EPA's Grant Management System – User Guide for Applicants

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EPA Research Programme 2021- 2030

EPA's Grant Management System - User Guide for Applicants

Introduction

This document is a guide for applicants using the EPA's Grant Management System (System). It describes the functionality and interfaces of the System to Applicants who want to submit a proposal in response to an EPA Research Call. The system can be accessed using the following link:

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

The system also enables the online completion of proposal evaluations and the ongoing management and reporting related to successful proposals.

Please read this document carefully prior to using the System.

You will need to refer to the following documentation which is available to download from the EPA's Grant Management System, or from the Call Documents page on the EPA Website:

1. EPA Research Call Technical Description Document
2. EPA Research Guidelines and Terms & Conditions

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

More Information

For further information and assistance with using the System, 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.

Contents

Enabling Pop-ups

Please ensure that your browser settings permit pop-ups from the web site address displayed by the System (https://epa.smartsimple.ie/s_Login.jsp).

IMPORTANT: If you do not enable pop-ups when logged on to System, some functions will appear not to work because the associated pop-up windows cannot be displayed.

Applicant Functions - Overview

The EPA's Grant Application and Project Management Portal (System) 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 System to respond to any technical and/or financial queries raised during the evaluation of your proposal.

Research Proposal Authoriser Interaction

Your organisation's Research Proposal Authoriser(s)[1] will also use the System to authorise your proposal (except for submissions for Event Support Grants). They will review any proposal you submitted on the System 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;
- Decline a proposal you have created.

They will also use the System to accept offers of funding made in relation to successful applications.

IMPORTANT: Please note that all proposals must be authorised by the relevant Research Proposal Authoriser in your organisation for the proposal submission to be valid.

Grant Evaluators Interaction

The Evaluation process will be carried out using the System. Grant Evaluators will be able to:

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

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[1] Means the person (or persons) authorised on behalf of the Lead Organisation to confirm support of the application and agreement with the
Lead Applicant's declarations.

Post-Award (Grantee) Functions

If your proposal is awarded funding, you will also use the System to manage the grant award. Please refer to the **EPA's Grant Management System – User Guide for Grantees** for further details and guidance on using the Portal to manage your grant awards.

Reviewers/Steering Committee Members Interaction

Steering Committee Members will be able to:

- View and download/upload meeting documentation
- View/download Project Progress Reports
- View/download Final Deliverables and carry out their review

Applicant Workbench

Log into the System to load the Applicant Workbench. The Workbench is laid out in the following sections:

1) Welcome Banner which includes the Apply Now and My Submissions Buttons
2) Home button – clicking on this from anywhere in the system will bring you back to the Home page
3) Useful Links – clicking on this will take you to a new page that includes links to templates and documents that are available on the EPA website, including:
   a. EPA Research Report guidance and templates
   b. Evidence Synthesis Report guidance and templates
4) Items for Action
5) Information
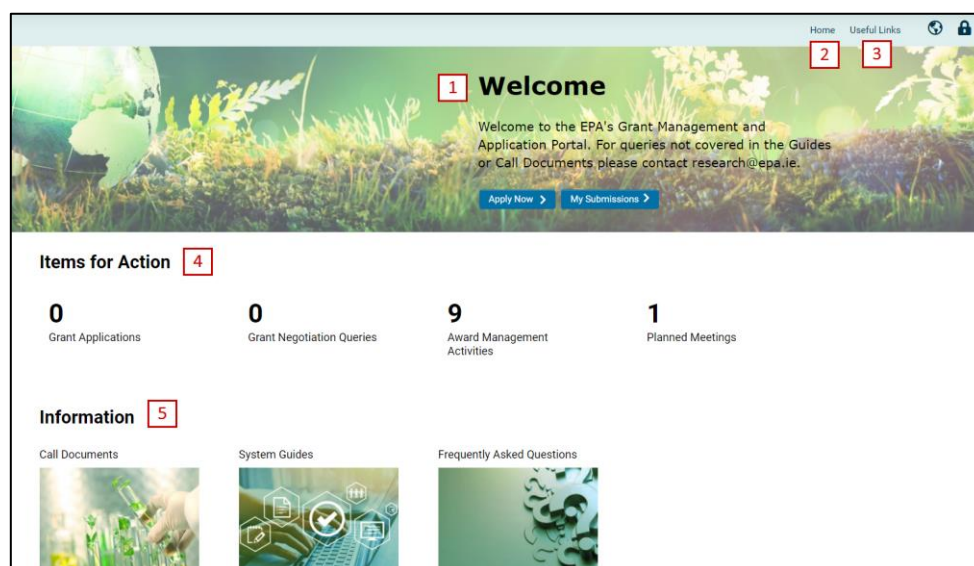
Welcome Banner

The welcome banner includes the following:

1) A link to Open EPA Research Calls via the Apply Now Button

2) A link to Grant Applications and Grant Management Activities via the My Submission Button
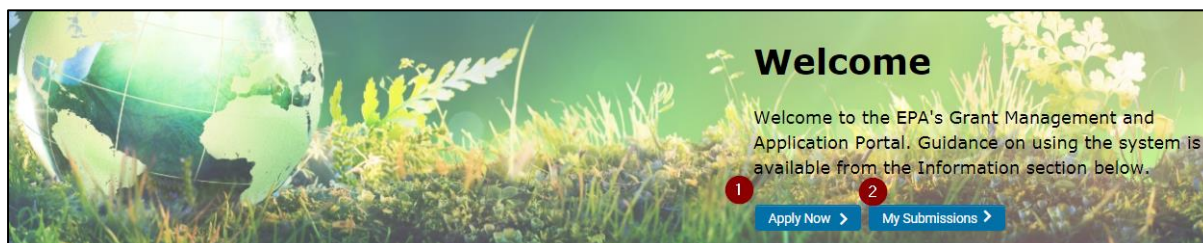
Items for Action

The Items for Action Section provides links to

1) Grant Applications that require your attention

2) Award Management Activities that require your attention

3) Grant Negotiation Queries

4) Planned Meetings

Information Section

The Information Section provides links to

1) Call Documents and PDF guides

2) System Guides

3) EPA Research Call Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's)

Open Calls

Clicking on the Apply now button in the Welcome banner will bring you to the Open Calls page which lists all the current open calls. The section includes the following:

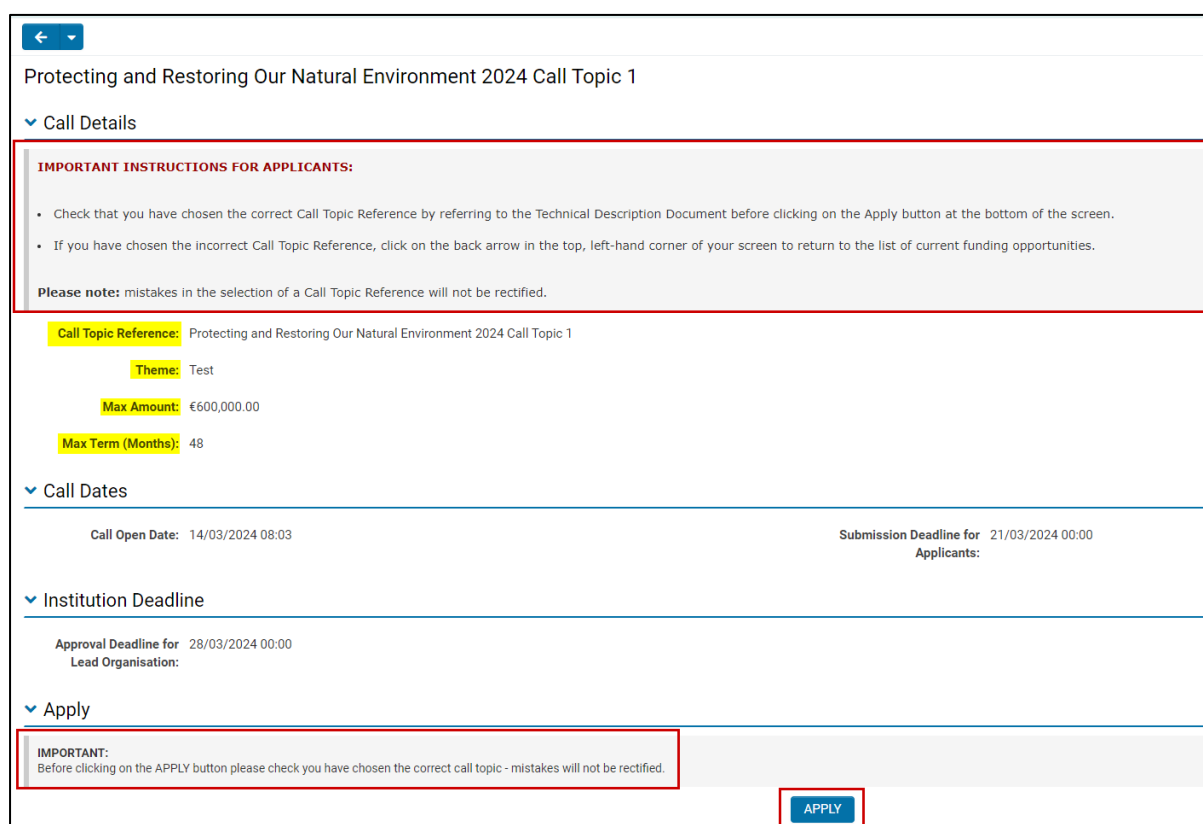1) A list of available call topics under the headings of Fast Track to Policy, Climate Evidence, Healthy Environment, Green Circular Economy, Natural Environment, Innovation and Demonstration and Event Support

2) A link to the Call Technical Description Documents

3) The date and time of a call's Submission and Approval deadlines

4) An Apply button for each call topic

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**.

Grant Applications and Award Management Activities

Clicking the My Submissions button in the Welcome banner will bring you to a page displaying Grant Applications and Award Management Activities.

Grant Applications

Under the header Grant Applications, you will find details under separate tabs of Awarded Grants, Applications in Progress and Unsuccessful Applications. You can also view and edit Draft Grant applications via the Grant Applications icon under the Items for Action heading on your home page.

The **Applications In Progress tab** displays a list of all the applications for funding that you have created via the System but have not yet been awarded, i.e. 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 by clicking on the OPEN button. Please note you can only create one draft application per call topic reference and you can only create an application when a call for proposals is open.

Award Management Activities

Under the header Award Management Activities you will find details (under separate tabs of Periodic Reports, Requests, Deliverables, Financials, Post Completion Dissemination, Meetings and Event Support) of all activities related to the ongoing management of awarded grants.

Please refer to the EPA's Grant Management System – User Guide for Grantees for further details.

The Online Application Form

Create your Online Application form

Log in to the System and click on the Apply Now button to view a list of the calls for which applications can be submitted.

To begin the application process, select the Hub tab which relates to the call topic reference that you wish to apply for e.g. Natural Environment). In the following example the chosen call topic reference is Protecting and Restoring our Natural Environment Topic 2. To open the online application form, click the Apply button at the end of the row. You can open the call technical description document by clicking on the link beside the Apply button

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.

Once you have clicked on the Apply button an application form displaying basic information about the proposal that you are about to apply for will be created. Check that you have chosen the correct Call Topic Reference and note the maximum Amount of budget available and Term of the project. **To begin completing the application form, click on the Apply Button at the bottom of the form.**

Once the Apply button has been clicked the full form will load automatically after a few seconds and will be displayed under six tabs entitled General Project Scope, Project Team & Work Allocation, Outputs & Impact Delivery, Budget Details and Declarations & Authorisation. Each tab has a percentage complete Indicator to let you know how your application is progressing. A unique proposal number will be generated and displayed on the top right-hand corner of the Application together with a countdown timer which details the amount of time available to complete your proposal before the applicant submission deadline.

To submit an application your organisation must be pre-approved by the EPA - if it is not a warning message advising you of this and the necessary action to take will be displayed.

Three buttons are available at the bottom of the Application which allow you to save your application, check for errors and submit your proposal.
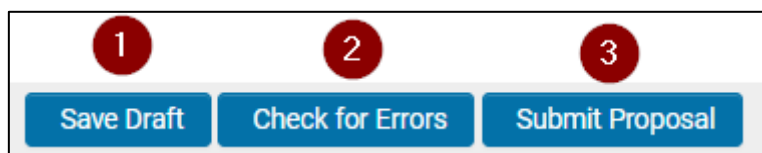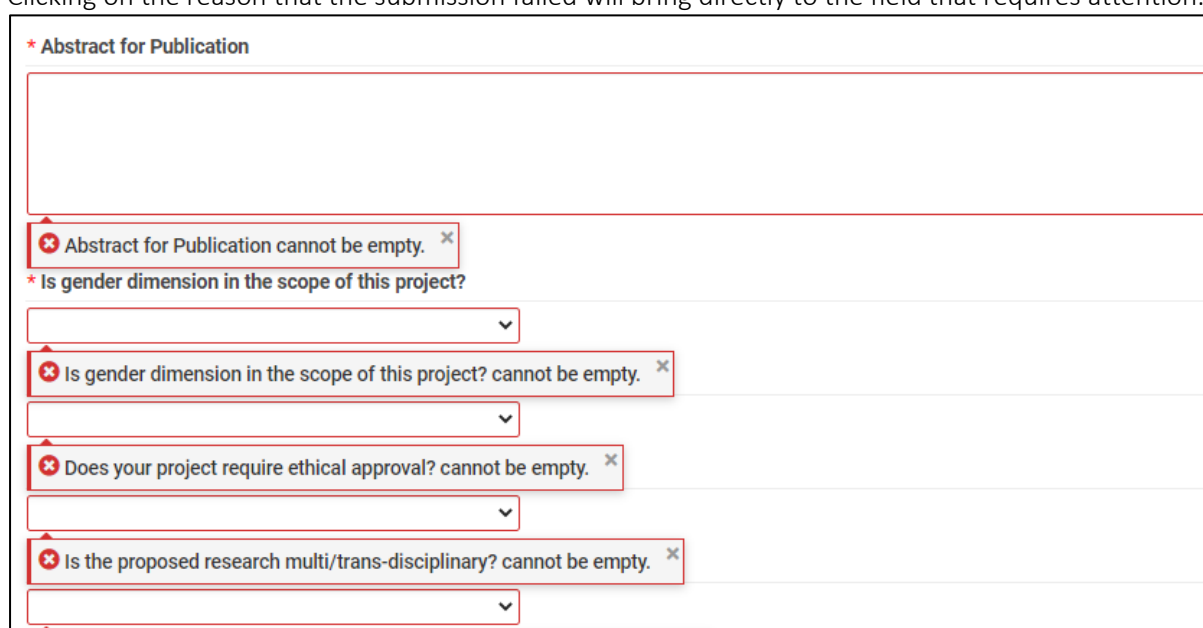
Save Draft

You can save your application at any time by clicking on the Save Draft button and return to it later.

Check for Errors

Clicking on the Check for Errors Button will provide a list of reasons why your application cannot be submitted.
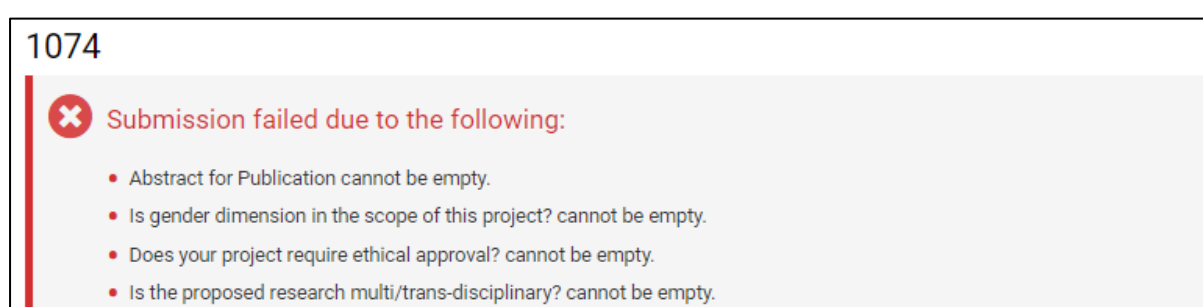
Clicking on the reason that the submission failed will bring directly to the field that requires attention.
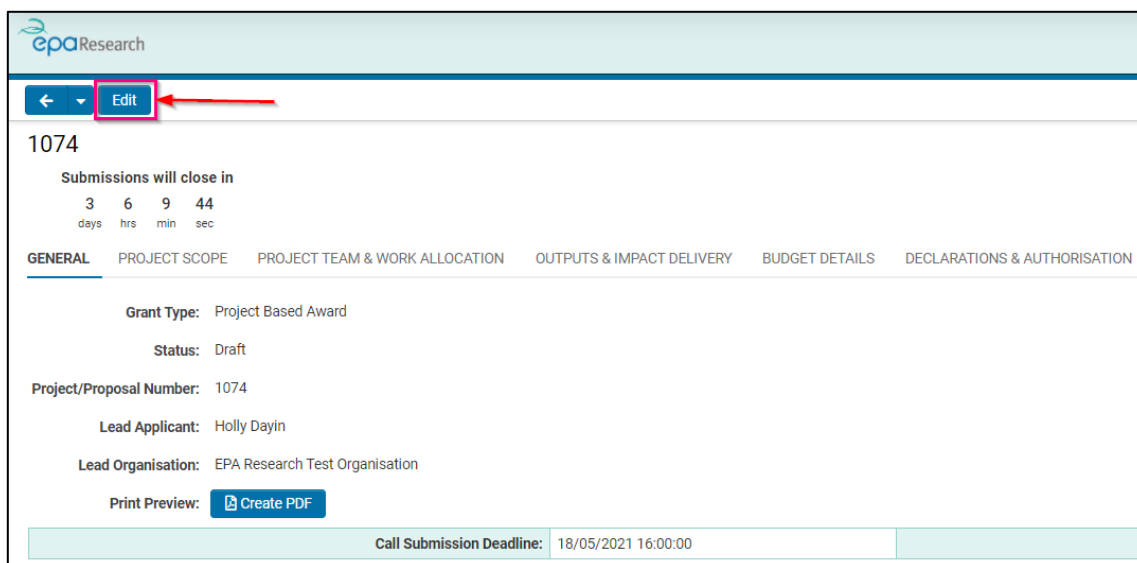

Submit Proposal

Clicking on the Submit Proposal button will allow you to Submit your proposal if you have completed it correctly. If it has not been completed correctly a list of reasons will appear at the top of the screen similar to those displayed when you click the Check for Errors button. Clicking on the reason that the submission failed will bring directly to the field that requires attention.

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

Edit your Application

To edit an application that you have already created and saved, click on the Grant Applications icon in the Items for Action section on the home page – choose the proposal that you wish to edit and click on the Open Button. You will then be brought to your saved application – Click on the Edit button to continue completing your application.
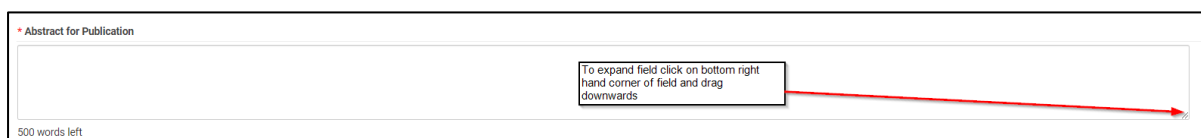
Mandatory fields

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, you will not be able to unless you enter data into all mandatory fields.

Expanding Text Fields

The system provides the ability to expand or collapse certain text fields on the form. To expand field click on bottom right hand corner of field and drag downwards.

Downloading the Templates

The templates for documents to be uploaded are available by clicking on the download buttons on the form – Guidance in relation to completing each template is available in the template itself.

> 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:

1. Inviting Co-Applicants
2. Declarations & Authorisation

Inviting Co-Applicants

Under the tab on the online application form entitled Project Team & Work Allocation, you can select any Co-Applicants that you want to be associated with your proposal. Please note that only the lead researcher from each co-applicant organisation (i.e. no more than one person per co-applicant organisation) should be invited.

Before Inviting co-applicants please refer to the definitions below

1. **Co-applicant (IE/NI Organisation)** - Means an individual from a host organisation located on the island or Ireland[2] who is providing an essential intellectual and/or technical contribution to the proposed research and who may or may not receive funding through the Grant.

2. **Co-applicant (Non-IE/NI Organisation)** - Means an individual from a host organisation not located on the island of Ireland[3] who is providing an essential intellectual and/or technical contribution to the proposed research and who may or may not receive funding through the Grant.

Please follow the Instructions on the online application form to proceed with inviting co-applicants. Once invited Co-Applicants will receive a system generated email which will ask the recipient to Accept or Decline the invitation by clicking on a link provided in the email. Clicking on the link will bring the recipient to a page similar to the one shown below which contains instructions on how to Accept or Decline the Invitation.

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[2] For the avoidance of doubt an applicant organisation is considered to be located on the island of Ireland where it has an established legal presence here and is registered for all relevant employee and corporate taxes in the respective jurisdictions of either Northern Ireland or the Republic of Ireland.

[3] For the avoidance of doubt an applicant organisation is considered to be located on the island of Ireland where it has an established legal presence here and is registered for all relevant employee and corporate taxes in the respective jurisdictions of either Northern Ireland or the Republic of Ireland.

Invitation to Collaborate on Research Proposal

Hi Joe King,

You have been invited to collaborate as a *Co-applicant (IE/NI Organisation)* for the following research proposal:

- Proposal Number: 1074
- Proposal Title:
- Call Topic Reference: Protecting and Restoring Our Natural Environment 2021 Call Topic 2

Please click on the buttons below to **ACCEPT** or **DECLINE** this invitation.

Please note:
If you are not already a registered applicant on the EPA's Grant Management and Application Portal you will be directed to the New Applicant Registration page and will be required to accept the EPA's Privacy Policy, Terms of Use of EPA Websites, Confidentiality Declaration and Conflict of Interest Declaration and complete the registration form before being added to the proposal as a co-applicant.

[Accept] [Decline]

All Co-Applicants must be registered on the System. If your proposed Co-Applicant is not already registered on the system they will be directed to the New Applicant Registration page and will be required to accept the EPA's Privacy Policy, Terms of Use of EPA Websites, Confidentiality Declaration and Conflict of Interest Declaration and complete the registration form before being added to the proposal as a Co-Applicant.

You will be able to see whether or not Co-applicants have accepted your invitation in the table directly below the Invite Co-Applicant instructions on the online application form. Once a Co-Applicant has accepted an invitation the Projects Co-Applicants Table will automatically populate with their details and will be colour-coded as follows:

- Green - indicates the user registration request has been accepted by the EPA.
- Amber - indicates the user registration request is pending EPA approval.
- Red - indicates the user registration request has been declined by the EPA and this user cannot participate as a co-applicant on your proposal therefore please **revoke their invitation**.

Project Co-Applicants Table

This table will complete automatically and will only include the names/details of the co-applicants who have accepted your invitation to collaborate on this proposal.

- Green - indicates the user registration request has been accepted by the EPA.
- Amber - indicates the user registration request is pending EPA approval.
- Red - indicates the user registration request has been declined by the EPA and this user cannot participate as a co-applicant on your proposal therefore **please revoke their invitation**.

#	First Name	Last Name	Email	Company	Contac
1	Alice	Tickband	alicetickband100@gmail.com	EPA Research Test Organisation	Co-app
2	Morris	Russell	morris.russell@testfake.ie	Bodgit Grabbit & Scarper	Co-app
3	Test	Person	test.person@fake.ie	EPA Research Test Organisation	Co-app

IMPORTANT:

Only Co-Applicants who have accepted your invitation prior to the Submission deadline for Applicants will be added to your proposal. Please ensure that all Co-Applicants accept your invitation prior to this deadline.

Revoking an Invitation

To revoke an invitation, open the envelop icon button to open the table of invited co-applicants, locate the person whose invitation you wish to revoke and click on the X at the end of the row where their name appears:

The following warning message will now appear – click on the Yes button to confirm your request:

An email will now be automatically issued from the system to notify the person that they have been removed as a co-applicant on your proposal.

Declarations and Authorisation

To full complete your application, you must complete the Declarations contained under the Declarations and Authorisation tab:

1. Read the declaration statements carefully
2. Confirm your agreement by ticking the boxes under each of the following headings
   a. Privacy and Terms of Use
   b. Consent of Participants
   c. Research Integrity Compliance
   d. Ethical Approval
   e. Athena Swan Charter
   f. Project Co-Applicants
   g. Attached Documents
   h. Lead Applicant's Statement
3. Click the Save Draft button

Submit your Application for Approval by your Organisation

> **IMPORTANT**: When you are ready to submit your proposal click on the Submit Proposal button. This will submit your proposal for authorisation by your organisation .

Pre-Submission Checklist

Checklist:
✔   Check you have selected the correct call topic reference and project type
✔   Check the Total Project Cost Requested is greater or equal to the Total Grant Aid Requested.
✔   Check you have uploaded the correct documents using the correct templates where provided and respected the file format and page limits where relevant.

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 Proposal button at the bottom of the screen to submit your application for authorisation by your organisation.

3. The message below will then appear. Click on Yes to confirm you wish to submit the proposal or click on No if you wish to amend your application.

Once you have clicked Yes and submitted your application the message below confirming that the application has been sent for organisational review by your Research office/Managing Director will appear. You will also receive an automated email from donotreply.epa@smartsimple.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 clicking on the Submissions button in the Welcome banner section of your Home page and then clicking on the Applications in Progress tab.

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

Proposal Authorisation Process

Overview of the Process

Your organisation's Research Proposal Authoriser(s) will use the System to authorise the submission of your proposal. They will review any application you have submitted and can:

- Authorise your application

- Request revision of your application

- Decline your application

> **IMPORTANT**: The Authorisation Deadline detailed in the Technical Description document is not negotiable. Proposals which have not been authorised by your Organisation 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@smartsimple.ie. You can continue to view the application on a read-only basis by clicking on the My Submissions button in the Welcome banner section of your Home page, clicking on the Applications in Progress tab and then clicking on the Open button beside the proposal that you wish to view.

Proposal is Declined by Institution

You will be notified that your application has been declined by automated email from donotreply.epa@smartsimple.ie. The email will contain the reason given by your Research Office / Managing Director for not approving your proposal for submission to the EPA.

You can continue to view the application on a read-only basis (for a period of six months after which the application will be removed from the system) by clicking on the My Submissions button in the Welcome banner section of your Home page, clicking on the Unsuccessful Applications tab and then clicking on the Open button beside the proposal that you wish to view.

You can also view the reason for the decision, provided by your Research Proposal Authoriser(s), for not approving the proposal by clicking on the Declarations and Authorisation tab of your application and scrolling to the "Provide Justification / Reason if not authorised or revision is required" box at the bottom of the page. **It will not be processed any further**.

Revision is Required to Proposal

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

You can access your application by clicking on the Grant Application icon under the Items for Action Section on your home page and clicking on the Open button for the relevant proposal.

You can review the justification provided by your Research Proposal Authoriser by clicking on the Declarations and Authorisation tab of your application and scrolling to the "Provide Justification / Reason if not authorised or revision is required" box at the bottom of the page.

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

You can continue to view the application on a read-only basis by clicking on the My Submissions button in the Welcome banner section of your Home page and then clicking on the Applications in Progress tab and clicking on the Open button beside the proposal that you wish to view.

> **IMPORTANT**: The revision of the proposal and its review and approval by the Research Proposal Authoriser should be completed before the Approval Deadline for Lead Organisation.

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 Proposal Authoriser before the Organisation Approval deadline, **it will not be valid** and its status will automatically change to Missed Deadline.

Evaluation Process

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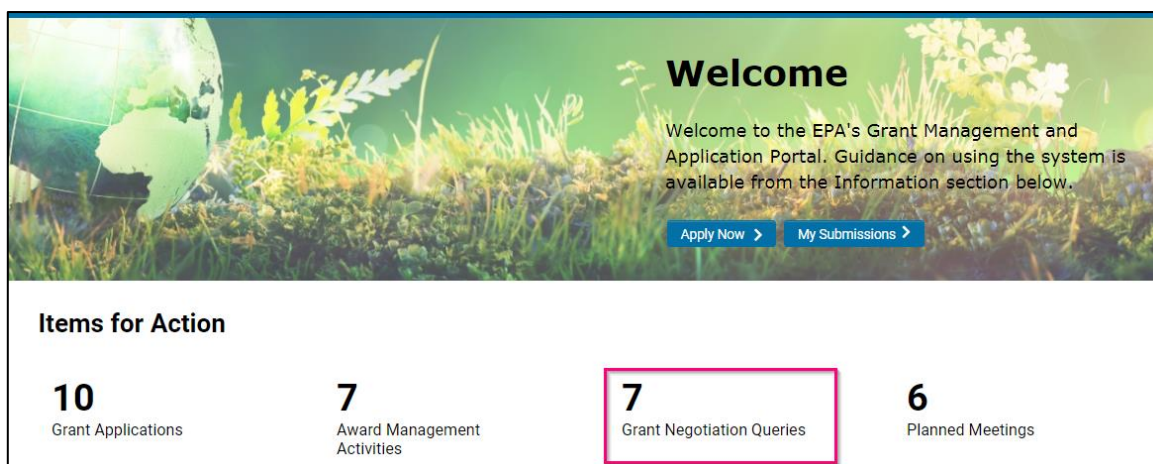
Negotiation Process

Overview of the Process

You will be notified by email from donotrely.epa@smartsimple.ie of the outcome of the evaluation of your proposal. If your proposal has been recommended for funding the email will contain details in relation to the requirement 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 System.

2. You can access the queries raised by clicking on the Grant Negotiation Queries icon under the Items for Action section on your Home page. This will bring you to a page listing the technical and budget queries for each proposal for which a response is required.

3. You can then view and download the queries raised by clicking on the Open button of the relevant technical or budget query activity.

Grant Negotiation Queries

	#	Proposal Number	Project Leader	Activity Type
Open	1	1007	Holly Dayin	Technical Queries
Open	2	1012	Holly Dayin	Budget Queries
Open	3	1024	Holly Dayin	Budget Queries
Open	4	1024	Holly Dayin	Technical Queries
Open	5	1037	Holly Dayin	Technical Queries
Open	6	1045	Holly Dayin	Budget Queries
Open	7	1064	Holly Dayin	Technical Queries

4. Download and view the Budget Queries and prepare a response, then upload it using the Response to Financial Queries button indicated below, complete all drop-down fields and the tick box to indicate this is the latest response, then click on the Save Draft button followed by the Submit Response button.

Budget Queries

▾ Financial Queries

It is the responsibility of the Lead Applicant to include financial responses from all project participants. Responses must include:

1. Responses to the Financial Queries using the form uploaded by the EPA, and a revised budget (if applicable)
2. Responses to the Financial Queries must include any budgetary considerations arising from the Technical Queries.

* Upload Financial Queries

Budget Queries

☐ File Name ▲

📄 Test_PJBA_Upload_09_01_21.pdf

Upload response to Budget Queries

* *Will the technical queries have an impact on the proposed budget?

* Response to Financial Queries

🔼 Response to Financial Queries

5. Download and view the technical queries and prepare a response, then upload it together with a completed matrix template for Deliverables using the Upload Response Documents button indicated below, complete all other required fields including the tick box to indicate this is the latest response, then click on the Save Draft button followed by the Submit Response Button

Further revisions / clarifications are required in relation to Budget and/or Technical queries

In the case where following the review of your responses, additional queries/clarifications are required, you will be notified by automated email from donotreply.epa@smartsimple.ie.

On receipt of such notification, please log onto the System and review these additional queries following the same steps as described above.

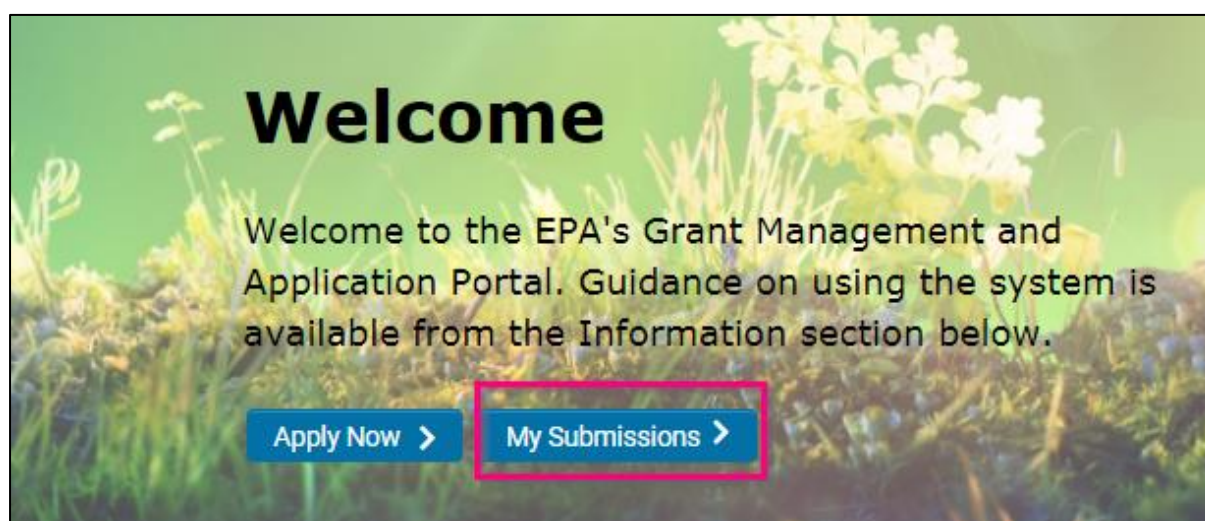## All queries have been resolved (end of the Negotiation Process)

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@smartsimple.ie that the Negotiation Process has now been successfully completed and the EPA will proceed with the Grant Offer process. At this point the proposal will be assigned it's own unique project code that will be used in all future correspondence related to your application.

Grant Offer and Grant Award Processes

An offer of grant award will be sent to you by email from donotreply.epa@smartsimple.ie. This email will also cc staff in the Research Proposal Authoriser(s) in your organisation and will explain that the Notification of Grant Award and the Acknowledgement of Receipt of Grant Award are available to download from the System. The email will also advise that a person designated as Research Proposal Authoriser for your organisation (contacts cc'd above) must log into the System to follow the necessary steps to accept the offer.

Once the offer has been accepted, the status of your project will change to Grant Awarded on the System. Where appropriate, the advance payment will then be processed. You will be notified by automated email from donotreply.epa@smartsimple.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 by clicking on the My Submissions button in the Welcome banner section of your Home page and then clicking on the Awarded Grants tab and clicking on the Open button beside the proposal that you wish to view.

Please refer to the **EPA's Grant Management System – User Guide for Grantees** for further details and guidance on using the System to manage your grant awards.