S&E Regional Operational Programme 2014-2020

Implementation Plan: Technical Assistance

Operational Programme	S&E Regional Operational Programme 2014-2020
Priority	Technical Assistance
Thematic Objective	N/A
Investment Priority	N/A
Scheme	**Technical Assistance**
Categorisation Code	121, 122, 123
ERDF Certifying Body	Department of Public Expenditure & Reform
Managing Authority	Southern Regional Assembly
Intermediate Body	Southern Regional Assembly
Level 1 Public Body	Regional Assemblies, ERDF Audit Authority, Certifying Authority
Grant Rate	100% of certified eligible expenditure
EU Co-Financing Rate	50% of eligible public expenditure

Objectives of Intervention

To support the effective implementation of the Regional Operational Programme.

Description of Intervention

Under this Priority, expenditure in accordance with Article 59 of Common Provisions Regulation (EU) 1303/2013, shall be eligible to cover costs incurred by the Managing Authority (or agencies acting on its behalf) in relation to the overall management and implementation of the Operational Programme.

Technical Assistance may be used to support the preparatory, management, monitoring, administrative and technical support, evaluation, information, networking & co-ordination activities, complaint resolution and control & audit measures necessary for the effective implementation the Operational Programme under the CPR. Subject to the limits set down in Art 59 (1) this Priority may support areas such as:

- Preparation, selection, appraisal & monitoring of programmes & operations which are the subject of co-funded assistance;

- Meetings of the OP Monitoring Committee and any related sub-committees;

- All financial management and control, audit and verification activities on co-funded operations;

- OP-level information actions in accordance with the Communications Action Plan, incl. costs of participation in the INFORM network & the development & operation of programme web-sites;

- Evaluations of the programme or aspects of it, incl. costs of participation in the Evaluation Network;

- Actions for the reduction of the administrative burden on beneficiaries, including the establishment and operation of the computerised system for data exchange and e-cohesion system;

- Provision of guidance and training to Intermediary Bodies and beneficiaries to reinforce the capacity of Member State authorities and beneficiaries to administer and use those Funds and participation by Managing Authority staff in appropriate training programmes;

- Cost of establishment and administration of complaint resolution procedures;

- Study visits and attendance at meetings and conferences related to EU Cohesion Policy;

- Networking, co-ordination and other activities in support of complementarities, with other EU funded programmes, including attendance at steering and monitoring committee meetings;

- The ERDF may be used to support actions to reinforce the capacity of relevant partners in accordance with Art 5(3)(e) and to support exchanges of good practices between such partners;

- Any other activities deemed appropriate by the Certifying and Managing Authority.

The actions above referred to above may concern previous and subsequent programming periods.

In addition, taking account of the recent reconfiguration of regional bodies in Ireland, the Technical Assistance Priority will also cover the approved costs of the Midland and Eastern Regional Assembly in relation to their participation in any of the above activities.

The Technical Assistance Priority will cover the appropriate costs of the ERDF Audit Authority, as well as the costs of the management controls undertaken by the Managing Authority.

Capacity Development
Under this priority it is proposed to address the capacity development needs of the personnel engaged in programme management and implementation. This will take the form of the provision of guidance and training to Intermediary Bodies and beneficiaries to reinforce the capacity of these authorities and beneficiaries to administer and use those Funds and participation by Managing Authority staff in appropriate training programmes. The capacity development supports for staff of Intermediary and beneficiary bodies will include the following:

- Training and guidance on the overall financial management and control system

- National and EU eligibility rules

- Public Procurement for ERDF co-financed operations

- Information and Publicity

- Integration of Horizontal Principles

- Audit Trail and document retention requirements

- EU and national regulations (including Competition and State Aids and EIA and SEA Directives)

- Management verifications

- Preparation for systems and operations audits

- Declarations of eligible expenditure on the ESIF IT System

- E-cohesion

Notwithstanding the need for training programmes for personnel in relation to the new requirements of the 2014 -2020 programming period, the extensive experience within the Managing Authority in the management, monitoring and evaluation and financial control of ERDF co-financed programmes remains in-situ. This institutional capacity and skill sets will ensure the effective and efficient delivery of this Operational Programme. The training and information needs of Managing Authority personnel will be addressed during the lifetime of the Operational Programme and any costs arising will be met from the Technical Assistance budget.

Administrative Arrangements
The Priority will be administered by the Regional Assembly under the general control of the Operational Programme Monitoring Committee. Details of the proposed technical assistance and the arrangements for managing the Programme will be approved by the Monitoring Committee.

Responsibilities of Intermediary Body

The S&E Regional Assembly as Managing Authority and Intermediate Body will be responsible for carrying out all Managing Authority functions as set out in the Common Provisions Regulation (EC) 1303/2013. These include, inter alia:

Managing the Operational Programme
a. support the work of the monitoring committee and provide it with the information it requires to carry out its tasks, in particular data relating to the progress of the operational programme in achieving its objectives, financial data and data relating to indicators and milestones;

b. draw up and, after approval by the monitoring committee, submit to the Commission annual and final implementation reports.

c. make available to intermediate bodies and beneficiaries information that is relevant to the execution of their tasks and the implementation of operations respectively;

d. establish a system to record and store in computerised form data on each operation necessary for monitoring, evaluation, financial management, verification and audit, including data on individual participants in operations, where applicable;

e. ensure that the data referred to above is collected, entered & stored in the system in point (d).

Selection of Operations
a. draw up and, apply appropriate selection procedures and criteria that ensure the contribution of operations to the achievement of the specific objectives and results of the relevant priority; are non-discriminatory and transparent; and take into account the general principles set out in Articles 7 and 8 of CPR (EC) 1303/2013;

b. ensure that a selected operation falls within the scope of the Fund or Funds concerned and can be attributed to a category of intervention a measure identified in the priority or priorities of the operational programme;

c. ensure that the beneficiary is provided with a document setting out the conditions for support for each operation including the specific requirements concerning the products or services to be delivered under the operation, the financing plan, and the time-limit for execution;

d. satisfy itself that the beneficiary has the administrative, financial and operational capacity to fulfil the conditions referred to above before approval of the operation;

e. satisfy itself that, where the operation has started before the submission of an application for funding to the managing authority, applicable law relevant for the operation has been complied with;

f. ensure that operations selected for support from the Funds do not include activities which were part of an operation which has been or should have been subject to a procedure of recovery in accordance with Art 71 of CPR (EC) 1303/2013 following the relocation of a productive activity outside the programme area;

g. determine the categories of intervention the measures to which the expenditure of an operation shall be attributed.

Financial Management and Control
a. verify that the co-financed products and services have been delivered and that expenditure declared by the beneficiaries has been paid and that it complies with applicable law, the operational programme and the conditions for support of the operation;

b. ensure that beneficiaries involved in the implementation of operations reimbursed on the basis of eligible costs actually incurred maintain either a separate accounting system or an adequate accounting code for all transactions relating to an operation;

c. put in place effective and proportionate anti-fraud measures taking into account the risks identified;

d. set up procedures to ensure that all documents regarding expenditure and audits required to ensure an adequate audit trail are held in accordance with the requirements of point (g) of Article 72;

e. draw up the management declaration and annual summary referred to in points (a) and (b) of Article 59(5) of the Financial Regulation;

f. Verifications shall include the following procedures:
   - administrative verifications in respect of each application for reimbursement by beneficiaries;
   - on-the-spot verifications of operations.

Where the Managing Authority is also a beneficiary under the programme, arrangements for the verifications referred to above shall ensure adequate separation of functions.

In addition, the Regional Assembly will draft Administrative Agreements with Beneficiaries which will set out in detail the responsibilities of each level in respect of financial management and control and the arrangements for the payment of amounts due.

Responsibilities of Public Beneficiary Body

The Beneficiary Bodies will be responsible for ensuring that all payment claims for European Structural and Investment Fund expenditure submitted, are supported by receipted invoices and audit documents, and that a clear audit trail exists. They will also be responsible for ensuring in respect of co-financed Interventions/projects, that only eligible expenditure actually incurred is certified and submitted to the Intermediate Body. Level 1 Public Bodies will be required to respect EU and national regulations in respect of public procurement, information and publicity and electronic transmission of data.

Integration of Horizontal Principles

The activities funded under the measure are aimed at ensuring that the measures and the OP generally are achieving their objectives, which include the horizontal priorities of environmental sustainability, equality, including gender equality, people with disabilities and social inclusion.

Selection Process and Criteria

Project selection is not relevant to this priority theme. All eligible expenditure, duly incurred and certified will be eligible for re-imbursement.

Appeals

Performance Indicators

Priority-level Output Indicators: Investment Priority 1(a)

ID	Indicator	Measurement Unit	Fund	Category of Region	Target Value	Source of Data	Reporting Frequency
6.1	No. of Monitoring Committee meetings	No. of meetings	ERDF	More Developed	10 (1 per year)	MA administrative records	Annual
6.2	No. of Evaluation Studies conducted	No. of studies	ERDF	More Developed	5 (1 per priority)	MA	Annual
6.3	No. of annual Information & Publicity Events	No. of events	ERDF	More Developed	7 (1 per annum 2014-20)	MA	Annual

Financial Management

The Technical Assistance Priority theme will be administered by the Southern Regional Assembly. The gross public expenditure in respect of expenditure incurred under this measure will be provided for in the vote of the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform. That office will transfer funds to the Managing Authority from the appropriate sub-head, on the basis of reported expenditure.

Payments will be made to beneficiaries on the basis of invoices and statements of account submitted by them. These claims will be subject to examination and approval by the Managing Authority (Administration) and passed to the Managing Authority (Finance Unit) for certification and payment from the sums advanced by the Office of the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform.

As beneficiaries, the Regional Assembly (Administration), ERDF Audit Authority, will be required to have in place separate accounting arrangements in respect of expenditure under the measure.

Administrative agreements will be entered into between the Certifying Authority, Managing Authority/ Intermediate Body and Level 1 Public Bodies which will set out in detail the responsibilities of each level in respect of financial management and control.

Document Retention

In accordance with Article140 of the Common Provisions Regulation (EC) 1303/2013, all supporting documents regarding expenditure, verification checks, certification and audits on operations for which total eligible expenditure is less than €1,000,000.00 will be kept available for the EU Commission and Court of Auditors for a period of three years from 31 December following the submission of the accounts in which the expenditure of the operation is included.   In the case of operations over €1,000,000.00 all supporting documentation shall be kept for a 2-year period from 31 December following the submission of accounts in which the final expenditure of the completed operation is included.

Monitoring and Reporting Arrangements

The Priority will be administered by the Southern Regional Assembly under the general control of the Operational Programme Monitoring Committee. Details of the proposed technical assistance and the arrangements for managing the theme will be reported to the Monitoring Committee.

In addition, the Regional Assembly and Level 1 Public Bodies will be required to provide data on the IT system which will be used to transfer information to the Commission. This system is currently being developed.

Information and Publicity

The Technical Assistance priority will support the carrying out of a wide range of activities in order to ensure compliance with the Information and Publicity requirements as set out in Regulation (EC) 1303/2013 and detailed in the Communications Action Plan for the OP.