



# Flexi-Grant User Guide

A guide to support applicants using Flexi-Grant

April 2024

**Biodiversity Challenge Funds:**

**Darwin Initiative**

**Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund**

**Darwin Plus**

**Contact for all applications:**

Biodiversity Challenge Funds  
c/o NIRAS  
Pentlands Science Park  
Bush Loan  
Penicuik  
EH26 0PL  
United Kingdom

Flexi-Grant application portal:

[bcfs.flexigrant.com](https://bcfs.flexigrant.com)

For all general Darwin Initiative application queries e-mail:

[BCF-Darwin@niras.com](mailto:BCF-Darwin@niras.com)

For all general IWT Challenge Fund application queries e-mail:

[BCF-IWTCF@niras.com](mailto:BCF-IWTCF@niras.com)

For all general Darwin Plus application queries e-mail:

[BCF-DPlus@niras.com](mailto:BCF-DPlus@niras.com)

For all queries specifically related to the use of the Flexi-Grant system e-mail:

[BCF-Flexigrant@niras.com](mailto:BCF-Flexigrant@niras.com)



Department  
for Environment  
Food & Rural Affairs



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## 1 Purpose of this document

This guidance provides practical information on how to use the Flexi-Grant application portal to apply for Biodiversity Challenge Funds (BCFs) projects.

This document is only about how to use Flexi-Grant to apply for your project. There is separate guidance about the content of your application and how to structure your project which you should read prior to beginning an application.

This guidance covers applications to Darwin Initiative, the IWT Challenge Fund and Darwin Plus. This guidance is specifically focused on how to use the Flexi-Grant online application portal. Separate application guidance relating to the content of your application is available for each scheme<sup>1</sup>:

- [Darwin Initiative – Guidance Notes for Applicants](#)
- [IWT Challenge Fund – Guidance Notes for Applicants](#)
- [Darwin Plus – Guidance Notes for Applicants](#)

## 2 What is Flexi-Grant?

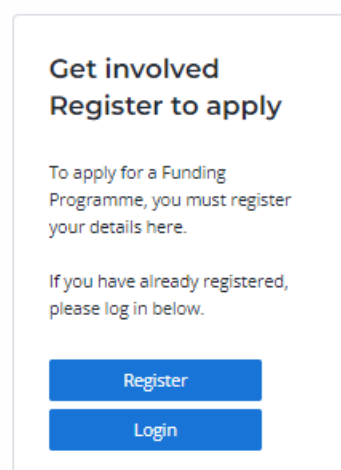
Flexi-Grant<sup>®</sup> is an online application portal used by a range of government and independent grant bodies worldwide. **All applications to Darwin Initiative, the IWT Challenge Fund and Darwin Plus must be through the Flexi-Grant application portal.**

## 3 How to register on Flexi-Grant

In order to submit an application via Flexi-Grant, you need to register an account.

To register, go to: <https://bcfs.flexigrant.com>

At the bottom of the webpage on the left, you will find a button to create an account or login if you already have an account. Be sure to scroll all the way to the bottom of the page until you see this box:



The screenshot shows a white rectangular box with a thin grey border. At the top, it says "Get involved" in bold, followed by "Register to apply" in a larger bold font. Below this, there are two lines of text: "To apply for a Funding Programme, you must register your details here." and "If you have already registered, please log in below." At the bottom of the box, there are two blue buttons with white text: "Register" and "Login".

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<sup>1</sup> At the time of preparing this Flexi-Grant guidance, not all funds are open to applications. Please monitor the relevant pages for updates on upcoming rounds.

You will need to agree to the Flexi-Grant Terms and Conditions in order to register. Once you have registered, you will receive a confirmation email which you will need to activate your account.

If you forget your login details, please contact [BCF-Flexigrant@niras.com](mailto:BCF-Flexigrant@niras.com) and a member of the fund administrator team (at NIRAS) will unlock your account and reset your password.

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** The account you create to begin your application (the Flexi-Grant account holder) will be the lead applicant (unless you reassign this permission – see section 4.4). **The lead applicant will be the only login that can submit your application and will be the sole point of contact for the duration of the application (i.e. both Stage 1 and Stage 2) unless you notify the fund administrator of a change.** Therefore, we recommend the lead applicant has regular email access or shares the login details if necessary.

If you experience any issues accessing the online portal, firstly we suggest using Google Chrome as your browser (there may be reduced functionality with Edge and Internet Explorer in particular). If you continue to experience difficulties, please contact [BCF-Flexigrant@niras.com](mailto:BCF-Flexigrant@niras.com).

## 4 How to complete your application

Before beginning an application, we would recommend reading all of the guidance documents relevant to your application. For most funds, this includes:

- **Guidance for Applicants**
- **Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Guidance**
- **Risk Management Guidance**
- **Finance Guidance**
- **Terms & Conditions**
- **Standard Indicator Guidance**
- **Biodiversity Challenge Fund Privacy Notice**

For Darwin Initiative, the documents can be found on the Darwin Initiative website [here](#).

For the IWT Challenge Fund, the documents can be found on the IWT Challenge Fund website [here](#).

For Darwin Plus, the documents can be found on the Darwin Plus website [here](#).

### 4.1 Stage 1 or Single Stage applications

To start an application to any of the BCFs schemes either use the blue 'Click here to start an application' panel on the main Flexi-Grant home page or click the 'Application Portal' button in the top left. On the 'My applications' tab, you can also scroll down to the 'Start a new application' section.

Select a scheme to start an application

Start a new application

**Darwin Plus Main Round 11: Stage 1**

Closing Date  
27/06/2022 23:59 Start

## 4.2 Stage 2 applications

If your Stage 1 application is successful for any of the two-stage schemes, you will receive a unique link via email inviting you to Stage 2. This will allow you to begin your Stage 2 application. **You will not be able to start a Stage 2 application directly through the Flexi-Grant application portal – you must use the link in the email and ensure you login as the original account holder.** Please avoid clicking this link multiple times as this will create duplicate Stage 2 applications. Once you begin the application, you will then be able to access this via your account. If you are the lead applicant on more than one Stage 2 application, please contact [BCF-Flexigrant@niras.com](mailto:BCF-Flexigrant@niras.com) if you are unable to access all Stage 2 applications. Please ensure that you follow the correct link for each of your Stage 2 applications. Once you have followed this link, your Stage 1 application will be marked as complete and your Stage 2 application will appear under 'My applications' with a **new** Stage 2 application reference.

## 4.3 General application advice

We recommend reading each page of the application form to familiarise yourself with the questions before starting. Links to all application documents are included on the 'summary' page of the application form (see below for an example) and elsewhere if relevant.

You can also print/download the entire application form in PDF before or after completing it and you can download a blank Word template for drafting purposes from the 'summary' page on Flexi-Grant and on the relevant website 'Apply' pages .

## Summary

Darwin Initiative Round 30: Darwin Innovation

[Instructions](#)

[Print](#)

At any stage in the application process you can save your work and return to it at a later time. The system will automatically save your work when you change pages but we recommend that you also save your work at regular intervals to avoid loss of data. The questions and sections can be completed in any order.

We recommend reviewing each page of the application form to familiarise yourself with the questions before starting.

For all general application queries, e-mail: [BCF-Darwin@niras.com](mailto:BCF-Darwin@niras.com)

**Before starting your application, please ensure you have read the following:**

- [Guidance for Applicants](#) (with particular focus on the eligibility criteria)
- [Terms and Conditions](#)
- [Finance Guidance](#)
- [Flexi-Grant Guidance](#)
- [Risk Guidance](#)
- [Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Guidance](#)
- [Standard Indicator Guidance](#)

**Documents you will need to complete alongside this application form are available below (note there are different templates for projects requesting over £100,000 or under £100,000):**

- Budget template for projects [over £100,000](#)
- Budget template for projects [under £100,000](#)
- A logframe using the [Single Stage logframe template](#)
- A [project workplan](#)
- [Risk Register Template](#) (Do not attach this to your application)
- A cover letter from the Lead Partner
- Letters of support from lead and all partners uploaded as one PDF
- One page CVs for the project team uploaded as one PDF
- The last 2 sets of signed audited accounts as two PDFs (or other financial evidence - see Financial Guidance).

Questions marked with a red asterisk \* are mandatory.

The closing date for all applications is **23:59 GMT on Monday 23 October 2023**.

**To submit your application form:**

Once you have completed all sections of the application a 'Submit application' button will become available at the top and bottom of this summary page. This button will become available once every page of the application is marked as 'Complete' - however please note that **all collaborators must have marked their inputs as complete or this button will not appear**. If they do not, the Lead Applicant will have to revoke their permission to collaborate before the application can be submitted. You may need to refresh the page after revoking permission for the 'Submit application' button to appear.

If you continue to experience issues, please email: [BCF-Flexigrant@niras.com](mailto:BCF-Flexigrant@niras.com).

When you click the 'Submit application' button you will be asked to confirm that you want to submit your application. Once your application has been submitted, you will be able to view your application and its current status but you will NOT be able to modify it. If you receive any supporting documents after the submission date, please email: [BCF-Flexigrant@niras.com](mailto:BCF-Flexigrant@niras.com).

In order to facilitate collaboration, you can also download a [Word version](#) of the application form. **Please note that applications will only be accepted via the Flexi-Grant portal. Any applications received on the Word form via email will be rejected.**

For all queries specifically related to the use of the Flexi-Grant system e-mail: [BCF-Flexigrant@niras.com](mailto:BCF-Flexigrant@niras.com)

At any stage in the application process you can save your work and return to it later. The questions and sections can be completed in any order. When you leave a page by clicking any of the following buttons in the Flexi-Grant program, any edits you have made will be saved automatically:

[< Previous page](#)

[Return to Summary](#)

[Next page >](#)

However, if you click any of the other buttons in the Flexi-Grant programme or the back button in your internet browser without saving, new content and edits **will not be saved**.

You can paste text from other sources (e.g. a Word document) into the fields on Flexi-Grant. However, **word limits are automatically enforced and any words exceeding the limit will be deleted** so check all you have copied appears as you expect.

Questions marked with a red asterisk \* are mandatory.

#### 4.4 Application contact details

The individual who creates the Flexi-Grant account is referred to as the Flexi-Grant account holder (see section 3 above). This person is the **lead applicant** and main point of contact for the duration of the application (unless reassigned). It is useful if the Flexi-Grant account holder is the individual named as **Project Leader** in the application form.


**All emails automatically generated by Flexi-Grant, including notification of application results, will only be sent to the account holder.** We would therefore recommend that this individual regularly monitors this email during the application period, and, if necessary, we recommend sharing login details with other members of the team who can login to submit the application on their behalf.

**If the Project Leader is not the Flexi-Grant account holder,** then you should also add their name to the application form at the relevant question.

The screenshot shows a portion of the Flexi-Grant application form. The fields are as follows:

- Title:** A dropdown menu with the text "Please select..." and a downward arrow.
- First name:** A text input field with the placeholder "Enter first name" and a red asterisk (\*) indicating it is mandatory.
- Last name:** A text input field with the placeholder "Enter last name" and a red asterisk (\*) indicating it is mandatory.
- Contact type:** A dropdown menu with the text "Please select..." and a downward arrow.
- Position:** A text input field containing the text "Project Leader". This field is highlighted with a green rectangular border.
- Related organisation:** A dropdown menu with the text "Please select if appropriate" and a downward arrow.
- Below the "Related organisation" field, there is a small text note: "You can add this later in the application".
- Lead:** A checkbox with the label "Lead" next to it. This checkbox is also highlighted with a green rectangular border.

Please note that the 'lead' checkbox is used to indicate who the lead applicant is (initially the account holder but can be changed once an application is started). Only the person who is a lead applicant can reassign this permission to another collaborator on the application (see section 5).

Only the lead applicant (i.e. the contact marked with a black icon will be  contacted regarding the result of an application and they will be the only individual to receive emails automatically generated by the system.

If project staff already have an active Flexi-Grant account, please invite them to your application as a co-applicant. This will avoid duplicate accounts being created (see section 5).

If the lead applicant changes during the review process (i.e. after you have submitted your application), please contact [BCF-Flexigrant@niras.com](mailto:BCF-Flexigrant@niras.com) with new contact details and a member of the fund administration team will update these details to ensure application results are sent to the correct person.

In addition, **please be aware that although some of the fields in Questions 1 or 2 may not be relevant to you/your organisation and appear to be optional, all available fields must be completed before page one of the application (Contact Details) is marked as complete.** Where fields do not apply please use 'N/A' as your response. Please ensure you include the relevant country so we know where you are based.

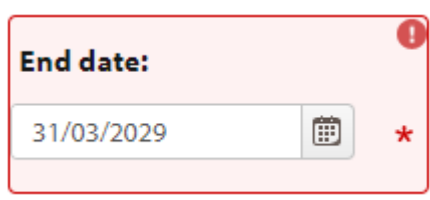
#### 4.5 Eligibility criteria

The application form has been designed, as far as possible, to help ensure applicants meet our eligibility criteria, for example through the inclusion of word limits. Please ensure you are familiar with all the eligibility criteria set out in the relevant guidance document, as your application will be rejected if it fails to comply with these criteria.

#### 4.6 Incomplete questions and error messages

Because you are allowed to progress through the application form in any order, it is possible to leave a page incomplete. However, you will not be able to submit an incomplete application. The 'summary' page indicates which parts of the application form have incomplete questions or error messages.

Once you have identified which page is incomplete, click the 'edit' button to open the relevant page. If you are unable to identify what information is missing, click 'save current page' at the top or bottom of the page. If there is an error, a message will pop up at the top of the page and the relevant question will be marked – for example:



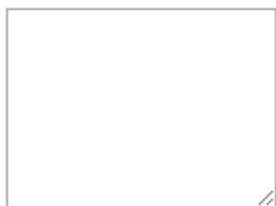
The image shows a form field with the label "End date:". The input field contains the date "31/03/2029" and a calendar icon. A red star icon is visible to the right of the input field, indicating an error. The entire field is enclosed in a red border.

If you are still unclear what the error is, please refer to the guidance for applicants which details restrictions related to project start and end dates, as in the example above, or contact our support team by email: [BCF-Flexigrant@niras.com](mailto:BCF-Flexigrant@niras.com).



## 4.7 Entering text into boxes

Note that most text boxes are adjustable in size. These boxes are marked by stripes on the bottom right hand corner.



In order to adjust the size and shape of a box, simply click on the striped corner and drag in any direction. Please note that this function may not be available when using Internet Explorer or Microsoft Edge as your web browser. Adjusting the size will not adjust any restricted word count.

## 4.8 Uploading supporting materials

The limit for any single file uploaded as supporting materials with your application is 5MB. Please ensure documents are saved in PDF form where possible (apart from templates in Excel) in order to minimise size, and are collated as requested e.g. all CVs in one PDF document. Non-essential additional materials **must not exceed 5 pages in total. Your application will be made ineligible if the number is exceeded.**

# 5 Collaboration

It is possible to collaborate with partners on your application. We recommend that you discuss this with any partners you intend to invite, before sending them an invitation to collaborate.

You can send an invite to collaborate and manage invited collaborators from the 'participants' tab on the 'summary' page.

Application Participants

As the Lead Applicant and Flexi-Grant account holder you are able to invite partners to collaborate on this application. However, the Lead Applicant alone is responsible for submitting the final application. If you expect not to be available when submission is due, we recommend sharing login details with other members of your team who can login to submit the application on your behalf.

▼ Collaboration requests: Active, Pending or Required			
Role	Assigned	Status	
 Co-applicant Invited: 15/12/22	Charles Darwin <a href="mailto:charles-darwin@beagle.com">charles-darwin@beagle.com</a>	<span>Invited</span>	<span>Remind</span> <span>Revoke</span>
 Co-applicant		<span>Optional</span>	<span>Invite</span>

## IMPORTANT NOTES:

- Although it is possible to collaborate on an application, the lead applicant **must** be the person who submits the final application. If the lead applicant expects not to be available when submission is due, we recommend sharing login details with other members of the team who can login to submit the application on their behalf.
- All collaborators need to have marked their inputs as complete prior to submission, otherwise the lead applicant has to revoke permission (see screenshot above) to collaborate before the application can be submitted. **This will not remove the collaborators inputs.**
- All collaborators have equal editing power, and changes are not marked.
- Collaborators can leave comments for each other at the top of each page of the application form. To do so click on the “+” sign next to “Page Comments” to expand the comments field, type your comment into the box and click “Add comment”. These comments will then be visible to all collaborators, reviewers and to Flexi-Grant administrators but won’t be considered during the application review process and should not be used to provide information outside of word limit.
- For those applicants wishing to collaborate offline, a Word version of the application form is available to download from the “summary” page of your application form within Flexi-Grant, or on the relevant fund websites under the ‘apply’ tab (see section 4). The Stage 2 application form can be downloaded from within the Stage 1 application so that you can see what will be expected should you be invited to the next stage.

## 6 Submission

Once you have completed all sections of the application a 'Submit application' button will become available at the bottom of the “summary” page (note that only the lead applicant can submit the application). This button will become available once every page of the application is marked as 'Complete'. When you click the 'Submit application' button you will be asked to confirm that you want to submit your application. Once your application has been submitted, you will be able to view your application and its current status but you will **NOT** be able to modify it.

If you find you have made a mistake and need to amend something before the deadline<sup>2</sup>, you can contact us to ask for the application to be returned. If we return it, it will no longer be recognised as ‘submitted’ and you will need to make your edits and resubmit within the application deadline for your application to be considered.

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<sup>2</sup> Specific deadlines are outlined in the relevant guidance notes.

Please ensure you have read the relevant guidance notes before you apply. We recommend reviewing each page of the application form to familiarise yourself with the questions before starting.

## 7 Other ways to apply

For all BCF projects, **Flexi-Grant is the only way of applying**. Please be assured that support is available from the fund administrators.

If anything is unclear after reading this guidance and the relevant “Guidance Notes” document, then please feel free to contact us, and we will provide assistance.

If you continue to have **significant difficulties** completing your application via this online portal, please contact [BCF-Flexigrant@niras.com](mailto:BCF-Flexigrant@niras.com) prior to the deadline.

## 8 Frequently Asked Questions

### **I have completed my application, but I can't see the 'submit' button.**

If you are not the lead applicant, you will not be able to submit the application. Ensure the lead applicant has access near the submission deadline so that they can submit the application. If you are the lead applicant but still can't see the submit button, please ensure that any collaborators on the application have marked their inputs as complete or else you have revoked their invitation to collaborate. You should then be able to submit. If your application is 100% complete but unsubmitted after the deadline, the fund administrators will contact the lead applicant the following day to try and resolve the submission. Please contact [BCF-Flexigrant@niras.com](mailto:BCF-Flexigrant@niras.com) if you experience any further issues with the submission.

### **I am not the lead applicant but would like to be – how do I do this?**

The person who started the application or who is currently the lead applicant needs to make you the lead applicant – only the current lead applicant and fund administrators have the power to change the lead applicant. You cannot become the lead applicant if you have been invited to collaborate on the application. You must revoke your collaboration before changing to the lead applicant. If the lead applicant is no longer available, please contact the fund administrators.

### **I use Flexi-Grant for other grant schemes and they require another stage of sign off – do you have this stage?**

No, we have not configured an additional sign off stage for our application forms. We do ask that applicants complete the certification page but we leave it up to you to manage any other necessary sign-off stages internally.

### **I am struggling to access the Flexi-Grant portal**

If you experience any issues accessing the online portal, we suggest using Google Chrome as your browser (there may be reduced functionality with Edge and Internet Explorer in particular).

### **How do I sign my application?**

You can upload an e-signature on the Certification page of your application as a .jpeg, .jpg, .png or .pdf. You may also print out the relevant page of the Word application form to sign and submit as a PDF. Please **do not include** the full application.

### **Can the lead applicant be from a different organisation from the Lead Organisation?**

Yes, the lead applicant can be from a different organisation than the Lead Organisation but do make sure the Lead Organisation clearly identified in Question 2 so we know which organisation is submitting the application.

### **How do I access the relevant guidance documents and templates?**

All the necessary documents and templates for the funds are available on the relevant website 'Apply' pages and are also available for download within Flexi-Grant on both the summary page and embedded into the application form itself (see section 4).

*For all of the above, if you continue to have problems, please get in touch.*