Species Recovery Programme

Grant Scheme: C32276

Clarification Questions and Answers

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The period for clarification questions is now closed.

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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.
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. 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. 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.

Q7. **UPDATED** Previous Government funding

1) A qualification question on the portal asks for funding details about previous funds from government departments, does this refer to the organisation or the individual? And does this question relate to England or UK Government?
2) **Does this include funding received from Environment Agency, Natural England and Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (CEFAS)?**
3) **For large national organisations, do we need to declare all government funding received anywhere in the organisation in the past three years, or only funding directly relevant to the SRP project or delivery sites?**

A7. **UPDATED** Answer

1) Yes, we need the funding provided to the organisation applying for funding, not the individual. You will need to omit non-project funding and if necessary, summarise by programme or faculty (if a university) providing as much information in the space allowed. The maximum number of words is 100, so tailor the response accordingly. This relates to funding received from the UK Government.
2) **Yes, this includes the Environment Agency, Natural England and Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (CEFAS) as these organisations are all funded by the UK Government.**
3) **On Annex F, for the question "Please state whether your organisation has received any funding from another government department in the last 3 years." Only a Yes or No response is required.**

Q8. **NEW** Multiple applications: Partnership form

If we are submitting more than one application, should we submit one Annex F for each (as we will for Annexes C and D) or should we combine Annex F into one?

A8. Answer

If you are the lead applicant in more than one partnership project please submit a separate Partnership Form (Annex F) for each project. Ensure you include the relevant unique reference code in the title of each form.

Q9. **NEW** Multiple applications: Annual accounts

Do we need to upload copies of our annual accounts more than once if we are applying for multiple projects?

A9. Answer

Accounts are uploaded as part of the single organisational application process on Find A Grant, they should therefore only be uploaded once.

Q10. **NEW** File formats and size restrictions

Are there any restrictions on file upload size on Find a Grant and what format should my uploaded files be in?

A10. Answer

The maximum file upload size is 300 MB, which should be more than sufficient for each zipped file.
You should upload your files in the following formats: organisational accounts: PDF; technical application form: Word or ODT; budget plan: Excel; maps: PDF or JPEG; partnership form: Excel; supporting information: PDF.

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, 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. 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 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 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. 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. 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. 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. 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. 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.

Q13. Budget template: extra rows

We require additional rows on the budget template, but we cannot copy the formulas when we insert a new row. Is there a bigger budget template available?

A13. Answer

The spreadsheet has been protected so certain functions, such as copying formulas, cannot be carried out. An XL version of the budget template with additional budget rows has been uploaded to the Supporting Information section on the Find a Grant website.

Q14. Staff overheads

Can staff overheads, e.g. mobile phone allowances, PPE and software packages for laptops be included in the overhead calculations? Would budgets require amendments if a mobile phone allowance was categorised as an equipment purchase rather than an overhead?

A14. Answer

Purchase of items like these should be included under the cost category of equipment purchase or consumables. Disposable PPE would be a consumable, whereas longer-lasting PPE such as steel-toe capped wellingtons should come under the equipment purchase category. Mobile phone or laptop and software purchase should be categorised as equipment purchase, whilst phone allowance would come under project travel and subsistence.

Q15. Financial administration costs

Is a financial administrator's time classed as staff time or a project overhead?

A15. Answer

If the financial administrator is employed specifically for or has a set proportion of their time dedicated to managing finance and administration relating to project expenditure this can be included in your project budget under the ‘Staff costs - finance/admin’ category. However, if they handle financial administration across your whole organisation and do not have a project specific role, these would be considered organisational overheads and would normally be included in overhead calculations. Ensure this staff time is not double counted.

Q16. Consultancy costs

If an activity is in a resource category, but is delivered by a consultant, would this then be considered capital? E.g. if monitoring or landowner advice is outsourced to a consultant?

A16. Answer

Please enter the activity under the most appropriate cost category in your application. Natural England will request a manual adjustment if the category is not suitable or needs amending.

Q17. Intervention rates

Would the single intervention rate calculated affect the amount each partner would receive, versus being funded as a single organisation?
In an example with two partners, with Organisation A asking for 80% funding, and Organisation B asking for 30% funding, is the intervention rate worked out per partner i.e., 80% & 30%, or per project at a total intervention rate?

A17. Answer

You should put a single budget plan together for the whole project, showing which partner is responsible for which elements. The intervention rate applies to the whole project based on the percentage of grant funding requested compared to the total project costs. It is up to the lead partner to agree the working and funding relationship with partners.

Q18. Research and Development

Please can you clarify how best to categorise surveys and research activities in the budget? There are specific cost categories for both 'Surveys' and 'Scientific research', however they are also listed under 'Staff costs - project delivery & management'.

A18. Answer

The umbrella term 'scientific research' within TSRA covers a range of activities including surveying. If you were to use the scientific research category the survey would need to meet the five R&D criteria to be categorised as capital (CDEL).
Our advice is to select the cost category (column A) on your budget plan that best describes the type of activity and provide a good description in column C. If we need to make a manual adjustment to a more appropriate category during the assessment of your application, we will discuss this with you.

Q19. Research and Development (2)

Where an SRP bid is a research project, can it be described entirely as CDEL? Or would survey or technical supervision (which would be RDEL based on the table in the application information) need to be separated out, even though they are critical aspects of the research project?

A19. Answer

Your budget should include all the different elements of your project split into the most appropriate cost categories on the budget template. There are a number of applicable categories for research projects, e.g., 'Scientific research' and 'Staff costs - project delivery & management'. Please choose the most appropriate cost category and we will request a manual adjustment if the category is not suitable or needs amending.

Q20. **NEW** Unsecured cash match funding

How do we best present unsecured cash match funding in the application form and on the budget template?

A20. Answer

We encourage match funding towards all SRP projects, which helps our budget go further to deliver more for species recovery, and increases the value for money of the projects. Any secured match funding should be shown on your budget template against the most appropriate line(s). If you have not yet secured your match funding, the details of any unsecured match funding should be provided ONLY in Section 7a of the application form and not on the budget template. If you are awarded SRP funding and later secure any additional match funding, an amendment request should be submitted to the SRP team for consideration, any material amendments will require a simple Change Control Notice.

Q21. **NEW** Itemising staff and overhead costs

On the budget template, for staff costs, do you require a row for each individual staff member per organisation, or can the staff costs per organisation be combined up into one row? Should we do the same for the overhead costs.?

A21. Answer

Yes, please enter the staff costs on a separate row for each individual staff role per organisation. Overheads should also be entered on a separate row for each individual staff role per organisation.

Q22. **NEW** Grant intervention rate

Why does the non-cash (in-kind/ volunteer value) not affect the total grant funding? (the total grant funding is the total project cost minus the cash match funding)

A22. Answer

The grant percentage is calculated based on cash costs only. Whilst non-cash contributions have a value, we are only required to report to Defra on cash contributions.

Q23. **NEW** Budget categories: Habitat management

Could you confirm the correct classification for the following cost categories so we can assign costs consistently:

- Habitat management (listed as Resource in the guidance but appears as CDEL in the budget template).

A23. Answer

Depending on the nature of the habitat management then this could be categorised as either resource or capital type delivery, for instance routine habitat management such as annual hay making is resource; whereas a more intensive intervention such as diversifying a species poor hay meadow by adding green hay or seed would be considered capital as it is enhancing the value of the land. Please enter a detailed description so we can determine the nature of the works, and Natural England can make a manual adjustment to your budget plan if necessary.

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

1) Is there a word limit for the Project Description?
2) In Section 3c of the 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?
3) **Is question 5a split into two parts, consisting of (1) text about "Organisation or partnership structure and governance (enter description below)" and then (2) a completed table of roles, skills, etc. and does the word limit of 500 words apply to both parts combined?**

A2. **UPDATED** Answer

1) 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.
2) 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
3) **Yes, question 5a is split into two parts and the word limit is for both parts combined, please be concise in your answers.**

Q3. **UPDATED** Supporting documents

Other than the required document templates what other documents are we allowed to upload?
Should we include citations where appropriate and, if so, where should they go?

A3. **UPDATED** Answer

You must upload the Technical Application Form (Annex A), Budget Plan (Annex B), and a project location map; plus a map of protected sites if applicable. 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.
If you wish to include citations please use a numbering system in your application form to avoid using up your word count and provide citations in a supporting document.

Q4. Supporting documents (2)

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. 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. 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. 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. 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.

Q9. Partial funding

Is it possible that projects could receive a partial grant if they score highly but funds available are limited? e.g. if we demonstrate within our application which elements of our project can stand-alone and be delivered with a partial grant.

A9. Answer

Yes, that is possible, but it would be the decision of the SRP team as to which elements we wish to pursue.

Q10. Project locations

How specific do we need to be in terms of identifying project locations within the application? We will specify a project area, but can we decide on the exact locations for different project activities (within this project area), based on feasibility modelling and other data collected as part of the project?

A10. Answer

Yes, that is acceptable. We recognise that some grant applicants will know exactly which locations they plan to work on, whilst others will need to refine these as a result of survey and feasibility work. However, if you named sites in your response to the Call For Ideas, but these have materially changed, you should explain this in section 1b of your application.

Q11. Project and protected sites maps

Our project involves multiple species sub-projects covering multiple regions. Should we upload a separate map for each species? What sort of scale should the maps be and should they show the specific land parcels where work will take place?

A11. Answer

If your project is across multiple sites over a wide geographical area, it is recommended you provide an overall map showing the extent of your delivery area. For the protected sites maps, we suggest basing this on location rather than species, so even though multiple maps will be needed, providing maps on a regional or county level should reduce the number of maps. We do not necessarily need to see land parcels.

Q12. Permissions for protected sites

Our applications will cover large areas of England and therefore may include hundreds of protected sites, and we work to gain permissions for sites as we go based on identifying specific locations through work with landowners. Given the scale of this work, do we need to provide all of the required permissions for this work before commencing the project?

A12. Answer

Given the scale of the project area, we do not expect you to have identified all the protected sites and individual permissions at application stage and will not ask for these before the project commences. You should identify what approvals are needed in your application and explain your approach to securing them.

Q13. Assets (species)

Can a species/population reintroduced into the landscape be considered an asset? If so, should they therefore be listed in answer to question 6b (Asset creation and enhancement table).

A13. Answer

A species itself (or a population) cannot be capitalised, however, the reintroduction of a species/population to an area of land where the species presence enhances the value of that land, can be considered to have enhanced the land asset. On that basis, yes, you should include species reintroductions in section 6b of you application form.

Q14. Aims and objectives

Is it acceptable to include multiple aims in Section 3a of the technical application form?

A14. Answer

Ideally, we are looking for one over-arching aim above a series of objectives. For more complicated or multi-taxa projects there may be more than one over-arching aim. Please keep these focussed and specific.

Q15. Research and Development

What elements of a project could be classed as Research & Development, and do we need to complete Section 6a of the application form?
Is the TSRA action 'Status survey/review' classed as research or surveying?

A15. Answer

You should complete section 6a if any or all of the work you are proposing includes Research & Development, which is defined in the ITA guidance for applicants - refer to the Specific Guidance on Research and Development.

The umbrella terms 'Status survey/review' and 'Scientific research' within TSRA each cover a range of activities including surveying and research. The TSRA action 'Status survey/review' is unlikely to fall under the definition of Research & Development unless the work you are doing meets the five R&D criteria and can be categorised as capital (CDEL). Only if the survey work requires novel experimental design and meets the R&D criteria can it be categorised as research.

Q16. Tangible and intangible assets

Can you please clarify what is meant by 'tangible assets' and whether these should be listed in Section 6 of the application form? Does this include any academic output such as papers or presentations at conferences (i.e. intellectual assets) or solely to physical improvements or structures in the environment?

A16. Answer

An academic paper should be included as an output in the table in Section 3c. Presentation at a conference would constitute an activity to be included in the table in Section 3c. Research should be described in Section 6a, setting out how your research includes elements of all five of the R&D criteria. Intellectual products are considered intangible assets which can only be capitalised in certain circumstances.

Tangible assets covers property, plant and equipment; heritage assets (e.g. Nature Reserves); and agricultural biological assets (specifically breeding livestock). The Grant terms and conditions require any assets over £10,000 to be added to the grant recipients fixed asset register.

Q17. **UPDATED** Landowner permissions - evidence

Does landowner permission evidence need to be submitted with our funding application?

If a project is planning site walkovers/surveys to inform the most viable locations for project delivery, e.g. habitat works and/or translocations, do we need landowner agreements in place for the application?

A17. **UPDATED** Answer

Landowner permission evidence does not need to be submitted with your funding application, but it does need to be submitted to the Authority within 3 months of a grant agreement being signed.
You will need to provide us with copies of the landowner agreements when the sites have been confirmed and before we approve any grant payment.

Q18. Personnel & Skills

Can independent specialists and specialist 'species' contractors who are just contributing their time as in-kind, but not associated directly with an organisation, be included in Section 5a Personnel & Skills section?

A18. Answer

Yes, Section 5a should include details of the project team, who is delivering the project and the structure of the team, which can include staff, partners, contractors, specialists and volunteers.

Q19. Dual funding

How do we ensure that our project is not double funded when we are still waiting for responses for other funding applications (e.g. Sustainable Farming Incentive 2026)?

A19. Answer

You should declare any outstanding funding applications within your technical application and if offered grant funding, advise us of the outcomes immediately.

Q20. **NEW** Project changes since the CFI stage

Can we add a different partner into our project that wasn't mentioned in our response to the Call For Ideas? Likewise, can we remove a species that was in the CFI proposal?

A20. Answer

Adding in a different partner or changing partners would be considered a material change. Similarly, removing species that were in the CFI would also be considered a material change. You should provide information about these, or other material changes, in section 1b of your application form. These changes should be supported by evidence of how and why the decision was made. Any changes will be evaluated when the application is assessed.

Q21. **NEW** Project staff information

1) If the person who will lead on delivery (the Project Manager) hasn’t been recruited yet, what should we put in the boxes (in Section 2 of the application form) entitled ‘Delivery lead for the project if different to the person above’?
2) Do we need to include all staff members from each organisation who will be working on the project in Section 2 of the Technical Application?

A21. Answer

1) For this section, if the post has not been recruited for yet please input 'TBC'. Please refer to the 'Project Management - Personnel and Skills' section of the ITA guidance for what is required in Section 5.
2) For section 2 the main person in that partner organisation (such as a project officer) who will be involved in the project is to be listed. The further detail of staff members of each partner organisation involved in the project you should include in section 5 of the technical application form.

Q22. **NEW** Procurement thresholds and policies (inc. partners)

1) Is there a threshold value for when we must seek quotes to ensure value for money?
2) What stage should the quotes be sought, proposal or once funding is awarded? Do partners have to obtain multiple quotes or tenders as part of the application?
3) Should partners follow their own organisational procurement processes, or must they follow the lead applicant's procurement policies?

A22. Answer

1) As per the Authority's procurement policy, three quotes should be sought for relevant items over the value of £5,000, with tender activity for contractor/supplier costs over £10,000.
2) Your application should provide evidence of how costs have been derived, including those from partners. If quotes are available these should be provided as a single attached file. If multiple quotes are not available, or if tendering cannot be completed, before the application deadline, then you should provide a narrative in Section 7a explaining how you have derived your budget costs and how you will achieve value for money. If you anticipate using a Single Tender Action, then we would expect you to include justification for this in your application. If successful with the full application, evidence that the procurement process has been followed will be required with funding claims.
3) Partners should either follow the procurement rules established by Natural England or their own rules. If the party is a Contracting Authority within the meaning of the Procurement Regulations they must comply, as necessary, with the Procurement Regulations when procuring goods and services in connection with the Grant Funding Agreement and the Authority must not be liable for the Grant Recipient's failure to comply with its obligations under the Procurement Regulations.

Q23. **NEW** Landowner agreements with Natural England

Do we need to have a landowner agreement in place with Natural England if they are the landowner of one of the sites our project will be focussing on?

A23. Answer

Landowner agreements should be put in place with landowners on whose land you expect to deliver work. The agreement should cover the duration of our funding plus the subsequent 5 year obligation period. This is different from an agreement with a project partner. Partners in your project must sign a partnership agreement with you which sets out roles and responsibilities of the partners for the duration of the funding period and the subsequent 5 year obligation period. If Natural England is not a project partner but is a third-party landowner, then you will need to set up a landowner agreement.

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.

Q3. Equipment for habitat creation

Is equipment purchase for items required for habitat creation eligible for funding?

A3. Answer

If the purchase of equipment or machinery is necessary to deliver habitat creation, then it would be eligible for funding. These items should be categorised as 'Equipment/machinery purchase' on your budget plan.

Q4. **UPDATED** Fencing installation: eligibility and budget category

1) Is the installation of stock-fencing, to enable habitat management via grazing, eligible for funding under the action 'habitat creation'?
2) **Would this activity be eligible for funding if the organisation (or a specific parcel of land) is prohibited from entering into an agri-environment scheme?**
3) **Should the installation of livestock fencing be entered into the 'Site Infrastructure' cost category of the Budget Plan (as opposed to the 'Habitat Creation' or 'Habitat Management' cost categories)?**

A4. **UPDATED** Answer

1) Fencing for conservation grazing for habitat management would not be eligible for funding under the habitat creation category, where possible this should be delivered via agri-environment schemes. The SRP is focused on funding highly bespoke actions that TSRA species require which are above and beyond most agri-environment agreements and options. **For instance, we can fund action where additional management tailoring or coordination of activity across multiple landholdings is required. The TSRA dataset describes actions which can be taken forward by a range of different means, of which SRP is just one.**

2) **Where an organisation or a specific parcel of land is not eligible for environmental payments (aka agri-environment schemes) then we will consider applications for**

costs which would otherwise be eligible within such schemes, where these actions are necessary to deliver species recovery.

3) **If the fencing proposed satisfies the circumstances outlined above, then any fencing costs should be categorised as 'Site infrastructure'. Any activities that could ordinarily be funded via agri-environment schemes should be in line with standard rates that are available through active schemes: https://www.gov.uk/find-funding-for-land-or-farms and https://www.gov.uk/capital-grant-finder**

Q5. Legal fees for partnership agreements

Are legal fees related to partnership agreements/management agreements eligible for funding as a Professional fee? These may be incurred between the signing of the funding agreement (approval to start) and the first three months of project delivery'?

A5. Answer

Yes, these fees would be eligible but not if they were incurred before the grant agreement was signed.

Q6. Contingency

How and where should we add contingency costs to our budget template?

A6. Answer

We do not accept a contingency on individual project budgets; we intend to hold a central contingency pot which can be used as required following an approved amendment request. Only inflationary costs should be factored in as stated in our guidance: Please note that inflation funding to allow for cost increases in years two and three of delivery should be included within the costs, not itemised separately.

Q7. Subsistence costs

What are the rules for subsistence costs (e.g., meals, accommodation), are these expected to be within reason (e.g, as per the submitting organisation usual rates)?

A7. Answer

Subsistence costs should be within the terms of employment for the employing organisation; we would expect these to be reasonable and offer good value for public money.

Q8. DNA tests

Is DNA detection Capital or Resource? And does this change dependent on what the analysis is being used for?

A8. Answer

The most relevant cost category for this work would be Scientific Research if this is experimental and addresses all five of the R&D criteria. If the work you propose does not meet all five criteria in some way, then this would be best described as survey (for example if you are using DNA detection to survey for presence/absence). If, having read the guidance, you are still unsure which category to use enter the activity under the most appropriate cost category (column A) in your budget plan and provide a detailed description in column C. Natural England will request a manual adjustment if the category is not suitable or needs amending.

Q9. Payments: internal invoices

Would internal invoices be acceptable expenditure, if they are intended to pay for services essential to the project (e.g., data storage)?

A9. Answer

Costs incurred through the provision of internal organisational services essential to the delivery of projects, such as data storage/processing, would be acceptable, provided these services are not core funded by your organisation (or any part of Defra) and appropriate evidence of cost and recharge can be provided.

Q10. Activities on Forestry England land

Can any project partners carry out activities on Forestry England land?

A10. Answer

Yes, other parties can apply for their staff or contractors to carry out activities on Forestry England land, where they are part of research and development. Forestry England is not eligible under the terms of this grant scheme to receive SRP funds for paying for works on FE land or paying for FE staff time or expenses.

Q11. **NEW** Partners and subcontractors not from England: eligibility

Can a partner or sub-contractor be based outside of England and still be eligible to receive funding from the SRP?

A11. Answer

Yes, a partner or sub-contractor can be based outside England/the UK, the lead partner's relationship with the party will determine whether a partner or sub-contractor is more appropriate.

Q12. **NEW** Publishing papers

Can we include the cost of producing papers that will occur during the eligible period but that will be published after the project has ended?

A12. Answer

Yes, but we will expect to see a draft of the paper as evidence it has been written using the funding and within the funding period.

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. In-kind costs

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

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.
Volunteers managed by Natural England staff should be counted as contributing volunteer value at the standard rates. However, Natural England staff themselves cannot be counted as volunteers unless it is in their own (unpaid) time.

Q4. 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. 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.

Q6. Staff salary costs

If the specific staff member is not known at this stage, can we use a generic rate costed for someone at that staffing level?

A6. Answer

Yes, where a new role would be created for the project or you do not have a member of staff in post, please use the appropriate salary costings in your budget plan, these should be staff salary plus employers NI contribution plus employer's pension contribution.

Q7. Natural England staff costs

Can staff costs for Natural England staff, either existing or new, be included in the project budget?

A7. Answer

No, Natural England staff costs should not be included in project budgets. Existing staff are already on the Defra payroll so this would constitute double funding. Natural England also has headcount limits so is not able to employ additional staff members. Only delivery (non-staff) costs on NE-owned land should be included. NE staff time or other contributions should not be calculated as in-kind. You may refer to NE contributions as additional in the narrative but not in any way as match.

Q8. Staff costs: non-payrolled staff

I am sole director of a Community Interest Company (CIC). Within the ITA application, am I able to include staff costs for myself at a specified day rate given that I am not on a payroll?

A8. Answer

You can include costs incurred, with justification for your time and rates detailed within the application and budget. Your daily rate should be reasonable and in line with the market average, which will be evaluated against Value for Money criteria.

Q9. Staff costs & Overhead calculations

Can you provide more detail/explain specifically what needs to be submitted in relation to staff costs and if this is in addition to us providing the detail as to how overheads are calculated?
Is there any difference when using day rates as opposed to annual salaries? i.e. the category used. Also, are overheads allowed as part of day rates?

A9. Answer

For your application you need to provide evidence for both staff costs and overheads and how they have been calculated (evidence can be a letter of confirmation signed by your chief finance officer or equivalent). Staff costs must be based on actual employment costs incurred, i.e. employer's gross salary cost, plus employer's pension contribution, plus employer's National Insurance contribution and any other contractual costs. Rates for staff costs should not include overheads, and calculations of these have been derived should be separately.
Staff costs for all categories should be calculated using annual salary figures, as per the guidance. We cannot accept staff costs based on any other form of charging rates.

Staff costs should not include overheads, please refer to the section on Overheads in the ITA Guidance.

Q10. **NEW** Staff costs: personal information

On Annex D, the budget template, for staff costs, where you require staffing costs for named staff members, can we check how confidentiality on salary is to be maintained given the level of detail requested and how GDPR issues will be addressed?

A10. Answer

The supporting evidence for staff costs we ask for with the application is a letter of confirmation signed by the chief finance officer or equivalent. We do not require sight of individual's payslips, and any letters or other evidence should be provided so that personal information is not shown. Staff members should be identified by job role rather than by name. Where there is more than one individual with the same job role then adding the individual's initials is sufficient. Please refer to Annex E budget plan template EXAMPLE.

Q11. **NEW** Medical insurance

If our employee benefits include medical insurance do we need to provide information on that for each staff member?

A11. Answer

You do not need to include any detail on this, a letter from your chief finance officer confirming the nature of contractual benefits is sufficient. Please do not send us unnecessary personal data.

Topic 7. Partnerships

Q1. **UPDATED** 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?
Can the supporting partners budget information with salary, NI, Pension details etc be sent directly by a partner to NE without needing to send these through the lead applicant. The same for the claims process, when we will need to submit actual payslips as proof of our claim, can these be submitted by a partner to NE direct?

A1. **UPDATED** 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.
The grant agreement will be between Natural England and the lead partner; all grant claims must be submitted by the lead partner only with a signed declaration that all costs are correct (this includes costs from their partners). Personal information will need to be redacted before sending information to Natural England. Partnerships must produce a partnership agreement which covers roles, responsibilities and arrangements for providing claim evidence which meets the requirements of the Authority as set out in the Terms and Conditions of the funding agreement.

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. **UPDATED** Project partners: **Government partners, inc. Natural England**

Is information on the partnership form required from Natural England if they are involved in a project or is this only a requirement for external partners?
Does this include National Landscape teams?

A3. **UPDATED** Answer

Where projects have government partners involved, including Natural England, then we will need just the partner's name (column B), role within this project (column N) and % involvement (column O) to be entered onto Annex F, so that the total contribution percentage equals 100%.
Yes, National Landscape teams should be listed on the partnership form. If they are wholly funded by Defra then their time cannot be counted as match.

Q4. 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. 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?
The partners for my project are offering 'in-kind' contributions (not cash). Does this still mean my project qualifies as a 'partnership project' when answering the questions in the portal? Would the partners still have to complete Annex F given that no funds would be going to them?

A5. Answer

All delivery 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).
If partners' in-kind contributions are contributing to the delivery of the project, then yes they should be included as partners on the partnership form. Q6 below explains how to work out what % to enter.

Q6. Partnership form percentages

On the partnership form, it asks for the percentage of involvement of each member in the project. Should the total for all partners be 100%?

A6. Answer

The lead applicant and each delivery partner organisation should specify what their approximate percentage of involvement is in the project, these figures combined should total 100%. This should be based on the percentage of both financial and delivery involvement. For example, if a partnership comprises of 3 organisations each contributing to different aspects of the project, the combined contribution should total 100% and might look like the following:

Organisation	Financial Involvement	Delivery Involvement	Calculation	Total Involvement to be stated in the Partnership Form
A	75%	55%	130/2	65%
B	15%	35%	50/2	25%
C	10%	10%	20/2	10%
Total	100%	100%		100%

Q7. Landowners

Are landowners of sites in projects considered to be partners?

A7. Answer

No, landowners of sites on which you are delivering works would not necessarily be considered as partners. 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. Please also refer to the information about management control of land and the need for landowner agreements in the ITA Guidance for Applicants document.

Q8. Landowner permissions

For sites where formal agreements are in place between landowners and project partners is a signed lease or a management agreement acceptable evidence of land management control (provided it covers the grant funded period and 5 year obligation period), or would we need to provide additional evidence of permission from the landowner covering the specific works included in our SRP application?
For sites where formal agreements are not in place with the landowner, what format would constitute acceptable evidence of land management control?

A8. Answer

If any existing written agreement(s) between parties cover the works planned under the SRP-funded project (and the obligation period) then these should be sufficient; if they don't then an agreement covering the SRP-specific works will be required.
Acceptable evidence could include a signed permission letter from the landowner, which should detail the nature of the works planned under the SRP-funded project and the 5-year obligation period (this could include surveys, releases, trapping, access, habitat works).

Q9. Procurement

We are keen to work with a specific organisation on part of our project. If we list them as a sub-contractor in the proposal, what evidence are we expected to show to suggest we have followed "proper procurement procedure"? Would it be sufficient for us to put together a narrative justifying why they are the only organization we can collaborate with on this project, and that this is why we have not opened up a competitive tender for a subcontractor?

A9. Answer

If tendering for contractors or sub-contractors cannot be completed before the application deadline, and if you anticipate using a Single Tender Action then we would expect you to include a narrative explaining your reasons for this. If you are offered a grant, we will need to see detail of your procurement approach and justification for Single Tender Action before we approve the expenditure.

Q10. Project partner eligibility

In the 'Eligible Applicants' section it says: You cannot apply for funding if your organisation is not formally constituted, registered with the charities commission or companies house, one of our partners is not formally constituted, can they still be listed as a project partner, and therefore be a recipient of any project funding at all (e.g., as a sub-contractor)

A10. Answer

The guidance for 'Eligible Applicants' refers to the lead applicant, not the partners. Natural England will not enter into a funding agreement with an entity (an organisation) that doesn't have a legal status. Our preference would be for an organisation which does not have a legal status to be considered as a sub-contractor rather than as a partner.

Q11. Project partners and subcontractors

If we are a Collaborator in a partnership on one SRP project, can we be a subcontractor on a separate SRP project that we are not collaborating on?

A11. Answer

Yes, you can be a sub-contractor on an SRP project that you are not a partner in. You cannot be a partner and a sub-contractor within the same project.

Q12. Volunteer partnership organisations

If we are working with volunteer partnership organisations (e.g. a local conservation or species group, with no paid staff) do they need to be a partner? And how do we record their contribution to the project?

A12. Answer

If their in-kind contributions are contributing to the delivery of the project, then yes, they should be included as partners and details provided on the application form. Their contribution would be recorded in the non-cash match section under the category volunteer value.

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.

Q2. Monitoring timeframes

Can you provide more detail on what level of post-release monitoring for a conservation translocation of beaver is required within the project timeframe?

A2. Answer

The detail of the required post-release monitoring will be subject to any conditions placed upon the release licence. Please refer to the following guidance
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/recording-beavers-and-data-sharing/recording-beavers-and-data-sharing
For a population reinforcement we would expect some short-term beaver monitoring to ensure there are no welfare issues for the released animals, especially to ensure there is no conflict with existing beavers. This would also be used to inform on-going stakeholder engagement and management advice. For a population reinforcement we might not request as much monitoring as we would for the establishment of a new population, but we would expect post release monitoring for potentially two or three months, with perhaps less frequent follows ups after a year or two.

Topic 10. Timescales

Q1. 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.

Topic 11. Match Funding

Q1. National Parks

Could match funding from National Parks be considered as part of an SRP funding bid, or are they classed as double Defra funding?

A1. Answer

National Park Authorities receive funding from a range of sources; provided the funds allocated to the SRP project budget are not restricted funds for another purpose, then yes, these can be considered as match funding.

Q2. Existing funding obligations

The guidance notes that 'Match funding cannot be part of an existing obligation'. Please could you clarify exactly what is meant by this? Is it possible, for example, for us to factor in funding from other projects where it will directly contribute to the outcomes of our SRP project? E.g. including a proportion of funding from a (fully funded) PhD placement as match funding – where the student will dedicate a proportion of time and resources directly to our SRP project delivery.

A2. Answer

Yes, this is a good example of match funding. The guidance in relation to existing obligations means that where the grant recipient has made an existing commitment to fund works as part of the legacy or obligation period from another funder (including Natural England), that committed funding cannot be used as match funding towards this project, as that is in effect, double counting.

Q3. Treasury funding

Can other treasury funds (e.g. LWEG/FiPL) be considered match funding?

A3. Answer

Due to Defra grant funding objectives, any match funding should exclude schemes funded by Defra, but match funding from wider government sources e.g. National Lottery Heritage Fund, would be considered. Therefore, in this instance, LWEG and FiPL cannot be included as match funding.

Q4. Forestry England – partners and match funding

For an organisation like Forestry England that is not fully funded by the treasury, but part funded, can it be a partner and can it provide cash match funding?

Does the following apply for Forestry England: 'match funding should not include other exchequer funding such as … Forest Enterprise, other Natural England sources'?

A4. Answer

Yes, Forestry England can be a contributing partner, it can only provide match funding that isn't from the 'grant in aid' funding provided by Defra through the Forestry Commission; this includes staff time or cash match. Forestry England is not eligible under the terms of this grant scheme to receive SRP funds for paying for works on FE land or paying for FE staff time or expenses.

Q5. Staff match funding: cash match

Can staff matched funding be counted as cash match?

A5. Answer

Existing staff who are already on the payroll but are giving some of their time towards the project should be classed as in-kind. If, however, you are increasing their hours or taking on new staff specifically for the project and paying for this as new money, then this should be counted as cash match.

Q6. Existing project funding

If our SRP application is for an extension on an existing project (not previously funded by SRP), which partially overlaps in timescale, can the funding from the current project be counted as match funding towards our SRP bid?

A6. Answer

Yes, a relevant proportion of your existing funding can be counted as match funding for the SRP project, provided the objectives are the same and the other funding does not come from any part of Defra.

Q7. Match funding source

Does match funding have to be accounted for through the lead partner? Therefore, if a partner or associated project was undertaking work that supports the stated outcomes (and not part of a separate funded obligation), then that could be counted as cash match? Or would that be in-kind?

A7. Answer

Match funding does not have to be provided by the lead partner, other partners can provide match funding, either by giving it to the lead partner towards the costs of delivery or by using funds from their own reserves or from other funding sources (provided these other sources are not from Defra or do not have other restrictions on them to prevent the funds being considered as match). Please refer to the information on match funding in the ITA guidance for applicants.

Q8. **NEW** Match funding evidence from partners

As a multiple partner project, will you require partner statements and evidencing of match funding from each individual partner and not just the lead partner?

A8. Answer

Yes, if you have this information from any of the partners then please provide it as supporting information in a single combined file (e.g. combined pdf).

Topic 12. Terms & Conditions

Q1. Project audit

Our accounts are audited externally each year, including a selection of projects, but it's not guaranteed SRP projects will be assessed separately, will this be sufficient?

A1. Answer

It is a condition of funding that all grant projects are audited. If your current audit arrangements do not provide specific auditing of the funded project, then this would not be acceptable. The ITA guidance for applicants states that ‘all Grant Recipients need to engage an auditor to conduct an examination of their project accounts as part of the grant closure procedure. If these costs are not included in your budget plan at application and grant offer stage, these costs must be borne by the grant recipient when incurred.’

Q2. Partner audits

Where entering into a partnership project can you please confirm whether the lead organisation is required to audit the other partners?

A2. Answer

The lead applicant should decide the level of due diligence they perform on their partners. Note that all partners should, where applicable, comply with the grant recipient code of conduct. Lead applicants are responsible for any grant funding provided and should ensure they have sufficient controls in place to manage the project responsibly, including both internal financial management and financial arrangements with partners. The lead applicant needs to comply with the grant funding agreement terms and conditions including providing a grant usage form with an independent auditor signoff at closure of the project.

Q3. Grant agreement amendments

What flexibility is there for modifications of activities, timeframes and budget during the 3-year project period? Will the SRP Team be available to support on this?

A3. Answer

The grant agreement will include the agreed activities, outputs, timeframe and budget which is approved at grant application evaluation stage. Any subsequent amendments to this must be submitted formally to the SRP team for consideration. Material amendments will require a Change Control Notice.

Q4. Costs incurred prior to grant agreement

Are we able to claim for work undertaken following the grant being awarded, but prior to having a signed agreement in place?
If data are needed for the project but will be collected before the grant award, could this count towards our match funding?

A4. Answer

The same guidance applies to all the types of funding and only costs incurred after the signed grant agreement start date can be claimed for.

Q5. Budgets: financial years

Can funding be moved between financial years if work is delayed (such as due to bad weather), even if it is within the project period?

A5. Answer

Budgets cannot be moved between financial years (April to March) so any unspent budget in any financial year will be forfeit. You may make an amendment request or request for contingency which we will consider.

Q6. Audit reports

Does Natural England require the audit report before the end of the project or is submission afterwards, with costs paid in advance during the project period, acceptable?

A6. Answer

The final project audit (certificate of grant usage) must be provided with your final project reporting documents by the deadline shown in Section A paragraph 10 of the ITA guidance for applicants. No payment in advance of costs incurred will be considered.

Q7. Partners: audited accounts and Certificate of Grant Usage

Is it only the lead organisation that is required to provide audited accounts and a final certificate of grant usage, if so, would all the evidence of expenditure from other partners be expected to be included in this?

A7. Answer

Yes, it is just the lead organisation. You will be expected to keep accounts of the transactions between yourself and partners, these will be subject to audit.

Q8. **NEW** Legacy Plans and obligation period funding

Can the scope of the Legacy Plans be treated as conditional to us receiving more funding, does the obligation period require commitment to work even if ultimately it is unfunded?

A8. Answer

The guidance states: "Due to funding restrictions, we are unable to cover the costs of ongoing management, maintenance and monitoring after the Grant Funding Period has concluded. Therefore, please set out how you will maintain the works carried out for the five-year obligation period required by this grant scheme and continue appropriate management and monitoring. Include plans for securing any resources required to fulfil this obligation." In your application we expect you to demonstrate your intention to secure the legacy of the work we have funded, during the funding period you should develop these plans and provide information with your final report.

Q9. **NEW** Obligation period funding: government funding

Can you clarify if the rules on funding extend beyond the grant period into the legacy plan, i.e., can we use funds from Defra or other government schemes?

A9. Answer

The rules on match funding from Defra sources do not extend into the legacy period. For instance, a good legacy plan might be to secure a long-term management agreement on land which will support your target species.

Q10. **NEW** Asset Register

Is the £10k amount for the fixed asset register per individual item? For example, if there are 10 items totalling £10k would this need to be registered?

A10. Answer

Your own finance team should be able to advise on this. Natural England rules on asset registers include grouped assets, for example, five microscopes purchased at the same time for £15k could be capitalised, even though the individual cost of each item would be under the de minimis limit. The business would expect the assets to have the same useful life, and the benefits derived from the asset will be dependent on the full complement of microscopes being available for use.

Q11. **NEW** “Same Outcome” guidance

In the ‘Enrolment in Other Schemes and Grants’ section of the ITA Guidance what is meant by “similar activity or outcome”?

A11. Answer

The guidance about same outcome relates to avoiding paying for the same activity/work twice which would constitute double funding. e.g. if a landowner is in an agreement where they are already being paid to manage the land parcel in a certain way in order to achieve a specified action then we cannot pay for this again.

Topic 13. Reporting

Q1. Existing survey data

Can we include data from surveys outside of the project period, e.g. from 2025, or in April-June 2026, and present that data in our project reporting?

A1. Answer

Yes, this survey data can be used as baseline data and used to support project delivery and/or reporting but any associated costs incurred prior to the grant agreement start date cannot be included in the application.