

Ability Programme Requirements

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EUROPEAN UNION

Investing in your future

European Social Fund



An Roinn Gnóthaí Fostaíochta agus Coimirce Sóisialaí
Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection



pobal

government supporting communities



Ag tacú le daoine óga atá faoi mhíchumas barr a gcumais a bhaint amach
Supporting young people with disabilities reach their potential

Ability is co-financed by the Irish Government and the European Social Fund as part of the ESF Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning 2014-2020.

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1. Introduction

The purpose of this Ability Programme Requirements document is to provide guidance to Ability Grantees to enable the effective administration of your Ability grant. The document should be used by project managers/co-ordinators, financial administrators and other relevant staff who have a role in administering the Ability grant.

The document sets out the financial and non-financial monitoring and reporting arrangements, as well as key requirements associated with recruitment and employment, public procurement and communication and publicity. The document will be updated from time to time if requirements change. Grantees will be notified when this arises.

Any changes to text from version 1.1 of this document are highlighted in red throughout.

For the purposes of this document, the term 'grantee' refers to the organisation that holds a Grant Agreement for Ability.

2. Overview of the Ability Programme

Ability is a Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (DEASP) programme that is co-funded under the European Social Fund (ESF) Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning (PEIL) Operational Programme, 2014-2020.

The aim of Ability is to bring **young people with disabilities** who are not work-ready closer to the labour market using a range of **person-centred supports**.

More specifically the objectives of the programme are:

- To assist young people with disabilities to **develop the confidence and independence** required to participate in education, training, employment.
- To assist young people with disabilities at **key transition points** between education, training and employment.
- To support young people with disabilities who are not in education, employment or training to **access and participate in education, training, employment**.
- To **build the capacity of mainstream employment services, education and training providers** to support the progression of young people with disabilities.
- To **build the capacity of employers** to recruit and retain young people with disabilities within their workforce.

The Ability Programme is focused on promoting the **employability** of young people with disabilities in the Republic of Ireland.

Employability relates to the general skills a person needs to enter, stay in and progress in the world of work.

The term 'employability' recognises the importance of an individual's skills, competencies and experience when they are looking for work.

The Ability Programme promotes **employment prospects** and **meaningful social roles** for young people with disabilities and particularly, for young people who are distant from the labour market.

A **meaningful social role** refers to any employment or volunteer role that supports a young person to realise their potential. A meaningful social role will facilitate a young person with a disability to contribute to economic life or to their community to the extent of their ability.

The programme promotes positive pathways into education, training and employment for participants.

The Ability Programme supports projects that demonstrate **person centred approaches**. This type of work assists young people to identify and follow progression routes based on both their potential and their needs.

The programme raises awareness of the target group's capacity to obtain and retain employment.

The Ability Programme also supports projects to address societal barriers to progression. In addition to supporting young people, Ability projects also deliver complementary actions with families, employers and key service providers working in education, training and employment. The programme supports projects of different scales. This includes local, county-wide, regional and national projects.

- **Local** projects cover one area or a small number of areas within a city or a county.
- **County-wide** projects will cover a wide range of locations in a county.
- **Regional** projects will cover more than one county.
- **National** projects cover the whole country.

3. Young People with a Disability

The Ability Programme defines **young people** as individuals who are between the ages of 15 and 29 when registering for Ability supports.

For the purpose of the Ability programme, **people with disabilities** refers to people with physical or sensory disabilities, mental health conditions, acquired disabilities, intellectual disabilities, hidden disabilities and people on the autistic spectrum.

In order to qualify for support, Ability participants must also be:

- in receipt of disability allowance or invalidity pension; or
- in receipt of illness benefit for more than three months; or
- an existing service user or client of the lead applicant or project partner (**if they are a disability service**); or
- referred to your project by relevant organisations or services supporting young people with disabilities.

For example, referrals will be accepted from:

- the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS),
- Primary Care Teams,
- National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS),
- Community Mental Health Services,
- HSE Disability Services,
- residential or day services,
- special schools.

Other referrals may be accepted on a case-by-case basis. Referrals from GPs and mainstream schools are not eligible.

Please note that it is the responsibility of each Grantee to ensure that participants are eligible to participate in the Ability programme. Grantees must have evidence on file that project participants qualify for support under Ability in line with the requirements set out above.

It is essential that all Grantees promote the ESF Horizontal Principles of gender equality, equal opportunities and non-discrimination in the context of recruiting project participants.

4. Ability Grant Agreement

All successful applicants will be issued with a Grant Agreement from Pobal subject to meeting any pre-contractual requirements and specific conditions identified during the decision-making process.

During project delivery you will be required to comply with the financial, monitoring, reporting and publicity requirements of Pobal, DEASP and the ESF as set out in your grant agreement and this programme requirements document.

Where a Grantee has 'delivery partners' that administer part of the Ability grant, a robust partnership agreement needs to put in place that ensures such partners adhere to all monitoring and reporting requirements, and provide all such relevant data to the Grantee to facilitate both financial and non-financial reporting. Please note that all Ability project related information that is held by 'delivery partners' is also subject to audit and verification.

5. Pobal Support

Each Grantee is assigned a Development Co-ordinator (DC) as a primary point of contact within Pobal for support and guidance as required to facilitate compliance with contractual requirements. You will also be assigned a Finance Officer for support and guidance in relation to the financial administration of the grant.

Pobal will organise an induction meeting shortly after Grant Agreements are issued to help familiarise all Grantees with the requirements of the programme. Other support meetings will be arranged during the lifetime of the programme to assist with meeting monitoring and reporting requirements. Guidance documents will be available via an online Ability Portal.

6. Meeting European Social Fund (ESF) Requirements

The Ability programme is co-funded by the Irish Government and the European Social Fund as part of the ESF Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning (PEIL) Operational Programme 2014-2020. This means the Ability programme will need to comply with the ESF requirements set out below.

Grantees are required to collect data on participants in accordance with the ESF and Pobal requirements. ESF regulations require Grantees to collect and store detailed data about each participant (i.e. each person with a disability who is directly supported by the Ability programme), both upon their entry into the programme, and after they have exited the programme.

The data to be collected covers a range of personal information that is set out in Section 7 below. All Grantees will be required to collect a range of sensitive personal data about participants when they register for supports and at different points in the programme.

As data processors of this information, all grantees and delivery partners who collect such data, must be able to demonstrate that they are compliant with Data Protection Acts 1988 and 2003 and with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) which came into effect on 25th May 2018.

More information <https://www.dataprotection.ie/docs/GDPR/1623.htm>

6.1 Participant Indicator Data

The relevant EU Regulations provide that 'Participants' are persons benefiting directly from an ESF intervention who can be identified and asked for their characteristics, and for whom specific expenditure is earmarked. Other persons should not be classified as participants. Therefore, for the Ability programme, participants are the young persons with disabilities who are directly supported by the programme. Family members, employers and service providers who benefit from the complementary actions referred to above are not participants.

The Regulations require that a range of indicator data is collected in respect of each and every participant in an ESF-supported scheme and that all data shall be broken down by gender. The Indicators can be categorised as follows – Common Output Indicators, Common Result Indicators, and Programme Specific Indicators.

The ESF **common output indicators** for participants are:

Labour Market Status

- unemployed, including long-term unemployed;
- long-term unemployed;
- inactive;
- inactive, not in education and training;
- employed, including self-employed;

Age

- below 25 years of age;
- above 54 years of age¹;
- above 54 years of age, who are unemployed, including long-term unemployed or inactive, not in education and training²;

Education

- with primary or lower secondary education;
- with upper secondary or post-secondary education; and
- with tertiary education

Disadvantage

- migrant, person with a foreign background, or from a minority,
- disability,
- other disadvantaged.

The ESF **common immediate result indicators, at the exit date**, for participants are:

- inactive participants engaged in job searching upon leaving;
- participants in education/training upon leaving;
- participants gaining a qualification upon leaving;
- participants in employment, including self-employment, upon leaving; and
- disadvantaged participants engaged in job searching, education/training, gaining a qualification, in employment, including self-employment, upon leaving.

The ESF **common longer-term result indicators, 6 months after exit**, for participants are:

- participants in employment, including self-employment, six months after leaving;
- participants with an improved labour market situation six months after leaving;
- participants above 54 years of age in employment, including self-employment, six months after leaving³; and
- disadvantaged participants in employment, including self-employment, six months after leaving.

The indicator data referred to above will be generated through the data recorded within the online Ability ICT system which Grantees will have access to. A 'How to' guide will accompany the Ability ICT system. Grantees are required to maintain records, for each participant, which show how the required participant data has been generated, e.g. application forms, referral forms, referral letters, online applications (must record that an interview took place with the participant) etc.

Where attempts have been made to collect data from participants, e.g. results indicators, but those attempts have been unsuccessful, it is critical that the Grantee must maintain a full record of those attempts.

Indicator data on participants in the Ability scheme will be provided by DEASP to the ESF Managing Authority in accordance with ESF monitoring and reporting requirements.

Detailed guidance on ESF participant data requirements can be found [here](#). All Grantees should familiarise themselves with the document “Guidance on the Completion of Non-Financial Declarations” in particular.

¹ Not applicable for the Ability Programme

² Not applicable for the Ability Programme

³ Not applicable for the Ability Programme

6.2 ESF Co-Funded Operations

A participant can take part in activities which are separate ESF co-funded operations. For example, they are involved in an activity as part of Ability co-funded under ESF and are also involved in a training activity as part of a separate ESF co-funded programme such as SICAP. Care should be taken to ensure that double-funding does not take place, i.e. that the same expenditure is not accounted for under both programmes.

6.3 Follow-up with ESF Participants

In order to generate the Result Indicator data referred to above, Ability Grantees have to collect and record additional output information for all participants. This information is collected:

- At the exit date: Grantees have 4 weeks to get the exit date information. How the exit date is defined will vary depending on the individual circumstances and further guidance will be provided on this;
- Six months after exit date: Grantees must follow-up with these individuals exactly six months after their date of exit from Ability.

7. Project Monitoring

Data relating to the participant, their supports and interventions must be recorded on the online Ability CRM system on a regular basis by the Grantee. While the ESF Regulations provide the legal basis for the processing of personal data for the purpose of implementing an ESF-supported activity, the GDPR provides that the explicit consent of each participant is required in relation to the processing of “special categories of data”. The disadvantage indicators referred to above are special categories of data so may only be recorded and processed, etc. where the participant’s explicit consent is received. Where a participant does not give explicit consent, ‘consent requested but not provided’ must be recorded on the system and on any supporting documentation.

Each Grantee will have a user name and password for authorised members of staff to access the Ability CRM System, and enter details in respect of each participant. Each Grantee will have two CRM licenses.

Each Grantee must be able to record specific details in respect of every participant they recruit to their project. The list of baseline information required by all Grantees for each participant is detailed below. A separate template will be provided to all Grantees with all the required participant information which is to be collected and recorded by Grantees.

Field Name	Field Data Type and Value
Eligibility criteria met	<i>(this is based on the criteria set out in the application guidelines)</i>
Consent given to process “special categories of” data	Y/N <i>(this is based on a signed data protection consent form, which sets out the purpose of data processing)</i>
Participant referral	Select one: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In receipt of a disability allowance or invalidity pension • In receipt of illness benefit for more than 3 months • Identified through the lead organisation or their partner(s) • Referred by another organisation which supports people with disabilities
First Name	
Last Name	
Date of Birth	
County	
Gender	Male Female
Disability type	Select all that apply: Physical disability Sensory disability Mental health condition Acquired disability Intellectual disability Autistic spectrum Chronic illness Learning disability
Does the participant belong to any of the following disadvantaged groups: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Migrant (non-national permanent residents in the country) • Persons with a foreign background (persons whose parents were born outside Ireland -other than Northern Ireland) • Minorities (persons from the Traveller or Roma communities, or from ethnic minorities) 	<i>If participant belongs to any of the groups, a Yes or No answer is all that’s required. We do not need to distinguish between each of the groups.</i>

<p>Does the participant belong to any of the following disadvantaged groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an ex-offender, • a substance abuser, • affected by homelessness or housing exclusion, • has not completed primary education, • living in a jobless household, • living in a single adult household with dependent children, • living in poverty or material deprivation. 	<p><i>If participant belongs to any of the groups, a Yes or No answer is all that's required. We do not need to distinguish between each of the groups.</i></p>
<p>Participant Commencement date</p>	
<p>Employment status</p>	<p>Select one:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employed (incl. self-employed) • Unemployed • Long term unemployed (this is defined as >6 months for participants under 25 years. And >12 months for participants 25 years and over) Inactive – may be in education/training • Inactive – not in education/training
<p>Highest level of education</p>	<p>Select one from the NFQ levels</p> <p>Option1: NFQ Level 1 (Certificate)</p> <p>Option 2: NFQ Level 2 (Certificate)</p> <p>Option 3: NFQ Level 3 (Junior Certificate)</p> <p>Option 4: NFQ Level 4 (Leaving Certificate)</p> <p>Option 5: NFQ Level 5 (Leaving Certificate)</p> <p>Option 6a: NFQ Level 6 (Higher Certificate)</p> <p>Option 6b: NFQ Level 6 (Advanced certificate)</p> <p>Option 7: NFQ Level 7 (Ordinary Bachelor Degree)</p> <p>Option 8: NFQ Level 8 (Honours Bachelor Degree)</p> <p>Option 9: NFQ Level 9 (Master's Degree)</p> <p>Option 10: NFQ Level 10 (Doctoral Degree)</p> <p>Option 11: none of the above</p> <p>http://www.nfq-gqi.com/index.html</p>

<p>As outlined under Para 6: “<i>Meeting ESF Requirements</i>”, the following <i>Common Immediate Result Indicators</i> are required at Exit date, or within 4 weeks of Exit date:</p>	
	<p>Select relevant Option(s):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • inactive participants engaged in job searching upon leaving; • participants in education/training upon leaving; • participants gaining a qualification upon leaving; • participants in employment, including self-employment, upon leaving; and • disadvantaged participants engaged in job searching, education/training, gaining a qualification, in employment, including self-employment, upon leaving.

<p>As outlined under Para 6: “<i>Meeting ESF Requirements</i>”, the following <i>Common Longer-term Result Indicators</i> are required exactly six months after Exit date:</p>	<p>Select relevant Option(s)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • participants in employment, including self-employment, six months after leaving; • participants with an improved labour market situation six months after leaving; • participants above 54 years of age in employment, including self-employment, six months after leaving³; and • disadvantaged participants in employment, including self-employment, six months after leaving.
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Most of the above information in relation to each participant must be recorded by the Grantee as soon as a participant agrees to be part of their specific project **and** only when the participant provides the appropriate consent to record their personal information on Ability to the Grantee. The information in relation to ESF *Common Immediate Result Indicators* and ESF *Common Longer-term Result Indicators* is required within timeframes outlined.

It is the responsibility of the Grantee to ensure consent forms are signed by the participant (or proxy) before commencing the programme. Pobal will provide the data consent form to be completed. There must be explicit consent obtained for “special categories of” data.

The Grantee will be expected to update the information for each participant on a regular basis and in real time throughout the lifetime of their project.

The participant information is required even if the participant is an early leaver and does not complete the full level of activities anticipated at the outset of the project. In such cases the Grantee will only fill out the relevant fields that apply to each participant.

Each Grantee will have access to view and edit the participant records they create. They will not be able to view the records belonging to another grantee.

The DEASP requires Grantees to base work on person-centred planning and the development of personal progression plans for all participants. All participants must have a personal progression plan which will be tailored to fit their needs. Progress against progression plans must also be recorded on the Ability ICT system at regular intervals by the Grantees.

Progression plans are divided into three sections depending on what the personal plan involves– training courses, interventions and key objectives.

Grantees will also be expected to provide data against the programme output and outcome indicators from the online ICT system, as requested.

8. Project Reporting

Grantees will be required to provide financial and progress reports (returns) at different intervals throughout the lifetime of their grant, and an end of project report once their project closes. The financial report will detail project expenditure while the progress report will provide summary of progress to date and issues arising. ‘Delivery Partners’ must adhere to all monitoring and reporting requirements, and provide all such relevant data to the Grantee to facilitate both financial and non-financial reporting. The arrangements for provision of same should be set out in a robust partnership agreement between the grantee and the delivery partner.

The table below provides a summary of key dates that Grantees need to note. Reporting will take place for the periods up to the dates outlined below via an online Ability Portal. Any changes to the reporting periods set out below will be advised by Pobal. A reporting template will be designed and circulated prior to reporting dates to complete. Further guidance in relation to the completion of these templates will be issued well in advance of the deadlines for completing the required reports. It is always important to ensure that any Pobal returns/reports are approved by the appropriate personnel or board members in your organisation

For a grantee who is in receipt of 3 year funding, this will require reporting on spend and activities delivered 6 times during the project life cycle.

Return Period	Financial and Progress Report start date	Financial and Progress Report finish date
Period 1	2nd July 2018	31 st December 2018
Period 2	1 st January 2019	1 st July 2019
Period 3	2 nd July 2019	31 st December 2019
Period 4	1 st January 2020	1 st July 2020
Period 5	2 nd July 2020	31 st December 2020
Period 6	1 st January 2021	1 st July 2021

Further detail on financial reporting is set out in Section 10.

With regard to the retention of records, please note that the period of retention is up to the **31st December 2028** or up to **7 years** from the end of the delivery period whichever is the greater. The Grantee must maintain complete and accurate books of account and records of all receipts and payments and all supporting documentation in respect of the use of the grant in an easily accessible manner.

9. Programme Level Evaluation

Pobal will co-ordinate a programme level evaluation aimed at evaluating the extent to which the programme has met its stated key objectives. This will be a long term, summative evaluation (i.e. aimed at demonstrating outcomes rather than processes) with the main research output being completed after the conclusion of the programme.

Pobal have tendered for a researcher to carry out the evaluation and will support this research by way of data sharing with the successful tenderer. The evaluation will be overseen by a steering committee including representation from Pobal and the DEASP.

Grantees will be obliged to participate in the programme-level evaluation, which may include attendance at evaluation meetings, case studies and the provision of data to evaluator(s) in relation to the delivery of their particular project.

10. Financial Payments

The Pobal system of grant payments is intended to provide forward funding for grantees. Payments will be made on foot of submission of required reporting documentation. Each payment will be made in advance subject to contract conditions having been met. A provisional payment schedule is attached below.

Payment	Amount	Payment type
Payment 1 Year 1	70% of Year 1 Allocation	In advance, subject to prepayment conditions being met – see below.
Payment 2 Year 1	30% of Year 1 Allocation	Payment made once 50% of Payment 1 Year 1 is reported as being spent in Period 1 return.
Payment 1 Year 2	70% of Year 2 Allocation (Year 2 Allocation less unspent allocation/cash on hand from Year 1)	Payment made in advance at the start of Year 2.
Payment 2 Year 2	30% of Year 2 Allocation	Payment made once 50% of Payment 1 Year 2 is reported as being spent in Period 3 Return
Payment 1 Year 3	70% of Year 3 Allocation (Year 3 Allocation less unspent allocation/cash on hand from Year 2)	Payment made in advance at the start of Year 3.
Payment 2 Year 3	20% of Year 3 Allocation	Payment made once 50% of Payment 1 Year 3 is reported as being spent in Period 5 return.
Payment 3 Year 3	Up to 10 % of Year 3 Allocation	Balance of Monies due following review of Period 6 (Final return).

If a group hasn't met the spend threshold (50%) for second payments in a given year, a draw down facility will be available once the group meets this threshold for the release of these funds. The drawdown template will be issued in due course.

There is no facility to carry over unspent monies from each of the yearly allocations. Any underspend yearly allocation already paid to your group, will be treated as cash on hand and as a first instalment of your next year's allocation.

Example of Payment Schedule

Year 1			
Budget Year 1	€200,000		
Paid	€200,000		
Reported Year 1	(€190,000)		
Cash on Hand in Year 1	€10,000	(A)	
Year 2			
Budget Year 2	€200,000		
Cash on Hand from Year 1	(€10,000)	(A)	
Balance of Year 2 Budget to be paid in Year 2	€190,000		
1 st Instalment @70%	€133,000	(B)	
Final Payment Year 2 @30%	€57,000	(C)	
Total Paid Year 2 Allocation	€200,000	(A+B+C)	
Total Reported Year 2	(€195,000)		
Cash on Hand in Year 2	€5,000	(D)	
Year 3			
Budget Year 3	€200,000		
Cash on Hand from Year 2	(€5,000)	(D)	
Balance of Year 3 Budget to be paid in Year 3	€195,000		
1 st Instalment @70%	€136,500	(E)	
2 nd Instalment @20%	€39,000	(F)	
Final Payment up to 10% in arrears *	€19,500	(G)	
Total Paid Year 3	€200,000	(D+E+F+G)	
* Final payment is dependent on reported spend in your Period 6 Expenditure report i.e.			
Budget Year 3	€200,000		
Paid :			
Cash on hand from Year 2	€5,000		
1 st Instalment @70% Year 3	€136,500		
2 nd Instalment @20% Year 3	€39,000		
Total paid prior to Final Reporting	€180,500		
Reported Year 3			
Period 5 - 2nd July - 31st December 2020	€100,000		
Period 6 - 1st January - 1st July 2021	€95,000		
Total Reported Year 3	€195,000		
Total Received to date	€180,500		
Final Payment	€14,500		

10.1 Preparation for First Payment

To ensure Pobal is in a position to approve your first grant instalment, it is essential that your board members read the Grant Agreement thoroughly, understand its provisions and address any pre-payment conditions, before signing and returning to Pobal.

You will be asked to submit the following in order to secure your first payment:

Your Tax Reference Number (TRN) – this must match your Company / Co-op name that appears on your memorandum and articles of association (or rules) and the Pobal Grant Agreement. Please reference ["Verification of tax clearance status" on the Revenue website for details on how to access this number.](#)

To access an up to date Tax Clearance access number (TCAN), please refer to www.revenue.ie

10.2 Acceptance of the Agreement:

- The Grant Agreement must be accepted by two authorised signatories signing the certificate of acceptance. Authorised signatories are as outlined by you in Annex I of the Grant Agreement.
- Complete the **Bank Details Form in Annex II** of the Grant Agreement, the first and subsequent payments will be made to this account
- Insurance indemnification of Pobal and the relevant Government Department on the organisation's insurance policy.
- **A Public Procurement Declaration must be completed** and signed as per **Annex III** of the Grant Agreement
- **Complete Annex I** of your Grant Agreement outlining at least **4 authorised signatories'** i.e. members of your Board and staff who are authorised by the Board to sign and submit documents to Pobal in relation to the funding awarded
- Return a signed Grant Agreement within the specified timeframe on your cover letter; Grantees are reminded to retain a signed copy of the Grant Agreement for your records.

10.3 Subsequent Payments

The balance of payments will be made in instalments over the delivery period. The final payment will be a retrospective payment of 10% of the total budget value. When the expenditure reported on the financial return reaches 50% threshold Pobal will automatically make a subsequent payment.

10.4 Final Payment

The final 10% of the Ability grant will be paid retrospectively on receipt and approval of your final financial report and progress report. (i.e. after 100% of the grant has been spent and reported). Please ensure that you have the funds in place to cover your costs pending receipt of the final payment. In order to receive the final payment, all expenditure related to the project must be incurred and paid out of your bank account and included on the final return to Pobal. Any outstanding project queries or issues must all be finalised.

All cheque payments must appear on bank statements as cashed. For expenditure to be deemed eligible, it must be cashed on a bank statement. Outstanding cheques cannot be included as part of an expenditure return.

11. Financial Report

As set out in Section 8, all Grantees are required to complete financial reports (returns) at regular intervals. It is always important to ensure that the financial report is approved by the appropriate personnel or board members in your organisation, and that all supporting documentation is attached and in agreement with the reported expenditure. All reporting will be completed on an excel template. In completing the report, you will be required to attach some documentation including supporting bank statements for the full period for the bank account/s from which spend has been incurred.

- When using a cost Centre system relevant transactions must be highlighted on the bank statements.
- In exceptional circumstance where bank statements are not available, and if agreed in advance, an alternative method demonstrating that all Ability payments have been cashed will be accepted. (e.g. use of a cost centre where there is one central account in operation).
- Salaries: Gross-to-net report from payroll system. Each Employee must reflect the Ability reference number for their employment – see Section 14.
- Original copies of invoices for all project expenditure must be maintained on file locally. For the purposes of reporting, copies of invoices for all non-pay costs greater than €3,000 (e.g. Training, Venue hire, Materials etc. must be attached with the relevant financial return.
- All capital items claimed must also have invoices attaching to them.
- Facilitators, trainers or tutors must provide invoices. A clear distinction must be made on invoices between hours worked and their hourly rate. Both need to be included on all invoices.
- Any approved programme costs/mileage costs incurred by the facilitator/trainer/tutor should be billed separately.

Further guidance on completing the financial report will be issued once the template is available.

12. Change of Project Budget Process

Pobal acknowledge that costs forecasted at the time of application may change during the course of the project life cycle. An annual 'budget change window' will be available. You will have one opportunity to request changes for that year's budget, in February each year. Please note the following:

- Pobal are not in a position to approve additional funding above your contract award.
- The Budget template agreed at the start of your contract must be referenced as part of this process.
- Each Budget sub heading (i.e. Recruitment, Travel & Subsistence Venue costs, Publications, Accreditation, Publicity) within each category of spend (i.e. Programme Costs) will have an allocation based on your project requirements. Any changes to these allocations must be presented prior to an over spend occurring on existing Budget sub heads. All changes must have an adequate rationale / proposal for the change.
- You may make amendments without Pobal approval where the budget change is less

than €1,000 in each Budget sub-heading. The change must not affect the overall Budget category. For example, a reduction of €950 in Accreditation costs that is then allocated to Transport costs cannot lead to an overall increase in the Programme Costs category of spend.

- All indirect overhead costs are set at a maximum of 7% of direct and programme costs. No increase in this % will be considered.
- Any change which will require an increase / decrease in the main Budget headings (i.e. Direct Costs, Programme costs, Capital) must have prior approval by Pobal, irrespective of value.
- No facility will be in place for unspent monies to be carried in to the following years Budget.

13. Direct Costs

Staff costs can include salaries and employer's national insurance (PRSI) and superannuation costs (Pension). The claim must be based on actual salary costs relating to time spent on ESF activity. The claim can be evidenced in the following way:-

- Staff employed wholly or for a specific part of their duty on Ability related activity need to have a letter of appointment and job description that clearly states starting and finishing dates (if appropriate) and makes clear that they will be wholly employed exclusively on Ability ESF Programme.
- If a staff member is working part of their time on Ability (ESF) then an hourly rate should be used to calculate salary costs based on a recorded ratio split between time spent on the Ability Programme and any other projects/activity. e.g. 80/20 split would mean a claim of 80% for ESF purposes. Records should be kept of the hours engaged in both activities, to support the ratio of the ESF salaries as part of the claim.
- All staff costs that are claimed must be clearly distinguishable on supporting documentation that will be provided with the claim. These include a Payroll report which provides for Gross Salary, Employers PRSI, and Employer Pension contributions. For Facilitators and Tutors invoices must be provided clearly distinguishing the hours worked on Ability, plus the hourly rate applied for this work. The invoice should relate to the period of the claim (or a summary provided of all invoices for that period) and should not include any additional fees charged which relate to the delivery of the piece of work.
- **In order to reduce the workload for the completion of returns, Pobal recommends that all contracts of employment with Ability employees be paid on a monthly basis where possible. In effect, this would mean that for each reporting period there would be 6 entries (1 per month) required for each Ability funded employee, as opposed to 26 entries if an employee was paid weekly. The same methodology should be considered for Tutors and facilitators with regard to billing and invoicing on a monthly or bi-monthly basis.**

13.1 Job Descriptions

All direct staff job descriptions must be in line with what has been approved as part of your Grant Agreement.

Each position must be directly related to the delivery of the programme and supports to individual participants.

It is imperative that all job descriptions make reference to the employee duties on the Ability programme. All job descriptions for Direct staff positions must reflect the contracted hours per week and that they are accounted 100% on Ability for this period.

13.2 Unique Employee Reference Number

Each employee must have a unique Payroll reference number for ESF reporting. This should be unique across all funded groups within the Ability programme.

The most appropriate method is the employee number that is often referenced as part of payroll. On completion of your Ability report, you will be allocated an Ability reference number by Pobal for each direct staff member (internal/external). Part of this number will reflect employee number. See example below.

13.3 Example 1:

Project	Connaught Ltd – Pobal Reference Number - 123456W (this will appear on your Ability Grant Agreement)
Employee Number	0256
Ability Reference Number	123456W - 0256

In order to facilitate efficient reporting on the ESF claim system by the programme Implementer (DEASP), all documentation relating to this employee/employment must reference this number. Please ensure that the job description reflects this number.

On reporting templates, you will be required to disclose the following:

- Name
- Position
- Employee Reference Number
- Hours worked
- Hours worked on Ability
- Total Gross Salary for the period
- Total Employer PRSI

Please ensure compliance with the Data Protection Acts 1988 and 2003 and with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) in this regard.

14. Public Procurement

All goods and services purchased with funding must be procured on the basis of the public procurement guidelines available at <http://www.etenders.gov.ie>. A brief synopsis is provided in the table below of the tender thresholds for supplies and services only. It is imperative that you familiarise yourself with the full requirements of the public procurement guidelines as failure to comply with public procurement requirements will lead to financial penalties.

Less than €5,000 excluding VAT (Record to be maintained)	Obtain written quote from one or more competitive suppliers. Select lowest price/most suitable. Although national procurement regulations allow for verbal quotes for low value items only, Pobal requires that a written quote is sought in all instances.
€5,000.01 to €25,000.00 excluding VAT(Record to be maintained)	A minimum of 3 written quotations excluding VAT sought from competent suppliers who ordinarily supply the relevant service.
€25,000.01 plus excluding VAT (Record to be maintained)	Requirements must be advertised through a formal tendering process on www.etenders.gov.ie .

Please ensure that you are aware of the changes surrounding tax compliance of suppliers where you have a contract of service / goods exceeding €10,000. This section "[Verification of tax clearance status](#)" on the revenue website explains how to verify the tax compliance of a supplier. All copies of the tax compliance should be retained on your files for inspection by the Department and Pobal.

15. Recruitment and Employment

Grantees are expected to follow best HR practice in relation to the recruitment and employment of staff funded under the Programme. The recruitment and selection procedure, process and outcome must be clearly documented and available for inspection. Please refer to Volume 3 Human Resources from the Pobal Managing Better series of guides for community and voluntary organisations available at www.pobal.ie

Grantees should also note that the percentage of time and number of days spent working on the Ability programme needs to be clearly outlined in writing between employer and employee from the outset in either a letter or job description.

It is expected that staff will be recruited externally via an open and transparent recruitment process. However, the internal recruitment of staff is allowable once a transparent recruitment process is followed.

Timesheets for staff are only required if the hours of an Ability staff member are variable and there is no defined work pattern each week. For example, if a staff member works 20 hours one week, and 10 hours the next. If the time required to work is not consistent each week, timesheets will be required. Where timesheets apply, they should capture time spent both on Ability duties and non-Ability workload. The timesheet template from the European Commission is set out in Annex 3 to the Financial Guidance at https://www.esf.ie/en/ImageLibrary/Repository/Files/Final_Financial-Declaration-Guidelines-13-06-2018.pdf

16. Communication and Publicity

16.1 Logos

Grantees must use the following logos on all information and communication materials and activities:

1. Ireland's European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) – this should be to the left of all other logos. The minimum size should be 58mm x 19mm.
2. European Social Fund/EU Emblem - the ESF logo must be no smaller than the biggest of the other logos and should be to the right of ESIF logo. The minimum size is 58mm x 19mm.
3. Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection
4. The Ability logo – which can be found on the Ability Portal.
5. The Pobal logo

Grantees can also use their organisational logo and that of any partner organisations. These should be placed after the Ability logo if being used on the same horizontal/vertical line. Logos must be used on items such as publications, annual reports, application forms, newsletter and posters, attendance sheets, invitation to Ability events, launches and award ceremonies, general Ability correspondence, conference materials etc.

Please note the following:

- If logos are placed horizontally Ireland's ESIF logo should be placed on the left, followed by the ESF logo and other logos, as appropriate.
- If used vertically Ireland's ESIF logo should be placed on the top, followed by the ESF logo and other logos, as appropriate.

Sufficient `breathing space` between logos should be utilised to enhance the visual appearance of publications and signage

EU logos may be downloaded [here](#) Two documents give the required information on how to the use of EU logos, as well as other EU publicity requirements:

1. The *ESF PEIL Information and Communication Guidelines 2014-2020* - see [here](#)
2. *Information and Communication Guidelines for European Structural & Investment Funds 2014-2020* – see [here](#)

16.2 Strapline to Acknowledge Funders

All publications, information and promotional materials relating to Ability (e.g. project documentation, posters, leaflets, reports) must contain the following strapline:

“Ability is co-financed by the Irish Government and the European Social Fund as part of the ESF Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning 2014-2020.”

16.3 EU Posters

Grantees are required to display a poster (minimum size A3) which acknowledges the financial support from the EU – these posters will be given to each grantee by the ESF. The poster should be placed in a prominent location where it is visible to the general public, for example, the entrance/reception area of a building or the training room.

16.4 Publications

Any publications produced as a result of Ability must adhere to the publicity requirements regarding the correct use of logos and a written acknowledgement of the funders. Any research and policy-related publications associated with Ability must include a statement that the views contained in the publication do not necessarily reflect those of the EU, the European Social Fund, the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection or Pobal.

16.5 Press Releases and Articles

Every press release and article relating to Ability must provide a clear acknowledgment of the sources of funding, particularly the contribution and support of the European Social Fund and Ireland’s European Structural and Investment Funds. Grantees must liaise with journalists to ensure that the final print copy includes the appropriate acknowledgement - the strapline could be provided to journalists to meet this requirement.

17. Audit and Verification

As the Ability programme is part funded under ESF PEIL 2014-2020, your project may receive a visit from ESF Certifying and/or Managing Authority through the Department of Education and Skills. You may also receive a verification from the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection as well as a member of the Pobal Audit team. The Audit Authority within the Department of Education and Skills (DES) may also visit or the auditors of the European Commission or European Court of Auditors or their representatives. It is important that you maintain adequate books and records to all aspects of your Grant Agreement. These books and records will be inspected as part of the audit process. Please note that all Ability project related information that is held by ‘delivery partners’ is also subject to audit and verification.

Compliance with the information and publicity requirements will also form a part of any verification/ audit visits. Grantees must keep a hard copy of all publicity materials (e.g. press-cutting, posters, press release, advertisements etc.) and retain these in an information and communication file to demonstrate compliance with the requirements.