

CIVIL SOCIETY CHALLENGE FUND (CSCF)

APPLICATION GUIDELINES

Valid as of 1st March 2010 for those applying for funding starting in April 2011.

Please note: These guidelines have been updated. Please read them carefully, even if you have made CSCF applications in the past.

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INTRODUCTION TO DFID'S WORK WITH CIVIL SOCIETY

1. The Department for International Development (DFID) leads the British government's fight against world poverty. We work with many partners in order to achieve this, including civil society organisations (CSOs).

2. DFID has policy and funding relationships with a diverse range of civil society organisations (CSOs). These include non-governmental organisations, trade unions, think-tanks, faith and Diaspora organisations and community groups. We work with CSOs:

- To enable the provision of goods and services to the poor and marginalised in developing countries
- To enable the poor and marginalised in developing countries to influence and hold to account developing country governments

- To aid civil society to influence, advocate and hold to account international institutions and the UK government
- To aid civil society to build support for development

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INTRODUCTION TO THE CIVIL SOCIETY CHALLENGE FUND (CSCF) COMPETITION

3. The CSCF is one of DFID's main central funds for civil society. It has an annual budget of £14m and currently supports around 130 projects with over 80 different UK based CSOs.

4. The CSCF is administered on behalf of DFID's Civil Society Department by an externally contracted Fund Manager. DFID sets the policy and makes funding decisions.

5. The current guidelines relate to the CSCF annual competition open from 1st April 2010 (for funding in 2011). The CSCF guidelines are reviewed annually, so please do read them carefully, even if you have made CSCF applications in the past.

6. The CSCF is a highly competitive fund. In the 2010 funding round, the CSCF received 409 Concept Notes from 253 different UK based organisations. This led to the submission of 142 proposals. Only 32 of these were funded (just under 8% of the original applications).

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CSCF OBJECTIVES

7. The Civil Society Challenge Fund (CSCF) supports the work of UK based CSOs in their efforts to strengthen and **build the capacity of their partners in the South**. This recognises the need for poor people to have their voices heard whenever decisions are taken that will affect their livelihood be it locally, nationally or internationally.

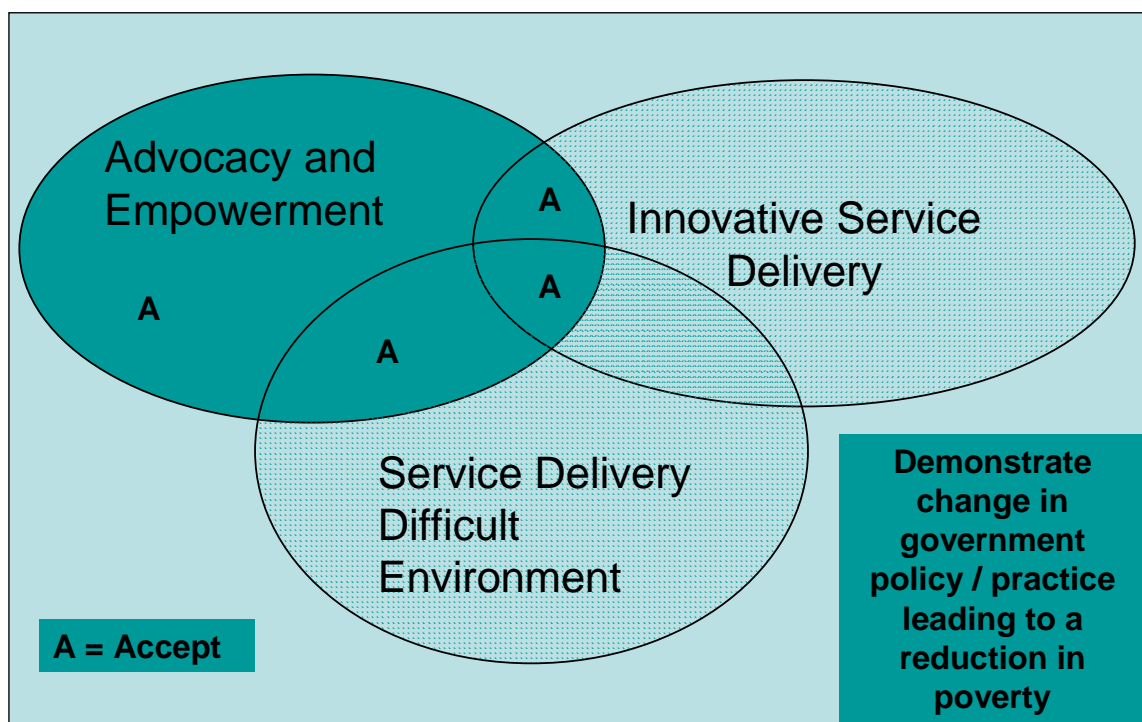
8. The CSCF seeks to fund **advocacy** and **empowerment** projects which are aimed at building the capacity of the poor, or the groups who represent them, to have their voices heard. The Fund is also willing to consider proposals which are predominantly service delivery in nature so long as they are innovative or working in a difficult environment and include an element of advocacy and empowerment which is integral to the project approach. All projects need to demonstrate how the funding will contribute to a reduction in poverty through a change in policy and/or practice.

9. The CSCF aims to contribute to **poverty reduction** of poor communities and excluded people in the developing world. There is a need for a flow of information to poor people about their rights as citizens, and the factors that perpetuate poverty. Therefore all applications must include an element of raising awareness of **entitlements and rights** to achieve changes in government(s) policy and/or practice, which can be demonstrated within the lifetime of the project. It should be clear what **gap in government policy or practice** the project is addressing given what governments have agreed to provide and are providing.

10. All projects must fall into one or more of the following five categories and include elements of advocacy and empowerment.

- 10.1. **Improving the capacity of Southern civil society to engage in local decision-making processes:** This includes enabling poor people to engage in local development strategy processes, decisions about allocation of resources and monitoring state performance at local level.
- 10.2. **Improving the capacity of Southern civil society to engage in national decision-making processes:** This includes representing the interests of poor people in processes such as formulating and monitoring poverty reduction strategies, national budgets, legislation and national sector programmes. It also includes promoting formal and informal sector workers rights and labour standards (including but not restricted to trade unions).
- 10.3. **Improving the capacity of Southern civil society to participate more effectively at the international level:** This includes international advocacy and influencing the work of international institutions and policy makers.
- 10.4. **Providing innovative service delivery:** These are projects that develop innovative approaches to service delivery which provide lessons that can be shared and built upon. In order to ensure long term long lasting benefits, all such programmes are required to include components of empowerment, capacity building and advocacy.
- 10.5. **Providing service delivery in difficult environments:** There are circumstances in which CSO basic service delivery could be the only viable approach to helping poor people. In such circumstances, whilst a large part of project funding might support direct service delivery, applications are expected to include elements of empowerment, capacity building and advocacy. Examples of such circumstances include: areas not reached by government services and unlikely to be reached in the foreseeable future; post-conflict environments, particularly where systems have been destroyed; post natural disaster development (e.g. strengthening civil society post-tsunami or post earthquake going beyond the humanitarian relief phase); communities whose lifestyle does not conform to a universal service delivery system.

What can be funded by CSCF?



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WHO CAN APPLY TO THE CSCF?

11. Only UK-based not-for-profit civil society organisations (CSOs), networks or coalitions are eligible to apply for the CSCF. This includes non-governmental organisations, academic institutions (including think-tanks), faith-based organisations, disabled persons organisations, trade unions, Diaspora groups and ethnic minority organisations.

12. To be eligible for funding, you must demonstrate that your organisation or network:

- 12.1. Has a UK-based office with significant autonomy and a registration. If your organisation is part of a larger international family, we will require documentation to show that you have your own UK constitution and board of trustees.
- 12.2. Has the necessary skills and experience to manage effectively its inputs to the activities proposed.
- 12.3. Has the capability to manage and account properly for total project funds.
- 12.4. Has an established and effective relationship with independently registered local civil society organisation(s) in the country(ies) where the project will be implemented. This link must be more than just a channel for transferring funds. The UK organisation must add value to the achievement of the project outcomes and the main local partner must have a significant degree of autonomy. If the main local partner is part of the same international family as the UK organisation, we will require documentation to show it has its own constitution and board of trustees.

13. Organisations currently holding a Partnership Programme Arrangement (PPA) with DFID are not eligible for CSCF funding. However, a PPA holder can be a local partner as long as the organisation does not receive funding through the CSCF budget.

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HOW MUCH FUNDING CAN BE PROVIDED?

14. The CSCF can provide up to £500,000 per project. We are particularly interested in projects where the UK organisation has secured a degree of funding from other sources and/or is making a contribution of its own, however, we are willing to consider up to 100% funding where there is no other funding available. It is important that you are realistic when setting your budget. DFID will look for evidence that both the UK and overseas partners have the capacity to manage the level of funding requested effectively.

15. DFID will provide up to 8% of the total annual DFID overseas budget for annual expenditure related to the UK partner (whether incurred in the UK or in the implementing country).

16. Up to 5% of the total DFID overseas project budget can be spent on Building Support for Development in the UK. The cost for these activities can include related UK staff costs and must be shown clearly in the budget.

17. More detailed information on preparation of proposal budgets is provided in the separate [CSCF Financial Management Guidelines](#). It is essential that you also read through those guidelines.

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WHAT IS THE MAXIMUM FUNDING PERIOD?

18. We can provide CSCF project funding for up to 5 years. We do not provide funding for follow-on phases of CSCF projects. .

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WHICH COUNTRIES ARE ELIGIBLE?

19. Provided the intended beneficiaries are poor women and men, applications may be accepted for activities in any developing country in Africa and South Asia and in a number of countries in the rest of Asia and the Pacific, Latin America, Caribbean, the former Soviet Union and South-Eastern Europe (if not EU accession countries). We will also consider proposals for work across groups of countries, whether cross-regional or trans-continental work. However, the reasons behind linking countries / regions should be clearly stated. If you are unsure whether or not a country is eligible first check the DFID CSCF web site to see whether or not there are currently projects funded in that country and if so then this will be accepted. If you are still unsure then contact the CSCF Fund Manager.

WHAT CAN'T DFID FUND UNDER THE CSCF?

20. **Areas covered by other DFID funding schemes**

In order to avoid duplicating effort, applicants should check all DFID funding schemes available in the funding section of DFID's website to see which funding scheme is most applicable. If the proposal is submitted to more than one of the DFID funding schemes

then this should be clearly stated. It is for this reason that the CSCF does not consider projects that are primarily focused on research (DFID's Central Research Department has responsibility for such requests). Similarly, DFID cannot consider applications for disaster or humanitarian relief initiatives responding to natural and human disasters. DFID's Conflict, Humanitarian and Security Department (CHASE) holds responsibility for this.

21. Welfare activities / Capital Expenditure

The primary aim of the CSCF is to build up people's understanding of their rights and support sustainable development. Initiatives which consist primarily of welfare activities are not eligible. Likewise, major capital expenditure cannot be supported (e.g. construction of buildings, purchase of land). Any other aspect of capital expenditure needs to be fully justified as contributing to the sustainable outcome of the project (e.g. project related equipment, and vehicles).

22. Discrimination

We will not consider projects that discriminate between individuals or groups of people on any grounds including race, sex, sexual orientation, religion, disability or age.

23. Evangelising & proselytising

We will not consider projects that contain any element of evangelising or proselytising.

24. Scholarships

We do not fund educational scholarships.

25. 'Stand Alone' activities

We do not fund stand alone initiatives which are not part of a wider project. These include one-off conferences, seminars, training events or exchanges. Nor can we support projects dealing purely with the overseas transportation of goods and supplies.

26. Core Support

The CSCF is designed for project funding and not to provide institutional support. All funding requested including administration budget lines therefore need to be related to the project.

27. Civil Disobedience

We do not provide support to projects which actively encourage civil disobedience.

28. Partnerships

Project partners must be comprised mainly of civil society organisations or networks located where the project is to be implemented. We will not consider proposals where the **main** partner is:

- Government
- A 'for profit' organisation
- A member of the same family or network as the UK applicant which is not autonomous (see paragraph 12)

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HOW TO APPLY FOR FUNDING UNDER THE CSCF

29. You must first submit a Concept Note. If the Concept Note is approved, you will be invited to submit a Proposal.

RESUBMISSION POLICY

30. You can resubmit a rejected Concept Note once only. This must be within the same or the following year's concept note round. You can resubmit an unsuccessful Proposal once to the following year's proposal round.

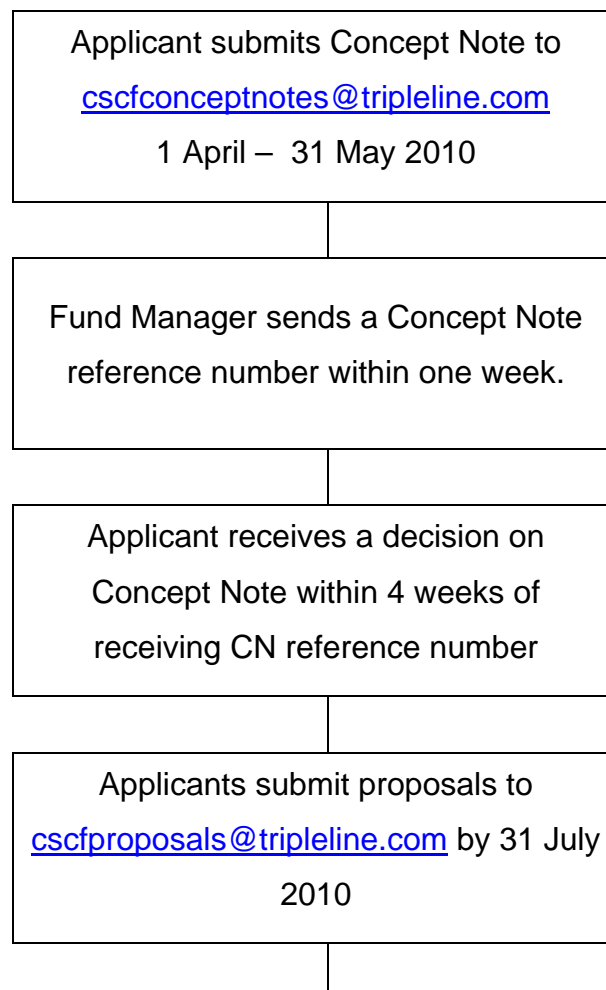
31. Please note that the CSCF resubmission policy is under review and may change for the 2012 funding round.

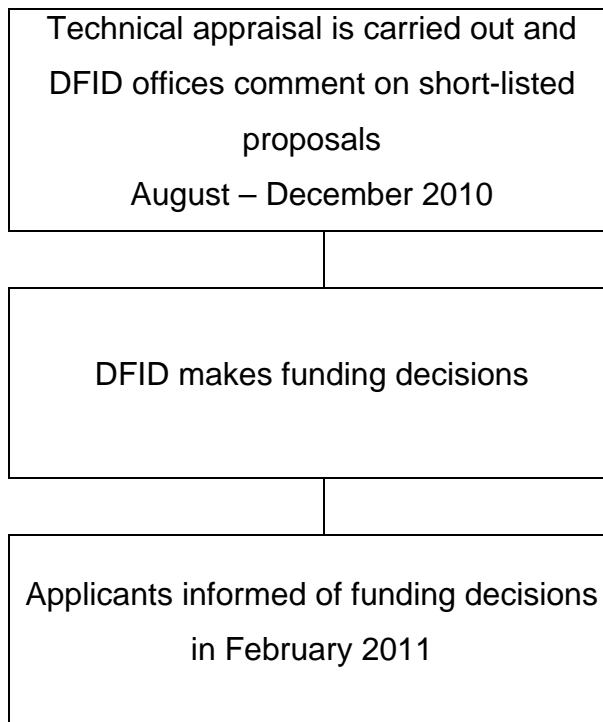
TIMING FOR APPLICATIONS

32. **Concept Notes:** Concept Notes must be submitted between 1st April and 31st May 2010. Concept Notes received after midnight on 31st May will not be considered.

33. **Proposals:** Proposals must be received no later than midnight on 31st July 2010 in order to be considered for funding starting in April 2011. Proposals received after midnight on 31st July will not be considered.

The submission process at a glance





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FORMAT FOR CONCEPT NOTES

34. **A Concept Note should set out the underlying idea of the proposal and how it relates to the CSCF. It does not need to be a summary of a fully developed project at this stage.** The Concept Note is intended to provide enough information to decide whether or not a project idea fits the CSCF and is eligible for funding.
35. We will accept **a maximum 2 concept notes per organisation** per funding round. This includes resubmissions.
36. When submitting a concept note, you must use the [CSCF concept note form](#). Please note the following page limits:
- Sections 1 – 4: max 6 A4 pages

Your Concept Note must be sent by e-mail to cscfconceptnotes@tripleline.com in Word format.

37. Concept Notes are intended to help DFID assess the eligibility of your organisation and to make an initial assessment as to whether your ideas fit with the priorities of the CSCF. The assessment is based on the Concept Note alone. Please make sure you include all the relevant details, even if some may seem to be common knowledge. Unless specifically asked, please do not send any other documents.
38. **All applicants must send the first column of a Logical Framework, which includes the main project activities.** (For information on logframes, see [CSCF Monitoring, Evaluation and Lesson Learning Guidelines](#), section 5). The logical framework should be no more than 4 A4 pages long and must be written in Arial font size 12.

39. Concept Notes can be resubmitted once, taking account of feedback. By submitting your Concept Note early in the funding round, you will have time to incorporate any feedback into a resubmitted concept note or full proposal.
40. You will receive an automated response upon receipt of your Concept Note (CN). A CN reference number will follow within one week (this number should be quoted in all correspondence). You should receive a decision within four weeks of receipt of your CN reference number.
41. **If we approve your Concept Note**, you will receive a letter via e-mail inviting you to submit a proposal. In this letter, we may raise issues requiring attention. You must address these issues and provide a covering letter showing where in your proposal you have done so.
42. You must submit a proposal within the current or next funding round. If this does not happen, the Concept Note will be considered withdrawn. Please note that this policy is under review and may change for the 2012 funding round.
43. Please note that if we invite you to prepare a proposal, this is not a guarantee that your application will be successful. It is therefore important that you do not enter into any formal commitments or raise the expectations of your partners or other funders while you are going through the application process.
44. If your Concept Note is rejected you will receive a letter explaining why we are not inviting you to submit a proposal.

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FORMAT FOR PROPOSALS

45. A maximum of two proposals a year can be submitted from each UK based organisation. This includes resubmissions. .
46. When submitting a full proposal, you must use the [CSCF proposal form](#). The following page limits apply:
 - Sections 1 to 12: max 14 A4 pages
 - Section 13: max 2 A4 pages per partner

Your proposal must be sent by e-mail to cscfproposals@tripleline.com in Word format.

47. **ALL applicants** must also send a project budget (see [Financial Management Guidelines](#) and a full Logical Framework (See [CSCF Monitoring, Evaluation and Lesson Learning Guidelines](#), section 5: The logframe). The logical framework should be no more than 4 A4 pages long and must be in Arial font size 12.
48. If it is the first time you apply to the CSCF, you must also send in electronic format:
 - **A copy of your constitution.** This may be a Memorandum and Articles of Association, a Trust Deed, or a set of rules, and should describe the purposes of your organisation, how the organisation is governed and managed.

- **A set of your most recent annual accounts.** These should be no more than twelve months old. Whatever format you use, your accounts should be signed and dated by the chair or treasurer on behalf of the management committee / board of trustees.
49. If submitting more than one proposal, you only need to submit one copy of these documents.
50. If your application is successful, you will subsequently be asked for the following documentation:
- A copy of your organisation's equal opportunities statement
 - If your project involves work with children or youth (age 0-18), you must submit documentation outlining your organisation's policy and practice in respect of Child Protection. You must also submit a [Child Protection Self Audit](#).
 - If your project is working with a local partner in India, you should send in their Foreign Contribution Registration Act document.
51. Unsuccessful proposals can be resubmitted only once. You must ensure that the feedback given on the proposal has been fully addressed and that the changes made to your proposal are highlighted within the covering letter. This includes changes to partners and/or the context of the project. Please note that there is no need for you to resubmit a concept note for this proposal. However, when submitting your proposal you should indicate that it is a resubmission. Your resubmitted proposal will be in competition with other proposals as before and will not be given preference over first time submissions. Please note that the resubmission policy is under review by DFID and may change for the 2012 funding round.

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HOW DOES DFID DECIDE WHICH PROJECTS TO FUND?

52. The CSCF Fund Manager is responsible for appraising Concept Notes and Proposals but DFID always makes the final decision. All judgements are made on the basis of your written application. It is important, therefore, that you provide all the relevant details even if some might appear to be common knowledge. Do not be afraid to state the obvious.

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DECISIONS AT CONCEPT NOTE STAGE

53. The CSCF Fund Manager uses the following criteria to decide whether to accept or reject a concept note:
- 53.1 **Eligibility in relation to organisation:** Is the applicant a not-for-profit UK-based CSO, network or coalition? If part of a larger international family does the applicant have its own UK constitution and board of trustees?

53.2 **Eligibility in relation to project:** If the Concept Note a resubmission, does it comply with the policy on resubmissions (paragraphs 28 and 29)? Is it a follow-on project?

53.3 **Fit with CSCF objectives. A concept note will be rejected if:**

- There is no clear advocacy or engagement with government.
- It is not obvious what change(s) in government policy and/or practice the project is aiming to achieve.
- Rights and entitlements are not mentioned and are not a focus for the project.
- Advocacy, empowerment and capacity building are not sufficiently central to the project concept.

53.4 **Project design:** Based on the information submitted, is the design realistic and feasible within the timeframe?

53.5 **Autonomy of main local partner:** Is the main partner autonomous from the UK applicant?

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DECISIONS AT PROPOSAL STAGE

54. The CSCF Fund Manager uses the following criteria used to assess proposals:

54.1 **Clear fit with CSCF objectives:** This relates to paragraphs 7, 8, 9 and 10 of these guidelines and is a more detailed assessment than that undertaken at Concept Note stage. It includes an assessment of how the project will contribute to the reduction of poverty.

54.2 **Project approach:** The project design should be clear and coherent. It should also be clear what change the project intends to bring about, who is being targeted, where, how and why. The methodology needs to be clearly set out and logical. Project risks should be carefully considered and mitigated as applicable. Please note that the timeframe should be reasonable and realistic to carry out the proposed activities and achieve the anticipated outcomes (which is why proposals can be funded for up to five years).

54.3 **Monitoring, evaluation and lesson learning:** Good monitoring and evaluation (M&E) is important because these activities improve performance by focusing projects on delivering outputs and impact. They enable DFID to monitor and evaluate the performance of the CSCF as a whole, making sure the project portfolio is contributing to reducing poverty and demonstrating, for public accountability purposes, that the fund is an effective use of money. M&E should be seen as part of project management and not separate to it.

All projects are required to have a **logframe**, with progress indicators which use the **SMART principle**, i.e. Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Time-bound. **All projects must carry out a baseline assessment** (this should be done in the first year of the project if data is not already available). Note that the logframe for CSCF should include separate outputs for 'capacity building of

local civil society' and 'building support for development in the UK'. In order to develop your full logframe in line with CSCF policy, please refer to the CSCF Monitoring, Evaluation and Lesson Learning Guidelines.

M&E also provides a system to record lessons learned which can be shared and used by the partner, DFID and others to improve strategies, project design and activities. Applications should have a clear focus on learning as an integral part of the proposed activities and show that lessons learned will be effectively disseminated. DFID is particularly interested in initiatives that are innovative and demonstrate how the approaches could be adapted in similar situations by other development partners.

- 54.4 **Project rationale:** The proposal should be clear why the project is needed given the project context and what governments have agreed to provide and are providing. The context should be shown in relation to other development initiatives and based on lessons learned from previous experience of the partners or others.

This assessment includes **coherence with DFID Country Assistance Plans/Regional Assistance Plans**. DFID has Country Assistance Plans (CAPs) or Regional Assistance Programmes (RAPs) for all countries/regions where we have development assistance programmes. These papers set out how DFID aims to contribute to poverty reduction. In some countries there will be other key strategy papers which influence DFID's work. Proposals should be consistent with DFID's current strategies in the country in question. [Country Assistance Papers](#) and Regional Assistance Plans are available on DFID's website.

- 54.5 **Project management (including governance), partnership and UK partner's added value:** Most CSCF projects involve a partnership based around the applicant helping to build the capacity of the southern partner(s) to empower the poor. However, we also consider other forms of partnership e.g. building international linkages to enable Southern civil society to be more involved in global advocacy.

It is essential that all partners make a genuine contribution to delivering the overall objectives of the initiative. Applications must clearly show the roles and responsibility of all partners. For example, the UK partner must offer more than just a channel for transfer of funds - and the Southern partner must be able to sustain the initiative after DFID funding finishes.

Project management (and governance) and project implementation arrangements must be clearly articulated.

It is the responsibility of the UK partner to ensure that any local partner who is in contact with children or youth (age 0-18) has child protection policies and procedures in place or get assistance to develop them. **Proposals for projects working with children and youth must set out how the UK partner will work to ensure the safety and welfare of children by the partner organisation.** This should also be clearly described under the capacity building output in the logframe.

54.6 **Cross-cutting issues:** All projects supported under the CSCF must clearly demonstrate how they will address the following key cross-cutting issues where relevant. If these are not relevant in a given context the applicant should state why this is the case:

- How will the project **actively promote gender equality**? This is a requirement for all projects.
- How will the project address the needs of marginalised groups, including **disabled people** and **people living with HIV/AIDS**?
- How will the project address the needs of **children, youth and the elderly**?
- What positive or negative impact is the project likely to have on **the environment** and are appropriate environmental management plans in place?

54.7 **How the project will be used to build support for development in the UK:** All proposals are required to have a component of building support for development (BSD) in the UK. It is essential that this is more than just disseminating information to supporters who are already convinced about the importance of development. BSD should aim to reach new audiences.

54.8 **Value for money:** It is of key concern for DFID that all funding must be able to demonstrate value for money. The project needs to show how project outcomes justify the cost. This can be done for example by estimating the project cost per number of direct beneficiaries and the ability of the project to justify this. The CSCF is also looking for a significant proportion of the project budget to be spent on activities and in the South.

54.9 **Sustainability and impact potential:** All proposals must set out the long term impact which the project aims to achieve. The CSCF is looking for projects to fund which will be able to demonstrate sustainability of impacts after the funding ends. Projects must therefore be realistic in their design. Applications must also address financial and institutional sustainability after the UK partner withdraws.

55. Applicants should note that more emphasis is placed on the 'fit with the CSCF', 'project approach' and 'monitoring and evaluation' criteria during the assessment stage.

56. Based on the Fund Manager's technical appraisal DFID will short-list the strongest proposals. These will be sent to DFID offices or British Embassies in the proposed beneficiary countries for comments on the local context and the relationship to DFID's Country Assistance Plan (CAP) and/or Regional Assistance Plans (RAP). Short-listed proposals will also be referred to DFID's Policy and Research Division for feedback. Comments from DFID country offices and policy teams are given considerable weight in the decision on funding.

57. The selection of the initiatives to support will primarily be based on the quality of the project. However we aim to develop a balanced portfolio of initiatives e.g. a reasonable balance between small and larger projects, between low risk and high-risk activities, between types of organisation, and a balanced geographical spread.

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

58. As a government department, DFID must ensure that public funds are used properly and that projects funded through the CSCF meet government reporting and accounting requirements.
59. If the project proposal is agreed, we will issue a grant award letter. This sets out, amongst other things, the size of the grant and our financial and narrative reporting requirements. These include:
- Quarterly financial statements (adhering to DFID financial year April-March).
 - Organisations will also be asked to submit copies of their annual audited accounts for the duration of the project.
 - Annual reports on progress against the agreed objectives
 - Annual submission of case study material from year 2 and onwards
 - An external evaluation towards the end of the project.
 - A Project Completion Report which is due within three months of the end of the project.
60. For more information, please see the 'Reporting Requirements' section on the [CSCF Monitoring, Evaluation and Lesson Learning Guidelines](#).

PAYMENT OF FUNDS

61. The CSCF makes payments quarterly in arrears. However, if payment of funding in advance is essential, organisations can contact the Fund Manager with a request outlining why payment in arrears is not suitable. This should be done when the Grant Agreement is signed.
62. For more information on budgets and payment of funds, please see the [Financial Management Guidelines](#).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF DFID FUNDING

63. DFID requires that all organisations funded through the CSCF clearly recognise DFID as funding body in any public or media communications about their CSCF projects.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION AND OBLIGATIONS

64. DFID is committed to open government and to meeting our responsibilities under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 . Accordingly, all information submitted to DFID may

need to be disclosed in response to requests under the Act. DFID has a policy of active disclosure where possible and we may decide to include certain information in the publication scheme which we maintain under the Act.

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WHO TO CONTACT

65. If there are any areas where you would like clarification or further guidance, please contact Triple Line on +44 (0)20 8788 4672 or send your query to <mailto:cscf@tripleline.com>

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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