



Cluster Facilitator Job Description and Candidate Profile

The North Sea Region Programme is launching an initiative to promote project clusters as a key element in the strategic delivery of the programme. As part of this the programme is looking for a senior officer to facilitate and promote the process. A detailed description of the initiative can be found in the "Clustering Background Paper", which is an attachment to this job description.

The Cluster Facilitator is responsible for assessing the need for and subsequent development of cluster projects in line with the directions provided by the Programme Monitoring Committee. This will involve motivating potential project partners for engagement in cluster projects with a view to enhance the strategic outcomes of the North Sea Region Programme. The execution of these tasks will involve a close cooperation between the relevant national authorities in the North Sea Region, the National Contact Points and the cluster facilitator.

In cooperation with the National Contact Points, the primary role of the cluster facilitator will be to facilitate the dialogue between related projects and ensure and emphasise strategic inputs during the lifetime of the cluster projects. The Cluster facilitator will maintain the overall focus of the clusters and ensure that the cluster activities are in line with and contribute towards the overall objectives of the Programme. The responsibilities will include the preparation of a call for cluster projects including related documents and selection criteria, giving advice to cluster projects under development, liaison with the approved cluster projects and organising related events.

The Cluster Facilitator will be employed by the programme secretariat, which is located in Viborg, Denmark and will be part of the Project Development Unit. The position will be limited to a period of two years.

Candidate profile

The ideal candidate would have a hands-on practical view on European Territorial Cooperation and the ability to pursue the strategic aims of the North Sea Region Programme. This should be paired with good negotiation skills and the ability to communicate in a trustworthy and convincing way. The candidate should be prepared for frequent travelling within the North Sea region.

Essential qualifications

- University degree
- Excellent communications and publicity skills
- Sound experience in project development and management
- International working experience, preferable on EU structural funds projects
- Good knowledge of EU policy and priorities – in particular in relation to the structural funds
- Excellent spoken and written English

Desirable qualifications

- Good team-player
- Negotiation skills
- Ability to work independently in a sometimes challenging environment
- Sound political understanding and the ability to operate in a political environment
- Good networking skills
- Relevant Interreg experience

Salary to be negotiated on the basis of relevant experience (please indicate expected salary level in your application).

If you are interested in the position, please forward your letter of application and CV to the following address:

Interreg IVB North Sea Region Programme
Jernbanegade 22
DK-8800 Viborg
Denmark
Attn.: Christian Byrith
E-mail: Christian.Byrith@northsearegion.eu

We will need to receive your letter of application before 13 August 2010.

Christian Byrith, 28 June 2010, Viborg



CLUSTERING BACKGROUND PAPER

Aim of clustering

The aim of project clustering in the North Sea Region Programme is to assist projects within and across priorities in identifying common issues considered valuable for the projects as well as the Programme.

Background

Strategic project initiatives are in high demand from Programme stakeholders as well as from the European Commission. The concept has been identified by different names over time, but the overarching idea remains the same. In the case of the NSRP, strategic projects have been anticipated since well before implementation of the 2007-2013 Programme and examples are mentioned in the Operational Programme.

In the NSRP the work to discuss different methods in relation to strategic projects initiatives started formally with a stakeholder workshop on the topic. One of the main discussion points was if there should be an emphasis on individual strategic projects (i.e. flagship projects) or if it should rather be clusters of such projects – to draw on the potential multiplication effect which might come from shared strategic input.

Approach to clustering

At the stakeholder workshop on strategic projects it was recommended that the Programme opt for the clustering approach. This approach has been approved by the Monitoring Committee of the Programme. A working group has subsequently been setup to facilitate the process to implement the concept.

The project clustering concept builds on the idea that projects, which share a common theme or address similar issues, form a cluster of excellence and deliver a shared strategic input for the Programme. An underlying idea is that this might give leverage to their strategic added value.

Spontaneous clustering

Project clustering happens spontaneously when projects meet and often by chance. This type of clustering is already taking place in the North Sea Region Programme and the Secretariat has been approached by a handful of projects, wishing to discuss how to implement clustering in their specific context.

The Programme encourages spontaneous clustering, but has found that this kind of clustering involves a risk of sub-optimisation. Previous experiences indicate that there is a tendency in spontaneous clustering to focus on individual needs of projects rather than the wider strategic potential in the cluster. The bottom-up approach exemplified by spontaneous clustering should therefore be combined with a top-down approach.

Facilitated clustering

Project clustering should facilitate a greater impact of Interreg/ETC by way of a close and coordinated delivery of the projects, bringing added value at strategic level to the projects and the Programme. This will have the potential to strengthen the North Sea Region identity, and make projects more visible to experts on national and international level as well as to the general public. To secure that the potential in clustering is maximised it has been decided to introduce a Cluster Facilitator.

The Cluster Facilitator

The Cluster Facilitator will maintain the overall focus of the clusters and to ensure that the cluster activities are in line with and contribute towards the overall Programme strategy.

The role of the Cluster Facilitator is to facilitate the dialogue between related projects and ensure and emphasise the strategic inputs from the process. The role of the Cluster Facilitator **does not** include managing the clusters. This is entirely up to the individual clusters and their partnership. The Cluster Facilitator would, in other words, first and foremost

be a co-ordinator for the projects within a cluster. The Cluster Facilitator will be based in the Secretariat Office in Viborg, Denmark.

Clustering in practice

A clustering initiative in the context of the North Sea Region Programme could be initiated by a group of projects sharing a common theme but with different approaches for addressing the challenges associated with this theme. The projects would jointly identify strategic elements where there seems to be a real and interesting potential for the projects to work together in order to take advantage of each other's results.

By supporting each other in delivery and drawing on the latest information available from a wide range of partners, individual projects will gain access to a much greater range of resources and knowledge, allowing them to take work on the strategic elements much further than would be possible in single projects.

In effect, the clustering idea takes the value of working together in project partnerships and aims to apply the same methods and draw the same benefits from cooperation between projects.

The practical implementation

Implementation of project clustering in the Programme could be executed as two step process.

In step one, the themes for a specific cluster identified could be subject to a facilitated discussion e.g. in connection with a Lead Beneficiary seminar or a similar already existing arena. The purpose of such a facilitated discussion would be to "test the waters" and establish whether it is possible to identify a common field of interest between the needs of the projects and the needs of the programme. It may turn out that the themes already identified would need adjustment or that completely new themes are identified. This is what the meeting during the Annual Conference 2010 was about.

If step one proves successful, it would be possible to initiate step two. Step two would involve launching a first call for cluster-projects based on the findings of phase one. Based on the conclusions about step one it will be the programme's Monitoring Committee to finally decide about the set-up and next steps.

Themes

A number of themes, structured as over-arching themes and sub-themes, have been identified as starting point for clustering discussions among projects.

The actual projects clusters may or may not make use of the themes listed below, but the themes listed below constitute a framework within which the clusters are supposed to operate. Themes which are completely different from the ones listed are not ruled out but are, on the other hand, anticipated to be the exception rather than the rule.

The over-arching themes are as follows:

Climate

Sustainable Communities

Innovation

Managing Marine Resources

Criteria for clustering initiatives

Clusters should contribute to the overall Programme aim and objectives, but have a strong focus on added value at strategic level. The clusters should also bring something in delivery which would not have been achieved by the individual projects by themselves. Exact details on criteria will be presented well in advance of any Calls for Applications for Clustering Initiatives.

Financing the clusters

Project clustering is an additional activity for the projects involved and as such an activity, which has not been taken into account in the project budget.

The overall idea is to organise the clusters as small projects following the same structure as a "normal" project but with a limited number of beneficiaries. Clusters will be open to both Lead Beneficiaries and "normal" beneficiaries.

Decisions on the precise structure should be left for the project beneficiaries. Taking into account that the idea of project clustering involves a time limit, it is proposed that project cluster mini-projects will be operational for a period not exceeding 18 months and have a budget not exceeding € 250,000 in total.