



**MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
OF DENMARK**
Danida

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Guidelines for approval of bilateral (incl. multi-bi) projects and programmes

Table of Contents

1. INTRODUCTION	3
2. THE THREE APPROVAL FLOWS (STEP-BY-STEP)	4
2.1 Grants from DKK 100 million and above	4
2.2. Grants from DKK 20 to 99 million	5
2.3. Grants up to DKK 20 million (inclusive)	7
3. KICK-OFF MEETINGS	8
4. PRESENTATION TO THE EXTERNAL PANEL.....	10
5. THE ROLE OF “BEVILLINGSSEKRETARIATET” (APPROPRIATION SECRETARIAT).....	13
7. GUIDELINES REFERENCES	14

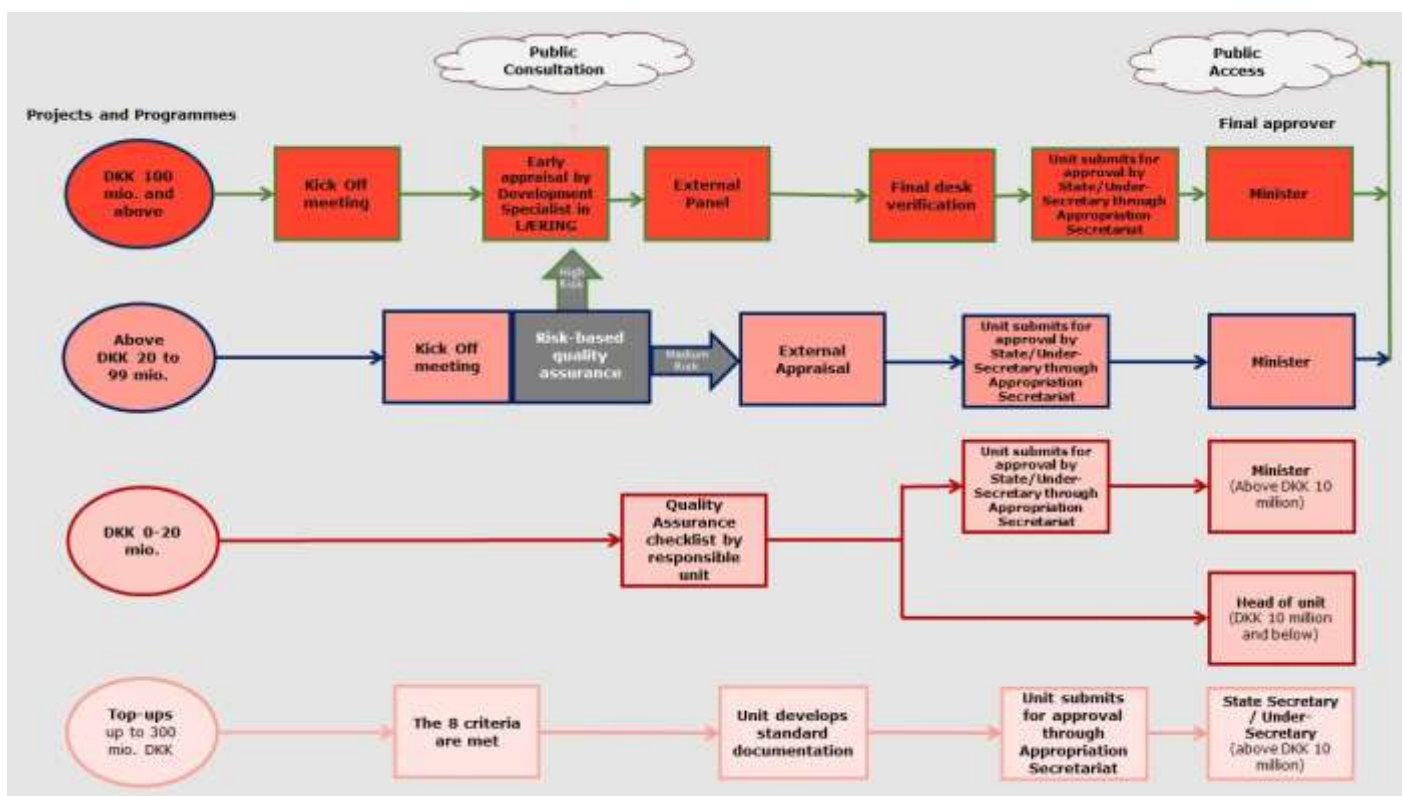
1. INTRODUCTION

These guidelines constitute the approval process for all bilateral programmes and projects. The approval guidelines describe the procedure within the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs for presentation and approval of projects and programmes.

The approval guidelines apply to projects and programmes of all financial sizes, complexities and durations. An overview of the procedures is provided in the figure below.

For registration of programmes/projects for kick-off meetings and meetings in the External Panel, please coordinate with the Appropriation Secretariat on bevillingssek@um.dk. For questions or inquiries please refer to the same shared mailbox.

Overview of procedures for presentation and approval of bilateral (incl. multi-bi) projects and programmes



2. THE THREE APPROVAL FLOWS (STEP-BY-STEP)

2.1 Grants of DKK 100 million and above

Step 1: Identification.

The process begins with the identification phase. During this phase, the responsible unit prepares or updates the background analyses required to support the project or programme design, including studies, political economy analysis, context assessment and other preparatory analyses. The unit should also document relevant experience and lessons learned from previous experiences. If relevant, the unit may establish a task force. If additional expertise is required, consultants may be recruited to support the identification process.

Step 2: Identification note and Process Action Plan

The unit prepares the identification note (2-pager) and the Process Action Plan (PAP) for presenting at the kick-off meeting.

The unit must notify LÆRING (bevillingssek@um.dk) no later than 10 working days before the kick off meeting.

Templates and guidance on the mandate, scope, composition, and working procedure of the kick-off meeting are available in chapter 3.

Step 3: Kick-off meeting

At the kick-off meeting, the unit presents the project or programme to LÆRING, TILSKUD, AFRPOL and the Under-Secretary for Development Policy, who chairs the meeting. If relevant, the unit or the permanent participants may invite other departments and embassies to participate in the meeting. The unit should always involve its CFO.

LÆRING will distribute the minutes approximately one week after the meeting.

Step 4: Formulation

The unit prepares the draft project or programme document (PD). Please refer to [the bilateral guidelines](#) chapter 3 for further guidance on formulation.

Step 5: Early Appraisal and Public Consultation

The unit drafts Terms of Reference (ToR) for the early appraisal and submits them to LÆRING. LÆRING tenders for and contracts the appraisal consultants. The unit submits the draft PD to LÆRING for early appraisal and public consultation.

Step 6: External Panel

LÆRING facilitates the distribution of documents to the External Panel, which includes

- The appropriation cover note
- The draft PD (NB different requirements for stand-alone projects and programmes, please refer to chapter 4)

- The appraisal recommendations, and
- Comments received from the public consultation.

Further guidance on the mandate, scope, composition, and working procedure of the External Panel is provided in chapter 4.

LÆRING distributes the minutes approximately two weeks after the meeting.

Step 7: Finalisation

The unit revises the PD to reflect the recommendations and comments from the early appraisal, the External Panel and the public consultation and finalises the PD.

The final PD, including annexes and the appropriation cover note is submitted to LÆRING for desk verification.

Step 8: Approval

The project or programme is submitted for approval by the Minister for Foreign Affairs.

The following documents are mandatory for the submission:

1. Submission note ("forelæggelsesnotits") for the Minister for Foreign Affairs
2. Appropriation Cover Note
3. Final PD, including annexes
4. Desk verification report, incl. annex 1: response to early appraisal and annex 2: response to external panel's recommendations

The submission should be in the following approval flow in 360°:

1. Head of Unit
2. "Bevillingssekretariatet" (Distribution group in 360°)
3. State Secretary or Under-Secretary for Development Policy

After approval by the State Secretary or Under-Secretary for Development Policy, LÆRING forwards the submission note and appropriation cover note for the Minister's approval of the programme/project.

Following approval, LÆRING informs the responsible unit and publishes the project/programme document on Danida Transparency.

Other steps (if relevant) include preparation of the document for the Finance Committee ("Aktstykke"). Please refer to AFRPOL for further guidance on the Finance Committee.

2.2. Grants above DKK 20 to 99 million

Step 1: Identification

The unit prepares or update the necessary background analyses, including background studies, political economy analyses, context assessment and other preparatory analyses. The unit should also document relevant experience and lessons learned.

If relevant, the unit may establish a task force. If additional expertise is required, consultants may be recruited to support the identification process.

Step 2: Identification note and Process Action Plan

The unit prepares:

- The identification note (2-pager)
- Annex 1: Unit's self-assessment of risks
- The Process Action Plan (PAP)

These documents form the basis for the kick-off meeting.

The unit must notify LÆRING (bevillingssek@um.dk) no later than 10 working days before the kick-off meeting.

Templates and further guidance are available in chapter 3.

Step 3: Kick-off meeting

At the kick-off meeting, the unit presents the project or programme to LÆRING, TILSKUD, AFRPOL and the Under-Secretary for Development Policy, who chairs the meeting. If relevant, the unit or the permanent participants may invite other departments and embassies to participate in the meeting. The unit should always involve its CFO.

LÆRING distributes the minutes approximately one week after the meeting.

Important: If the kick-off meeting concludes that the project or programme involves substantial risk, the approval process for grants of DKK 100 million and above must be followed.

Step 4: Formulation

The unit prepares the draft PD. Further guidance is available in chapter 3 of the [bilateral guidelines](#).

Step 5: External appraisal

The unit finalises the Terms of Reference (ToR) for external appraisal, procures and contracts the appraisal consultant(s). The consultant(s) conduct the appraisal.

Step 6: Finalisation

The unit revises the PD to reflect the external appraisal's recommendations, finalises the project or programme documents and prepares the unit's response to the appraisal recommendations.

Step 7 Approval

The project or programme is submitted for approval by the Minister for Foreign Affairs.

The following documents are mandatory for the submission:

1. Submission note ("forelæggelsesnotits") for the Minister for Foreign Affairs
2. Appropriation Cover Note
3. Final PD, including annexes
4. Summary of recommendations from external appraisal, including unit's response

The submission should be in the following approval flow in 360°:

1. Head of Unit
2. "Bevillingssekretariatet" (Distribution group in 360°)
3. State Secretary or Under-Secretary for Development Policy

After approval by the State Secretary or Under-Secretary for Development Policy, LÆRING forwards the submission for the Minister's approval of the programme/project.

Following approval, LÆRING informs the unit and publishes the project/programme document on Danida Transparency.

Other steps (if relevant) include preparation of the document for the Finance Committee ("Aktstykke"). Please refer to AFRPOL for further guidance on the Finance Committee.

2.3. Grants up to DKK 20 million (inclusive)

Step 1: Identification

Projects up to DKK 20 million (inclusive) can follow a lighter identification process adapted to the level of complexity of the project and will apply the format for stand-alone projects, but with fewer annexes. An overview of documentation required for programmes and stand-alone projects can be found in chapter 3, figure 3 in [the bilateral guidelines](#).

Step 2: Drafting the project document

The unit drafts and finalises the project documentation based on implementing partners PD.

Step 3: Internal quality assurance

The unit conducts the quality assurance using the template for Quality Assurance Checklist. The checklist must be completed by a staff member who has not been involved in preparing the project. Assessments should be supported by concise but sufficiently substantiated comments.

Step 4: Approval

Grants above DKK 10 million

The project is submitted to the Minister for Foreign Affairs for approval. The following documents are mandatory for the submission:

1. Appropriation Cover Note
2. Final PD, including annexes
3. Signed Quality Assurance Checklist

The submission should be in the following approval flow in 360°:

1. Head of Unit
2. “Bevillingssekretariatet” (Distribution group in 360°)
3. State Secretary or Under-Secretary for Development Policy

After approval by the State Secretary or Under-Secretary for Development Policy, LÆRING forwards the submission to the Minister and informs the unit once approval has been granted.

Grants of DKK 10 million or less

Projects of DKK 10 million or less are approved by the Head of Unit. The following documents are mandatory for the submission for approval:

1. Appropriation Cover Note
2. Final PD, incl. annexes
3. Signed Quality Assurance Checklist

The submission should be in the following approval flow in 360°:

1. Head of Unit

Other steps (if relevant) include preparation of the document for the Finance Committee (“Aktstykke”). Please refer to AFRPOL for further guidance on the Finance Committee.

3. KICK-OFF MEETINGS

Mandate and scope

All grants above DKK 20 million, including programmes, projects and organisation strategies, must be presented at a kick-off meeting.

The purpose of the kick-off meeting is to provide strategic feedback to the responsible unit at an early stage of the preparation phase and to determine the appropriate quality assurance and approval process based on an assessment of risk.

The dialogue is based on:

- The 2-page identification note
- Annex 1: unit’s self-assessment of risks (required only for grants above DKK 20 to 99 million)
- The Process Action Plan (PAP).

The kick-off meeting serves as a forum for strategic discussion, decision-making, organisational learning and knowledge-sharing.

For grants above DKK 20 to 99 million, the meeting concludes with an assessment of the project’s or programme’s overall risk. The outcome is recorded in the minutes and determines which quality assurance and approval process the responsible unit must follow.

Kick-off meetings are internal and only for colleagues within the MFA. Following the meeting, the responsible unit may share the minutes with external partners where appropriate.

Composition

The Under-Secretary for Development Policy chairs the kick-off meeting. In the Under-Secretary's absence, the meeting is chaired by LÆRING.

The presenting unit must be represented by its Head of Unit or Deputy Head of Unit and may be accompanied by one or more desk officers, including the unit's CFO.

AFRPOL, LÆRING, and TILSKUD are permanent participants. Other MFA departments and embassies may be invited where relevant. If the project or programme has a significant focus on economic diplomacy, ØKODIP may participate at their discretion. LÆRING serves as the Secretariat for kick-off meetings.

If the presenting unit wish to invite other departments or embassies, the unit should coordinate with the appropriation secretariat (bevillingssek@um.dk). The secretariat will then extend the meeting invitation.

The meeting is conducted in Danish unless the representing unit has requested the meeting to be conducted in English. Please coordinate with the appropriation secretariat.

Working procedures

Kick-off meetings are normally held every Wednesday between 10.00 and 12:00 (CET).

The responsible unit must confirm the presentation date with the appropriation secretariat no later than 10 working days before the meeting.

No later than 12:00 (CET), five working days before the meeting, the unit must submit the following documents to the appropriation secretariat (bevillingssek@um.dk):

- Two-page identification note
- Annex 1: Unit's self-assessment of risk (grants above DKK 20 to 99 million only)
- Process action plan (PAP)

The Head of Unit is responsible for ensuring that the documentation has been quality assured before submission.

Identification notes and minutes from previous kick-off meetings are available on the UMBrella workspace. If access is required, please contact the appropriation secretariat: bevillingssek@um.dk.

Each meeting may include a maximum of four agenda items. Agenda requests are normally scheduled on a first-come, first-served basis.

The appropriation secretariat distributes the agenda and meeting documents approximately one week before the meeting.

Conduct of the kick-off meeting

Normally, an agenda item is opened with questions and comments from one or two of the permanent participants. Then the presenting unit is invited to respond. The discussion should encourage constructive dialogue and provide strategic guidance for further development of the project or programme.

LÆRING prepares concise written minutes summarising the key observations, recommendations and decisions from the meeting, including the Chair's conclusion.

The responsible unit must take the conclusions and recommendations into account during the subsequent formulation phase.

Timeline for the preparation of kick-off meetings

Deadline	Action	Responsible	Role of Secretariat
2 weeks (10 working days) prior to the meeting	Departments and representations confirm requests for agenda items	Departments and representations in MFA	
1 week (5 working days) prior to the meeting at 12 PM	Departments and representations submit the two pager, annex 1: Unit's risk self-assessment and PAP. The Secretariat distributes the agenda and documents among the participants at the kick-off meeting	Departments and representation in MFA	Ensure that all documentation is received and distribute agenda and documents
Chosen Wednesday between 10AM to 12PM	The meeting is conducted		Contact person for online participation
Approximately 1 week (5 working days) after the meeting	Minutes of the meeting is distributed	LÆRING / Secretariat	Distribute minutes

4. PRESENTATION TO THE EXTERNAL PANEL

Mandate and scope

The purpose of the External Panel is to provide independent professional quality assurance of major bilateral grants at an early stage of the preparation process. The External Panel therefore forms part of the quality assurance process immediately after the completion of the internal quality assurance. This enables the responsible unit to revise the programme or project documentation in light of both internal and external feedback before finalising the documentation.

The External Panel reviews all bilateral grants with a budget of DKK 100 million and above. In addition, grants with a budget above DKK 20 million up to DKK 99 million may be referred to the Panel where, based on a risk assessment, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs considers that the proposed intervention involves significant implementation risks.

The rules of procedure for the External Panel are available [here](#) (in Danish only).

Composition

The Minister for Foreign Affairs appoints the nine members of the External Panel. The Panel is a standing body whose members are appointed for a three-year term and may be re-appointed once. Members are appointed on the basis of their individual professional expertise in international development and their experience of development cooperation in one or more of the thematic areas covered by the current development policy strategy. Collectively, the Panel should possess expertise across the principal thematic priorities of the strategy.

The current composition of the Panel can be seen [here](#).

Meetings are chaired by the Chair or, in the Chair's absence, the Deputy Chair.

LÆRING serves as the Secretariat to the External Panel.

Working procedures

The Panel meets regularly throughout the year.

The Secretariat prepares the agenda in consultation with the Chair and Deputy Chair.

Departments and representations can register agenda items by contacting bevillingssek@um.dk. The units should confirm agenda items before the early appraisal take place in order to ensure the timeline for finalisation of the early appraisal's recommendations. The External Panel receive the summary of recommendations prior to the meeting. Therefor they must be completed no later than 12 working days before the meeting in the External Panel. All agenda items must be confirmed by the Secretariat.

The Secretariat works with the Chair in planning the meetings to ensure an appropriate balance between agenda items.

The agenda and supporting documents are published on [Danida Transparency](#) approximately 10 working days before the meeting.

Unless otherwise agreed, all documentation submitted to the External Panel must be in English and prepared in accordance with the relevant guidelines available on [AMG](#).

Meeting documentation

The following documents form the basis for each agenda item:

- 1) Summary of recommendations from appraisal (not mandatory to include the unit's response)
- 2) Responses from the public consultations

Additional meeting documentation for programmes with underlying projects

- 1) Programme appropriation cover note
- 2) Early draft MFA Programme document including annex 1: Context analysis
- 3) Underlying project appropriation cover notes
- 4) Early draft MFA project documents (where possible)

Additional meeting documentation for Stand-alone projects:

- 1) Project appropriation cover note
- 2) Early draft MFA project document including annex F (partner-project document)

For Stand-alone projects that plans for a Call for Proposal

- 1) Information note¹

Before presentation to the Panel, the PD must have undergone an early appraisal as well as been in a public consultation². The public consultation lasts 10 working days and must be completed no later than 11 working days before the panel meeting. The documentation for the public consultation is identical to the above, except that the appropriation cover note is excluded at both programme and project level. Responses to the public consultation are shared with the Panel.

The Panel meeting

Meetings are normally conducted in Danish. Danish representations may participate by video conference where appropriate.

The presenting unit must be represented by its Head/Deputy of Head and may be accompanied by up to a maximum of two case officers.

During the meeting, Panel members provide comments and ask clarifying questions.

At the conclusion of each agenda item, the Chair summarises the panel's key observations and recommendations.

LÆRING prepares the draft minutes, reflecting the Chair's conclusions and the panels' principal recommendations.

The Panel is given the opportunity to comment on the draft minutes before they are approved by the State Secretary or the Under-Secretary for Development Policy.

Following approval, the Secretariat publishes the minutes on [Danida Transparency](#).

Timeline for the preparation of meetings in the External Panel

¹ The information note is not subject to a public consultation.

² Concerning projects or programmes for the following year the public consultation will commence after publication of the proposed Finance Act.

Deadline	Action	Responsible	Role of Secretariat
Approximately 10 weeks (50 working days) prior to the meeting	Departments and representations forward draft PD to LÆRING for early appraisal and public consultation	Departments and representations	Publishing the early draft PD for public consultation on Danida Transparency
2 weeks (10 working days) prior to the meeting	LÆRING forwards agenda, early draft PD, summary of recommendations from early appraisal, responses to public consultations to the External Panel	Secretariat	Forward documentation to the External Panel
2 weeks (10 working days) prior to the meeting	Agenda and documents are published on Danida Transparency	Secretariat	Upload the agenda and the documents (for discussion) to Danida Transparency
Approximately 2 weeks after the meeting	Approval and distribution of minutes	Secretariat	Receive comments to the minutes from Panel. The approved minutes are published on Danida Transparency.

5. THE ROLE OF “BEVILLINGSSEKRETARIATET” (APPROPRIATION SECRETARIAT)

The Appropriation Secretariat (LÆRING) is responsible for coordinating the quality assurance and approval processes for grants in cooperation with the responsible units and for ensuring that these processes comply with the guidelines (AMG).

When a project or programmes is submitted for approval by the State Secretary/Under-Secretary, the approval flow in Public 360° should include the distribution group “**Bevillingssekretariatet**”.

The Appropriation Secretariat does not carry out a substantive quality assurance of the project or programme. Instead, it verifies that:

- All the mandatory documents have been submitted
- The required quality assurance procedures have been completed in accordance with the AMG.

LÆRING is available to advise departments and representations throughout the preparation of grant documentation and to provide guidance on the quality assurance and approval processes.

For questions or requests for guidance, please contact the shared mailbox: bevillingsek@um.dk.

5.1. Danida Transparency

Following the approval of projects and programmes, LÆRING publishes the final project or programme document for all grants above DKK 20 million on [Danida Transparency](#).

LÆRING is also responsible for uploading the documents for public consultations on Danida Transparency.

Exemption from the publication requirement may only be granted in exceptional circumstances and must be approved by the Under-Secretary for Development Policy. The responsible unit is responsible for obtaining the approval for the exemption and for informing LÆRING accordingly.

7. GUIDELINES REFERENCES

The following guidance documents should be consulted together with these guidelines:

[Bilateral guidelines](#)

[Multilateral guidelines](#)

[Top-up guidelines](#)

[Guidelines for Strategic Sector Cooperation](#)

[Guidelines for the peace and stabilisation fund](#)

[General Guidelines for Financial management](#)