



Top Ten Tips

Effective Use and Delivery of Structural Funds and Regeneration Programmes in Cities and Other Sub-regional Areas

Drawn from the SRN Europe Network's Good Practice Guide
which can be found at www.SRNeurope.net/Guide

1. Strategic fit:

Have a clear and integrated sub-regional strategy in place, and use it as a guide for structural fund interventions

- Develop an **integrated sub-regional strategy** to make the best use of all available regeneration budgets.
- Where the sub-regional organisation has a role in selecting and monitoring projects, establish **procedures** to ensure that projects are in line with both EU and local policy objectives, including the application of assessment tools that check for correspondence with **Lisbon & Gothenburg Agenda** priorities.
- Use the **sub-regional strategy** to influence what is available in future EU Operational Programmes.
- Involve appropriate external stakeholders in the strategy formulation process in order to establish a **common vision and key strategic goals** before looking at the funding possibilities.

2. Subsidiarity:

Functions should be devolved to a sub-regional level where this increases efficiency and effectiveness of the programme

- Ensure that local authorities and other sub-regional organisations have **adequate opportunities** to shape the programmes and that their views are taken into account.
- Establish a clear and appropriate **split of responsibilities** between regional and sub-regional levels and a suitable mechanism for partnership.
- Use the sub-regional **strategy** to **influence** what is available in future EU programmes.

3. Vertical partnership:

Effective delivery requires the engagement of local, regional and national actors

- **Horizontal working** is most likely to be effective where there is also good vertical partnership. Effective horizontal and vertical working require political **commitment**.
- Intermediary organisations taking a leading role in horizontal partnership need to be **recognised as legitimate** by the region above and municipalities/stakeholders below.
- Ensure mechanisms are in place to **enable sub-regional organisations to give their opinions** on project proposals from their localities. They will have an understanding of whether a particular proposal is appropriate and, if a local Action Plan or sub-regional strategy is in place, can verify whether or not a proposal is in line with this.

4. Horizontal partnership:

Use local expertise and knowledge to build a strong and effective multi-sector partnership

- Ensure that there is **democratic accountability** within the partnership arrangements.
- Ensure participation of staff from the sub-regional organisation in project steering groups / project development.
- Involve appropriate external stakeholders in the strategy formulation process in order to establish a **common vision and key strategic goals**.
- Identify relevant partners and **involve them in management and delivery from the start** of funding programmes, in line with EU regulations and guidelines.
- Political and technical roles should be well defined, with a focus on democratic accountability.

5. Stakeholder engagement:

Use a variety of techniques to ensure that the widest possible range of stakeholders from all sectors are engaged in the programme in a way that is appropriate for them

- It is important to consider at what point in a programme or project, and by what method, to involve stakeholders. **Early involvement is generally recommended.**
- Special support, such as mentoring or training, may be needed to **improve the participation of particular groups** such as young people
- **Tailor support** to, and **communication** with, community and interest groups on the opportunities for project work.
- Establish arrangements to support community groups, citizens and enterprises in the development and implementation of good quality relevant projects.
- Set up a support resource for community organisations (using technical assistance funds where available) so as to broaden participation.

6. Communication:

Communication at horizontal and vertical levels is essential to programme success. This includes stakeholder relationships, PR and reporting arrangements

- **Recognise the value of good communication and informal networking.**
- Make a clear distinction between **political** and **technical** roles, with proper decision-making processes for both political and technical levels and good working relationships between politicians and officials.
- When acting as a potential lead partner, develop a '**marketing strategy**' for **the new project idea** in order to interest potential partners.
- When participating in cooperation projects, establish effective project management structures within the sub-regional organisation. These should preferably include a **single point of contact** for external partners, and staff with appropriate **technical** and **financial** expertise.
- Developing a **strategy for communication** with stakeholders and citizens is useful to organise and improve cooperation.
- Ensure participation of staff from the sub-regional organisation in project steering groups and in project development.
- **Follow up the results** of projects and **report regularly** to decision makers

7. Project Development:

Good Programme Management facilitates the development of good projects

- When undertaking projects invest in **comprehensive project planning**; specify precise objectives; consider team-building activities at the start of the project; and **provide for the effective dissemination** of the project results.
- In particular, ensure clarity on the **auditing, reporting** and **dissemination** requirements placed on projects.
- When developing EU-funded projects, have a clear view of **aims** and **requirements** at the outset.

8. Capacity:

Build delivery capacity by investing in staff, ensuring that training is available, and that there is a clear understanding when external expertise is useful

- Demonstrate the capacity to manage finances and ensure that good projects come forward.
- Know **when** to use **expert services** to support **high quality implementation of projects**, especially in communication, financial matters, follow-up and benchmarking.
- Ensure that experts have in-house **capacity to understand** the project's requirements. For example, the eligibility for different budgets.
- Recognise that the **effectiveness** of the Managing Authority (and Accountable Body) is a key factor in determining a project's success. Consistency is required in a **Managing Authorities' performance** and in **national requirements for monitoring, auditing and reporting**.

9. Understanding the impact – know what works:

Know what impact the funds are having at a local and regional level. Use a variety of indicators and assessment techniques

- Evaluate **measurable results** from projects against local and regional strategies
- Follow up the results of projects and report regularly to **decision makers**.
- Use good practice from **other projects** and areas, such as the evaluation of measurable results from earlier projects, and ensure that **sensible approaches** are incorporated into the **main activities** of the Managing Authority.
- Secure the necessary provision for interregional working in **Operational Programmes for Convergence and Competitiveness** so that lessons learned through **collaboration** can be mainstreamed and new **partnerships** developed.
- **Use different funds 'in sequence'**, for example, to support first research, then demonstration, then general implementation of a policy solution and dissemination of findings.

10. Learning:

Take all opportunities to learn from within the region and from beyond the region. Use EU regional co-operation programmes to provide new ideas and knowledge for the region

- **Be aware** of the scope of the **EU Territorial Cooperation objective** as a resource for both capacity building and financing for local investments and activities.
- Be aware that **politicians** at all levels of government are **key actors** who sometimes need to be persuaded that **Territorial Cooperation is essential** to the 'European project' **and worth supporting**. It will not happen on a large-scale without clear economic incentives linked to political priorities.
- Make the most of the cooperation opportunities that are available and **enjoy the experience** of working in an international team. When designing and implementing mainstream Operational Programmes, recognise and make use of **the experience of sub-regional organisations** in interregional, transnational and cross-border cooperation.
- Establish mechanisms to ensure that good practice approaches developed through European project work is well integrated into the main activities of the local authority (or other sub-regional body).
- When working with partners from new EU Member States, make sure that all partners have an equal incentive for participation and equitable access to funding. The use of local experts is recommended, rather than excessive reliance on foreign consultants.
- Recognise that **sub-regional organisations are key players** in the delivery of territorial cooperation. They should be fully engaged in the development, review and management of the programmes.

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