

Record keeping

Setting up systems to prove what you do and spend is essential. Our introduction to record keeping shows why you need to keep records and gives some tips on how to do it....

This fact sheet is a brief overview guidance note on what information you are expected to keep relating to your project. Also included in this pack will be information on how to complete a project file and organisational file and what paperwork you will need to file within it.

Why keep records:

The bottom line is that European Union rules insist upon it. The EU needs to look at how the programmes put together by individual countries impact on the social and economic regeneration of that particular country. It can only get this information through analysis of statistics gathered on the progress of each individual project i.e. exactly what is being achieved. It is also vital from a claims and audits perspective to ensure that you are spending on what you said you would. It is therefore essential that you keep evidence for all financial and non-financial elements of the project.

Aside from this, good record keeping can be a huge aid to project management. You will be able to fully justify your claim, keep track of what is going well and what is not, and give yourself a better grounding for future applications or projects.

Where to keep your records:

Good record keeping starts before the project begins. The background information about how the application was brought about, who completed it, why the budget is how it is, all helps an auditor or project manager obtain a good grounding in the project.

We recommend that you begin by establishing two files. The first is an organisational file and the second a project file

- **The organisational file**

An organisational file is a must to any organisation that is funded via European funded projects. This file should contain as much information as possible about your organisation. We suggest your constitution, a mission statement or business plan, charity number, an equal opportunities policy, your policy on Community Relations, Equality Statement, ICT and the environment, your annual report, health & safety policy and copies of your newsletters and flyers. It is useful also to keep a copy of your last set of audited accounts. All this information you provide within your organisational file will allow the auditor to get a 'feel' of what your organisation is about, what you are trying to achieve, and how you are supporting best practice to ensure that you are delivering what you intend to deliver. On top of this and perhaps most importantly it will allow anyone looking at your project to see added value. If the European funded project is only a part of what you do this makes proof of added value much easier.

▪ **The Project File**

It is essential at the start of your project that you establish a project file. Within your file you will be expected to keep all information relating to your project. Your file should be organised and easily accessible and display EU logos. In the event of an audit your project file will be one of the first places your auditor will look to enable him/her to establish what your project is about and the type of activity you are conducting. Your file should be as user friendly as possible; this will hopefully present you with a 'happy' auditor. These are the kinds of documentation you should have in your project file

Project background:

You must have information on the project background and evidence of need. This could include a feasibility study, evidence of consultation, mission statement and equal opportunities statement. This will lay out the project specifications.

Project operation:

- Evidence of beneficiaries which could be monitoring forms which are signed by beneficiaries of the project, timesheets beneficiaries ILPs etc;
- Staff details and staff cost which could be staff time sheets countersigned by the line manager, expenses claims forms etc and external staff information which may be relevant to your project;
- All financial information relating to the project which will include any invoices, receipts, apportionment methodologies and evidence etc;
- Monitoring and reports you have completed relating to the project and all activity details;
- Publicity.
- You must also show information of any income received.
- You need to keep in your project file any correspondence you may have with NBP / Urban II and also all other working papers related to the project.

Project Completion:

- The final claim is a crucial phase of European funding. All of the working papers from this claim must be in order
- Any evaluation or feedback that you conducted as part of the project

What records you need to show

• **Confirmation of expenditure**

You need to provide confirmation of expenditure with all appropriate receipts, signatures etc. not only to prove that your project is on track but also to enable you to make your claims for payment. You need to monitor your project thoroughly throughout its life to provide the evidence needed

- **Evidence that your project actually took place**

The information kept within your records and your project file is secure and firm evidence that your project did actually take place, that what you have achieved and delivered within your project is what you promised to do and that everything you have completed is eligible for EU funding

- **Verification of EU publicity**

Publicity to your sponsors is of the utmost importance and is written into your contract for EU funding. You **must** advertise the fact that your project is part funded by the European Union. Your records need to provide evidence of this. If you do not advertise as you promised then the money may be taken back of from you.

How long to keep your records:

You must ensure that all records, financial or otherwise, relating to the Project are kept and available for inspection for a period of seven years after completion of the project. All documentation retained should be of original format, photocopies and computer printouts will not be accepted.

You must ensure that, if the group is dissolved for any reason within a seven year period after completion of the project, the full, original documentation relating to 'the Project' should be returned to NBP. In no circumstances should any documentation be destroyed or otherwise disposed of without the written permission of NBP.

If you wish to dispose of any NBP financed asset, prior consent must be sought from the NBP who will advise you of how an asset is to be disposed and the proceeds allocated.