

# Admissibility & eligibility: lessons learnt for applicants

# CEF- Transport evaluation process



# 1. Admissibility check

## **Admissible proposal** (section 5 of call document):

- is electronically submitted on time,
- contains the forms provided inside the Submission System, and
- is complete:

**Application Form Part A** — contains administrative information about the participants and the summarised budget for the project (to be filled in directly online)

**Application Form Part B** — contains the technical description of the project (to be downloaded from the Portal Submission System, completed and then assembled and re-uploaded)

**Mandatory Annexes**

# Mandatory annexes

- ❑ **Agreement by the concerned Member States** (benefitting from the project) – for all applications
- ❑ **Detailed budget table per Work Package and calculator** – for all applications
- ❑ **Timetable/Gantt chart** – for all applications
- ❑ **Environmental compliance file** – for all applications except ERTMS i.e. for works and for studies with physical interventions and for studies without physical intervention ([see FAQ #18080](#))
- ❑ **Activity reports of last year and List of previous projects** (key projects for the last 4 years) (template available in Part B) - except exempted from operational capacity check: Public bodies, Member State organisations, international organisations, and beneficiaries of grants under CEF 1 and 2.
- ❑ **Full cost-benefit analysis (CBA) report and CBA cash flow template** - only for works or mixed projects with a budget (eligible costs) above EUR 10 million
- ❑ **Simplified CBA calculator** – only for works or mixed projects with a budget (eligible costs) below EUR 10 million

# Lessons learnt from the Admissibility check under previous calls (1)

## Incomplete application forms:

### Missing or incomplete **Environmental Compliance File (ECF):**

e.g. not fully submitted (only the declarations), not duly signed, dated and stamped declarations by the competent authority for monitoring the NATURA 2000 sites or under the Water Framework Directive.

- The **ECF must be submitted** – if not the proposal is not admissible
- The **ECF must be comprehensively completed** – with
  - (i) the **necessary approvals** by competent authorities
  - (ii) the **information required** in the boxes
    - **within the foreseen boxes** - it is not sufficient that the info is somewhere in the application , and
    - **with the documents** required in the sections of the ECF i.e. copy of screening decision etc.
- If not, it has a negative impact on the evaluation.

# Lessons learnt from the Admissibility check under previous calls (1)

- ❑ No grant amount requested in part A of the AF, wrong **budget** uploaded not corresponding to requested amount in SEP
- ❑ **MS Agreement** not signed; agreements from other concerned MS (benefiting from the project) missing; agreement from a local public entity not being the concerned MS ministry
- ❑ Inconsistencies between section Budget of part A and the detailed budget table in part B
- ❑ **CBA report** referring to another proposal, CBA report is an empty document, missing **Cash Flow template** or **Simplified CBA Calculator**,
- ❑ Missing **activity report of last year** or **list of previous projects** (required for private bodies)
- ❑ Incorrect **Gantt chart** referring to a project other than the submitted proposal

## 2. Eligibility check

### Eligible proposal (section 6 of call document):

- Submitted by **applicants** who are legal entities (public or private bodies) established in the EU Member States or countries associated to the CEF Programme
- The **activities** proposed are within the technical scope of the topic described in section 2 of call document;
- The **geographic location** of the project is on the **TEN-T network** (core and/or comprehensive)
- The **duration of the project** for works or mixed projects should be 4-5 years maximum, and for studies projects it should be 2-3 years maximum.
  - The earliest starting date may be the proposal submission
  - The end date cannot be later than 31/12/2028
- Any **budget** requested is admitted – but recommended to be min. EUR 1 million of EU contribution requested.

# Lessons learnt from the Eligibility check under previous calls

- Proposal submitted by an applicant from a non-eligible country
- Location of the proposal - **not on (or connected to) the TEN-T network**
- Project's start date** in parts A and B of AF - in different times
- Project duration** wrongly calculated
- Project proposal being '**out of scope**'
- Project proposal** and the Global Project - **insufficiently clear**



# The award criteria: lessons learnt for applicants

# 3. Evaluation - Award criteria



## Priority & Urgency

- ❑ **Contribution to the TEN-T network:** (i) core or comprehensive, (ii) on a CB link as listed in part III of Annex to CEF Regulation, (iii) contribution to the corridor work plans and (iv) any network effect by developing or modernising the network.
- ❑ **Relevance:** if the proposal addresses the Work Programme 2021-2027, Call, and/or Topic objectives
- ❑ **EU added-value:** the proposal addresses (i) EU objectives (Green Deal, Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy) and (ii) if the project improves significantly the transport connections between the Member States in efficiency, sustainability, competitiveness or cohesion – in addition to the benefits at national/regional/local level.
- ❑ **Synergies** with other CEF sectors (Energy, Digital), EU programmes (e.g. RRF, Horizon Europe)  
**Synergetic elements** may apply for work proposals only if they:
  - relate to another CEF sector,
  - do not exceed 20% of the total eligible costs, and
  - significantly improve the socioeconomic, climate and environmental benefits of the project
- ❑ Taking into account the EU policy urgencies created by:
  - ❑ the EU new situation created by **the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine**,
  - ❑ the Action plan on **Solidarity Lanes** of 12 May 2022 (COM/2022/217/Final)
  - ❑ the EU mission on the “**100 Climate Neutral and Smart Cities**”.

## Maturity

- ❑ **Readiness/ability of the project to start** by the proposed start date **and to complete** by the proposed end date (technical maturity – under responsibility of the applicants),
- ❑ **Status of the necessary contracting procedures and permits** (procedural maturity – beyond the remit of the applicant),
- ❑ **Financial availability needed to complement the CEF investment** (financial maturity – funds needed for completing the project), and
- ❑ **Correspondence** between the **technical planning and financial profile**.
- ❑ **Works/mixed proposals** must have completed two **key steps of the environmental impact assessment by the date of application**:
  - (i) an EIA report prepared by the project promoter and
  - (ii) consultations carried out under the EIA Directive,

The development consent procedure may be followed and completed after the submission of the CEF application.

## Maturity

### **Project duration:**

- For works and mixed proposals: 4-5 years
- For studies proposals: 2-3 years, as from the start of the project

**Starting date:** Not earlier than the proposal submission date

**End date:** 31 December 2028

*Tasks not respecting these conditions i.e. that go beyond the recommended duration or that start before submission date are not considered.*

## Quality

- The **quality of the application** : Part A, Part B and the mandatory annexes submitted, including the environmental documents (ECF).
- The **operational capacity check of the applicants**: Competence and experience of the applicants and their project teams mainly for new private entities to CEF – based on the list of previous projects and the activity report of the last year
- The **quality of the proposed project – based on:**
  - The **implementation plan proposed**, from technical (Work Packages well structured) and financial (cost effective) point of view,
  - Design approach, the **organisational structures** (project management) put in place (or foreseen) for the implementation,
  - Risk analysis/management**, the **control and quality procedures**,
  - Communication** strategy to provide visibility to **CEF funding**,
  - Sustainability and maintenance** strategy for the completed project (for works)

## Impact

- ❑ **Demand/traffic forecast study** – is the works project based on similar study ?
- ❑ **Socio-economic impact of the project**
  - Describe the socio-economic impact of the project – leading (or not) to a project being economically viable
- ❑ Other impacts on **congestion, modal split, safety and security, service quality, and noise emissions**
- ❑ For studies proposals, under the section Decision-making tool: contribution of the study to preparing the overall project implementation, for instance, further steps in the project development
- ❑ Effects on the **interoperability** of the transport systems/modes and territorial **accessibility** in the TEN-T network (i.e. the cross-border dimension), **innovation** and **digitalisation, competition, regional and local development** and **land use**, and **outermost regions** when applicable.

## Impact

### □ Environmental and climate impact of the project:

- its contribution to the climate change targets,
- how climate change has been taken or will be taken into consideration when designing the project and its components.
- impact on air pollutants, and (possible) greenhouse gas emission reductions,
- **mitigation measures** summarised from the climate proofing analysis for the applicable\* works applications – including:
  - how the cost of greenhouse gas emissions have been integrated in the **economic evaluation of the project**
  - how the **energy efficiency first principle** is applied
  - how the project will contribute to the **emission targets for 2050** e.g. 90% reduction of transport emissions

### □ Climate resilience

- findings of the vulnerability assessment to identify the climate hazards to which the project is more sensitive (because of the its type or location).
- **adaptation measures** summarised from the climate proofing analysis for the applicable\* works applications

*\*Climate proofing of infrastructure is required for works projects subject to an EIA and for which key steps of the EIA have been completed after 18 January 2023 (ref. [FAQ 30160](#))*



## Catalytic effect

□ **Catalytic effect** looks into how the CEF funding will facilitate or accelerate the project - in comparison to a situation without the CEF funding.

Three main elements that the CEF funding may influence the realisation of the project:

1. **Overcoming a funding gap** (or negative Financial Net Present Value - FNPV) of the project – due to insufficient financial viability, high upfront costs or lack of market funding
2. **Financial leverage on additional investments:** capacity of the CEF grant to trigger differentiated public or private investments, and accelerating the overall investment plan
3. Enabling effect of the CEF grant on the **commitment/acceptance of stakeholders towards the project** – due to, among other reasons, improved quality of the project implementation by enhancing the technical parameters.

# Lessons learnt from the evaluation of proposals under previous calls

- ❑ Low quality of the description of proposals:
  - ❑ Work packages detailed unclearly – with insufficient number of milestones and unclear deliverables
  - ❑ Work packages covering several distinct tasks – with no costs broken down (per task)
  - ❑ Limited risk analysis with incomplete mitigation measures
  - ❑ Project impact (fields 4.1 Demand/traffic forecast study, 4.2 Economic analysis and 4.3 Social, environmental and other impacts of section 4 of the application form Part B) not filled in/sufficiently explained
  - ❑ Communication tasks described too vaguely