

German ESTHER Initiative

Standards and Guidelines for Proposal Development and Review

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1. Introduction

Since 2004, Germany has joined the European Clinical and Organisational Network ESTHER (Ensemble pour une Solidarité Thérapeutique Hospitalière En Réseau). The coalition of the European ESTHER partners aims at contributing to assure the quality of medical and psycho-social services, in particular those related to HIV and AIDS.

The German contribution to the ESTHER Network favours to improve equitable access to and quality of supplied services in the fields of prevention, treatment, care and support for people living with HIV/AIDS in selected partner countries. GTZ has been commissioned by BMZ to create and assist the implementation of the partnerships between hospitals and organisations in industrial and developing countries.

1.1 Objectives of this document

A set of standards and guidelines (S&G) to support an open and transparent proposal development and review process for applications to the German ESTHER Initiative has been developed by the German ESTHER secretariat.

The objectives of the S&G are

- to guide the design and implementation process of reasonable, responsible, and cost-effective interventions,
- to facilitate an open, fair and transparent proposal review process ,
- to offer a tool for assessing the proposed interventions.

2. Content and Context of supported interventions

Public and private hospitals and organisations in partner countries or in Germany providing medical, preventive, and psycho-social or harm reduction services related to HIV and AIDS are eligible for support from German ESTHER Initiative.

2.1 Main focus of funding

The type, scope and scale of the interventions are in line with current knowledge and experiences related to HIV/AIDS and are committed to the ESTHER purpose. Priority is given to quality training and exchange of professional experience aiming to develop specific capacities, harmonisation and coordination of activities, and knowledge management as well as quality assurance for certain services. Financing of material and small equipment and relevant research activities can also be funded by the ESTHER initiative. Innovative approaches that do not fall directly into one of these categories need to be thoroughly assessed for their added value.

Proposals should primarily originate from BMZ's priority and partner countries. Proposals which do not fall within the geographical priority region of the BMZ may still qualify through particularly promising approaches but require consultation with German ESTHER-Secretariat, prior to proposal submission. The applications have to consider the national health and HIV/AIDS policies and strategies. They have to build on, complement and co-ordinate with existing regional and national programmes in partner countries.

The proposal has to refer to at least two of the following activity areas:

(i) Quality Assurance for certain services

The development and introduction of quality standards and/or a quality assurance system in a hospital or organisation related to HIV/AIDS services can be supported. Quality assurance may include improved processes, checklists, standardisation, better follow-up and/or management of patients, better management of health staff, better monitoring of outcomes etc. Support to implement a certification system in the field of HIV/AIDS related services (e.g. EFQM, ISO 2000 etc.) is also an important area of partnership.

(ii) Training and expertise to strengthen the partner institution in specific technical fields¹, workshops, exchange of practical experiences, visits north-south and south-south, staff exchange, training on the job

Capacity development measures include institutional training, improvement of regional training capacity, training of trainers, on the job qualification, exchange of professional experience, and development of human resource capacity plans.

Cooperation between the ESTHER partner organisations may foresee an exchange program for the medical, paramedical and laboratory personnel and social workers. Internships can comprise joint seminars and case discussions but also the employment of staff members for the daily routine activities at health facility level. In addition workshops will assist health care employees and others who work with people at risk for HIV to develop the necessary skills to provide HIV prevention, treatment, care and support.

A south-south or north-south network between partners could contribute to the development of locally appropriate responses to HIV and support the mutual exchange of expertise between different organisations and services in one country, and between neighbouring countries. The cooperation with other instruments and organisations of German Development Cooperation like DED, CIM, INWENT are also an option to be explored by the applicants. The ESTHER Secretariat can advice and assist the applicants on this topic.

(iii) Contribution to harmonisation, coordination and networking of activities and knowledge management

Participation in e.g. national or regional coordination meetings, presentation of results and lessons learned of this partnership in international and national meetings and conferences but also the networking with other scientific and development partners in the south and in the north as well as the publication and/or documentation of "lessons learned" and operational research results etc. can be financed through this component.

(iv) (Operational) research activities designed and implemented jointly by the partners

Joint research proposals (clinical, social, and operational) of the partners intend to improve specific aspects of interventions can also be financed within the given budget framework. For this research activities approval by the concerned national ethic committee and respect of international guidelines and budgets for research have to be proven and documented. Possible co-financing of these research activities through third parties (ministries, research funds and industry) has to be transparent and well documented. Operational research activities that complement core project interventions are eligible for funding, up to a

¹ ... mainly diagnostics and treatment, prevention, care and harm reduction

maximum of 30 percent of the overall budget. Basic research (vaccine development, development of microbicide, etc.) cannot be funded through the ESTHER Initiative.

If necessary clinical partnerships may also ask for financial support for small-scale purchasing of equipment in order to improve their laboratory capacities, prevention materials, to strengthen data management or to improve clinical care activities at ward level or prevention activities in the organisation.

2.2 Eligibility criteria

To facilitate a smooth application process the ESTHER-Secretariat has created a list of standardised criteria. Regarding to those criteria the German ESTHER Initiative promotes participatory mechanisms between partner organisations and favours partnerships that allow for involvement, as equal partners in the development, implementation and monitoring of commonly proposed actions.

Eligibility Criteria for ESTHER Funding

The criteria are listed independently of weighting or preference and correspond to the application format.

Criteria (to be checked and used for proposal writing)

1. The proposed partnership includes a BMZ partner country where i) health is a priority of German Development Cooperation (primarily Africa) or ii) German Development is implementing HIV, health or other programmes. Countries that do not meet these criteria are not excluded per se but need special justification (e.g. promising and innovative approaches).
2. Pre-existing and functioning partnerships between submitting organisations are an asset.
3. The proposal was prepared and signed jointly by both applying organisations. The proposal was endorsed (in writing) by a public health authority in charge.
4. The project proposal has to be outcome oriented and should outline the possible impact of the project (see attached matrix on outcome orientation).
5. Integration of the proposed intervention into national policies, strategies and local activity plans with clear indication of coordination with local authorities. Integration and coordination are clearly documented by citation of official documents (e.g. chapters in national programmes/plans)
6. Coordination of the proposed intervention with the German Health Programme in the partner country (if applicable).
7. Shared responsibilities of all partners (German and those from different countries) during design, planning, implementation and monitoring of the proposed intervention.

8. The complementarities of the proposed intervention with third party efforts (and budgets) should be clearly outlined.
9. The budget has to be linked to the intended outcome. A feasible system for financial administration is outlined in the proposal as well as a break-up of the overall budget between the applying organisations.
10. All partners are planning for a significant and quantifiable contribution (financial, material or human resources, services) to the project.
11. Research components have to highlight the collaboration with the concerned national ethical committee and respect international standards and guidelines.
12. Innovative approaches such as networking for continuous knowledge exchange, contribution by local vulnerable groups, challenging gender inequality, promoting workplace programmes within the partner organisations, are additional assets.

Attention:

The proposal review process will take into consideration all the above eligibility criteria. However, assessing the proposals is a multi-stakeholder process that comprises of several steps. Consequently, the eligibility criteria are a central tool for a transparent and fair review but failing at one or more criteria might not necessarily result in a rejection of the proposal. The ESTHER-Secretariat considers the project proposal development as a stepwise process.

2.3 Supplementary issues

Additional credits will be given to interventions concerning the following supplementary issues:

- The proposed intervention empowers civil society organisations in their endeavour in the fight against HIV/AIDS
- The applying organisation is aware of the gender dimension of the disease burden and considers gender-specific approaches for effective interventions (e.g. capacity development measures, gender norms).
- The proposal gives attention to marginalised and socially excluded people living with HIV and AIDS.
- The proposal emphasises the introduction of HIV/AIDS-Workingplace programmes for health personnel, the considered clinics and health centres of the partnership.
- The intervention contributes to strengthen networking and knowledge transfer between partners.

2.4 Sustainability

Technical feasibility and state of the art interventions in the partnership project proposal are very important aspects for the evaluation process. But applications have also to consider and incorporate sustainability criteria that are important for a long-term success of the partnership and the investments made.

Here are some important sustainability criteria to be considered in the partnership project application process:

- The proposal has to be linked, coordinated and be part of the national, regional or district health and HIV/AIDS programmes and strategic plans.
- The proposal has to be endorsed by a representative of the local, regional or national health authorities
- All partners contribute significantly to the proposed intervention (human, material and/or financial resources; services).
- The proposal to the German ESTHER-Secretariat has to be signed by the two applying organisations. (e.g. administrative director, hospital director).
- The proposal describes the methodology to be used for results-based monitoring and consequently includes the definition of the expected outcome and possible impact of the intervention
- The ESTHER partners identify measures to support the outreach (decentralisation) of HIV/AIDS services in order to extend the geographical, social and financial access of the supported services and interventions.
- Cooperation between hospitals should continue after project completion/financing by the German ESTHER Initiative and additional funding should be identified in a long run.

3. Modes of funding

The commonly developed project is proposed by the partner organisations via a structured application procedure and standardised forms that assure transparency, fairness and a thorough review, and selection of the most beneficial and effective proposals. In order to allow for fast, efficient and unbureaucratic assistance, the German ESTHER-Secretariat has developed **two modes with corresponding application forms** to suit individual needs of partner organisations. Interested applicants who so far have no partner for a twinning can send a **letter of interest** with the available details and information to the ESTHER secretariat. The secretariat will then evaluate this letter of interest, ask perhaps for further information and/or look already for a potential twinning partner.

Completed applications can be submitted **in English or French language** respectively. Very often the consultancy application will be the first step for the project application. But there is no fixed (or specified) schedule between both application procedures. The **duration of the first phase** of the ESTHER funded projects can not exceed the **end of December 2009**.

A. Consultancy Application (up to EUR 15,000 per consultancy)

The Consultancy Application provides an opportunity to assign consultants to support project proposal development and/or implementation. The application form is also suitable for the initiation of new partnerships. Terms of Reference have to be worked out (Form 2) for each consultancy. Proposals will be checked for relevance and quality by the ESTHER-Secretariat by a quick and light approach. In case of a positive decision for example travel costs can be covered and if necessary and useful a contract with a consultant will be prepared by the ESTHER-Secretariat.

B. Project Application (up to EUR 50,000 – 200,000 € per contract)

The Project Application caters for partnership projects that support the above listed activity areas (see chapter 2.1) and have a duration of 1,5 to 2 years (1st phase of funding). The maximum time period for which funding can be requested should not exceed 5 years. The Project Application requires a brief summary of the proposal and a logframe that states purpose, outputs, indicators, activities, time frame and budget.

Please see ESTHER website for application forms:

<http://www.gtz.de/en/themen/soziale-entwicklung/hiv-aids/894.htm>

For further advice, clarification and information about the application procedure (application forms, etc) please contact the German ESTHER-Secretariat via E-mail: ESTHER-Germany@gtz.de

4. Budgeting

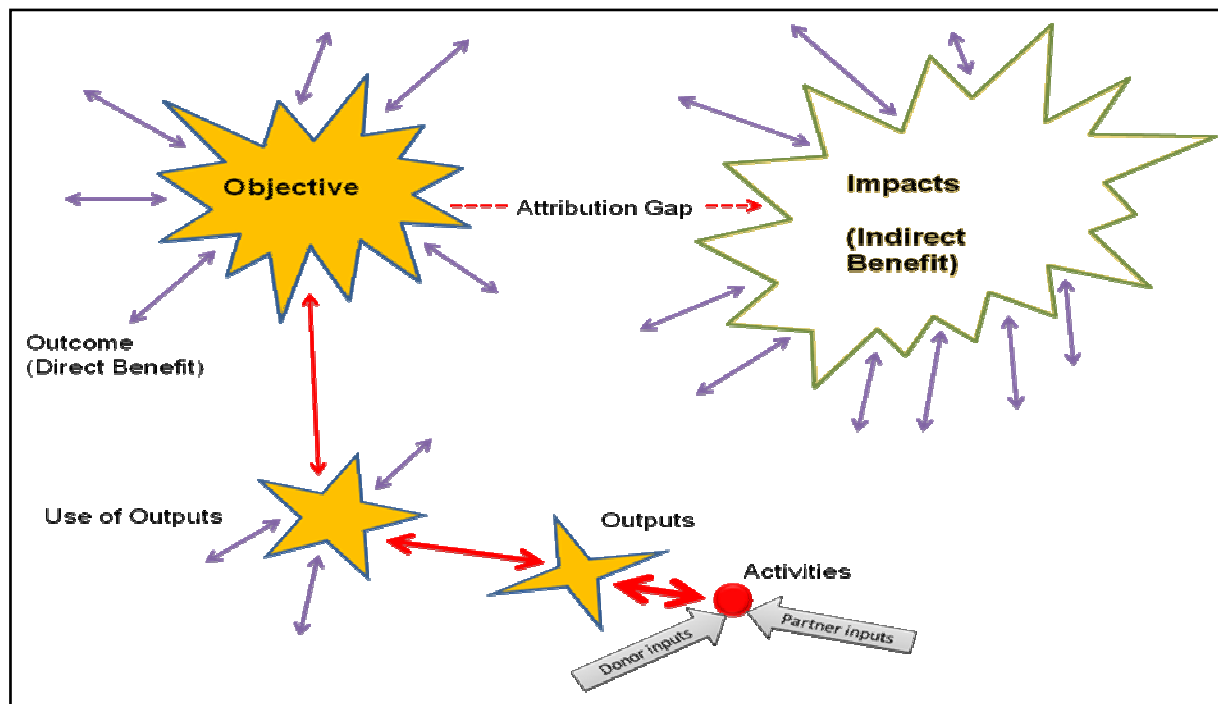
The total budget requested has to be stated in **Euros**. Contributions from the German ESTHER Initiative, the applicant and from other partners should be clearly marked.

- The total budget requested from the German ESTHER initiative should not exceed 200,000 Euros (time period for the first phase ends on December 31, 2009).
- Expenditure has to be detailed.
- The two (or more) ESTHER project partners have to clearly mention their own specific contribution to the proposed project (funding, staff, staff working time, facilities, equipment, etc.)
- The intended share of the operational research component should not exceed 30% of the overall budget.
- For a first phase (2008-2009) about 1, 2 Mio. EUROS are available for ESTHER partnerships. GTZ applied for a second phase with additional funds from 2009 onwards. A decision by BMZ on this demand is expected already in 2008.

5. Planning Methodology, Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)

A clearly designed M&E system shall monitor the progress of interventions towards outcomes in the areas of diagnosis, prevention, treatment, care and support for people living with HIV and AIDS. Thus, the proposal shall describe the methodology to be used for process- and result-based monitoring as well as for the final evaluation. The results-based monitoring and evaluation is an approach to assess the performance of the approved proposals, on the basis of impacts and benefits that the project is expected to produce. Results-based monitoring can be seen as a dynamic tool of planning and budgeting for improving substantive performance and achieving results, and forms part of the self-evaluation of a project. Results-based monitoring takes in the whole results chain, from inputs, via activities and outputs through to the outcomes and impacts. It focuses on the results generated by a project or programme. To identify these results, various tasks must be performed.

Figure 1: Results-Model



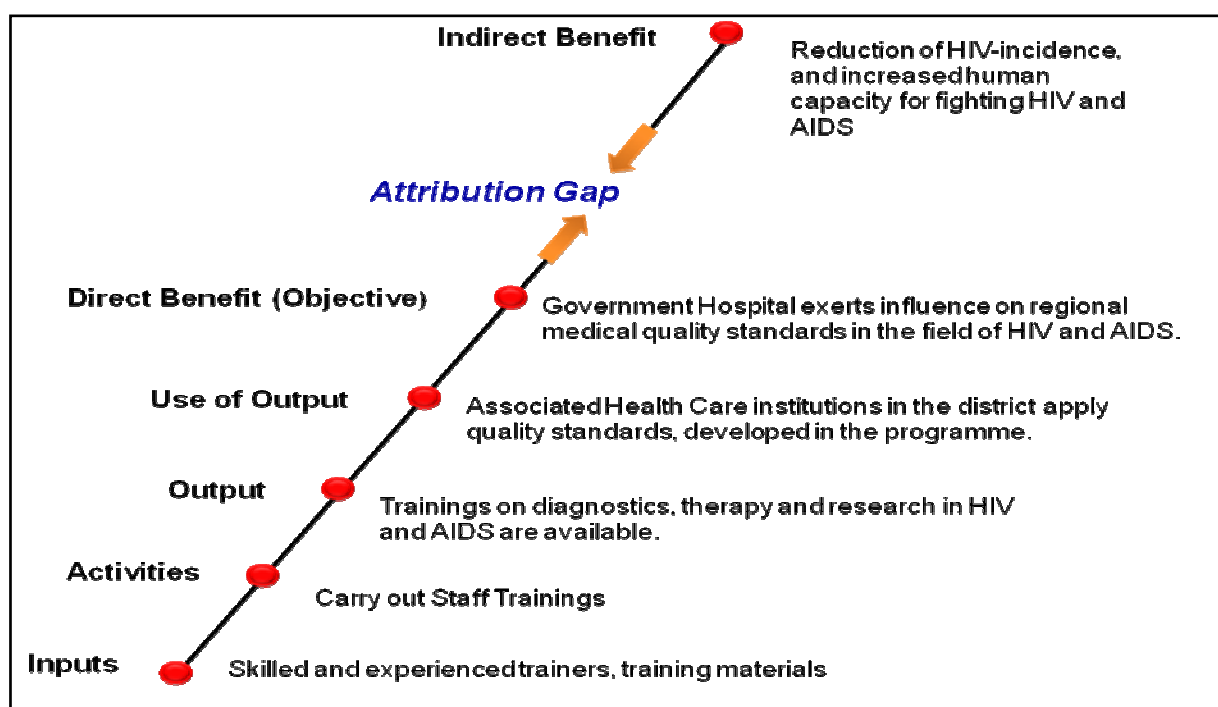
Using given inputs, they launch *activities* that generate *outputs*. These are then utilised by target groups or intermediaries (*use of outputs*), generating medium-term and long-term development results i.e. *outcomes and impacts*. Up to the level of *use of outputs*, attribution is relatively easy in most cases. However, up to the levels of *outcomes and impacts* external factors that cannot be influenced by interventions become increasingly important. The *attribution gap* widens up to an extent where the observed changes cannot be directly related to project outputs any more. Up to the level where a causal relationship between outputs and observed development changes can be shown, projects are entitled to claim the observed positive development changes as a *direct benefit*. Project *objectives* are set at this level. Projects aim to generate *impacts* beyond the *objectives* level. In general, it is not possible to identify a causal relationship explaining how these “*indirect benefits*” came about, as too many actors are involved to clearly isolate the effect of a single intervention.

- A project is an activity or a set of activities that are undertaken either to overcome a problem and/or to develop an opportunity.
- An activity is an action, which is necessary to transform given inputs into planned outputs within a specified period of time. All activities contribute directly to the output level.
- The outputs are the results that can be guaranteed by the project as a consequence of its activities. Each output can be seen as a necessary mean to achieve the objective. Consequently, project partners have to ensure that all essential outputs for achieving the project objective are included.

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- Indicators are signs that show changes or progress that have been induced by an activity or a set of activities.
- The objective sets out the operational purpose of the project and determines the magnitude of the project both in terms of resources and strategy.
- Impacts consider indirect benefits on a highly aggregated level which can no longer be clearly attributed to the project.

Figure 2 shows what a results chain looks like in practice using a staff training project on HIV/AIDS related services



6. Review process

The review process will consider the feasibility of the proposed approach including relevant assumptions and potential risks involved. In particular, the organisational and operational capacities of the applying organisation to implement the proposed intervention need to match the objectives and scope of the proposed intervention.

6.1 Main actors

ESTHER-Secretariat

- Coordination of the entire review process and managing the stepwise partnership project development.
- Communication with applicants and possible partner organisations

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- Assessment of formal aspects of proposals
- Checking of compliance with ESTHER purpose and principles
- Screening for completeness and compliance with the S&G for proposal review
- Maintaining a database with internal and external experts as well as to store information from proposals
- Contracting consultants to support proposal development and implementation.
- Suggestions to applicants to improve the proposal.
- Provision of a summary of each proposal to the advisory board
- Ensuring that all stakeholders (BMZ, Advisory board, ESTHER partnership applicants and ESTHER contract partners) in the project approval process are kept informed on the status of the proposal
- Documentation and disseminations of the decisions to relevant stakeholders
- Monitoring and if required coaching of ESTHER partners during project implementation
- Design of contract, detailed action plan, budget and terms of reference
- Signing and monitoring of contracts
- Evaluation of the partnership
- Managing the available resources

Internal and External Consultant

- Advice and support on demand of applicants (e.g. proposal development)
- Conduct site visits of suitable hospitals

Independent Advisory Board

- Assessment of selected proposals according to a review format and recommend possible improvements to the proposal.
- Provision of expertise related to the review process and consideration of an innovative point of view in terms of planning and implementing the German ESTHER-Initiative.
- Setting the project content into the specific context and link with other German and International Initiative's engaged with HIV/AIDS.
- Suggestions to applicants to improve the proposal.
- Expressing recommendations to BMZ based on evaluation criteria for final decision of project proposals.
- Provision of helpful suggestions and recommendations for long-term orientation and linking of German ESTHER Initiative.
- Holding biannual meetings in order to evaluate applications, exchange knowledge and discuss further aspects related to twinning process.

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- Final decision on whether to approve the application or not

6.2 Key steps

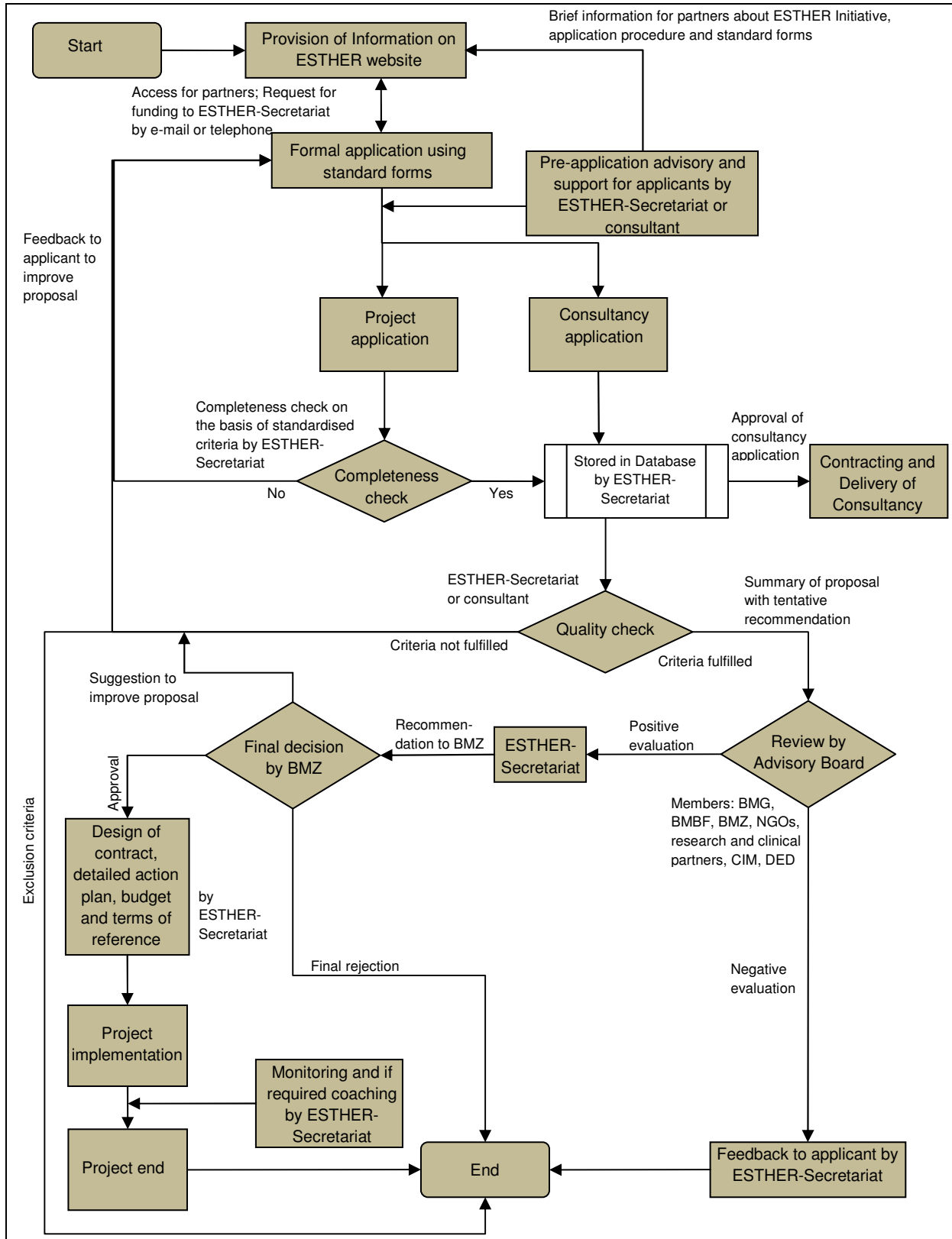
- Before starting the application process, each organisation interested in clinical partnership should ask for advice and support by the ESTHER-Secretariat in Berlin. If necessary a request for internal and external consultancy support in order to facilitate the formal application process is also possible (consultancy application).
- In order to assess the completeness of the proposal, the ESTHER-Secretariat will carry out a first check of the formal application.
- The following quality check is also conducted by the ESTHER-Secretariat.
- In case the application is incomplete the ESTHER-Secretariat will ask the applicant for missing information.
- The ESTHER-Secretariats' report is delivered to the Advisory Board as input to the Board's consideration of the proposed intervention.
- The Board gives recommendations whether or not the BMZ should approve or reject the proposal.
- The final decision will be taken by BMZ.

All successful proposals will be published on the ESTHER website. Proposals can be submitted during the whole year and will be evaluated 2-4 times per year according to available funds.

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Overview of the Application Process at the German *ESTHER* Initiative



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Please contact the German ESTHER-Secretariat for advice and clarification about the application procedure and also send your letter of interest or application for a consultant or a partnership project to: ESTHER-Germany@gtz.de

Note: For reasons of feasibility and transparency **questions concerning the application process and content will be answered by the ESTHER secretariat by mail only** in the first step of the application process. We ask for your understanding.

All relevant documents for the application process can be accessed on the German ESTHER website: <http://www.gtz.de/en/themen/soziale-entwicklung/hiv-aids/894.htm>

Note: Any comments and suggestions on the guidelines and proposal forms are very welcome and should also be sent to the German ESTHER-Secretariat by mail. Thank you!