

UK AID DIRECT – Financial guidance for grant holders

1. Principles of Reporting

September 2017

1. Introduction

This document presents the basic guidelines for financial reporting covering DFID's UK Aid Direct Fund. Grant holders may complete their own financial management according to their own finance manual, however all financial reporting, forecasting and budgeting under UK Aid Direct must comply with these rules.

DFID's policy is to allow grant holders flexibility where possible in their own financial management, and places responsibility for the policies adopted on the grant holders themselves. However, budgeting and reporting must be on a consistent basis across the fund. This guidance informs grant holders on what that basis is, and provides worked examples based on past experience of where confusion may arise.

2. Financial obligations of the grant holder

As set out in Grant Arrangements, grant holders must fulfill their responsibilities to DFID in order to remain eligible to receive UK Aid Direct funds. Grant holders' obligations are set out below:

- ensure that the Project Funds are properly accounted for
- ensure proper financial accountability, through adequate financial management (including, but not limited to, adequate controls, accountability structures and procedures to ensure transparency) in accordance with the Financial Policy
- retain all invoices, receipts and accounting records and other relevant documents relating to the Project Funds for a period of five years after the expiry of the Grant Arrangements. Such records should be made available at the Fund Manager's reasonable request for audit purposes during the lifetime of the Grant Arrangements
- keep the Fund Manager regularly informed of forecast spend during lifetime of the Grant Arrangement
- ensure that the Project Funds are not used in violation of any relevant UN conventions, resolutions of the UN Security Council or any law or otherwise
- comply with all terms of the Grant Arrangement

3. Timing of transactions

UK Aid Direct grants are recorded on the basis of cash accounting. Many grant holders will be required to report their organisation's financial statements on an accruals basis, but all reporting under UK Aid Direct will be on a cash basis.

The cash basis requires that grant holders recognise transactions and events only when cash (or cash equivalents) are received or paid by the entity.

Timing of the recording of transactions will match the cash received or paid, when entering or leaving the control of the reporting entity. In most cases this will be clear but can cause confusion in the case of advances paid to staff. For example:

Grant holder A is planning a field trip to a project site. The individual responsible for completing this trip is staff member B. In order to cover expenses incurred on the trip, A pays an advance to B totaling GBP 1,000. This payment leaves the grant holder's bank account on 1 June 2016. B proceeds to complete the site visit and spends GBP 500 on 2 June, and GBP 400 on 3 June. On 5 June, the unspent balance of GBP 100 is returned to the bank account of A. These transactions are reported to the grant holder on 5 June, alongside an expense report. When reporting this expenditure to DFID the only transactions which should be shown are GBP 500 on 2 June, and GBP 400 on 3 June as these are the only points where the cash leaves the control of the grant holder.

4. Transactions with partners

The budget, and all reporting and claims on the budget, is to be based on the expenditure of the project, not the spending of the grant holder.

In many cases, UK Aid Direct grants are based on a grant holder (often UK based) working with local implementing partners. When reporting, it is essential that grant holders record the final spending on the activities of the project rather than just recording the transfer made to the grant holder.

For example:

Grant holder A is working with Implementing Partner B to deliver a project in Zimbabwe. During Q1 2016/17, grant holder A transfers a lump sum payment of £100k to its partner, of which the partner spends a total of £80k. When reporting to DFID, the grant holder should report spending of £80k on the project – this may therefore be different to the recording within their own internal accounts.

There can be uncertainty of what counts as the end use of funds on a project, particularly in reference to sub-contracting. Where a grant holder makes payment for services over a period of years to a local provider who is integral to the project, then the substance of the relationship may be similar to a partnership – in this situation, what gets recorded; the payment to the subcontractor, or the expenditure of the subcontractor?

The answer to this question should depend on how the project was originally designed. In the original proposal and in grant arrangements, each project has a prime grant holder and a list of named partners on the project. The expenditure of partners should be recorded as:

- payments and transfer of funding to **named partners** on the project are not recorded as project expenditure. The actual expenditure of the partners should be recorded against budgets
- payments to sub-contractors or service providers who are **not named in the grant arrangement** should be recorded against the budget

For this reason, it is important to consider at the project design stage who should be considered implementing partners on a grant.

5. Financial years / reporting years

DFID's financial years runs from 1 April to 31 March. UK Aid Direct's financial year follows these same periods, and all budgets are aligned with April to March recording.

In some cases, grant holders will have reporting years based on the start date of their individual grant rather than being based on the financial year. In these cases, all technical reporting and completion of the Annual Review is on the basis of the project specific reporting period, however the DFID financial year will remain the same, which means that budgets, and carryovers, must be maintained on the basis of the April – March period.

Further details of how this applies to carrying over budget between years are included in **Budget Classification and Budget Management** section of this guidance.

6. Classification of Budget

Under UK Aid Direct, budgets are split between five standardised budget headings/subheads: Capital Expenditure, Project Activities, Staff Costs, Other Administrative Expenditure, Monitoring Evaluation and Lesson Learning. Within each of these headings, grant holders must define their own budget lines which are specific to the project.

Further details of classification, and methodologies for calculation of the categories are included in Budget Classification and Budget Management section of this guidance.

7. IATI requirements

Under the terms of the DFID Accountable Grant Arrangement, all organisations directly receiving DFID funding will be required to publish to the [International Aid Transparency Initiative](#) (IATI) standard on a quarterly basis. Organisations down to the third tier in the delivery chain will also be expected to publish their data.

The tiers in the delivery chain will be treated as follows:

- Tier 1: Fund Manager
- Tier 2: Lead grant holder
- Tier 3: Implementing/Downstream partners

This requirement applies to all grants signed after January 2017 and lead grant holders will be responsible for supporting their implementing partners to publish their IATI data.

Grant holders funded through the Small Charities Challenge Fund (SCCF) will be encouraged and offered support to publish to the IATI standard, however, it will not be a requirement stipulated in their Accountable Grant Agreement.

When preparing budgets, grant holders should allow sufficient staff resources to meet these requirements.