and is pending approval by your organisation.

The content of your application will now be locked for editing, however you can still view the application by scrolling to the Applications and Historic Grants section and selecting the Submitted Applications tab as shown below:

**IMPORTANT:** Do not wait until the last moment before submitting your proposal. Call deadlines are absolute and strictly enforced.

**NB:** There is no authorisation step for submissions for Researcher Travel Support Grants, Event Support Applications, or Small Scale Studies.

**Error Messages on Submit**

Error messages may appear when you try to submit your proposal in the following circumstances:

- If you have used the wrong file format or not respected the page limit
- If you have forgotten to tick the I agree box in the Declaration Section
- If the Total Cost of Project Requested is less than the Total Grant Aid requested
- If you did not complete a compulsory field
In all cases, click on the OK button within the message and complete the necessary action.

Proposal Authorisation Process

Overview of the Process

Staff in your organisation’s Research Office/Managing Director will also use the EPA Grant Management and Application Portal to authorise the submission of your proposal. They will review any application you submitted and can:

- Authorise your application
- Request revision of your application
- Review and decline your application

**IMPORTANT:** The Authorisation Deadline detailed in the Technical Description document is not negotiable. Proposals which have not been authorised by your institution prior to the deadline will not be considered further.

Proposal is Authorised by Institution

You will be notified that your application has been authorised by automated email from donotreply@epa.ie. You can view the application by scrolling to the Applications and Historic Grants section and selecting the Submitted Applications tab as shown below:

Proposal is Declined by Institution

You will be notified that your application has been declined by automated email from donotreply@epa.ie. You can view the reason/justification for this decision by viewing your submitted applications. Scroll to the Applications and Historic Grants section, select the Submitted Applications tab and click on the Open button as shown below:

The justification will be visible in the Authorisation section at the foot of the application. The status of your application will now be: Submitted – Declined by Institution as shown in the screenshot below. *It will not be processed any further.*
Revision is Required to Proposal

In the case where your Research Office/Managing Director requires that you revise your proposal, you will receive an automated email from donotreply@epa.ie asking you to log in and revise your proposal.

You can access your application by scrolling to the Applications and Historical Grants section, selecting the Draft Applications tab and clicking on the Open button as shown below:

Review the justification provided by your Research Office/Managing Director in the Justification/Reason box at the foot of the page:

Amend your form where required then click on the Save Draft button to save your changes. Once you are satisfied that the changes have been made, click on Submit to submit your application for authorisation by your organisation.

Your proposal will then be Submitted – Pending Institution Approval and your Research Office/Managing Director will receive an automated notification requesting them to review the proposal and to authorise it.

You can continue to view the application on a read-only basis by scrolling to the Applications and Historic Grants section, selecting the Submitted Applications tab, and clicking on the Open button.

**IMPORTANT:** The revision of the proposal and its review and approval by the Research Office/Managing Director should be completed before the Call Organisation Approval Deadline.

Proposal is not Authorised Prior to Deadline

The Organisation Approval deadline is strictly enforced. Proposals cannot be authorised once this deadline has passed. If your proposal has not been authorised by your Research Office/Managing Director before the Organisation Approval deadline, it will not be valid.
Evaluation Process

All valid submissions (i.e. authorised by your institution) will proceed to the evaluation stage. You will be notified in writing of the outcome of this process.

If your proposal has been recommended for funding following the evaluation process, you will use the EPA Grant Management and Application Portal to respond to any technical and financial queries raised during the evaluation of your proposal.

Negotiation Process

Overview of the Process

If your proposal has been recommended for funding following the evaluation process, you will use the EPA Grant Management and Application Portal to respond to any technical and financial queries raised.

You will be notified by letter of the outcome of the evaluation of your proposal. If your proposal has been recommended for funding, you will be notified by automated email from donotreply@epa.ie if you are required to respond to technical and financial queries. The time limit for responding to the queries will be noted in the automated email.

View and Respond to the Budget and Technical Queries

1. Log into the EPA Grant Management and Application Portal.
2. You can access the queries raised by scrolling to the Applications and Historic Grants section, selecting the Submitted Applications tab, and clicking on the Open button as shown below:

3. You can then view and download the Budget and Technical Queries by clicking on the hyperlinks in the Technical Queries and Budget Queries Sections as shown in the following screen shot:
4. **Prepare your response to the budget queries**, then upload it using the button indicated below, complete the drop-down box to indicate this is the latest response, then click on the Save Draft button:

5. **Prepare your response to the technical queries**, then upload it using the button indicated below, complete the drop-down box to indicate this is the latest response, then click on the Save Draft button:
IMPORTANT:
1. You do not have to upload Financial and Technical Responses at the same time.
2. If you do not upload the Financial or Technical response – you will need to select the No option in the relevant Latest Query Responses Uploaded dropdown menu.

Submit your Responses

To submit your response(s), click on the Submit button:

- If you have uploaded responses to **both** Technical and Budget Queries:
  o The status of the Evaluation-Negotiation Activity changes to **Submitted**;
  o Click the OK button on the popup window:
    
    ![OK button](image)

- If you have uploaded responses to only Technical or Budget Queries:
  o The status of the Evaluation-Negotiation Activity stays at **Revisions Required** (you can upload outstanding responses at a later stage).

Additional (Budget and/or Technical) queries have been submitted

In the case where following the review of your responses, additional clarifications/amendments are required, you will be notified by automated email from donotreply@epa.ie.
On receipt of such notification, please log onto the EPA Grant Management and Application Portal and review these additional queries following the same steps as described above.

**All queries have been resolved (end of the Negotiation Process)**

In the case where following the review of your responses, all queries have been resolved, you will be notified by automated email from donotreply@epa.ie that the Negotiation Process has now been successfully completed.

On receipt of this notification, please contact the EPA Research Staff managing your project and provide them with a proposed project Start Date – the EPA Research Staff will then proceed with the Grant Offer process.

**Grant Offer and Grant Award Processes**

The Grant Award documentation will be sent to you by email. You should return a signed and stamped copy of the Acknowledgment Letter of Receipt of Grant Award to the EPA as directed in the offer documentation. Please note that any correspondence and documents will refer to your project using its project code rather than proposal number.

On receipt of this signed letter, the EPA Research Staff will change the status of your project to Grant Awarded on the EPA Grant Management and Application Portal. Where appropriate, the advance payment will then be processed. You will be notified by automated email from donotreply@epa.ie once the payment has been made.

Please note that once your project is at the Grant Awarded status, you will be able to access it via the Live Grants section on your Home portal – please refer to the User Guide for Grantees for guidance on the management of live grants.