



Species Recovery Programme

Grant Scheme: C32276

Clarification Questions and Answers

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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. **UPDATED** 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.

Accounts cannot be transferred and if you have inadvertently created two accounts, the additional account cannot be deleted but will be removed after the application process has been completed (120 days from the deadline for applications). Applications from the same organisation should be submitted through one account.

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.

Q5. NEW Organisation category

Is a university categorised as "Other" on the Find a Grant application?

A5. Answer

Yes, a university would be categorised as 'Other' on Find a Grant.

Q6. NEW Funding amount applied for

Do I need to know my exact budget when I start my online application, or can small changes be made throughout the application process?

A6. Answer

The 'Funding amount applied for' can be changed at any point during the application process. The amount entered into the box should equate to the total shown on your budget plan (or if your organisation has been invited to submit more than one application, the total of all of them combined). You will need to press 'Submit' at the end of the application process, and 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. UPDATED 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, separate applications will not be acceptable.** Note that if awarded a grant, this would be at an overall intervention rate determined by the ratio of grant to total costs (including match funding), we would make grant payments based on evidence of actual costs incurred, as outlined in the guidance.

Q3. NEW Evidencing conditions have been addressed

One of our conditions of shortlisting was to work collaboratively, how do we evidence this to you? Is filling out section 1a of the application form enough or do you require written evidence from both parties proving the decisions made?

A3. Answer

If you were given conditions, you must complete section 1a of the technical application form. If you have addressed and met the conditions, this should be evidenced by the information within the application form. If you have been unable to meet the conditions you should provide a single separate attachment which clearly shows the efforts that have been made and the reason for not meeting the condition, for instance an email between the parties, or formal minutes of a meeting.

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 to 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 will 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.

Q8. NEW Subcontractors

Are subcontractors defined in a specific way? And can subcontractors be listed on a budget plan line and evidenced via an invoice?

A8. Answer

“Sub-contractor” means an organisation or individual engaged by the Grant Recipient to perform part of the Grant Recipient’s obligations under the Grant Funding Agreement. This typically includes any third party delivering goods or services on behalf of the main Grant Recipient and any entity performing a material element of the grant funded work. Yes, sub-contractors should be listed on the budget plan and will need to be evidenced with invoices during the grant claim process, if a grant is awarded.

Q9. NEW Capital and Resource costs

Is the capital/resource ratio of 2:1 averaged across all projects in the programme rather than being a requirement for each project?

A9. Answer

Yes, we are aiming for the 2:1 capital to resource ratio across the whole programme. We would like individual projects to be close to this but accept that the exact split will differ for each. We would not expect to see any individual budget being wholly capital or wholly resource funded.

Q10. NEW Capital and Resource costs (2)

In the budget template (Annex D) do we need to split out the capital and resource costs?

A10. Answer

The budget template does that for you, we have already assigned the appropriate cost categories to either capital or resource. This will show in column B based on the category you have selected in column A. The summary table below the budget plan will then provide you with the total amount categorised as CDEL (capital) and RDEL (resource).

Q11. NEW Budget template

How many budget templates are submitted on Find a Grant, 1 per partner or 1 per project?

A11. Answer

Only one budget template (Annex D) should be submitted with each project application. Partnership projects must clearly show on the budget plan template which partner is responsible for which items or activities or costs.

Q12. NEW Increasing costs due to VAT

Having read the guidance, we are reviewing whether the indicative cost we entered in our response to the Call for Ideas was sufficient, we may need to increase this amount to account for VAT, is this possible?

A12. Answer

If your indicative cost did not include irrecoverable VAT than you may include this in your application as it cannot be added later. Section A paragraph 60 of the ITA guidance states: It is the Applicant's responsibility to ensure their Application accurately reflects their VAT liabilities. If the application is successful and it subsequently transpires there has been an error in the Application, the Authority shall be under no obligation to increase Grant Funding to meet any VAT liability of the Applicant.

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. UPDATED Word limits

Is there a word limit for the Project Description?

In Section 3c of Annex A (Technical Application), 3 of the columns state there is a 100-word limit per line. Does the 100-word limit refer to the cell (100 words to outline the Activity, 100 words for the Output and 100 words for the Outcome) or is it 100 words total for the entire row?

A2. UPDATED 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.

The word limit for Section 3c of the Technical Application refers to each cell, rather than each row, so the word limit is 100 for the Activity, 100 for the Output and 100 for the Outcome

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.

Q5. NEW Incidental species

In addition to the main target species should we include incidental species, i.e., other species that will benefit from the delivery being carried out for the target species, in Section 3 of the Technical application?

A5. Answer

Only include the 'target' species, those for which you are actively delivering TSRA actions in the Species and TSRA Action table (Section 3b). Although you may benefit other species during the delivery of your project; the activity, outputs and outcomes for your target species should be your primary focus as this is what you, and we, will need to report on. Section 4, Strategic Fit, of the Technical Application would be an appropriate place to include details of those additional or incidental species that will benefit from your project.

Q6. NEW Protected sites

We note that you ask us to detail in our application any protected sites we plan to work on. Does our grant application constitute a notice for SSSI consent? If not, what process do we need to follow?

A6. Answer

The Find a Grant Application does not constitute a Notice of Proposal, and the grant offer will not act as SSSI Consent, Assent, or Advice. If you are proposing work on any protected site, you will need to discuss this at your earliest opportunity with NE protected sites team. You should provide evidence with your application of any discussions you have had.

Q7. NEW Reference code

If projects are combining, which unique reference code should be used?

A7. Answer

If you are working collaboratively and have been requested to submit one strategic project, select the lead organisation's project unique reference code and use this for the application.

Q8. NEW Cost evidence

Do we need to submit all quotes for expenditure, or do you only require quotes for expenditure over a certain value?

A8. Answer

Your application should provide evidence of how costs have been derived. If quotes are not available at the time of submitting your application, then you should provide an accompanying narrative explaining how you have derived your budget costs. You should attach a single file containing cost evidence for items over £10,000 where available, or your justification.

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.

Q3. NEW In-kind costs

Can staff time from collaborating organisations, including Natural England, working on/supporting a project be claimed as an In-kind contribution?

A3. Answer

Natural England staff time cannot be counted as match funding. The guidance defines match funding as both cash and in-kind and states that: Match funding does not include staff time funded by Defra (Environment Agency, Forestry Commission, Forest Enterprise, other Natural England sources) as they are exchequer funded. You can tell us separately how these provide added value, but these contributions will not be considered as part of our value for money scoring.

Cash or in-kind contributions from other organisations such as local authorities should be included as match.

Q4. NEW Staff cost definitions

What is the difference between "Staff costs for landowner advice and support" (Resource) and "Staff costs for project delivery and management" (Capital)?

A4. Answer

Please refer to the Funding Criteria in Section B of the ITA Guidance for Applicants which provides more detailed definitions of the cost categories. The 'Staff costs for landowner advice and support' category will primarily align with the TSRA action type 'Advice & Support'.

Q5. NEW Capital or Resource staff costs

If a staff member will be completing both Capital and Resource work, how do we reflect this on the budget template?

A5. Answer

You should assign their time as best you can to the relevant staff costs category, i.e. if the staff member will be employed full time on the project but 50% of their time will be delivering education/awareness raising activities (resource) then use this cost category and enter 50% of their costs on that line, if the remaining 50% is for delivering project delivery and management (capital) then use this cost category and enter 50% of their costs on that line.

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).

Q4. NEW Partner definition

What is the definition of a partner, and do they have to contribute money to be classed as a partner?

A4. Answer

Partners would be those organisations with whom you are collaborating to deliver the project, i.e. they would have specific delivery roles and responsibilities. They may also be contributing match funding towards delivering the project objectives, and/or could be in receipt of a proportion of the grant award.

Do not include contractors as partners, these are individuals or organisations to whom you would let a contract, following proper procurement procedures.

All partnerships will need to provide a signed partnership agreement to the Authority if a grant award is made.

Q5. NEW Partnership form

Which sections of the Annex F partnership form do partner organisations need to fill out, and do they need to answer all questions if they do not have access to the information? Should we list all the members of each organisation that will participate?

A5. Answer

All partner organisations, including the lead applicant, should complete all applicable sections of the partnership form, this is required for our due diligence process. Individual staff members should not be named here. These details should be included in Section 5a of the technical application form (Annex C).

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.

Topic 10. Timescales

Q1. NEW Start date

Can we back date the start of our project to 1 April 2026?

A1. Answer

Project start dates will be from July 2026 when signed agreements have been received. The Authority cannot backdate any costs incurred before the start date of the Grant Agreement.