Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

epaResearch

Environmental Protection Agency
An Ghníomhaireacht um Chaomhnú Comhshaoil

EPA's Grant Management System

User Guide for Evaluators, Reviewers & Steering Committee Members

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EPA's Grant Management System

User Guide for Evaluators, Reviewers & Steering Committee Members

Introduction

This document is a guide for Evaluators, Reviewers and Steering Committee Members using the EPA's Grant Management & Application System (System) and describes the functionality and interfaces of the System. The system can be accessed using the following link:

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

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 System, or from the Call Documents page on the EPA Website:

1. EPA Research Call (YYYY) Technical Description Document
2. EPA Research Programme 2020-2021 Guidelines and Terms & Conditions
3. EPA Research Programme 2020-2021 Evaluation Process

Enabling Pop-ups

Please ensure that your browser settings permit pop-ups from the website address displayed by the System.

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

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

Your Home Page **1**
EVALUATOR FUNCTIONS **2**
Relevant Documentation 2
Evaluation Steps 2
Evaluation Criteria 2
Rating System 2
Thresholds 2
Evaluation Forms **3**
Completing the Evaluator Declaration 3
Declare a Potential Conflict 4
Opening the Evaluation Form 5
View the Proposal Details 5
Option 1: View the Proposal in Split Screen 5
Option 2: View a PDF of the Proposal 6
Proposal Budgets 7
Complete the Ratings and Comments 7
Submitting the Evaluation 8
National Overview Pre-Scoring Forms **9**
Completing the Evaluator Declaration 9
Declare a Potential Conflict 10
Opening the Pre-Scoring Form 11
View the Proposal Details 11
Option 1: View the Proposal in Split Screen 11
Option 2: View a PDF of the Proposal 12
Proposal Budgets 12
Complete the Rating and Comment 13
Submitting the Pre-Scoring Form 14
REVIEWER FUNCTIONS **15**
Relevant Documentation 15
Review Forms **15**
Complete the Review – Round 1 17
Complete the Review – Subsequent Rounds 17
Previous Round Reviews 17
Revised Report and Response Document 18

STEERING COMMITTEE FUNCTIONS **19**
Meetings **19**
Meeting Details 20
Project Details 20
Approved Reports & Deliverables **21**
Approved Items 21
Project Details 21
MAKING A CLAIM FOR PAYMENT **22**
Submitting a New Claim 23
New Supplier Setup 23
Revisions/Clarifications Required 24
Checking the Progress of Submitted Claims 24

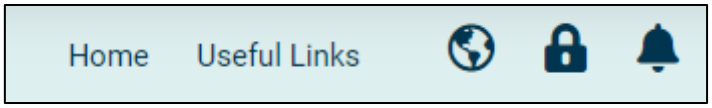
Your Home Page

When you first Log into the system you will see your Home page which includes the following:

Header Bar

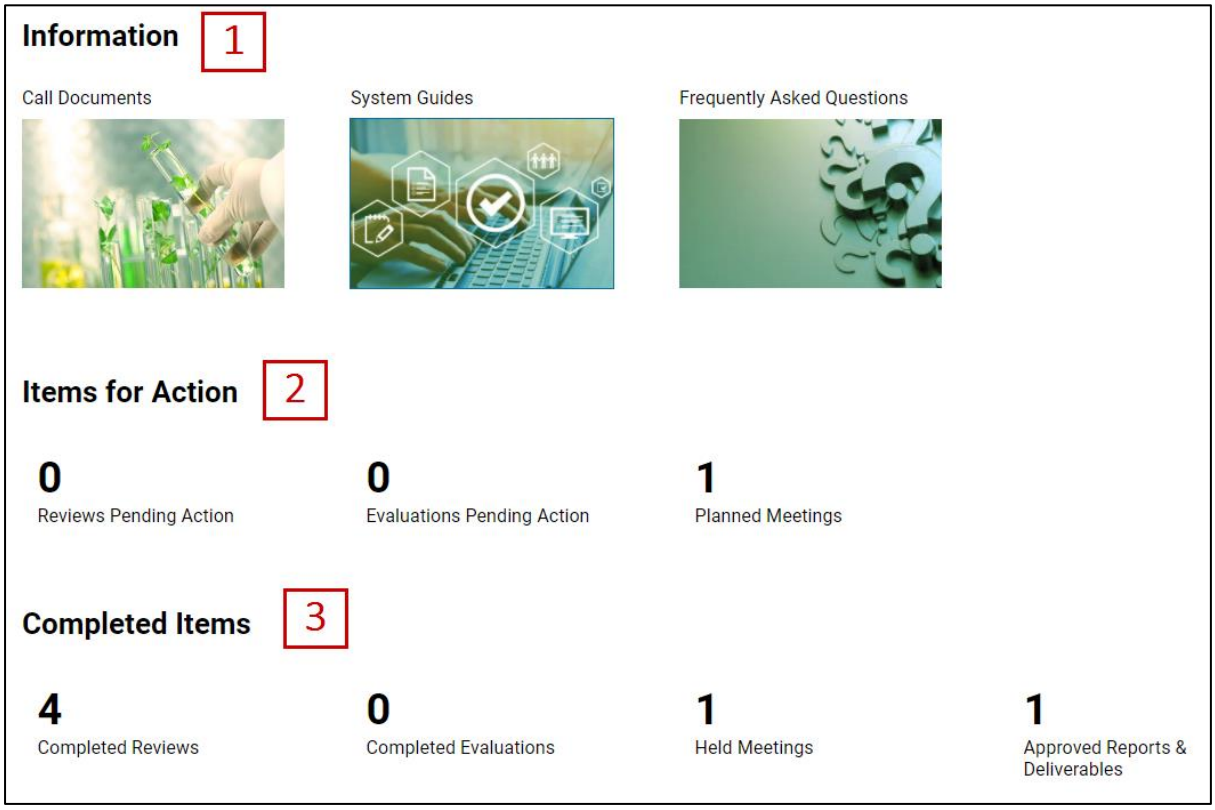
The header bar includes the following links:

1. Home – clicking on this from anywhere in the system will bring you back to your Home page
2. Useful Links – clicking on this will take you to a new page that includes links to template that are available on the EPA website, including Evaluator/Reviewer invoice templates.



Home Page

1. **Information** – this section includes links to the call documents and user guides
2. **Items for Action** – this section includes links to items that have been assigned to you for review or evaluation, and (Steering Committee Members only) meetings that you have been invited to attend but have not yet taken place.
3. **Completed Items** – this section includes items that you have completed, and (Steering Committee Members only) meetings that you were invited to attend that have already taken place and a list of approved reports and deliverables.



EVALUATOR FUNCTIONS

The purpose of the evaluation process is to ensure that all proposals are assessed in a fair and transparent manner, and that the best and most suitable proposals are selected for funding.

Proposals are assigned to evaluators following a preliminary general eligibility/suitability check carried out by the EPA Research Team. Proposals are evaluated based on the scientific and technical quality, as well as relevance to environmental research needs and priorities.

IMPORTANT: Proposals and evaluations **must not** be circulated outside of the system under any circumstances.

Relevant Documentation

Before you begin the process of evaluation of the proposal(s) assigned to you, please read the relevant call documentation which can be found on the EPA website (www.epa.ie) or by clicking on the Call Documents button located in the Information section on your homepage when you are logged into the system.

Evaluation Steps

You will receive an automated notification from donotreply.epa@smartsimple.ie for each proposal that has been assigned to you for evaluation. The evaluation process includes several steps:

1. Completing the Evaluator Declaration in relation to confidentiality and conflict of interest (required for each proposal that you have been assigned to evaluate)
2. Reviewing the proposal
3. Completing and submitting the Evaluation Form
4. Consensus (via email or telephone) where required

Evaluation Criteria

Applications are assessed using pre-defined criteria. Evaluation criteria and weightings may be revised periodically, therefore it is essential to refer to the description and marks available on the online evaluation form.

Rating System

Proposals should address at least one of the topic areas in the Technical Description Document and are marked on a scale of 0 to 3,000. The ratings available for each evaluation criterion are available on the online evaluation form.

Thresholds

To proceed to the second stage of the evaluation process proposals must achieve a minimum average score across each evaluation criterion and achieve a minimum total score – please refer to the EPA Research Programme 2021-2030 Evaluation Process document for details.

Evaluation Forms

To begin an evaluation, click on the Evaluations Pending Action button located in the Items for Action section. A list of the proposals that have been assigned to you to evaluate will be displayed on screen:

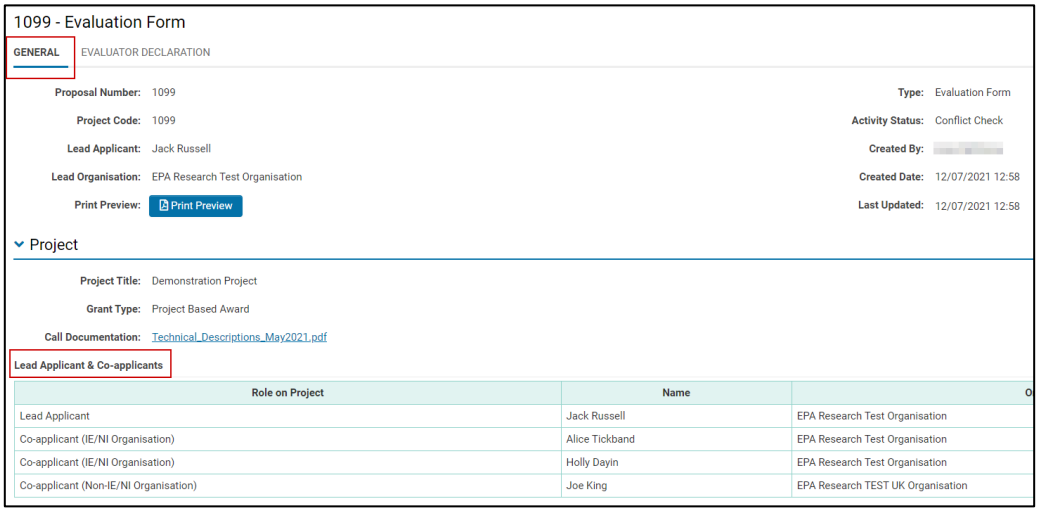
The status of each evaluation is displayed in the first column. The statuses are explained as follows:

Status	Explanation
Conflict Check	You need to complete the Evaluator Declaration (click on the Open button to access the declaration).
Draft	You have completed the Evaluator Declaration and can now evaluate the proposal if no conflict has been indicated (click on the Open button to complete the evaluation).

Completing the Evaluator Declaration

Prior to completing the Evaluator Declaration, the following information will available to you on the General tab of the evaluation form:

1. Name of the lead applicant
2. Name of the lead organisation
3. Name of any co-applicants and their organisation



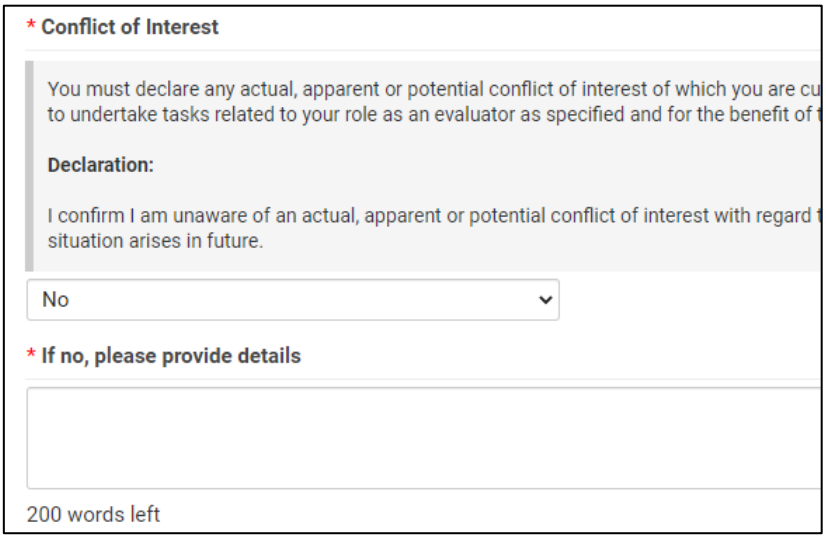
To complete the declaration, click on the Evaluator Declaration tab and answer the following questions which are detailed on the form:

1. Understanding of Requirements
2. Conflict of Interest
3. Unconscious Bias

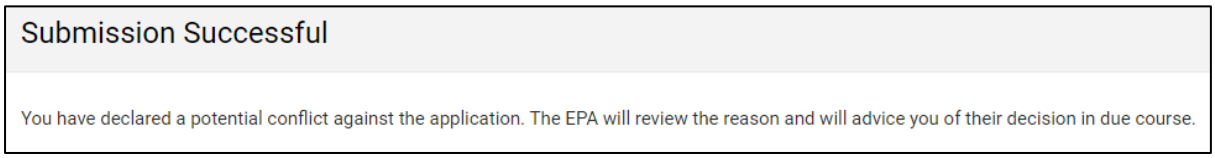
Please note: the proposal details will not be available to you unless you are able to answer Yes to all of the above questions and confirm no conflict exists.

Declare a Potential Conflict

If you are aware of a potential conflict of interest, please select No to question 2, provide a brief explanation in the text field, and click on the Declare Conflict button at the bottom of the screen:



The following confirmation message will now appear on screen:



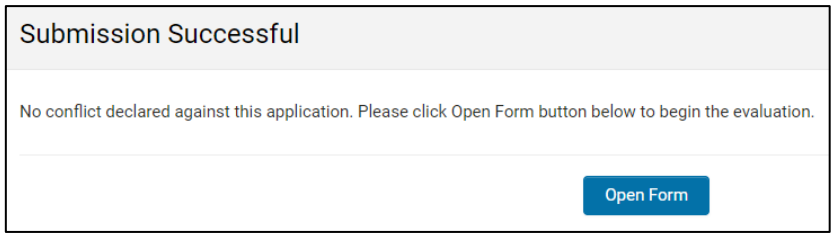
Following EPA review of the reason for the potential conflict you will be notified of one of the following:

1. The EPA has confirmed a conflict does exist and you will not be required to review the proposal
2. The EPA are satisfied no conflict exists and you may continue with your evaluation of the proposal

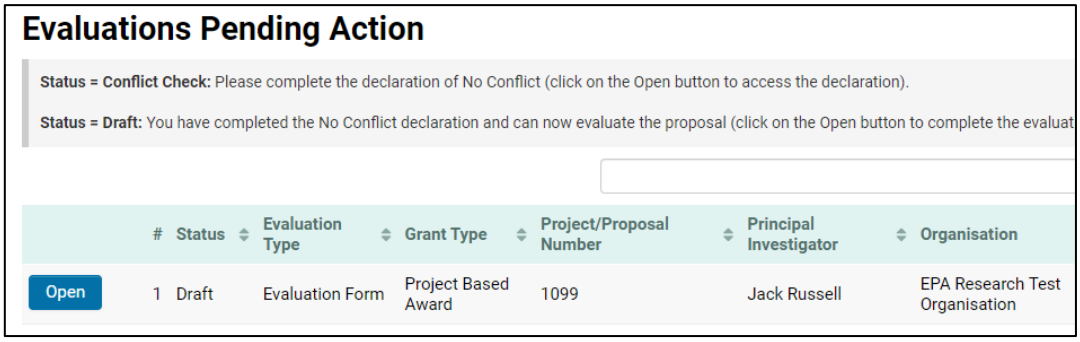
Opening the Evaluation Form

There are two ways to open the evaluation:

1. If you have declared No Conflict Exists, you can begin completing the evaluation by clicking on the Open Form button included in the confirmation message:



2. Or, if preferred, you can first complete the Evaluator Declarations for each proposal assigned to you and then proceed to complete the evaluations for each one. If you are using this method, click on the Evaluations Pending Action button located in the Items for Action section to open a list of the proposals that are ready to be evaluated (the status will be Draft):



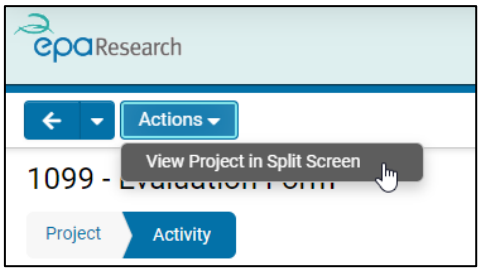
You can save a partially completed evaluation form at any point by clicking on the Save Draft button at the bottom of the screen.

View the Proposal Details

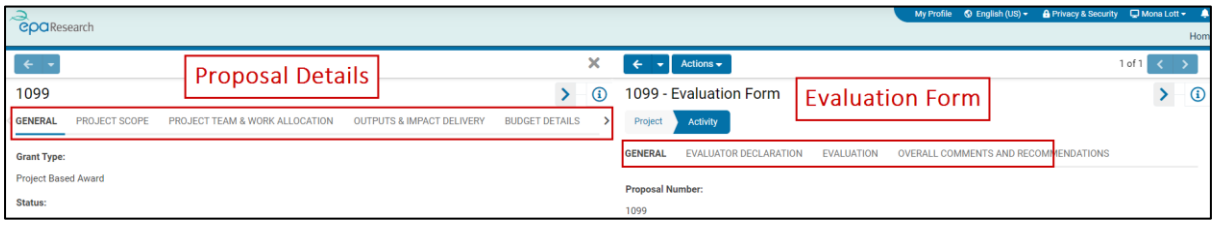
There are two ways to view the proposal details:

Option 1: View the Proposal in Split Screen

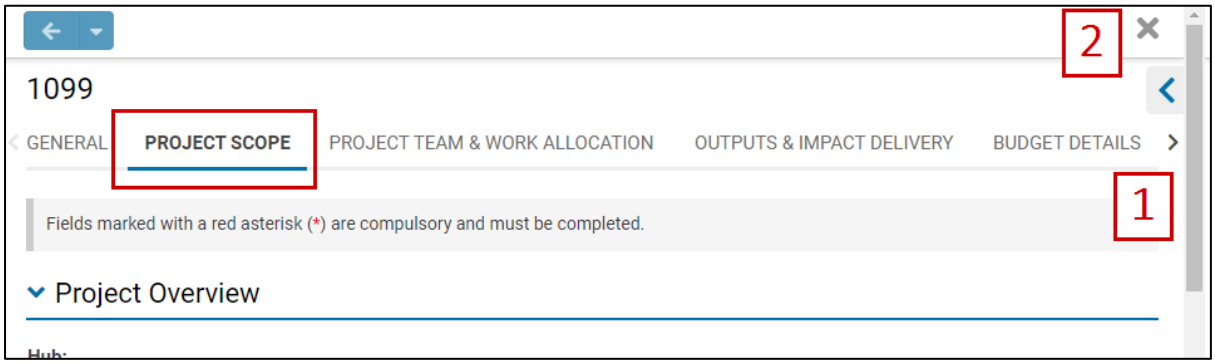
With the evaluation form open, click on the Actions button in the top left-hand corner (beneath the EPA Research logo) and select View Project in Split Screen:



Your view will now change to Split Screen mode, with the proposal details visible on the left-hand side and the evaluation form visible on the right-hand side:



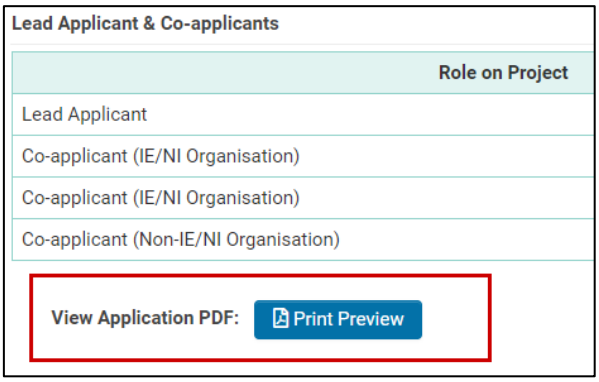
Clicking on each tab of the proposal will provide you with access to view the details entered by the applicant and the uploaded Project Description document (located at the bottom of the Project Scope tab). Use the scroll bar (1) to see all information, or close the split screen by clicking on the X (2)



The evaluation form can be completed by clicking on the appropriate tab on the right-hand side of the screen.

Option 2: View a PDF of the Proposal

With the evaluation form open, scroll to the bottom of the General tab, locate the View Application PDF field below the Lead Applicant & Co-applicants table, and click on the Print Preview button:



This will generate a PDF copy of the completed online fields and the uploaded Project Description document.

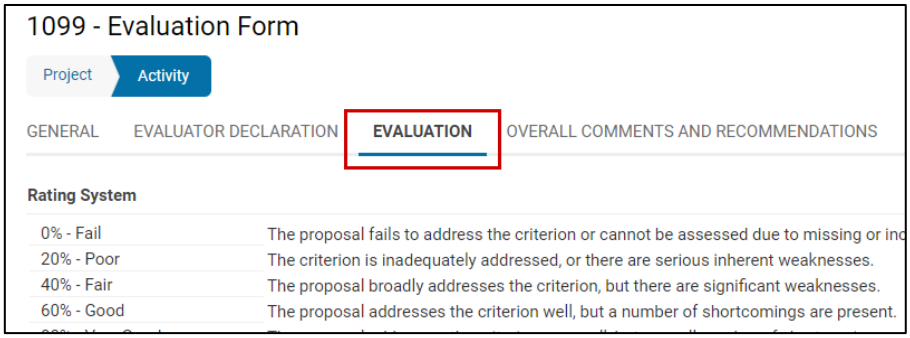
Proposal Budgets

Evaluators are not required to complete a review the of the budgets submitted with the proposal therefore only the following information will be available on the Budget Details tab:

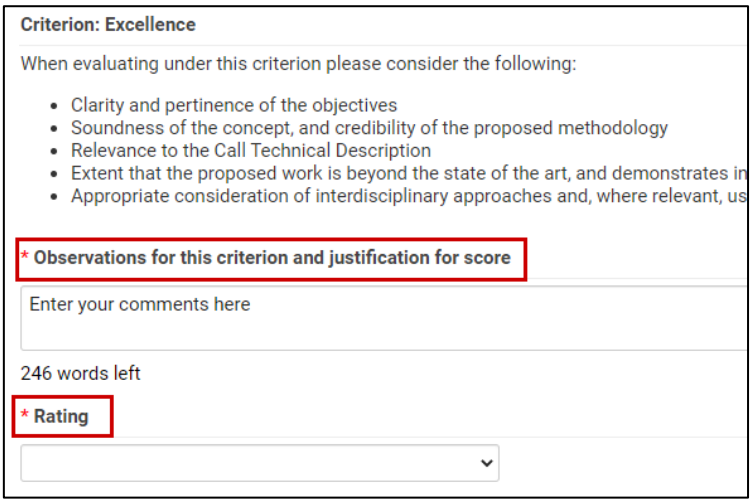
1. Total Cost of Project Requested
2. Total Grant Aid Requested

Complete the Ratings and Comments

With the evaluation open, click on the Evaluation tab:



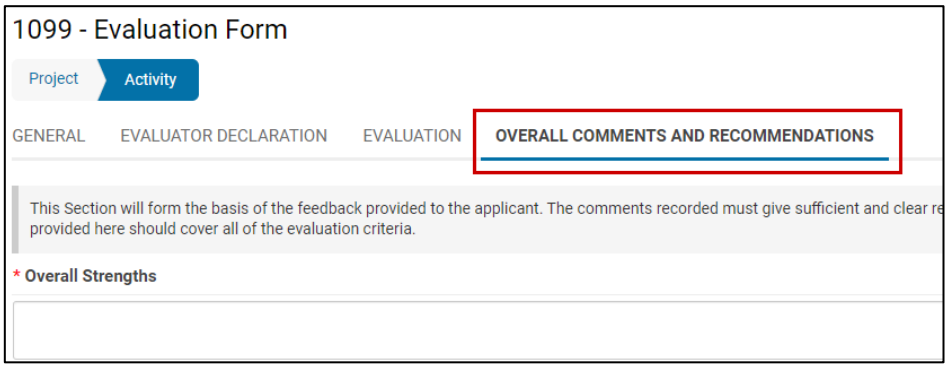
The rating system will be displayed at the top of the tab and each criterion is explained on the form. You will need to complete comments and select a rating for each individual criterion. Click on Save Draft to save your comments and ratings.



When you have added your comments and ratings, click on the Overall Comments and Recommendations tab to add comments under each of the following headings:

1. Overall Strengths
2. Overall Weaknesses
3. Overall Possible Improvements

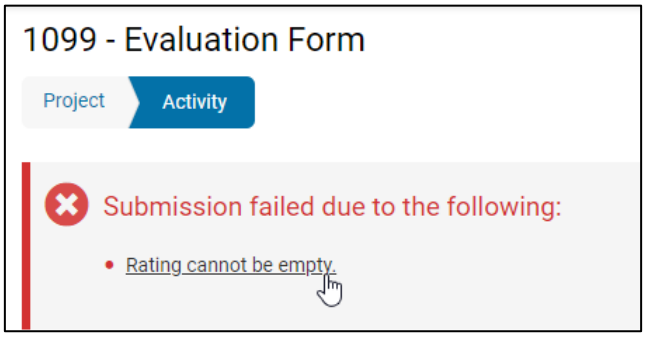
IMPORTANT: This Section will form the basis of the feedback provided to the applicant. The comments recorded must give sufficient and clear reasons for the marks awarded and if, appropriate, any recommendations for modifications to the proposal, should the proposal be retained for negotiation. The comments provided here should cover all of the evaluation criteria.



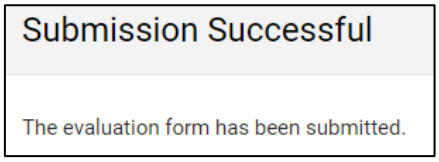
You can save your form at any point by clicking on the Save Draft button at the bottom of the screen.

Submitting the Evaluation

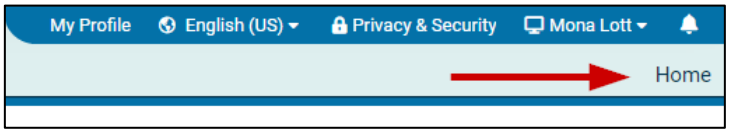
When you are satisfied with the ratings and comments you have entered you will need to submit your evaluation to the EPA by clicking on the Submit button at the bottom of the form. Forms must be fully completed before they can be submitted – if you have inadvertently forgotten to complete a rating or text field a warning will appear at the top of the screen (see example below) – clicking on the reason for the error will take you directly to the field that needs to be completed:



When the fully completed form has been submitted, a notification will appear on your screen:

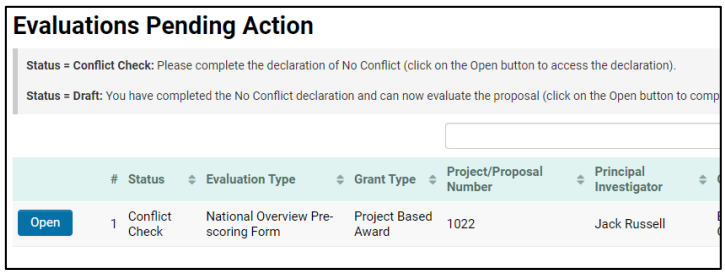


To complete additional evaluations, click on the Home link in the top right-hand corner of your screen beneath your name:



National Overview Pre-Scoring Forms

To begin completing a National Overview Pre-Scoring Form, click on the Evaluations Pending Action button located in the Items for Action section. A list of the proposals that have been assigned to you to pre-score will be displayed on screen:



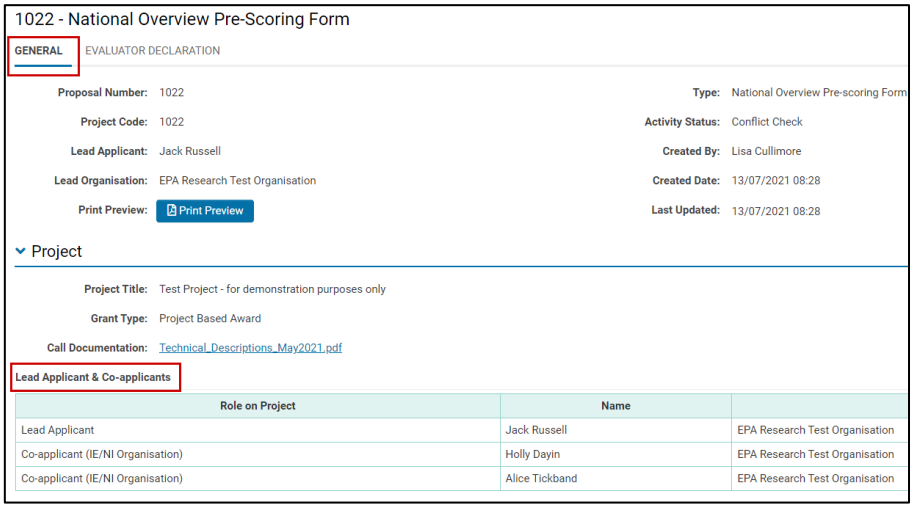
The status of each evaluation is displayed in the first column. The statuses are explained as follows:

Status	Explanation
Conflict Check	You need to complete the Evaluator Declaration (click on the Open button to access the declaration).
Draft	You have completed the Evaluator Declaration and can now evaluate the proposal if no conflict has been indicated (click on the Open button to complete the evaluation).

Completing the Evaluator Declaration

Prior to completing the Evaluator Declaration, the following information will be available to you on the General tab of the evaluation form:

1. Name of the lead applicant
2. Name of the lead organisation
3. Name of any co-applicants and their organisation



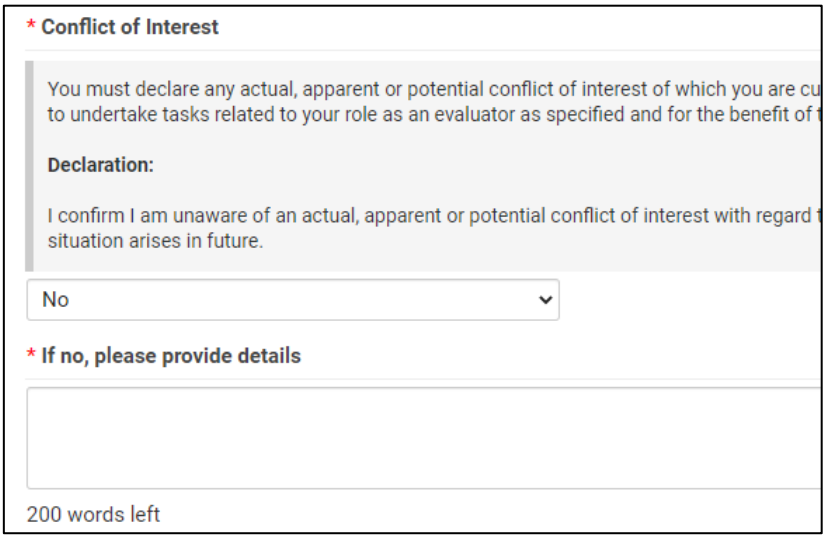
To complete the declaration, click on the Evaluator Declaration tab and answer the following questions which are detailed on the form:

1. Understanding of Requirements
2. Conflict of Interest
3. Unconscious Bias

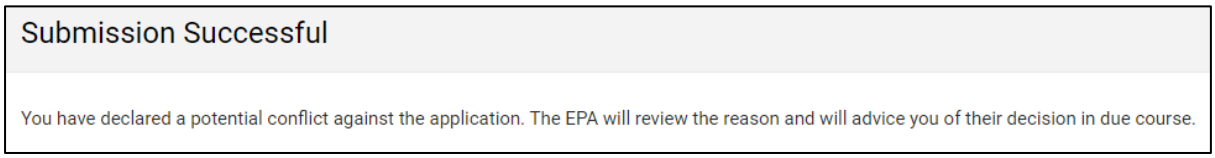
Please note: the proposal details will not be available to you unless you are able to answer Yes to all of the above questions and confirm no conflict exists.

Declare a Potential Conflict

If you are aware of a potential conflict of interest, please select No to question 2, provide a brief explanation in the text field, and click on the Declare Conflict button at the bottom of the screen:



The following confirmation message will now appear on screen:



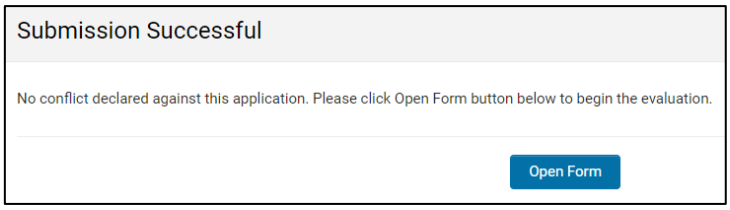
Following EPA review of the reason for the potential conflict you will be notified of one of the following:

1. The EPA has confirmed a conflict does exist and you will not be required to review the proposal
2. The EPA are satisfied no conflict exists and you may continue with your evaluation of the proposal

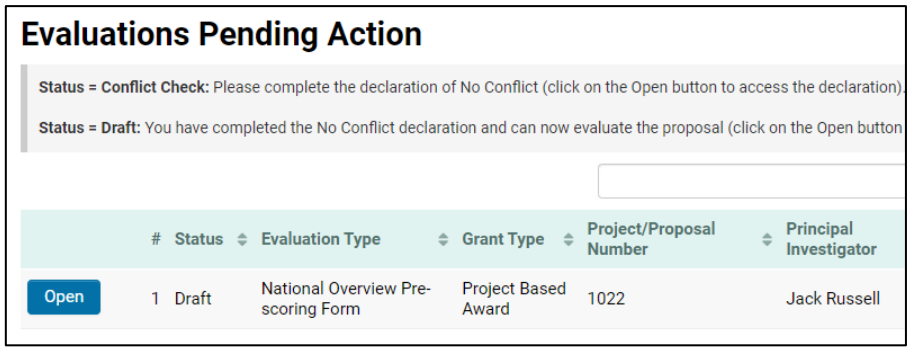
Opening the Pre-Scoring Form

There are two ways to open the Pre-Scoring form:

1. If you have declared No Conflict Exists, you can begin completing the form by clicking on the Open Form button included in the confirmation message:



2. Or, if preferred, you can first complete the Evaluator Declarations for each proposal assigned to you and then proceed to complete the form for each one. If you are using this method, click on the Evaluations Pending Action button located in the Items for Action section to open a list of the proposals that are ready to be evaluated (the status will be Draft):



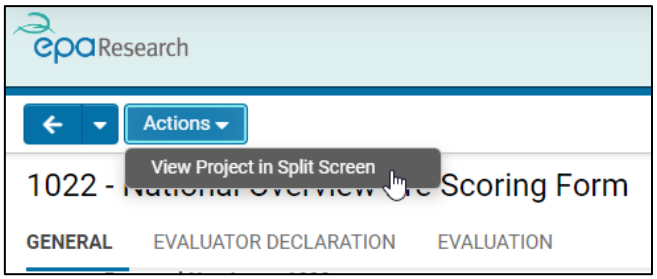
You can save a partially completed form at any point by clicking on the Save Draft button at the bottom of the screen.

View the Proposal Details

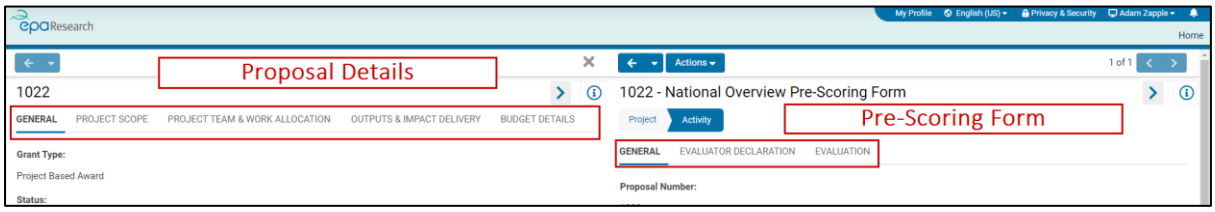
There are two ways to view the proposal details:

Option 1: View the Proposal in Split Screen

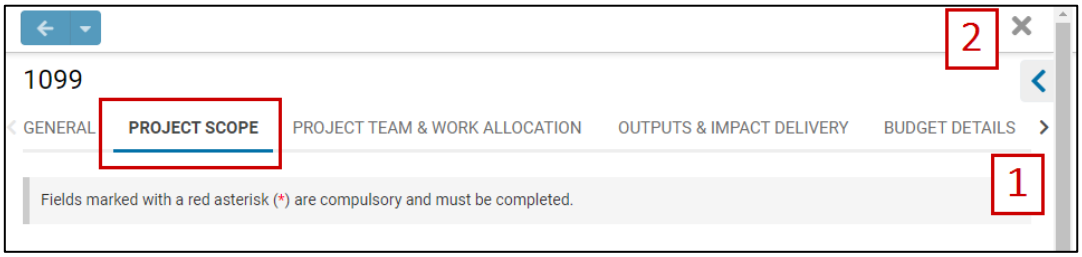
With the evaluation form open, click on the Actions button in the top left-hand corner (beneath the EPA Research logo) and select View Project in Split Screen:



Your view will now change to Split Screen mode, with the proposal details visible on the left-hand side and the evaluation form visible on the right-hand side:



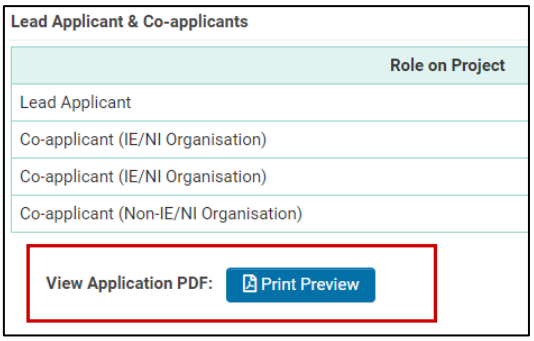
Clicking on each tab of the proposal will provide you with access to view the details entered by the applicant and the uploaded Project Description document (located at the bottom of the Project Scope tab). Use the scroll bar (1) to see all information, or close the split screen by clicking on the X (2)



The evaluation form can be completed by clicking on the appropriate tab on the right-hand side of the screen.

Option 2: View a PDF of the Proposal

With the evaluation form open, scroll to the bottom of the General tab, locate the View Application PDF field below the Lead Applicant & Co-applicants table, and click on the Print Preview button:



This will generate a PDF copy of the completed online fields and the uploaded Project Description document.

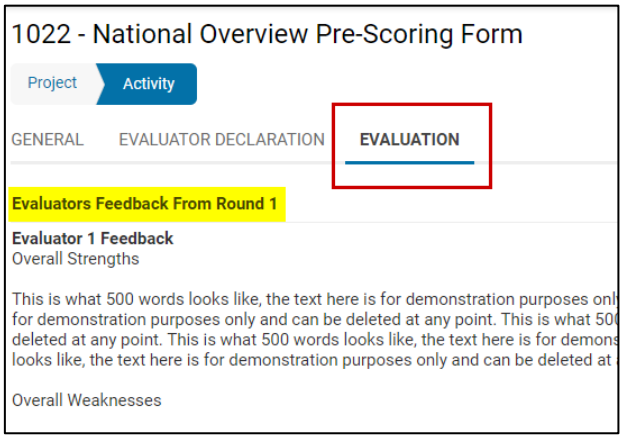
Proposal Budgets

Evaluators are not required to complete a review the of the budgets submitted with the proposal therefore only the following information will be available on the Budget Details tab:

1. Total Cost of Project Requested
2. Total Grant Aid Requested

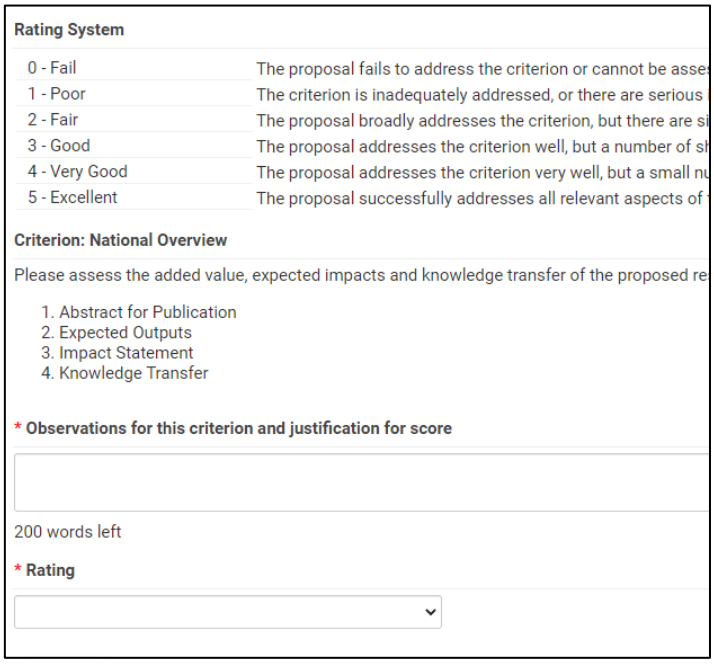
Complete the Rating and Comment

With the form open, click on the Evaluation tab:



A summary of the feedback from the Round 1 evaluators will be displayed at the top of the page.

Below the Round 1 feedback, the rating system and the criterion will be explained on the form. You will need to complete the comments field and select a rating for the proposal. Click on Save Draft to save your comments and ratings.

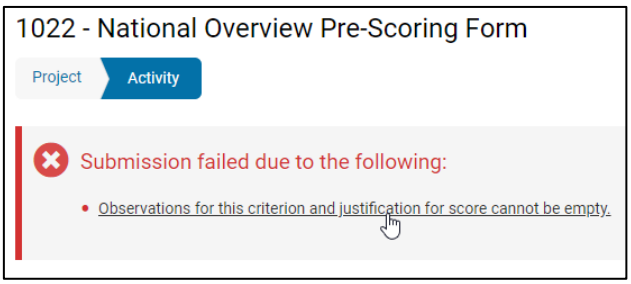


IMPORTANT: The comments entered here will be used to form the basis of the feedback provided to the applicant. The comments recorded must give sufficient and clear reasons for the score and if, appropriate, any recommendations for modifications to the proposal, should the proposal be retained for negotiation.

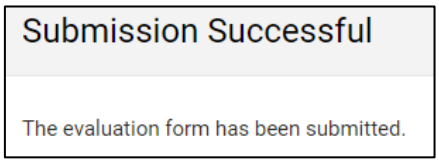
You can save your form at any point by clicking on the Save Draft button at the bottom of the screen.

Submitting the Pre-Scoring Form

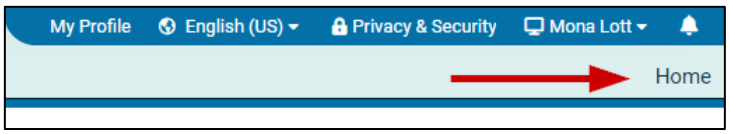
When you are satisfied with the rating and comments you have entered you will need to submit the form to the EPA by clicking on the Submit button at the bottom of the page. The form must be fully completed before it can be submitted – if you have inadvertently forgotten to complete the rating or text field a warning will appear at the top of the screen (see example below) – clicking on the reason for the error will take you directly to the field that needs to be completed:



When the fully completed form has been submitted, a notification will appear on your screen:



To complete additional Pre-Scoring forms, click on the Home link in the top right-hand corner of your screen beneath your name:



REVIEWER FUNCTIONS

Grantees are required to submit deliverables throughout the lifetime of the project[1], and on completion of the project. These deliverables may require panel review and feedback will be provided to Grantees as applicable.

The types of deliverables that may require panel review include (but are not limited to):

- EPA Research Reports
- Technical Reports
- Project Synthesis Reports
- Policy Briefs
- Literature Reviews (for publication as an EPA Research Report)
- Interim Reports (e.g. feasibility study/scoping study)
- Best Practice Guides

Where applicable, deliverables (both interim and final) are assigned to reviewers with technical expertise/knowledge of the project for comment and feedback to the author(s). The review process for all deliverables is conducted using the EPA Grant Management and Application System.

IMPORTANT: Deliverables and reviews **must not** be circulated outside of the system under any circumstances.

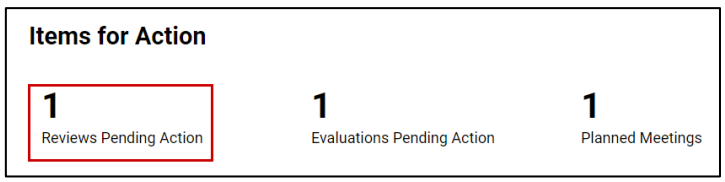
Relevant Documentation

When reviewing a deliverable that has been assigned to you, it may be useful refer to the following documentation that can be found on the EPA website (www.epa.ie), or downloaded from the Information section on your home screen when you are logged into the system:

1. EPA Research Call (YYYY) Technical Description Document
2. EPA Research Programme 2021-2030 Guidelines and Terms & Conditions

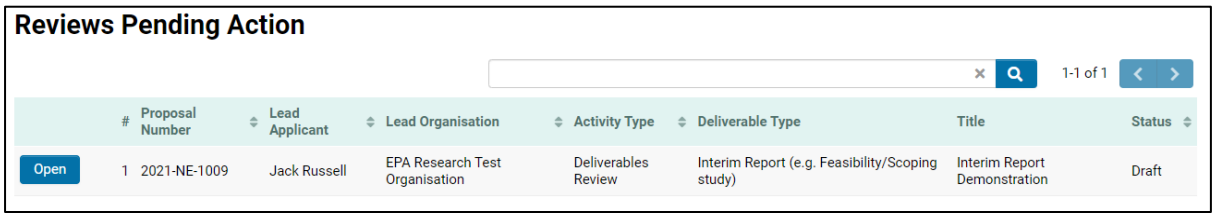
Review Forms

You will receive an automated notification from donotreply.epa@smartsimple.ie when a deliverable has been assigned to you for review. To begin the review, log into the system and click on the Reviews Pending Action button in the Items for Action section:



[1] Depending on the requirements of the project

This will open a list of any deliverables that are awaiting your review:



Open the deliverable you wish to review. The review form contains the following sections:

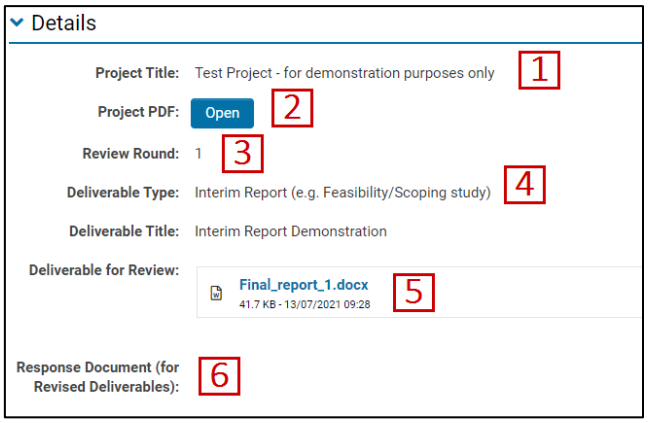
General

This section contains basic information about the project.

Details

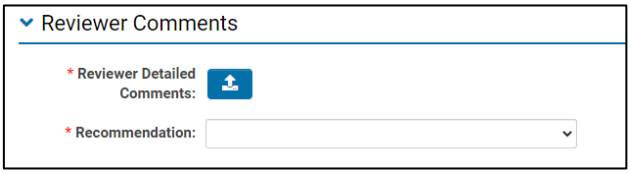
This section includes

1. The project title
2. A link to open a PDF of the project details
3. The review round number
4. The deliverable type
5. A link to download the document for review
6. A link to download the response document (available from review round 2 onwards)



Reviewer Comments

When you have completed your review, you will use this section to upload your detailed comments document and select your recommendation:

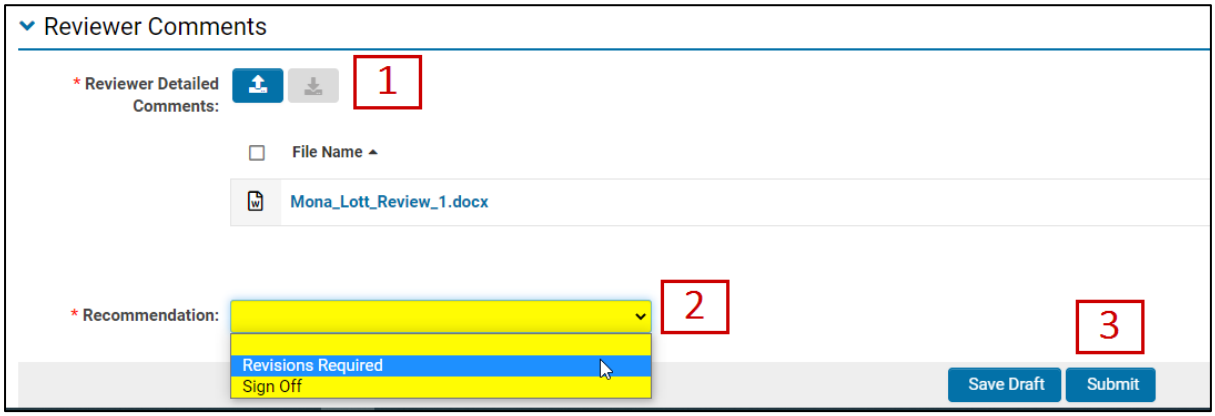


Complete the Review – Round 1

Download the document for review by clicking on the hyperlink. Save a copy of the document to your computer, then add your recommendations/suggestions as tracked changes and/or comments on the document and ensure you save a copy that includes your recommendations/suggestions.

Open the review form and scroll to the Reviewer Comments section to:

1. Upload the version of the document that includes your recommendations/suggestions
2. Select your recommendation
3. Submit your review

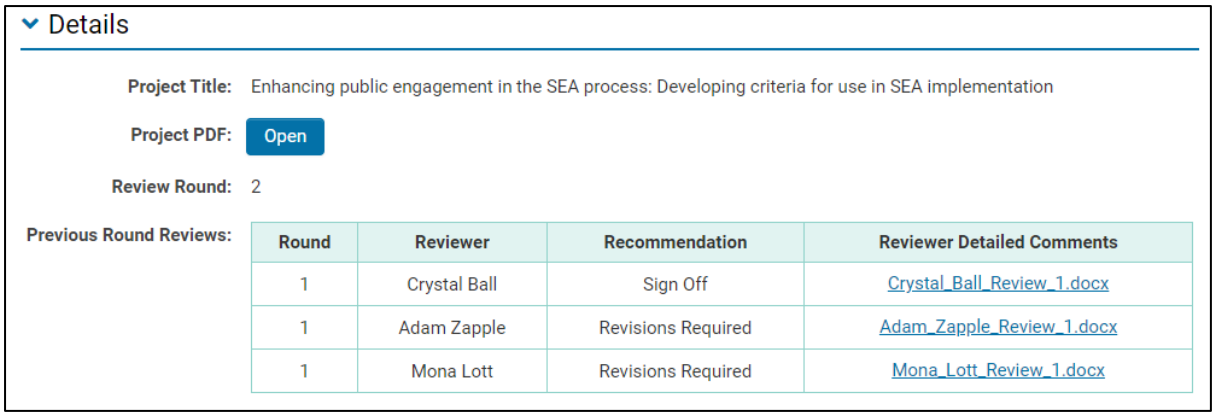


Complete the Review – Subsequent Rounds

You will receive an automated notification from donotreply.epa@smartsimple.ie when a revised deliverable has been assigned to you for review. To begin the review, log into the system and click on the Reviews Pending Action button in the Items for Action section, then open the deliverable that you wish to review.

Previous Round Reviews

A summary of other reviewers recommendations and their detailed comments from previous rounds is included under the Details section of the form. You can download each of the previously submitted review forms by clicking on the hyperlink in the table:

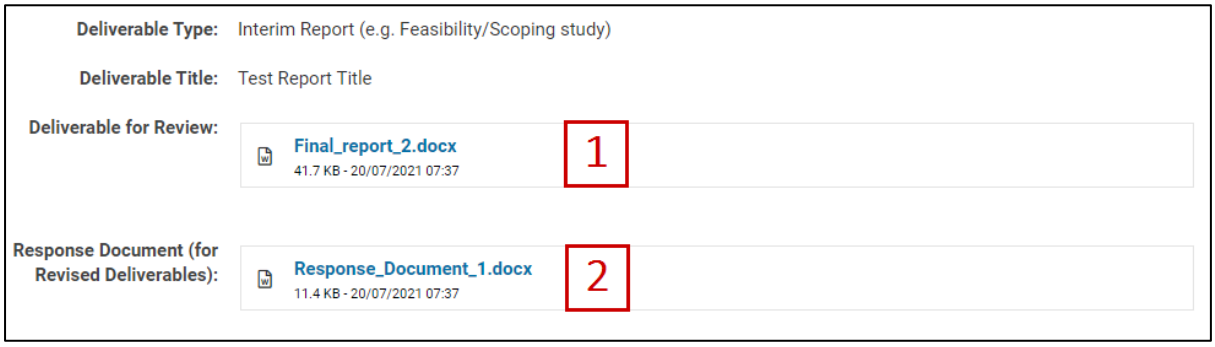


Round	Reviewer	Recommendation	Reviewer Detailed Comments
1	Crystal Ball	Sign Off	Crystal_Ball_Review_1.docx
1	Adam Zapple	Revisions Required	Adam_Zapple_Review_1.docx
1	Mona Lott	Revisions Required	Mona_Lott_Review_1.docx

Revised Report and Response Document

Below the review summary table, you will find the following (please note, depending on the size of the screen that you are viewing the activity on, you may need to scroll down the page to view the fields):

1. The latest version of the report for review (1)
   - This version should incorporate the comments and revisions suggested in the previous round.
2. A response document (2)
   - For any revised version of the Deliverable Report or Paper the applicant should upload a response document that details how the review points have been addressed. Where review comments and recommendations have not been incorporated justification must be provided.



Download the document for review and the response document by clicking on the hyperlinks. Save a copy of the revised report to your computer, then add your recommendations/suggestions as tracked changes and/or comments on the document and ensure you save a copy that includes your recommendations/suggestions.

Return to the review form and scroll to the Reviewer Comments section to:

1. Upload the version of the document that includes your recommendations/suggestions
2. Select your recommendation
3. Submit your review

STEERING COMMITTEE FUNCTIONS

If you are a member of a project Steering Committee (SC) you can use the EPA Grants Management System to access meeting details and view approved reports and deliverables.

Meetings

You have access to:

1. View meeting details (date, time, location)
2. Download the agenda and other related documents
3. View details of the project (by enabling Split Screen mode)
4. Upload meeting documentation
5. Download the minutes of the meeting

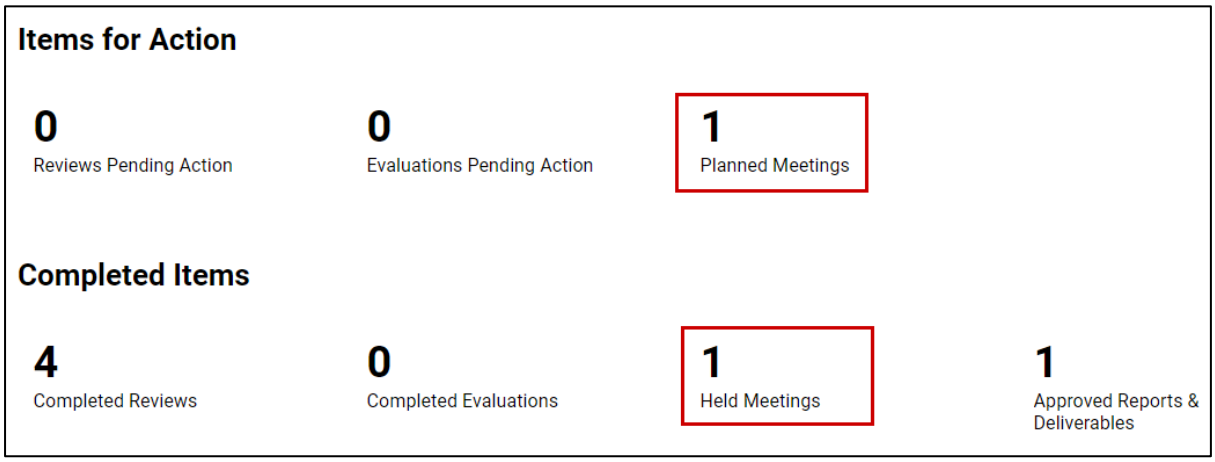
IMPORTANT: Meeting documents and minutes can be downloaded for off-line use but **must not** be circulated outside of the EPA Grants Management System **under any circumstances**.

You will have access to view meeting details, related documents and project details providing:

1. You are a current SC member on the project
2. You were/have been invited to the meeting

Please note – you will not have access to meetings that took place prior to your commencement as an SC member on the project.

You can view details of meetings that have not yet been completed by clicking on the Planned Meetings button in your Items for Action section, and details of past meetings can be accessed by clicking on the Held Meetings button in your Completed Items section:

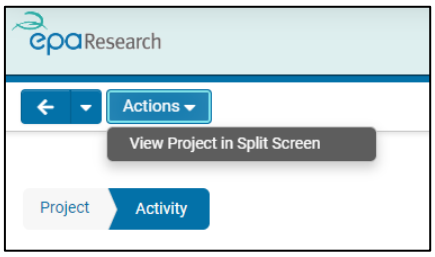


Meeting Details

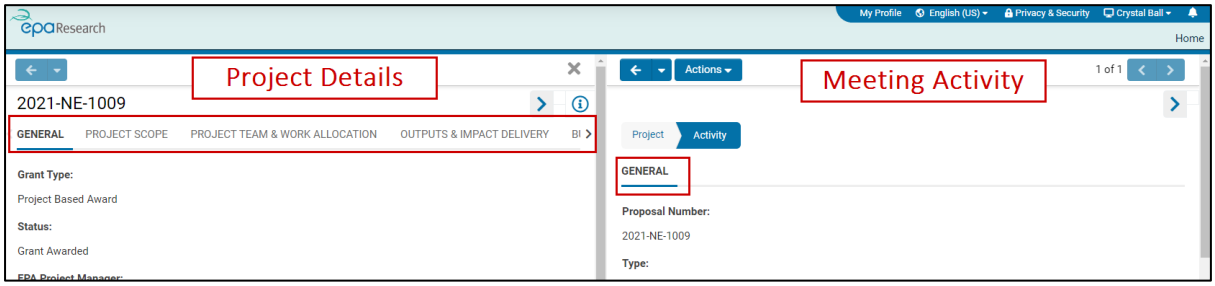
Click on either the Planned Meetings button or the Held Meetings button (as applicable) to open a list of items. To view the full details, the related documents and the agenda, click on the Open button:

Project Details

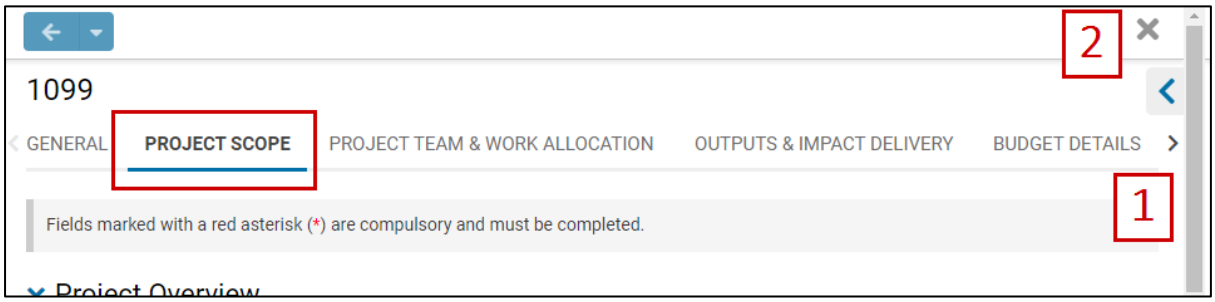
With the meeting activity open, click on the Actions button in the top left-hand corner (beneath the EPA Research logo) and select View Project in Split Screen:



Your view will now change to Split Screen mode, with the project details visible on the left-hand side and the meeting activity visible on the right-hand side:



Clicking on each tab of the project will provide you with access to view the details entered by the applicant and the uploaded Project Description document (located at the bottom of the Project Scope tab). Use the scroll bar (1) to see all information, or close the split screen by clicking on the X (2)



Approved Reports & Deliverables

When the review process has been completed and the item has been approved you will have access to:

1. View approved Project Progress Reports
2. View approved Deliverables (interim and final)
3. View details of the project (by enabling Split Screen mode)

IMPORTANT: Reports and Deliverables can be downloaded for off-line use but **must not** be circulated outside of the EPA Grants Management System **under any circumstances**.

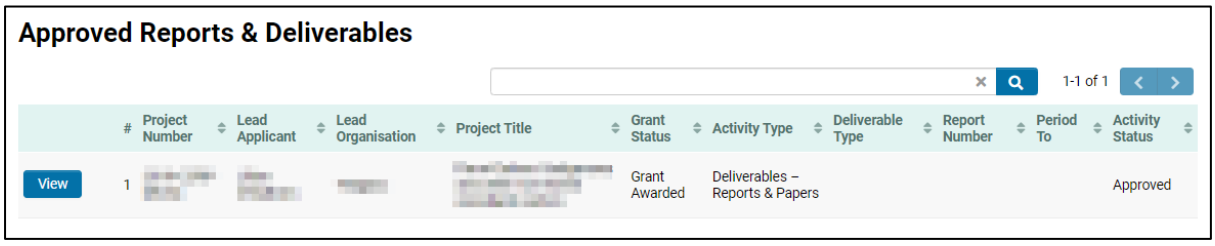
You will have access to view approved Reports and Deliverables providing

1. You are a current SC member on the project
2. The Report or Deliverable was approved after you were assigned as a current SC member on the project

Please note – you will not have access to Reports and Deliverables that were approved prior to your commencement as an SC member on the project.

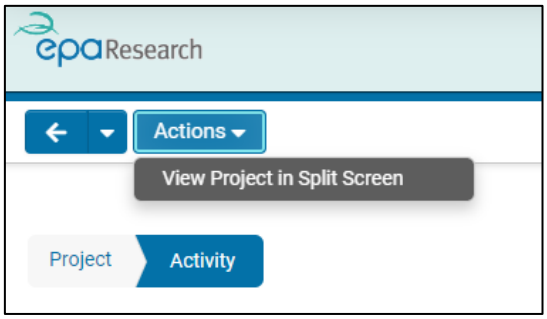
Approved Items

Click on Approved Reports & Deliverables button (to open a list of items. To view the full details, click on the Open button:

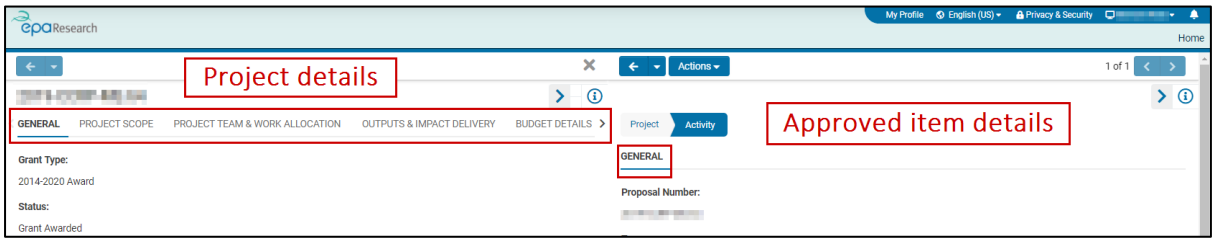


Project Details

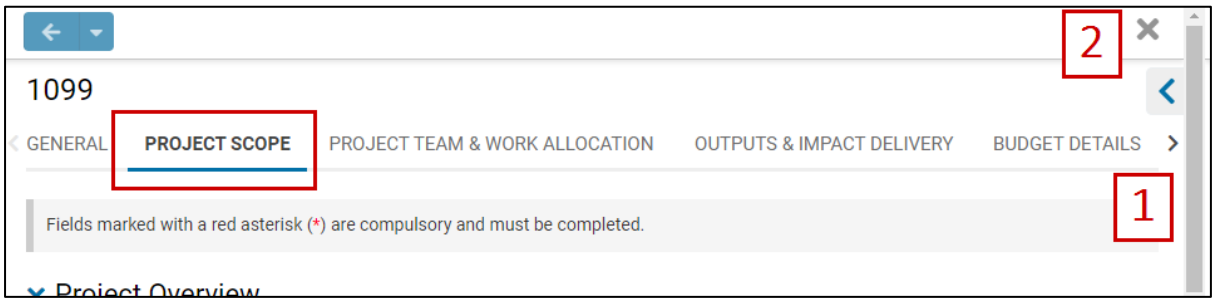
With the approved item open, click on the Actions button in the top left-hand corner (beneath the EPA Research logo) and select View Project in Split Screen:



Your view will now change to Split Screen mode, with the project details visible on the left-hand side and the approved item visible on the right-hand side:



Clicking on each tab of the project will provide you with access to view the details entered by the applicant and the uploaded Project Description document (located at the bottom of the Project Scope tab). Use the scroll bar (1) to see all information, or close the split screen by clicking on the X (2)



MAKING A CLAIM FOR PAYMENT

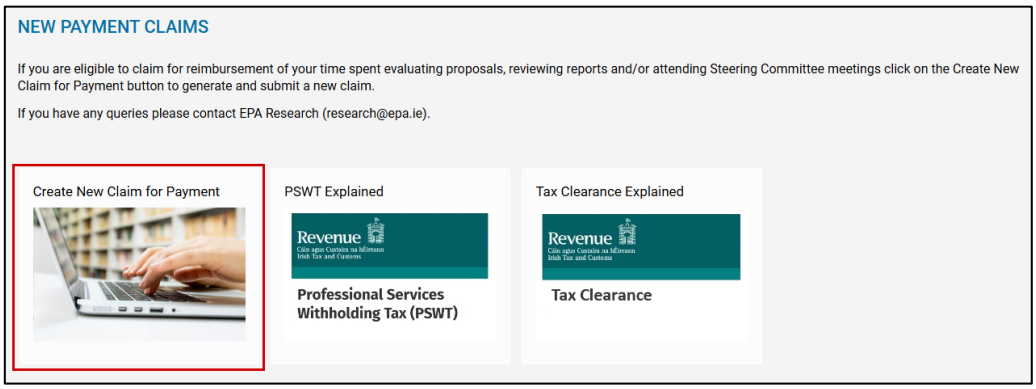
IMPORTANT:

The old Excel invoice template is no longer being accepted by the EPA. Please submit all claims for payment online as explained in this section.

If you are eligible to claim for reimbursement of your time spent evaluating proposals, reviewing reports and/or attending Steering Committee meetings click on the My Claims for Payment link in the header bar:

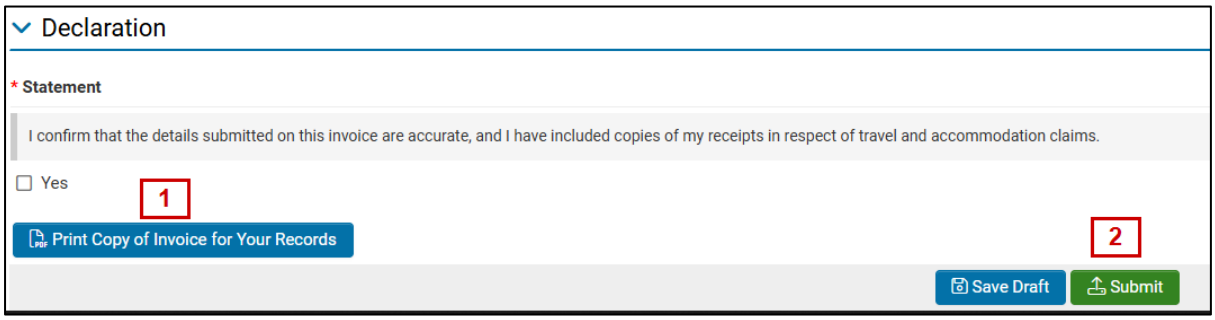
Submitting a New Claim

To create a new claim, click on the Create New Claim for Payment button:



Instructions will appear at the top of the new payment claim. Complete all the fields and upload copies of your receipts for travel and accommodation (if applicable) – uploads must be in PDF format.

You can create a copy of the invoice by clicking on the Download Copy of Invoice for Your Records button (1), then submit the claim using the button at the bottom of the screen (2):



The EPA will review your claim, and you will be notified of the outcome.

New Supplier Setup

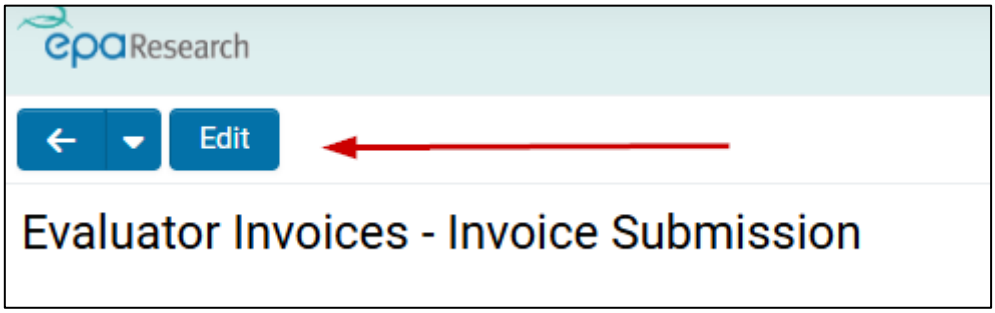
If you have not previously provided services to the EPA it will be necessary to request your bank details so that we can arrange for payment. If this is the case, you will receive a notification from donotreply.epa@smartsimple.ie with a New Supplier Form attached. Please complete the form in full and return it to research@epa.ie.

Revisions/Clarifications Required

If the EPA have identified that revisions and/or clarifications are required to your claim you will receive an automated notification from the system advising you of the reason why. Log into your portal and select the invoice from the list.

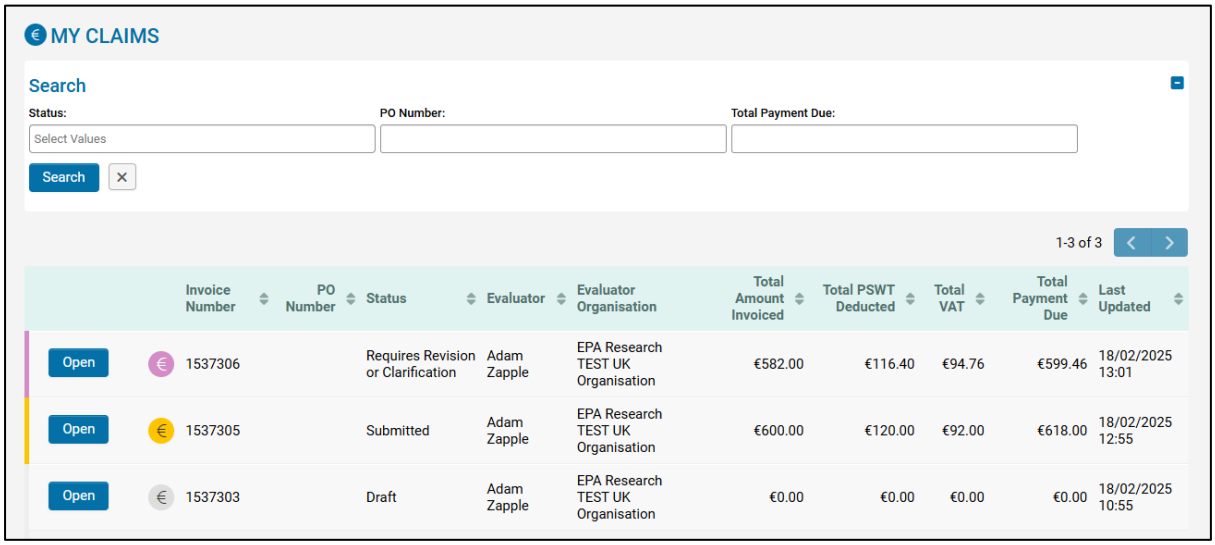
	Invoice Number	PO Number	Status	Evaluator	Evaluator Organisation	Total Amount Invoiced	Total PSWT Deducted	Total VAT	Total Payment Due
Open	1537927		**Requires Revision or Clarification**	Adam Zapple	EPA Research TEST UK Organisation	€412.00	€82.40	€94.76	€424.36

To revise the invoice, first click on the Open button, then click on the Edit button in the top left-hand corner of the screen.



Checking the Progress of Submitted Claims

The My Payment Claims section lists all the claims that you have either submitted or begun to complete (Draft). Clicking on the Open button will provide you with access to view the details, print a copy of the invoice for your records, or – in the case of Draft claims – complete the details and submit the claim for payment.



	Invoice Number	PO Number	Status	Evaluator	Evaluator Organisation	Total Amount Invoiced	Total PSWT Deducted	Total VAT	Total Payment Due	Last Updated
Open	1537306		Requires Revision or Clarification	Adam Zapple	EPA Research TEST UK Organisation	€582.00	€116.40	€94.76	€599.46	18/02/2025 13:01
Open	1537305		Submitted	Adam Zapple	EPA Research TEST UK Organisation	€600.00	€120.00	€92.00	€618.00	18/02/2025 12:55
Open	1537303		Draft	Adam Zapple	EPA Research TEST UK Organisation	€0.00	€0.00	€0.00	€0.00	18/02/2025 10:55

As your claim progresses through the system you will be notified at each of the following stages by email from donotreply.epa@smartsimple.ie:

1. When your claim has been submitted or a revised claim has been submitted
2. If a New Supplier form has been issued
3. If revisions/clarifications are required to you claim
4. When you claim has been accepted by the EPA
5. When your claim has been forwarded to our accounts office for payment

End of document:	User Guide for Evaluators, Reviewers & Steering Committee Members