**Biodiversity Challenge Funds**

**(Darwin Initiative, Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund and Darwin Plus)**

**CHANGE REQUEST FORM**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| INTERNAL USE ONLY – NOT TO BE COMPLETED BY APPLICANT | | | | | |
| **CR reference** |  | **Date received** |  | **Date PL informed** |  |
| **Date sent to Defra** |  | **Recipient in Defra** |  | **Date response from Defra** |  |

Application for Approval to Change a Biodiversity Challenge Funds Project

***Before completing this Change Request, please read the Guidance at the end of this document***

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Please indicate the type of Change Request: | Financial\* |  | Other | |  |
| \**any change which requires movement of funds between financial years* | | | |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Project Ref and Title** |  |
| **Request from (name and organisation)** |  |
| **Email address** |  |

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| --- |
| **Please confirm you have read the Change Request guidance at the end of this document and understand that there is no guarantee a request will be granted**  All **Change Requests** must be submitted as soon as possible; any delays to submission must be clearly justified.  **Financial Change Requests** must not be submitted **later than the end of Q3 (31st December).**  However, non-Financial or **Other Change Requests** can be submitted at any time.  **All Change Requests must receive approval before being applied**, do not assume approval will be forthcoming.  **Please keep your Change Request brief and clear,** providing enough context for us to understand the request and its justification, but **avoiding technical jargon and acronyms**.  Please contact NIRAS if there are any questions. |

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| **Why do you need to submit this Change Request?**  Please provide a short explanation of **why you need to submit this request**. Remember that we do not know your project in detail so you should provide enough information to allow us to understand the situation. |
|  |
| **What specific change(s) do you want to make? How is this different to what is currently agreed?**  Please clearly identify what you need to change. If there are multiple proposed changes you may wish to use a numbered list. You do not need to provide a lot of explanation in this section.  If your change impacts your logframe, please attach a copy of your current agreed logframe with your proposed changes made **in tracked changes** (N.B. there is a blank logframe template in the same place as this Change Request template). If your change involves changing staff, please attach the CVs. |
|  |
| **Please clearly justify why you need to make a change?**  Where appropriate please reference your approach to risk management, and why you have been unable to mitigate this risk.  If this is a **Financial Change Request**, please explain when you first became aware of the issue and why this Change Request is **exceptional**. If this is a **Financial Change Request** being submitted **after 31st December or for a past financial year**, then please justify why it is late. |
|  |
| **What actions have you taken to prevent the need for this Change Request?**  We expect you to have attempted and/or assessed alternative actions to reduce or eliminate the need to submit this Change Request. Please clearly outline what these were and why they are not viable. For example, have you considered a different approach to matched funding timing or accelerating other workstreams/activities? |
|  |
| **If this Change Request is rejected, what will still be deliverable in terms of the Outputs and Outcome of your project?**  We understand that changes are likely to impact the Outputs and Outcome of project. Please set out what can be still achieved or delivered, and what might not, if this Change Request is rejected. Ideally please refer to specific indicators and targets in your logframe. |
|  |
| **Have you submitted any previous Financial Change Requests for this project?**  Please fill in details of these requests in the table below if you are seeking a **Financial Change Request**, including the Change Request reference number that you can find in the email responding to the request. Add/remove other Financial Years, or Change Requests, where needed and check the headings match your budgets. |

Change Request 1

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| CRYY-XX | **2024-25** | **2025-26** | **2026-27** | **2027-28** | **Start/end dates/ Comments** |
| Current Budget |  |  |  |  |  |
| Revised Budget |  |  |  |  |  |
| *Difference* |  |  |  |  |  |

Change Request 2

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **2024-25** | **2025-26** | **2026-27** | **2027-28** | **Start/end dates/ Comments** |
| Current Budget |  |  |  |  |  |
| Revised Budget |  |  |  |  |  |
| *Difference* |  |  |  |  |  |

Request 3 (etc.) – add as necessary

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| **If this is a new Financial Change Request, please complete the table below.** Please ensure your current and proposed budget figures are **accurate and correct and in the correct financial years**; errors may invalidate this Change Request. |

This Change Request

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **2024-25** | **2025-26** | **2026-27** | **2027-28** | **Start/end dates/ Comments** |
| Current Budget |  |  |  |  |  |
| Revised Budget |  |  |  |  |  |
| *Difference* |  |  |  |  |  |

Split of revised budget requested for each Financial Year changed

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **2024-25** | **2025-26** | **2026-27** | **2027-28** |
| Staff Costs |  |  |  |  |
| Consultancy costs |  |  |  |  |
| Overhead costs |  |  |  |  |
| Travel & Subsistence |  |  |  |  |
| Operating costs |  |  |  |  |
| Capital Equipment |  |  |  |  |
| Other costs |  |  |  |  |
| End of project audit fee |  |  |  |  |
| TOTAL |  |  |  |  |

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| INTERNAL USE ONLY – NOT TO BE COMPLETED BY APPLICANT |

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **NIRAS comment and recommendation on request** | | | | | | |
|  | | | | | | |
| **NIRAS comments from** |  | | | | | |
| Decision made by NIRAS or referred to Defra: | | | NIRAS |  | Defra |  |
| **Defra comments on request and subsequent clarifications from the applicant** | | | | | | |
| **Comments from** |  | **Date** | |  | | |
|  | | | | | | |
| **Comments from** |  | **Date** | |  | | |
|  | | | | | | |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Final recommendation from NIRAS** |  | **Date** |  |
|  | | | |
| **Final decision from Defra** |  | **Date** |  |
|  | | | |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Final decision (Y/N)** |  | **Decision made by:** |  |
| **Any specific feedback to project:** | | | |

**Biodiversity Challenge Funds - Change Request Guidance**

Please ensure you read section 6.3 of the “[Financial](http://www.darwininitiative.org.uk/resources-for-projects) Guidance” before completing your request.

All grants are awarded and payable on the basis of the agreed details and work programme set out in the project application and any subsequently agreed changes.

We understand that Biodiversity Challenge Fund projects are often operating in difficult contexts, and sometimes **changes need to be made to ensure success**.

Projects can also potentially identify **new opportunities** to deliver on agreed outputs, and **changes can deliver on new outputs**, to enhance or strengthen the Outcome.

We recognise that these can require justified financial and/or administrative changes.

However, there are real restrictions to what is possible due to strict financial controls applied to Defra by UK Treasury, particularly when moving funds between financial years. The movement of such funds is likely to result in reduced finance available to award new grants. This is why all **Financial Change Requests** are **reserved for exceptional cases, including new opportunities**.

They will not be granted in instances of poor financial or programme management. You are expected to explain clearly why your programme management (including its approach to risk management) was not able to foresee and prevent the need for this Change Request.

**Please keep your request brief and clear and in plain English.**

**All Change Requests must receive approval before being applied: do not assume approval will be forthcoming.**

**Types of Change Request**

There are two types of Change Request. It is important to identify which you are seeking, as they are treated differently. If in doubt, please ask.

1. **Financial Change Requests**

A **Financial Change Request** involves the movement of funds from one financial year to any other year. It may include other changes, but is defined by the movement of funds across financial years. In most cases, this is about moving funds from the current financial year into future project years. Any request to move funds from previous financial years will need strong justification.

**Financial Change Requests** for the current financial year must not be submitted **later than the end of Q3 (31st December)**; after that date, they can only be considered in very limited and exceptional cases.

We need a clear justification for any request relating to unforeseen circumstances.

**We will not agree any Change Requests for** poor financial or programme management (e.g. avoidable slippage or poor planning).

**Financial Change Requests** relating to delayed recruitment will **only** be granted if you can clearly demonstrate that your original project plan allowed sufficient time for recruitment. Recruitment risks (such as the job being in a remote location, time taken for a candidate to leave prior role) should be considered in advance, and reflected in the recruitment plan.

Please ensure that any **Financial Change Requests** are agreed with your organisation’s finance team before submission and that you provide an accurate revised budget with your Change Request.

You must consider the full budget implications, including the need to ensure that audit costs remain in the final Financial Year (where relevant) and that any time extensions into a new financial year may have audit implications.

**Please note:**

* All **Financial Change Requests** must not be submitted **later than the end of Q3 (31st December)**. After that date, ‘Financial’ Change Requests will only be considered in very limited cases.
* **Financial Change** **Requests** for past years can only be considered in exceptional cases.
* Defra will not consider a request to simply carry forward ‘unspent’ funds or ‘no-cost’ extensions: all movement of funds between financial years must be justified in a Change Request. **Do not use** the terms ‘carryforward’ or ‘no-cost extension’. While the latter may appear to be the case, there is always a cost associated with moving funds between years, and the impact it has on the availability of funding for future grants.
* All **Financial Change Requests** are checked by NIRAS and sent to Defra for consideration. Where appropriate, NIRAS will add some text to explain/clarify the request, for example, from specific knowledge of the project.

1. **Other Change Requests**

An **Other Change Request** covers **everything else**: changes to staffing, logframes (indicators, outputs, outcome), and the movement of funds across budget lines within the same Financial Year.

You are not required to seek approval for changes to your detailed project activities, unless these have knock-on effects to your Indicators, Outputs, Outcome or budget.

**Other Change Requests** can be considered at any time, ideally before the change is needed.

Most **Other Change Requests** are typically dealt with by NIRAS, but some will be referred to Defra (e.g. if changes are more significant).

**Completing your request**

**Please ensure that you keep your Change Request brief and clear, with sufficient detail to understand and justify your request.**

For example, don’t just say ‘we had some recruitment challenges that led to delayed work’. We need to understand the issues that delayed the recruitment so we can make an informed judgement on the subsequent delays to the project timeline.

Please remember that not everyone dealing with your request will know your project, so ensure you provide clear sufficient information.

Please remember to attach the relevant documents e.g. a revised logframe in tracked changes, CVs for replacement key staff, a revised timeline if the project dates are changing, a revised budget for financial requests.

We aim to respond to your request **within 10 working days**, but at peak times this is not always possible.

Please submit completed **Change Request** forms (in MS Word) with supporting information (proposed logframe, budgets, CVs etc.) to [BCF-Finance@niras.com](mailto:BCF-Finance@niras.com) with your **project reference number** in the subject line. Do not send Change Requests with normal reporting, or claims etc. to avoid unnecessary processing delays.