Species Recovery Programme

Grant Scheme: C32276

Clarification Questions and Answers

Date published: 12/01/2026

This document will be updated weekly. Clarification questions should be submitted to SRPGrants@naturalengland.org.uk

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Topic 1. Find a Grant

Q1. Registering

Can more than one member of staff sign up on the Find a Grant portal as a representative of our organisation? Can our colleagues access the application forms?

A1. Answer

Only one individual per organisation should register on Find a Grant and complete the first stage of the application process (the organisational application). The technical application forms and guidance can be downloaded from the supporting information section and shared with colleagues for completion.

Q2. Multiple applications

How do we submit multiple applications on Find a Grant?

A2. Answer

Please refer to Section A paragraph 23 of the ITA Guidance: If you have been shortlisted and invited to submit more than one application, you only need to make one on-line organisational application on Find a Grant. Any documents required for each additional project application must be submitted on-line when prompted to do so. There will be the opportunity to submit a Technical Application Form (Annex C) and budget plan (Annex D) for each separate project. All attachments for each project application should be uploaded as a zipped file using the correct naming convention with the relevant unique reference code for each document and zipped file.

Q3. Multiple application value

If more than one application is being submitted should the total for all applications be entered in the 'Amount applied for' field on Find a Grant?

A3. Answer

The online application requires you to enter the total amount of funding being requested. So, if you are applying for more than one project enter the sum of all project amounts. The following (SQ0) question requires that you provide a breakdown by unique reference code of the amounts you are applying for, for each project.

Q4. Eligibility conditions

Find a Grant requires us to accept the Eligibility and Agreement conditions before being able to access the rest of the form. If we select 'Yes' would these only be considered as accepted when we submit the whole form?

A4. Answer

The conditions are only accepted once you press Submit at the end of the application process. All information can be changed until that point, provided it is before the application deadline.

Topic 2. Conditions of Applying

Q1. Meaning of collaboration

We have been asked to collaborate with other organisations. Are we expected to agree and submit one joint project proposal between the organisations, or should each organisation submit separate or different applications that clearly outline how we will work collaboratively?

A1. Answer

Collaboration is a condition of applying. Your outcome letter should outline how we would like you to collaborate with other organisations. Where the condition is to work together and submit a single application this is to achieve ambitious outcomes in the most cost effective and efficient way. In this instance you should identify the most appropriate organisation to lead and submit a single grant application, and if successful with the full application, that organisation would lead the delivery of the partnership project.

We will not fund separate projects to deliver the same actions in the same geography, hence the need to collaborate and determine whether:
- the proposals can be brought together entirely into a single application with resulting efficiencies
- there needs to be a division of responsibility and actions so that duplication is avoided

For proposals not operating in the same or similar geographies, the form of collaboration should focus on knowledge sharing unless we have specified otherwise.

If individual organisations cannot agree the terms of collaboration this should be explained in Section 1a of the Technical Application Form and will be taken into consideration when the Authority (Natural England) evaluates the applications.

Q2. Collaboration and costs

What do we do if the partners who have been asked to collaborate cannot agree cost savings, priorities or accept different payment rates for different organisations? Can they revert to submitting separate bids or will this automatically result in all of the bids failing?

A2. Answer

Collaboration is a condition of application, where the condition is to work together and submit a single application this is to achieve ambitious outcomes in the most cost effective and efficient way; if individual organisations cannot agree the details of the project as a partnership, they should not submit separate applications. Note that if awarded a grant, this would be at a single intervention rate calculated as the percentage of SRP grant to total project costs (including match funding). We would make grant payments based on evidence of actual costs incurred, as outlined in the guidance.

Topic 3. Budget

Q1. Maximum grant value

Can we increase the funding request over the indicative cost we included in our CFI submission, and can the value exceed the £1.5m maximum advertised?

A1. Answer

CFI submissions were appraised for value for money based on the indicative figures provided. The Authority does not expect these figures to be increased unless sufficient justification can be provided within the full application.

Q2. Increasing costs due to collaboration

Given the potentially expanded scope of a revised, collaborative project at the next stage, what level of increase to our original budget would be considered acceptable? Would it be appropriate to combine the budgets of all the projects?

A2. Answer

We would expect to see efficiencies from working in partnership, including cost savings; simply combining the indicative costings contained within the CFI submissions would not be sufficient. Requests for funding that exceed the £1.5million maximum will be considered for collaborative projects, where the Authority has conditioned this collaboration.

Q3. Increasing costs due to increasing delivery

The conditions on our outcome letter have specified that we need to be more ambitious, which includes additional TSRA actions and delivery. Are we able to increase the indicative cost from our Call for Ideas submission in order the fulfil these conditions?

A3. Answer

If the Authority has requested additional delivery, then an increase in project costs can be considered in these circumstances. You will need to provide full justification for any increase, and all budgets will be evaluated against Value for Money criteria.

Q4. Increasing costs due to adding a non-shortlisted proposal

We have been asked to partner with another organisation but does the guidance about making resource efficiencies and cost savings to submit a lower funding request than that indicated in our CFI application still apply if we have been asked to partner with an organisation that has not been shortlisted. Our costs may be higher if we need to incorporate additional delivery.

A4. Answer

If the Authority has requested additional delivery by bringing all or part of a separate non-shortlisted proposal on board, then an increase in project costs can be considered in these circumstances. You will need to provide full justification for any increase, and all budgets will be evaluated against Value for Money criteria.

Q5. Inflation/Contingency

Can we build in any inflation allowance/contingency into the budget to account for price rises?

A5. Answer

Please refer to Section B of the ITA Guidance (Eligible and Ineligible Expenditure), which states that: inflation funding to allow for cost increases in years two and three of delivery should be included within the above costs, not itemised separately.

Please also refer to Section C of the ITA Guidance (Technical Assessment) Section 7: Value for Money for additional information relating to Inflationary pressures.

Q6. Providing detailed costings later

Could finer details around precise costings be contained in subsequent grant paperwork, so no need to try and include all of this detail within the word limit of the grant bid by the deadline?

A6. Answer

No, all details must be provided by the deadline as set out in the guidance in order for us to assess the application against all criteria, including value for money.

Q7. Balancing principles

Are you expecting application costs to be reduced at full application stage so that a disproportionate amount of the SRP budget is not spent on one species or group of species?

A7. Answer

We expect all costs to be reasoned and justified. All applications wil be assessed against the published evaluation criteria including value for money, and the balancing principles as described in the guidance for applicants. We have not earmarked any specific proportion of budget to any species or taxonomic groups.

Topic 4. Application Questions

Q1. Project map format

What format should we submit the maps in?

A1. Answer

The project location map, with base map, should ideally be provided as a PDF, but a Word Document or JPEG would be accepted.

Q2. Word limits

Is there a word limit for the Project Description?

A2. Answer

Where specified, word limits must be adhered to. The Project Description, Section 3a: Aim and Objectives, does not specify a word limit, but the response for this section should be kept concise. Please refer to Section C of the ITA Guidance for further information on completing the technical application.

Q3. Supporting documents

Other than the required document templates what other documents are we allowed to upload?

A3. Answer

You must upload the Technical Application Form (Annex C), Budget Plan (Annex D), and a project location map; plus the Partnership Form (Annex F) if applicable, and a map of

protected sites if applicable. You should also upload annual accounts or financial statement if these are available to you. Other documents should be restricted to those that directly support your application: evidence of any approvals/permissions you already have or evidence of any submissions you have made for which you are awaiting approval; evidence that your budget costings are reasonable (e.g., quotes); evidence of how staff costs are calculated; evidence of how organisational overheads are calculated.

Q4. Supporting documents

Can we upload other supporting documents that we feel are important to the application?

A4. Answer

No, only those files as set out above (A3). We cannot accept additional responses to the Technical Application questions, which should be wholly answered on the form with any word counts adhered to.

Topic 5. Funding Eligibility

Q1. VAT

As a project team within a local authority, would the VAT on our expenditure be recoverable?

A1. Answer

If the project is hosted by the local authority and staff are employed by the local authority then the VAT is fully recoverable from HMRC, the project itself should not have different VAT rules from its hosting organisation.

Q2. Existing project obligations

Some of the work planned for this new project will be building on from previous work from the Species Recovery Programme Capital Grant Scheme 2023- 2025, is this eligible for funding?

A2. Answer

Grants cannot be used to pay for existing obligations from other funding streams such as Species Survival Fund or the Species Recovery Programme Capital Grant Scheme 2023-2025. Full checks will be made at the evaluation stage to ensure that the proposed work is not fulfilling obligations from a previous Capital Grant Scheme.

Topic 6. Staff Costs

Q1. Overhead calculations

The guidance asks for evidence of how the overheads are calculated, suggesting a breakdown of each component and their cost per FTE staff member. What is the level of detail you need for the evidence?

A1. Answer

Methods of overhead calculation will vary across organisations, you should present a letter or spreadsheet breaking overheads down into each of your main categories, e.g. financial administration, management time, legal & professional services, IT support etc, showing the organisation's cost per category, how this equates to the overhead cost per Full Time Equivalent member of staff and the resulting percentage of overheads to staff employment costs.

Q2. Partner's overheads

How you would like the overheads of partners to be included and do you need a full breakdown for how they will spend the overheads?

A2. Answer

You will need to include evidence of how your partners overheads have been calculated in the same way as the lead organisation does, plus evidence of how their staff costs have been calculated.

Topic 7. Partnerships

Q1. Payments to partners

Does a grant allow for invoicing and payments to be made to separate project partners, or would the lead partner have to be responsible for administration of funding?

A1. Answer

For successful partnership grant awards, the lead partner would be the grant agreement holder and would be responsible for administration of the funding. If offered a grant, partnerships will need to provide a copy of a partnership agreement which sets out roles, responsibilities and ways of working.

Q2. Partners

We are a project team hosted by an organisation; do we need to list the host organisation or the project team as a partner in our project application?

A2. Answer

The application should be submitted by the host organisation whose bank account any grant funds would be paid into. A project team employed by that host organisation would not be considered a separate partner. If other partners outside of the host organisation are involved in the project these should be detailed as partners on Annex F Partnership Form.

Q3. Project partners

Is information on the partnership form required from NE if they are involved in a project or is this only a requirement for external partners?

A3. Answer

No, Natural England should not be included as a partner on the Partnership Form (Annex F).

Topic 8. Publicity

Q1. Publicity

Can we release any publicity or communication about being shortlisted for the full application?

A1. Answer

Section A paragraph 37 of the ITA Guidance states: No Applicant will undertake any publicity activities with any part of the media in relation to this ITA without the prior agreement of the Authority, including agreement on the format and content of any publicity. For example, no statements may be made to the media regarding the nature of any Application, its contents or any proposals relating to it without the prior written consent of the Authority.

Topic 9. Reintroductions

Q1. Translocations

We are submitting an application for a project that is going to remove individuals from the wild, breed in captivity and then release offspring back to the same location in the wild. Would this be classed as a conservation translocation from your perspective?

A1. Answer

Yes, this would be classed as population reinforcement, which is one of the types of conservation translocation.