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Information Society and Media Directorate-General
Digital Content and Cognitive Systems

Safer Internet

A multiannual Community programme on protecting children using the
Internet and other communication technologies

(2009-2013)

Guidance Notes for Evaluators

Call for Proposals

2012

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1. INTRODUCTION

This document contains guidance notes for experts evaluating proposals received in response to the Safer Internet 2012 call for proposals¹.

Before starting to evaluate, experts should read carefully the call documentation governing the evaluation. It is available from the programme website at <http://ec.europa.eu/saferinternet> and includes:

- the 2012 Work Programme,
- the 2012 call for proposals,
- the 2012 Guide for Proposers
- the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) and
- the Model Grant Agreement.

The present guidelines observe the provisions contained in title VI "Grants" of the Financial Regulation² governing the award of grants in the framework of calls for proposals, complemented by the relevant provisions of the Implementing Rules³.

The evaluation of proposals will be based on the principles of transparency and equality of treatment. It will be carried out by the Commission with the assistance of outside experts. All proposals will be treated in strict confidence.

2. EVALUATORS

2.1. Evaluation Committee

The Commission appoints an Evaluation Committee of at least three Commission officials to evaluate the proposals submitted in response to a call. The Evaluation Committee is responsible for carrying out the evaluation. The Evaluation Committee will be assisted by other Commission staff and outside experts.

Upon completion of their work, the members of the Evaluation Committee will sign a record of all the proposals examined, containing an assessment of their quality and identifying those proposals recommended for funding.

2.2. Outside Experts

Outside experts, i.e. experts who work in a personal capacity and in performing the work do not represent any organisation, assist the Evaluation Committee in the evaluation of proposals. Outside experts are selected, on the basis of their curricula, from the list of

¹ <http://ec.europa.eu/saferinternet>

² OJ L 248 of 16.9.2002, p. 1.

³ OJ L 357 of 31.12.2002, p. 1.

individuals who are registered in the expert database through the Safer Internet web site in response to a call for expression of interest published in the Official Journal⁴.

The experts retained on the final list selected will thus reflect a high level of expertise, an appropriate range of competencies and language skills in view of the proposals to be evaluated, a reasonable gender balance, a reasonable distribution of geographical origins and regular rotation of experts.

Experts are expected to be independent, impartial and objective, and to behave in a professional manner throughout the entire evaluation process.

Conflicts of interest: Under the terms of their appointment letter, experts must declare beforehand any known conflicts of interest, and must immediately inform a Commission staff member if one becomes apparent during the course of the evaluation. The Commission will take whatever action is necessary to remove any conflict.

Confidentiality: The appointment letter also requires experts to maintain strict confidentiality with respect to the whole evaluation process. They must follow any instruction given by the Commission to ensure this. Under no circumstance may an expert attempt to contact an applicant on his own account, either during the evaluation or afterwards.

3. EVALUATION OF PROPOSALS

3.1. Evaluation Criteria

Each proposal is assessed against the evaluation criteria consisting of **eligibility**, **selection** and **award criteria**, as defined in the Work Programme.

While the Commission takes charge of verifying compliance with the eligibility and selection criteria, the award criteria are applied with the assistance of outside experts.

The eligibility criteria are intended to ensure receipt of the proposals by the Commission by the call closing date and time as well as proposal completeness.

The selection criteria help assess whether proposers have sufficient resources to co-finance the project and the professional competencies and qualifications required to complete the proposed work successfully.

The award criteria serve to evaluate the technical merits of proposals against the relevant requirements set forth in the work programme. A separate set of award criteria (with specific weightings) applies to each project type. The award criteria are applied on the basis of the information supplied in the proposal.

Each award criterion is marked from 1 to 10. A maximum weighted score of 100 points can be given to a proposal. Proposals that do not reach at least 60 points will not be retained for co-funding.

⁴ Official Journal C 130 of 09.06.2009, p.5

3.2. Evaluation Process

The evaluation of the submissions received in response to the call is carried out through the following stages, conducted under the supervision of the Evaluation Committee:

1. **Opening, registration and acknowledgement** of submissions.
2. Verification of **eligibility** of proposals.
3. Evaluation of proposals based on the **award criteria** with the assistance of outside experts
4. Application of **selection criteria** to proposals of sufficient quality with regard to the award criteria.
5. **Evaluation report.**

3.3. Application of the Award Criteria

The award criteria are applied going through the following phases:

3.3.1. Individual Assessment

Individual reading starts with a briefing of the evaluators about the scope of the actions, the application of the award criteria, scoring and the evaluation process.

Each proposal is allocated to three evaluators each of whom completes and signs off an Individual Assessment Report for each proposal and notes a score for the relevant award criteria.

To facilitate and structure the evaluation process, the Individual Assessment Report form maps the award criteria against the objectives, conditions and expected results set forth for the respective action in the work programme.

Output: Individual Assessment Reports

3.3.2. Consensus Evaluation

Consensus evaluation starts with a question and answer session for the experts to clarify any doubts or queries they may have after reading the proposals with respect to the scope of the actions, the application of the award criteria and/or scoring.

During this evaluation phase, the three experts who assessed a given proposal individually (triplet) meet to evaluate it with a view to reaching a consensus on their merits against the respective action objectives, starting from their individual views. As not all experts may have identified all relevant aspects of each proposal in their individual reading, this may involve a revision of their initial views depending on the findings and/or arguments advanced by the other experts.

Consensus meetings are chaired by a Commission official, whose role is to ascertain that discussions are fair and comprehensive, that all voices are heard and that the conclusions are recorded accurately. One expert is appointed as proposal rapporteur, who will draft the Consensus Report and, if needed, the Consensus Meeting Minutes.

The results of consensus evaluation are recorded in the following documents:

- Consensus Report, signed by the three experts and the Commission official.
 - All Consensus Reports will provide comments and scores agreed by the experts for each award criterion in line with the common view formed during the discussion.

These reports may include comments that the experts wish to address to the Commission in view of possible project negotiations, but which are not intended to be included in the Evaluation Summary report (see 3.3.4 below). Such indications may cover any relevant technical, financial or managerial aspect of a proposal.

- Consensus Meeting Minutes (optional), signed by the proposal rapporteur and the Commission official. They describe how decisions regarding the evaluation results were reached for those cases in which the consensus was not reached smoothly and/or there were significant deviations between the individual scores and the consensus score.

In case no consensus is achieved, this is reported in the Consensus Meeting Minutes. In that case, the Evaluation Committee may decide to bring in additional experts or to allocate the proposal to a new triplet or to submit the case to the respective target area panel.

Output: Consensus Report
 Consensus Meeting Minutes

3.3.3. *Panel discussion*

Separate panel discussions will be held for the following actions:

- **Action 1.1 Integrated network – Safer Internet Centres**
- **Action 2.1 Targeted project: Enhancing law enforcement agencies' identification and analysis of child pornography**
- **Action 3.1 Thematic Network: Promoting positive online experiences for young children**
- **Action 4.1 Knowledge enhancement project : Investigating the impact on young people of convergence of technology**
- **Action 4.2 Knowledge enhancement project: Identifying child friendly search/browser tools**

Panels will comprise all experts who evaluated proposals submitted in response to a given action.

The purpose of the panel discussion is

- to review the results of the consensus meetings, drawing on the collective wisdom of the panel and ensuring consistency of scores.
- to establish a ranked list of proposals recommended for funding for each action.
- to approve the list(s) of proposals not recommended for funding.

Panel discussions will be based on the list(s) of proposals evaluated, established by decreasing scores, the respective Consensus Reports and a presentation by the respective proposal rapporteurs of the proposals likely to be recommended for funding.

Panel discussions are chaired by the Commission official responsible for the target area, whose role is to ascertain that discussions are fair and comprehensive, that all voices are heard and that the conclusions are recorded accurately. In that task, the Commission official is assisted by the Panel Rapporteur, who will draft the minutes of the meeting, to be signed by the Commission official and the Rapporteur.

The tasks of the panel will also include:

- resolving cases where no consensus could be reached,
- recommending a priority order for proposals with equal scores,
- making recommendations on the possible clustering or combination of proposals.

Output: List of ranked proposals for each action
Approved list(s) of proposals not recommended for funding
Action Meeting Minutes

3.3.4. *Evaluation Summary Reports*

The final results of the technical evaluation of each proposal are recorded in Evaluation Summary Reports, which reflect the outcome of the panel discussions. They serve to inform proposers on the scores and comments arising from the evaluation of their proposal against the award criteria.

4. SELECTION & FOLLOW-UP

The results of the evaluation are summarized in the Evaluation Report. The Commission selects proposals for funding on the basis of the recommendations made by the Evaluation Committee in this report and the available budget envelope.

Once the evaluation report has been finalised, the Commission notifies co-ordinators of all proposals of the outcome of the evaluation by sending out the Evaluation Summary Reports. On approval of the Implementation Plan, co-ordinators of proposals retained for funding are contacted to negotiate a possible grant agreement.

5. REDRESS PROCEDURE

If, following receipt of the information letter with the results of the evaluation (within the Evaluation Summary report) the coordinator believes there have been shortcomings in the handling of his or her proposal, and that these shortcomings have jeopardised the outcome of the evaluation process, the redress procedure can be used.

An internal evaluation review committee ("redress committee") will then be convened to examine those cases that have been submitted by co-ordinators, before one month from the receipt of the Commission's information letter.

The committee's role is to ensure a coherent legal interpretation of such requests and equal treatment of applicants. It provides specialist opinions on the implementation of the evaluation process on the basis of all the available information related to the proposal and its evaluation. It works independently. The committee itself does not evaluate the

proposal. If the committee considers that there has been a failing in the eligibility checking or evaluation process that is likely to have jeopardised the decision whether or not to fund the proposal, it may suggest a further evaluation of all or part of the proposal by independent experts. The committee will not call into question the judgement of appropriately qualified groups of experts.

The committee is composed of Commission staff having the requisite expertise in legal and procedural matters. It is chaired by an official from a department other than the one responsible for the call. The call-coordinator (or other designated person from the department responsible for the call) is a member of the committee.

In the light of its review, the committee will recommend a course of action to the authorising officer responsible for the call.

ANNEX: INDIVIDUAL ASSESSMENT REPORT FORMS

- Action 1.1 Integrated network – Safer Internet Centres
- Action 2.1 Targeted project: Enhancing law enforcement agencies' identification and analysis of child pornography
- Action 3.1 Thematic Network: Promoting positive online experiences for young children
- Action 4.1 Knowledge enhancement project : Investigating the impact on young people of convergence of technology
- Action 4.2 Knowledge enhancement project: Identifying child friendly search/browser tools