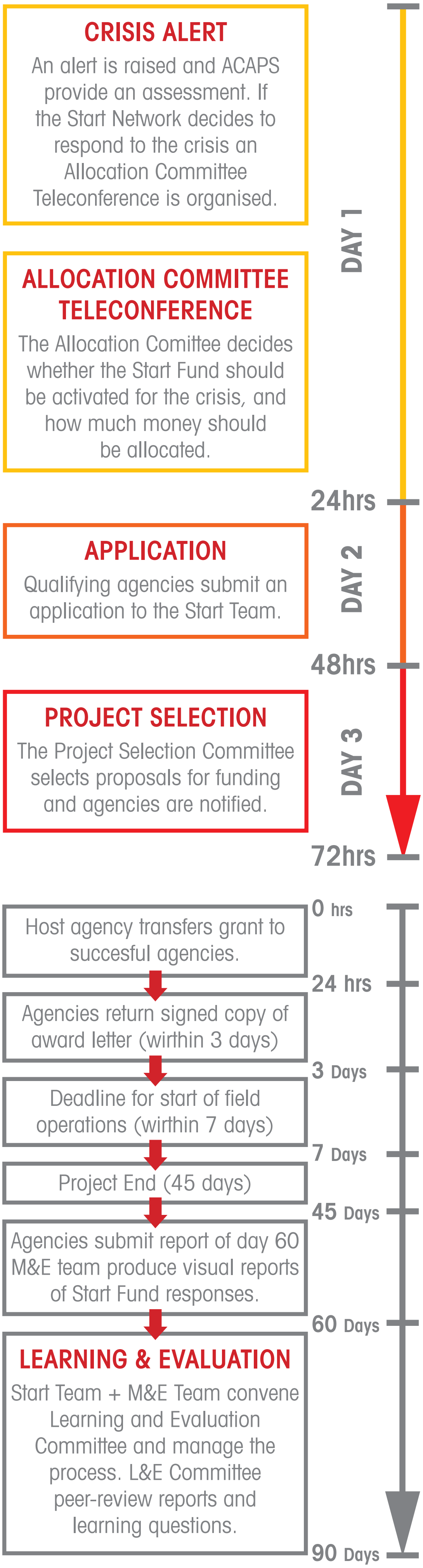
Start Fund Practical Guide Time Frame Diagram and Process



Alerts:

In the event of a crisis, the Start Network member agencies report a crisis to the Start team. This is done by sending an alert note (see Handbook Appendix V).

The Start team requests an assessment of the crisis from ACAPs.

When an alert has been raised, it is the responsibility of the Start Network member agencies to communicate this to their implementing partners. The members inform the Start team within 24 hours of the alert whether they would apply for funding should the Start Fund be activated. If at least 1 agency is potentially able to carry out a response and fewer than half of the membership objects to a telecon, the Start team organises a teleconference with the Allocation Committee, and shares the ACAPs assessment with them.

Allocations:

The Allocation Committee will decide in a teleconference whether the Start Fund will be activated for the crisis. This committee consists of a representative group of 12 Start Network members. When the committee decides to activate the fund it will also allocate a maximum disbursement amount to the response.

Application:

Qualifying agencies may submit an application via email to the Start team for a proportion of the overall Start Fund allocation. They have 24 hours from the start of the initial telecon to submit this application. See Handbook Appendix VII for standard Start Fund application form.

Project Selection:

This committee consists of five Start Network members who use peer review to decide which applicants are best placed to respond. The committee uses criteria based on the OECD DAC principles for humanitarian action. ACAPS will provide more detailed analysis of the crisis tailored to the criteria to contextualise the decision making process.

In cases where the Allocation Committee allocates less than £250K in total to a crisis the Start Team will run the selection process instead of the Project Selection Committee.

Transfer:

The Start Fund Team will initiate transfer of the awarded funds within 24 hours from the receipt of the Project Selection Committee's decision. The Start Fund award letter must be signed and returned within 3 days or the agency will be required to return the funds to the host agency.

Grant Requirements:

Start Fund recipients must have an operational project up and running within 7 days of the funding decision. The accountable project must be completed within 45 days (in terms of actual spend and completion of activities). The Report Form must be submitted by day 60, two weeks after completion of the 45 day grant (see Handbook Appendix XI for Reporting Form template). This is in order to make real-time information available.

Learning and Evaluation:

The M&E Team extracts three sources of information from the Report Form to produce three products:

1. Data visualisation platform; **2.** Crisis response summary sheets;
3. Learning review summaries.

The L&E Committee will peer-review these products and provide feedback on the Start Fund cycle.

The M&E team will report to the Start Fund team on how information from the Learning Framework contributes to improved performance of the Fund. They will also combine all reporting outputs with the results of regular external evaluations to form the basis of an annual State of the Start Fund report.

Frequently Asked Questions

Who is eligible to apply for the Start Fund?

Only full members of the Start Network are permitted to submit applications for the Start Fund but they may do so on behalf of partners. Partners receiving Start Funds through a sub grant should have:

previous programmatic relationships with the member agency and the ability to undertake an emergency response programme;

a commitment to working in line with the Humanitarian Charter (Sphere, Red Cross Code of Conduct); and

a commitment to the principles of accountability to beneficiaries

It is the member agency's responsibility to check the partner against the United Kingdom Treasury and the United States OFAC prohibited lists. The Start Fund will not be disbursed to agencies that appear on these lists.

How can I apply for a grant from the Start Fund?

An alert may be raised to report a crisis by either the Start team or a Start Network member. Implementing partners can raise an alert by contacting the Start Network member agency headquarters and requesting that they contact the Start team. Once the Allocation Committee activates the Start Fund and decides how much money will be disbursed, qualifying agencies will have 24 hours to submit an application via email to the Start team for a proportion of the overall Start Fund allocation. Implementing partners should direct their statements of interest and proposals through the Start Network member agency.

What is the maximum Start Fund grant size?

Funding is limited to £300,000 per member agency (this amount is subject to revision and any changes must be voted by the Start Network Executive Board) for any given emergency regardless of the number of partners that are sub granted to. In some cases the Allocation Committee may decide to allocate less than £300,000 in total to an emergency; therefore qualifying agencies will only be able to apply for the allocated amount.

What types of crises is the Start Fund designed for?

The Start Fund is intended for emergencies that are under-served by the current humanitarian financing system. As well as small-scale or cyclical crises, the Start Fund may be activated to provide timely assistance to larger scale slow or rapid onset disasters, before funding from other donors is made available. It is intended that the Start Fund will provide an opportunity to leverage funding from other donors to a particular crisis. Funding is needs-based and allocated through peer-review to the agency that is best placed to respond.

How is the Start Fund different to the Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC)?

The DEC brings together a unique alliance of the UK's aid, corporate, public and broadcasting sectors to raise public funds for DEC members to deliver effective relief to people most in need. However, DEC appeals are reserved for major disasters with a significant media profile where a national appeal is an appropriate response. Many disasters do not benefit from national appeals. The Start Fund will provide fast, direct funding for NGOs using an impartial assessment of humanitarian need alone. The membership of the two organisations differs slightly, with the DEC including civil society organisations and the British Red Cross, and the Start Fund being reserved specifically for civil society.

How is the Start Fund different to the UK Department for International Development Rapid Response Facility (RRF)?

The RRF is a rapid funding mechanism for pre-qualified British NGOs and private sector firms that is triggered by the UK Secretary of State. The RRF is an effective tool for rapid strategic disbursements in less frequent larger scale events, in situations where there is a significant political and public interest. The Start Fund can be activated for crises that do not meet these criteria, such as smaller scale, slow onset or forgotten events.

Can I apply for the Start Fund if I have already applied for grants from other donors?

The Start Fund is designed to finance response in the immediate aftermath of a disaster, before other funding mechanisms become available. However, if additional donors make funds available to implementing agencies before they have started spending Start Fund grants, then agencies are encouraged to return the money they received from the Start Fund.

Can Start Fund grants be extended beyond the 45 day time limit?

In exceptional circumstances the Start Fund will create the opportunity for second tranche funding for the same crisis. These second tranches are mainly reserved for cases where the emergency situation is ongoing (and a transition to recovery not in sight) and alternative sources of funding are not available. In these circumstances members can request the Board to instigate a second tranche. In the case of an under spend, the implementing agency must return the remaining funds within 14 days of the Final Report deadline.

What are the reporting obligations for agencies that receive Start Fund grants?

All that is required from field staff who received a Start Fund grant is one form. The form is succinct, and designed to answer few and insightful questions. The agency is required to submit the report 60 days after receiving a grant to make real-time information available.

What is peer review and how does it work?

The Start Network makes decisions using peer review, where a small elected group of individuals from the member agencies assess proposals using predetermined criteria. Peer review panellists are required to make decisions based on the collective interests of the membership and beneficiaries, rather than their own individual agency interests. The methodology is intended to be impartial and avoid undue bureaucracy, and enables the network to make collective decisions and uphold the quality of the process.

Is there a limit to how much you can apply?

There is no limit to the number of times an individual agency may apply for Start Funds, because grants will always be allocated to the agency or agencies deemed best placed to respond.

Will negative performance influence future access to funds?

Start Fund recipients are required to report on their performance during the project in a standardised Reporting Form. This form also encourages agencies to reflect on lessons learned through a question on what has changed during their response. In this way, if an agency performs poorly, they can avoid being penalised in future funding decisions by demonstrating that they gained learning from the experience effectively. However, if an agency performs poorly repeatedly, suggesting that they have not acted on feedback, this will be noted and the agency may not be considered for future funding.

Who participates in the committees?

The various decision making committees involved in the operational running of the Start Fund are made up of representatives from the Start Network member agencies. For more information on the size and terms of reference for the various committees, please see the Handbook.

How much influence do donors have over funding decisions?

A Start Fund Donor Advisory Group meets bi-annually to review the performance of the Start Fund and provide recommendations to the Start Network Board (who oversee the management of all Start activities). However, donors do not have any voting rights on the Start Fund committees to ensure that the fund is used impartially.

How is the performance and learning of the fund captured?

The reporting requirements for Start Fund recipients are light to minimise administrative resources and maximise response. Agencies are only responsible for one reporting form. The M&E team extract quantitative monitoring metrics, qualitative performance indicators and examples of lessons learned from this form, and provide a report to the L&E Committee. The L&E Committee will peer-review reports and provide feedback and recommendations to the Allocation Committee and the Project Selection Committee to identify areas for improvement where issues come up through agencies' performance. The M&E Team will also feed back to the other Start Fund committees, and combine all reporting outputs with the results of regular external evaluations to form the basis of an annual State of the Start Fund report.

This document is designed to provide some key information about the Start Fund. For more detailed information please see the Start Fund Handbook, or contact a member of the Start Team:

Contact

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