Project design and management:
Twelve tips to maximise your chances of securing funding

To secure UK Aid Match funding, applications will be assessed in four key areas: project design and management, technical, communications and fiduciary risk. This document provides 12 tips on how to improve the project design and management element of an application.

Throughout the document, examples will be provided. The examples are based off a fictitious project based in Nepal that aims to increase the recycling of plastics an reduce the amount of plastic going to landfill.

1) Keep it clear and simple: Ensure that you are writing clearly and succinctly in your application. Write in plain English, avoiding jargon and acronyms. If you gave your application to someone outside the development sector, would they understand what you are trying to achieve? If not, your document needs simplifying.

2) Clarify your vision: We are not asking for a general statement on how the world could be improved We want to know when your project will end and what specific improvements we are likely to see by then.

Bad example: Our vision is a world without poverty, hunger, violence and injustice.

Good example: By July 2021, the number of plastic bottles being recycled in Nepal will have increased significantly and the number of water bottles being dumped in four land fill sites will be halve the current figure.

3) Summarise the problems and baselines: General background information on a country is not necessary, this can be found by anyone using a web search. Focus on the issues you are trying to fix; what are you looking to change, how big is the problem today. This is a good opportunity to show the research you have done.

Bad example: Nepal is a landlocked country between India and China. With a population of around 30 million, 25% of people live below the poverty line.

Good example:

Problem to fix	Indicative baselines
Too much plastic being dumped in landfill across Nepal.	Four landfill sites, each disposing around 50 tonnes of plastic a year.
Very little recycling of plastic water from the five biggest towns.	Estimates suggest that around 10 million plastic bottles are being sold each year, with less than one percent being recycled.

4) State and quantify your objectives: What are you specifically trying to achieve? Your objectives should directly address the problem and achievable headline numbers should be provided. Do not provide numbers that are overly ambitious though. This could undermine the credibility of your application.
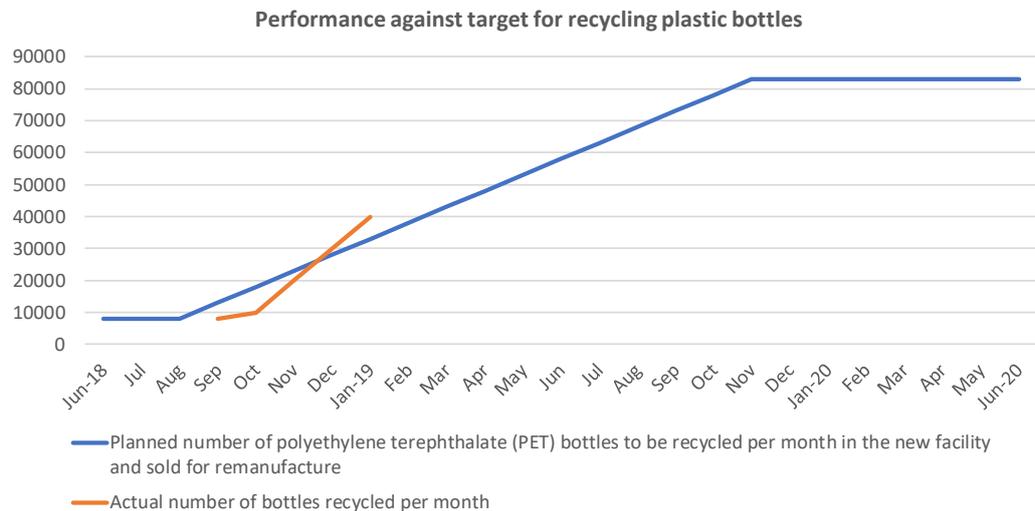
Good example:
Recycle more plastic bottles – increase from the current figure of about 100,000 bottles per annum to around 1 million.

5) Visualise what you will change using graphs: Graphs are a great tool for indicating your targets over a specific time period. To create a basic graph, measure what you are going to change along the Y-axis and the time period across the X-axis.

6) Make sure your graphs are realistic and specific: The scale and pace of change should be realistic. This means that you are unlikely to see progress from day one and the line of your graph is unlikely to be straight. As with the rest of your application, realistic figures and clear objectives are key.

Good example:

Performance against target for recycling plastic bottles

— Planned number of polyethylene terephthalate (PET) bottles to be recycled per month in the new facility and sold for remanufacture

— Actual number of bottles recycled per month

7) Avoid common logframe issues: Keep measurements and indicators simple, relate them to the overall objectives and use actual numbers rather than percentages where possible. Make sure you understand the key terms of a logframe such as outputs, outcomes and impacts. Use our handy guide.

8) Send the right CV: We want to see the CV of the local project manager who will be leading the project in-country. We do not want to see the CV of your CEO or the CV of the people supporting the project from the UK.

If no-one is in post yet, show us the type of person you would like to hire; what skills will they require to fill the objectives outlined in your application.

9) Use CVs to show achievements not responsibilities: When providing a CV of your project manager, make sure it shows their achievements not their responsibilities. What have they accomplished, what were the outcomes of the previous projects they have managed, how are their achievements particularly relevant to your project. Where possible back this up with statistics.

10) Set priorities: Make sure you are clear on the scope of your project and that your team has a few top priorities that are manageable.

11) Demonstrate local support: Show how the local people support your project and believe it is achievable. If this is not the case, it is unlikely to affect long-lasting change.

12) Justify your project to the UK taxpayer: How much is your project costing and does this cost outweigh the benefits that you are looking to achieve?