



# Darwin Initiative

## Guidance Notes for Applicants: Round 31

2024 - 2025

**Note:** *A UK General Election is due to be held sometime before the current funding rounds complete. We will seek to inform applicants as soon as we can, should the timing of the UK General Election or its outcome impact the Darwin Initiative in any way. We encourage all applicants to continue to apply as normal, but to bear in mind that results or start dates may be delayed and plan your project with this in mind.*



Department  
for Environment  
Food & Rural Affairs



**UK International  
Development**

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These guidance notes provide information on:

- what can be funded
- how to apply
- the process used to select projects for funding

Applicants should also read the Finance Guidance, which explains:

- what budgetary information you need in your application
- how the payments will be made if your application is successful, and how you should manage your budget
- when reporting is due and how it is linked to payments

Applications are made through the online application portal **Flexi-Grant** at [bcfs.flexigrant.com/](https://bcfs.flexigrant.com/)

All guidance is available via the Flexi-Grant portal, and replicated on the Challenge Fund website below.

Applications are administered independently by NIRAS.

Please read all the available guidance including the separate Finance Guidance before requesting additional assistance, as these provide answers to most queries.

**Further resources and templates** to support your application are available on the [Forms and Guidance Portal](#), including:

- |   |                      |
|---|----------------------|
| Application Forms (for drafting purposes) | Change Request Forms |
| Application Templates                     | Terms and Conditions |
| Flexi-Grant User Guide                    | Reporting Forms      |
| Claim Forms                               | Project Database     |

If you can't find the answer, please contact the Darwin Initiative Administration Team.  
Calls (Teams/Zoom/Phone) can be arranged by email.

## Darwin Initiative

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## Glossary

Biodiversity	"Biological diversity" means the variability among living organisms from all sources including, terrestrial, marine and other aquatic ecosystems and the ecological complexes of which they are part; this includes diversity within species, between species and of ecosystems.
Biodiversity Challenge Funds	Collective name for Defra's Darwin Initiative, Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund and Darwin Plus.
Capability & Capacity	Capability refers to the types of ability (skills and knowledge) required for a task; Capacity refers to the amount of ability at a point in time to deliver a task.
Complementary	Whilst distinct, activities are compatible and support the delivery of results, as opposed to having a negative impact on each other such as duplication or competition for resources.
Country	Normally refers (unless otherwise stated) to any country on the eligible country list (see 2.8 and Annex A), and not countries such as the UK.
Defra	Darwin Initiative is a programme of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), UK Government.
DEC	Darwin Expert Committee is a group of independent experts in biodiversity and sustainable development that provides strategic advice, assesses proposals and makes recommendations to Defra on funding decisions.
Ethics	The values, such as fairness, honesty, openness, integrity, that shape how an individual or an organisation operates and interacts with others.
Evidence	Is information that demonstrates project actions, outputs, outcomes and impact. It varies in format, quality and relevance and can include, documented and undocumented experiences, data, studies, policies, best practices, from a range of perspectives. However evidence is particularly valued when it is quality assured, accessible and applicable.
GESI	Gender Equality and Social Inclusion, see section 3.3 for details.
International organisations	Organisations that may have a presence in an eligible country, but a head office located in a country not listed as an eligible country (Annex A).
Innovation	The implementation of a novel or significantly improved approach (product, ways of working, and/or process) that differs from previous approaches. Innovation can include the implementation of tried and tested approaches in geographies, scales, contexts and ways than have not been used before.
Lead Applicant	The individual who leads on the submission of the application and supporting materials, and will be the project contact point during the application process.

Lead Organisation	The organisation who will administer, lead and coordinate the delivery of the grant, accepting the Terms and Conditions of the Grant on behalf of the project.
Local/national organisations	Organisations of an eligible country (Annex A), with either a national or local remit, always formally registered within that country, and typically led by a national of the country.
Logframe	Logframes are a monitoring tool to measure progress against a Results Chain, comparing planned and actual results along a causal pathway, and including indicators, baselines, targets, as well as risks and assumptions.
Matched Funding	Additional finance that is secured to help meet the total cost of the project, including public and private sources, as well as quantified in-kind contributions.
NIRAS	Darwin Initiative Administrator; first point of contact for projects and applicants.
ODA	Official development assistance – commonly known as overseas aid – is when support, expertise or finance is supplied by one government to help the people of another country via activities that promote economic development and welfare as a main objective.
Partner(s)	Have a formal governance role in the project, and a formal relationship with the project that may involve staff costs and/or budget management responsibilities; this includes the Lead Organisation.
Poverty	Poverty is multidimensional and not solely about a lack of money; it encompasses a range of issues that hinder people's abilities to meet their basic needs and better their life with dignity including a lack of income, land, or other means of access to the basic material goods and services needed to survive with dignity, or a deficiency in healthcare, security, education or necessary social relations.
Project Leader	The individual with the necessary authority, capability and capacity, and a full understanding of their role and associated obligations, who takes responsibility for delivering value for money, managing risk and financial controls whilst fulfilling the terms and conditions of the grant.
(P)SEAH	(Protection from) Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment.
Safeguarding	Broadly means preventing harm to people and the environment. In practice, efforts often focus on taking all reasonable steps to prevent sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment (SEAH) from occurring, and to respond appropriately when it does.
Scale	The ability to deliver greater impact of a proven approach, either through expanding the scope of activities within a given geography or focal issue, taking the approach into a new geography or focal issue, or through uptake by stakeholders that promotes systemic change.

Stakeholder	Are consulted, engaged and/or participate in project activities as they have an interest or concern in the project and its impact. They can also be partners, but if not, they would not have a budget management, or a formal governance role, within the project. Stakeholders are not homogenous groups, and will include layers of diversity within them (see 3.3).
Theory of Change	Explains the process of change by outlining causal linkages taking activities through to a desired outcome, being explicit about the assumptions underlying the expected causal pathways, and including an analysis of barriers and enablers as well as indicators of success. Often set out in a diagram and narrative form.
Value for Money	Good value for money is the optimal use of resources to achieve the intended outcomes.

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**There are several key changes for Round 31 of the Darwin Initiative.**

- **Darwin Initiative Innovation** – evaluation expectations have been clarified.
- **Darwin Initiative Main** - grant size and date limits have changed.
- **Darwin Initiative Extra** - must explicitly build on evidence from previous Biodiversity Challenge Fund projects.
- **Darwin Initiative Capability & Capacity** – expectations around practical elements have been clarified
- **Gender Equality and Social Inclusion and Safeguarding** requirements have been clarified.
- **Assessment criteria** have been clarified for all schemes.
- **Responding to Feedback**, if resubmitting an application, has changed.

**This list is not exhaustive, and it is important you read and understand all guidance in full to ensure you meet the key fund requirements, including the eligibility requirements, and to strengthen your application.**

## 1 Global Context- Biodiversity and Sustainable Development

**Biodiversity loss is a critical challenge for sustainable development.**

- The scale of loss and rates of extinction are the greatest they have been for several million years and are accelerating.
- Biodiversity loss is eroding economic livelihoods, impacting food and water security, health, and protection from extreme weather events, climate change and pollution.

Its loss is escalating the likelihood that **tipping points** will be reached, bringing instability, abrupt changes, and wellbeing impacts at the community, national and international levels. The **greatest impact will be on low-income countries and the poor**, with their greater reliance on biodiversity and limited capability and capacity to adapt, undoing past gains and risking future prospects.

### 1.1 Drivers of biodiversity loss

**Human activity remains the primary cause** of biodiversity loss and degradation, via the direct drivers:

- 1) **Changes in land and sea use**, e.g. agricultural and urban expansion, water extraction.
- 2) **Direct exploitation**, e.g. overexploitation via harvesting, logging, hunting and fishing
- 3) **Climate change**, e.g. extreme weather events, changes in seasonality, ocean acidification
- 4) **Pollution**, e.g. marine plastic, waste, industry, agriculture, petrochemicals
- 5) **Invasion of alien species**, e.g. global trade spreading species that impact ecosystem functions

**Climate change** is partly driving biodiversity loss, the loss of which is further reducing biodiversity's capability to mitigate, adapt and be resilient to the impact of climate change.

Behind these are **indirect drivers** (economic/political/social factors), including consumption habits, wealth generation, and the separation of production from consumption. **Inequalities** between and within stakeholders (see 3.3) often impacts who benefits from the use of biodiversity, and who bears the cost.



Biodiversity loss and degradation tends to be less in areas managed by **indigenous and local communities**, but these are facing escalating external pressures (resource extraction, agriculture, and infrastructure), impacting the biodiversity and the livelihoods and wellbeing of these communities.

## 1.2 Barriers to addressing the challenge

**The direct and indirect drivers of biodiversity degradation and loss need to be addressed to halt and reverse current trends.** As the Dasgupta review<sup>1</sup> on the Economics of Biodiversity highlights, action is needed to ensure biodiversity is effectively embedded in decision-making. Barriers include:

- **Market failures:** biodiversity is an externality or public good that private actors will not necessarily account for in their private behaviour.
- **Government or governance failures:** ability of policymakers to take a sustainable approach to political and economic priorities and the management of biodiversity assets; capable institutions and the requisite biodiversity knowledge to guide effective action form the enabling conditions to change this.
- **Information gaps:** lack of awareness of biodiversity, understanding impacts of activities, and options to managing biodiversity limits the effectiveness of policymakers, communities, and private agents.
- **Inequalities:** economic, political, and social inequalities exacerbate the market and governance failures; more equitable representation of marginalised groups (e.g. indigenous and local communities, women, ethnicity, age, poor) in decision-making is needed.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.gov.uk/government/publications/final-report-the-economics-of-biodiversity-the-dasgupta-review](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/final-report-the-economics-of-biodiversity-the-dasgupta-review)

## 2 What kind of projects can be supported by the Darwin Initiative?

The Darwin Initiative is one of Defra's Biodiversity Challenge Funds (BCFs), along with the Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund and Darwin Plus. It competitively awards grants for biodiversity conservation and multidimensional poverty reduction activities in eligible countries, helping these countries meet their commitments under the Multilateral Environment Agreements<sup>2</sup>, Sustainable Development Goals, and national policy.

Please also carefully consider whether the Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund, Darwin Plus or OCEAN Grants Programme are a better match for your project before applying (also see 2.9).

### 2.1 The Aim of the Darwin Initiative

The intended impact of the Darwin Initiative is that the *rates of biodiversity loss and degradation are slowed, halted or reversed, with associated reductions in multidimensional poverty.*

To deliver on this the Darwin Initiative supports stakeholders to incorporate biodiversity considerations in achieving multidimensional poverty reduction, through evidence and best practices, and by targeting the outcome:

*Local communities and other stakeholders have sustained improvement in policy and practice that results in **gains for biodiversity and associated reductions in multidimensional poverty.***

Elements of all successful Darwin Initiative projects are likely to include:

- delivering outputs that will achieve **both biodiversity conservation and multidimensional poverty reduction** (see 2.2);
- enhancing the **capability and capacity** of national and local partners and stakeholders, to help ensure a project's long-term legacy (see 2.3);
- strengthening, promotion and use of **evidence** to inform and scale the action (see 2.4);
- the implementation of a **novel or significantly improved approach** (see 2.5);
- **scalable** approaches that have the potential to deliver greater impact (see 2.6).

In achieving the outputs, cross-cutting co-benefits can be realised, including **climate change** mitigation and adaptation, and **public health** improvements such as reducing the risks of disease.

Projects are expected to co-opt and leverage other finance wherever possible.

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<sup>2</sup> Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS), the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species (CMS), the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), and the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA) and their corresponding action plans, such National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs), National Action Plans (NAPs) and Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs).

## 2.2 Biodiversity Conservation and Multidimensional Poverty Reduction

The most vulnerable people rely on biodiversity to manage risks (food security, environmental hazards, climate change, and health) and meet their everyday needs, including:

- **>3bn people depend** on marine and coastal biodiversity; **>1.6bn people rely** on forests.
- **Loss of crop biodiversity**, and reliance on agrochemicals to compensate for lowered plant resilience and poor soil, exposes biodiversity and people to health-damaging pollutants.
- **Agricultural systems' resilience and capacity to adapt to climate change** depends on maintaining diversity in cropping systems, crop varieties, wild crop relatives and animal breeds, impacting the small-scale farmers the hardest.
- **Declines in the diversity of fish species** are strongly associated with lower catches, decreased resilience to exploitation, and higher incidence of stock collapse.

Low-income countries are **proportionally more directly reliant on natural capital** than higher-income countries, with natural capital often leveraged to build infrastructure and human capital.

*Poverty is multidimensional and not solely about a lack of money; it encompasses a range of issues that hinder people's abilities to meet their basic needs and better their life with dignity including a lack of income, land, or other means of access to the basic material goods and services needed to survive with dignity, or a deficiency in healthcare, security, education or necessary social relations.*

There are **many ways** of defining and approaching a project's contribution to poverty reduction; the Sustainable Development Goals can be useful in defining and understanding this.

**Darwin Initiative projects must clearly demonstrate how their work will contribute to poverty reduction in one or more of the following ways:**

- **directly** e.g. through activities that help secure increased income or access to other important assets (e.g. land) for local communities whilst helping them to protect and improve biodiversity
- **indirectly** e.g. through safeguarding traditional rights, cultural values and increasing the voice of marginalised communities, while seeking to increase equality within communities, or through safeguarding plant genetic resources for improved food security, climate resilience, and sustainable agricultural development
- **through practice orientated research** e.g. activities that expand the local knowledge base on biodiversity and the interaction with poverty reduction, for example, the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the utilisation of biodiversity

Projects should look systematically at the relationship between poverty and biodiversity, with designs explicitly considering how planned activities **relate to poverty** or to the efforts to **reduce poverty**; with **clearly identified beneficiaries and reflecting Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) considerations** (see 3.3).

The involvement of development and/or GESI specialists is encouraged to understand and design appropriate poverty reduction aspects of your project; it is critical that unintentional negative impacts are identified and mitigated against early in the design process, in addition to strengthening the opportunities.

An information note, called [Poverty and the Darwin Initiative](#), might help you understand the multiple dimensions of poverty and how biodiversity projects can meaningfully contribute to economic development and welfare of identified poor and/or vulnerable people.

Where projects engage with **market economic activities** to deliver biodiversity and/or poverty reduction benefits, it's important to demonstrate how market intelligence and other evidence provides confidence that the proposed approach is likely to be commercially viable, whilst also avoiding exposing poor and vulnerable communities to greater risks. For practical guidance and resources on **how to design market-based interventions**, see <https://beamexchange.org/guidance>.

The anticipated impact on poverty should be reflected in the logframe, see the Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Guidance for further details.

## 2.3 Capability and capacity

Enhancing the **capability and capacity** of local and national partners and stakeholders to deliver biodiversity conservation and multidimensional poverty reduction outcomes is a proven approach to **sustaining impact** after project completion and is a **core objective** of the Darwin Initiative.

***Capability refers to the types of ability (skills and knowledge) required for a task;  
Capacity refers to the amount of ability at a point in time to deliver a task.***

By enhancing both elements, an organisation or individual should be able to deliver a task more **efficiently** and **effectively**. All projects should aim to build a legacy of people who are able to carry out conservation and development projects more efficiently and effectively in future.

***All grants must include activities and/or structures that will enhance and strengthen the capability and capacity of identified local and national partners and stakeholders during its lifetime and in the future.***

The approach adopted to enhance the capability and capacity of local and national stakeholders is for the **partners to formulate and justify** in the application; with the proportion of the project outputs focussed on capability and capacity varying according to the type of grant. Approaches should consider diversity considerations (see 3.3) within the stakeholders benefiting directly and indirectly from the capability and capacity activities.

Enhanced capability and capacity can be delivered through a wide range of activities and approaches including, but not limited to, structured training, fellowships, work placements, mentoring and the opportunity to deliver projects in partnership with more experienced organisations.

Grants focussed primarily on capability and capacity are available, see 4.4, but such activities are **expected in all grants**.

International Lead Organisations must ensure that local and national partners have **meaningful and stretching roles**, and/or **receive tailored mentoring/support** to develop their capabilities.

In addition to technical areas (biodiversity, sustainable development), activities can and should include enhancing the underpinning capabilities, for example, financial, communication, monitoring and evaluation, GESI, safeguarding, and risk management.

Where feasible, expertise to support locally based existing and future environmental leaders of identified organisations to grow professionally and technically, should be identified within the country

or region. However, where a strong case can be made, international travel to/from the UK, for example, to source this expertise can be justified.

## 2.4 Evidence and refined best practices

*The **strengthening, promotion and use of evidence** (including best practices) to **inform and scale** action, is at the core of the Darwin Initiative.*

**Evidence** ranges greatly in format, quality and relevance and includes documented and undocumented experiences, data, studies, experiments, observations, peer-reviewed papers, policies, best practices etc. and is particularly valuable when it is:

- **accessible** – people should be able to get at it
- **comprehensible** – people should be able to understand it
- **useable** – it should suit the needs of people, and
- **assessable** – interested people should, if necessary, be able to assess its quality.

Often overlooked, the role of **local knowledge and evidence held by indigenous groups and local communities** is vital and should be considered by projects in their design and delivery, abiding by ethical best practices.

**By improving the quality, accessibility and use** of evidence and best practices, decisions by individuals and organisations funded by the Darwin Initiative and beyond should lead to **more effective solutions and greater impact**.

*Applicants must **use evidence** to provide confidence that the project has **demonstrated a need, understood the context, made fair assumptions, identified the risks** and as a result has **been designed well**.*

The **performance of projects** is assessed based on the quality of evidence that the project develops, collates and presents in the reporting cycle - Half Year Reports, Annual Reports, Final Reports - and other MEL activities.

Consideration should be given to opportunities to **strengthen the value of evidence** produced by projects, by improving its accessibility, comprehensibility, usability, and quality. For example, incorporating experimental elements within projects to **test and compare approaches** are welcomed.

All evidence gathering and use must be conducted within a **robust ethics framework** (see 3.5) that respects the **prior informed consent of**, and **benefit sharing with**, the **owners of such evidence**, in addition to appropriate procedures related to the collection, storage and use of personal data.

Reflecting these ethical considerations, all projects should consider and set out the central role of evidence **throughout the project and beyond**, in developing the idea and approach, strengthening the implementation of the project, and the uptake of new evidence to help secure the project's legacy.

Where projects are proposed in geographic/thematic areas with existing related activities, **demonstrating an understanding** of these, how the proposed project **aligns**, and how the project **adds value**, will help support the case for the project. Conversely, a lack of awareness or understanding of related activities can undermine confidence in the proposal.

## 2.5 Innovation

Innovation, whilst widely understood, can be challenging to define given its dynamic and novel nature. Within the Biodiversity Challenge Funds, we understand innovation to be:

*the implementation of a **novel or significantly improved approach** (product, ways of working, and/or process) **that differs from previous approaches.***

There are broadly three types of innovation:

1. **Novel to the area** - the diffusion, replication or application of proven conservation approaches in another geography or to a different issue or stakeholder group.
2. **Novel to the sector** - an approach proven in a different sector is adapted to deliver results and impact in the biodiversity conservation and multidimensional poverty reduction sector.
3. **Novel to the world** – an innovation unproven in any sector, is applied to the biodiversity conservation and multidimensional poverty reduction sector.

Since they are novel, innovations tend to lack the evidence base to demonstrate that they are effective. In developing the monitoring and evaluation approach, projects should seek to test the effectiveness of the innovation and provide the evidence base to support its future application.

Compared to most Darwin Initiative projects, Darwin Initiative Innovation grants (see 4.1), with their high level of innovation, are expected to include relatively more significant monitoring and evaluation components, and/or adopt an experimental design to enable them to robustly evaluate the innovation.

## 2.6 Scalable Approaches

The resources available to meet the biodiversity conservation and multidimensional poverty reduction challenge are globally limited, and there is an urgent need to have a greater impact in order to meet this challenge. As a result, the Darwin Initiative is particularly interested in:

*approaches and evidence that, if proven, have **the potential to be scaled to deliver greater impact.***

The application asks applicants to set out their ambition and vision to scale their work in any of the following ways:

- **Landscape scaling:** test an approach and then apply it more broadly at the landscape/seascape level.
- **Replication scaling:** test an approach and apply it in another geography, or to another issue or stakeholder group.
- **Systems change scaling:** support changes in the rules (e.g. legislation), structures, functions or values that have impacts beyond their original scale.
- **Capacitation scaling:** leaving a legacy of significantly higher capacity to achieve change, e.g. through improving the capacity of organisations (e.g. geographic clusters of projects) that can generate momentum and help approaches go viral.

For these reasons, **new or innovative approaches, supported by evidence** (where possible), **that have the potential to scale are more likely to succeed under the Darwin Initiative.** Proposals that can leverage additional finance are also more likely to be supported.

Post-project scaling of the approach could be achieved through new finance or through uptake by stakeholders, markets or other mechanisms.

## 2.7 Opportunities and Gaps

The Darwin Initiative **assesses applications individually** against the published criteria; it does not strategically prioritise particular group of species, ecosystems, approaches or issues.

The fund is interested to receive high quality applications, particularly led by local/national organisations, that meet the criteria (Section 7) and aims of the Darwin Initiative (see 2.1) supported by, and enhancing, evidence, and which will meet identified needs in the country.

We encourage applications covering any group of species, ecosystems, approaches, and issues whether they are represented or not in the current Darwin Initiative portfolio.

There are many areas that are currently under-represented in global conservation attention, which are nonetheless important. We draw attention to some of these here:

- under-represented taxonomic groups such as fungi, small mammals, invertebrates;
- ecosystems such as freshwater, grasslands;
- approaches such as agrobiodiversity enhancement, public health-conservation interactions, stewardship of natural assets through sustainable use, private sector or market mechanisms;
- enhancing public policy and engaging indigenous groups and other less represented stakeholders (see 3.3);
- supporting under-represented conventions e.g. crop diversity, migratory species, desertification.

## 2.8 Eligible Countries

Darwin Initiative is entirely **Official Development Assistance (ODA) funded**, and therefore projects must promote the economic development and welfare of eligible countries (see Annex A) as a primary objective.

Darwin Initiative is expected to be mostly focused on Low Income and Lower Middle-Income countries, and **at least 70%** of funding will be allocated to these countries, however **Upper Middle-Income countries** (UMICs) are eligible.

Projects applying to work in a UMIC must clearly **demonstrate a stronger case** for support; this includes operating in areas of high importance for biodiversity and a clear poverty reduction need. UMIC applications must clearly demonstrate that they will:

- advance knowledge, evidence and impact in **Least Developed or Low-Income Countries, or**
- contribute to a **global public good**, for example by advancing understanding and/or strengthening the knowledge base related to biodiversity conservation/sustainable use and poverty reduction, **or**
- contribute to **serious and unique advancements** on a critical issue as a result of specific circumstances of the upper-middle income country that could not be made elsewhere.

Countries that have exceeded the high-income threshold for three consecutive years graduate from the ODA eligible list<sup>3</sup>. Applicants need to be aware that funding will cease if a project country graduates from the ODA eligible list during implementation.

An assessment of the likelihood of graduation impacting the project will be conducted prior to a funding decision for any projects in this round that include for example China, Costa Rica, Guyana, Malaysia, Panama, St. Lucia and any other country that will potentially cease to be ODA eligible.

## 2.9 Funding from any other UK Government body

Applicants are required to indicate whether they have received, applied for, or plan to apply for any other UK Government funding for their proposed project or a similar project. If this is the case, applicants are required to disclose details of their applications, explaining how the activities funded by BCFs are distinct and complementary.

However, applicants cannot make multiple funding applications for the same or similar project in the same year to Darwin Initiative, IWT Challenge Fund and/or Ocean Community Empowerment and Nature (OCEAN) Grants Programme. Failure to declare multiple applications for the same or similar project could result in all applications being rejected.

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<sup>3</sup> [oe.cd/dac-list-oda-recipients](https://oe.cd/dac-list-oda-recipients) noting that not all ODA eligible countries are eligible under the Darwin Initiative.



## 3 Project Requirements

### 3.1 Lead Organisation and Project Leader

**Applications must be made by the Lead Organisation**, not an individual, agreeing to the Terms and Conditions (see 3.11) including managing the grant, its finances, reporting and governance. Foreign governments and their agencies cannot be Lead Organisations, though they can be a partner; UK government agencies can be Lead Organisations or partners.

*Lead Organisations **can be based anywhere**, but we **strongly encourage** projects to have **in-country Lead Organisations where possible**.*

The **maximum annual value of funds** requested should not exceed 25% of the Lead Organisation's average annual turnover/income for the previous 3 years.

There is no limit on the number of applications a Lead Organisation may submit, but we would strongly encourage **internal co-ordination to ensure all submissions are truly competitive**; Defra will consider the number of applications from an organisation as part of their decision-making process when awarding grants.

**We expect Lead Organisations** to demonstrate openness, honesty and realism about their capability and capacity, accepting accountability and responsibility for performance along the project chain.

*The **Project Leader** is the individual with the necessary **authority, capability and capacity**, and a full understanding of their role and associated obligations to take **responsibility** for delivering value for money, managing risk and financial controls whilst fulfilling the terms and conditions of the grant.*

The Project Leader will be the **first point of contact** for all aspects of project management, and will be **responsible for the overall management of the project and accountability of the award**, on behalf of the institution they represent.

Where the Project Leader is not employed by the Lead Organisation, the reasoning behind this should be made clear in the application, including their capability to control and be held accountable for the proposed project.

Given the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, **the Biodiversity Challenge Funds have taken the decision to suspend all bilateral engagement with Russia**. Russian organisations are ineligible to be a Lead Organisation or Partner or involved in any way with any Biodiversity Challenge Fund grant.

If you are unclear whether these restrictions apply in your specific case, please contact us.

### 3.2 Project Partners

Partnerships between organisations aligning their interests around a common vision, combining their complementary resources, experiences and competencies and sharing risk, can maximise impact in terms of scale, quality, sustainability and benefits.

***All projects are required to be led by or partner with local/national organisations of the country/ies in which it is based, with the meaningful and early engagement of in-country stakeholders.***

Differing from Stakeholders, Partners have a **formal governance role** in the project, and a **formal relationship** with the project that may involve staff costs and/or budget management responsibilities. **All projects must be co-developed with their partners.**

In contrast, **Stakeholders** would not have a budget management or a formal governance role, within the project but are consulted, engaged and participate in project activities.

### 3.3 Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI)

Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) is comprised of two key terms; these are:

- **Gender Equality:** is about addressing inequalities and transforming the distribution of opportunities, choices and resources available to girls, women and non-binary individuals so that they have equal power to shape their lives and participate in the process thereby increasing equality between people of all genders.
- **Social Inclusion:** refers to the process of improving the terms of individuals and groups to take part in society, and the process of improving the ability, opportunity and dignity of people disadvantaged and historically excluded from decision making and spheres of influence on the basis of their identity to take part in society.

GESI adopts an ‘intersectional’ approach, recognising that **groups are not homogenous**, and that people face overlapping discrimination based on age, disability, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity and other characteristics i.e. individuals can face multiple barriers.

The BCFs consider groups that self-identify as **Indigenous People and Local Communities (IPLC)** to be included within Social Inclusion as they have been disadvantaged and historically excluded from decision-making based on their identity.

Evidence from the *Ecosystem Services for Poverty Alleviation* ([www.espa.ac.uk](http://www.espa.ac.uk)) programme demonstrates that **individuals access resources differently** depending on their gender and social background. For example, due to gender differences in roles and responsibilities, women in rural communities are often the main collectors of wild plant food and firewood, with men focusing on timber, wild meat, and control access rights and tenure due to patriarchal structures. As a result, women and men develop knowledge about different species, their uses and their management.

An understanding of how gender and social characteristics can result in exclusion, discrimination, and inequalities is **fundamental to project design**. Addressing these inequalities and ensuring equal participation of all can have a direct impact on an individual’s ability to meet their basic needs and their access to income or services such as healthcare, security and education. Without a consideration of GESI, the aim of ending poverty (UN’s Sustainable Development Goal 1: No Poverty) cannot be achieved.

With the strong ethical and evidential basis, regard for and a prioritisation of gender equality and social inclusion is an important public commitment of the UK Government, and therefore this fund.

Consideration of Gender Equality and Social Inclusion factors is crucial to developing stronger projects as it enables an understanding of relationships between society and the environment (power, knowledge, needs, roles and priorities). It helps identify the multitude of ways that different people access, use, and control natural resources and ecosystem services, potentially enabling equal (or equitable) opportunities for all to benefit.

*The BCFs have committed to be a GESI sensitive programme.*

*A **GESI Sensitive approach** is understood to demonstrate programming will “do no harm”, not exacerbate inequality and ensure meaningful and context appropriate engagement and participation of those involved in the project.*

*For further information please see our [GESI Ambition Statement](#).*

### 3.3.1 GESI in your application

The **approach taken** to promoting equality between persons of different gender and social backgrounds and ensuring individuals achieve equitable outcomes **will be assessed** at the proposal stage. While it is acknowledged there may be difference in how projects deliver on at least a GESI sensitive approach, all successful projects must be able to demonstrate that they:

- **Understand the GESI context** in which the project is working within and ensure activities take contextual factors into account in the design and implementation of the project.
- Ensure **early inclusive and meaningful participation** of all those engaging with the project.
- Will not contribute to or create any **further inequalities**<sup>4</sup>.

The above are essential to projects achieving the **minimum GESI Sensitive standard**, however projects are encouraged to push beyond these to deepen and improve their GESI contribution. For information on how to achieve a more ambitious GESI approach, please see the diagram below:



Projects that are able to demonstrate the **integration of GESI considerations in their design and delivery plans**, will **score more highly** than those that cannot.

As a minimum, all projects are expected to report **indicators disaggregated by gender** but are encouraged to include gender or GESI focussed indicators, where applicable.

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<sup>4</sup> As no action is neutral, by not giving due consideration to GESI, projects could unintentionally exacerbate inequalities, reinforce barriers or cause harm to already disadvantaged groups.

Some questions to consider early on:

- What are the prevailing gender and social norms in the host country/location in relation to division of labour, access and control of resources, and ability to participate in decision making?
- How do these prevailing norms affect the project, in terms of what it can achieve, how it will engage with stakeholders and how it needs to be designed?
- How will the project impact (positively and negatively) those engaged with the project in their domestic, economic and community roles and responsibilities and in term of access to and control over assets?
- How will the project ensure equitable opportunities for those engaged in the project to influence and participate in decision making?
- How will the project ensure meaningful participation of stakeholders in project activities?
- Does the intervention address underlying barriers that exclude certain groups from accessing opportunities created?
- How will risks and unintended negative consequences be identified, avoided or mitigated against, and monitored?

Closely related to working with those that are often disadvantaged, projects should carefully consider early on how they will approach and manage the safeguarding risks (see 3.6).

Further resources include:

- [UN Environment Programme – Why gender is important for biodiversity conservation](#)
- [UNDP – Gender Equality and Social Inclusion](#)
- [ISSD – Mainstreaming Gender Equality and Social Inclusion in Nature-Based Solutions for Climate Change Adaption](#)
- [ICF – Building sustainable development with Gender Equality and Social Inclusion in mind](#)

### 3.4 Value for Money

**Projects must demonstrate strong Value for Money in terms of expected impacts from each pound spent.**

#### **What is value for money?**

- **Value for money means aiming for the best feasible project for amount spent.** This means drawing on evidence to carefully appraise possible objectives and delivery options.
- **It does not mean only doing the cheapest things.** We need to understand what drives costs and make sure that we are getting the best outcomes for the lowest price.
- **Nor do we just do the easiest things to measure.** We need to explain what we value, be innovative in how we assess and monitor value for money and what results we are trying to achieve with UK taxpayers' money.
- **Value for money is not something that applies only to project design.** It should drive decision making throughout the project cycle and in relation to running costs and evaluations.

Partners must demonstrate that they are pursuing **continuous improvement** and applying stringent **financial management and governance** to reduce waste and improve efficiency. This can include the consideration of **evidence** from relevant historical and existing initiatives, and reflect this in project design, incorporating lessons learnt, to maximise the chance of success.

Projects should secure **matched funding** to help meet the total cost of the project, from public and/or private sources, as well as **quantified in-kind contributions** as far as possible.

For further guidance, see *Finance Guidance* (available online).

***Funded Projects should not significantly cut across or duplicate the work of others  
as this is inefficient and provides poor value for money***

Projects should openly acknowledge the work of others (past and present), and in particular demonstrate in their application an understanding of projects within their area (thematically and/or geographically) to clearly establish how the project will be complementary and add value.

### 3.5 Ethics

Projects are expected to meet the **key principles of good ethical practice**, and demonstrate this in the application. All projects must:

- meet **all legal and ethical obligations** of all countries and organisations involved in the project, including relevant access and benefit sharing legislation pertaining to the utilisation of genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge;
- follow **access and benefit sharing best practice** where legislation is incomplete or absent;
- include strong **leadership and participation from contributing countries** and the communities involved to enhance the incorporation of their perspectives, interests and knowledge, in addressing the wellbeing of those directly impacted by the project;
- recognise the value and importance of **traditional knowledge**, alongside international scientific approaches, and methods;
- respect the **rights, privacy, and safety of people** who are impacted directly and indirectly by project activities;
- use **Prior Informed Consent (PIC)** principles with communities;
- protect the **health and safety** of all project staff; and demonstrate this through an appropriate Health, Safety and/or Security policy or Security Plan;
- uphold the **credibility of evidence**, research and other findings.

**Funding may be frozen or withdrawn in the event that these principles are not met.**

Staff involved in the design or conduct of research should maintain the independence and integrity of the process, including intellectual detachment from personal convictions relating to the topic.

### 3.6 Safeguarding

Defra believes that everyone regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation<sup>5</sup> has the right to be protected from all forms of harm, abuse, neglect and exploitation.

If you have any questions or concerns around Safeguarding or Protection from Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment (PSEAH) please contact the fund administrators NIRAS for further advice and guidance<sup>6</sup>.

**All organisations within a project must uphold the [IASC 6 Core Principles](#) and/or the relevant standards on PSEAH of the [Core Humanitarian Standard \(CHS\)](#) as required by the terms and conditions of the grant (see Annex B).**

**Future terms and conditions of the grant are likely to include the [Common Approach to PSEAH \(CAPSEAH\)](#) in addition to the standards above.**

To be eligible for funding, the Lead Organisation must demonstrate that they:

1. have appropriate and proportionate **safeguarding policies and procedures** in place, tailored to the project and reflecting GESI factors and power relationships, to **protect staff, implementing partners, the public and beneficiaries**. The policy must include a statement of commitment to safeguarding and a zero-tolerance statement on inaction to tackling bullying, harassment and sexual exploitation and abuse;
2. have in place a **Code of Conduct** signed by all staff and volunteers that sets out clear expectations of behaviours - inside and outside the workplace - and what will happen in the event of non-compliance or breach of these standards;
3. have an **accessible and clearly communicated whistle-blowing mechanism** which protects whistle blowers from reprisals and includes clear processes for dealing with concerns raised;
4. **proactively share** safeguarding policies with all **partners**, ensuring that they *understand and meet the required standards*, offering support where required as part of their **Due Diligence** process for working with downstream partners;
5. **ensure all staff from lead organisation and project partners are trained** in safeguarding and PSEAH;
6. provide **community sensitisation** on expected standards of behaviour of staff and how to report complaints and provide feedback on services; appropriate and proportional to the project activities;
7. **actively identify, assess and monitor safeguarding risks** in the project risk framework;
8. have **clear investigation and disciplinary procedures** for SEAH allegations and complaints that are survivor centred and in line with best practice<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> Darwin Initiative is a UK government fund, and it is against UK law to discriminate against someone because of a protected characteristic, these are: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation ([Protected characteristics | EHRC \(equalityhumanrights.com\)](#)).

<sup>6</sup> The [Safeguarding Resource and Support Hub](#) is an online resource with further guidance on strengthening your organisation's PSEAH procedures.

<sup>7</sup> Safety of all parties involved in an allegation is paramount. For an example of appropriate SEAH investigation guideline see [here](#).

Additionally, Defra strongly encourages organisations to follow the [safer recruitment guidelines](#) and engage a member of staff to act as a Safeguarding Focal Point ([SFP](#)) to monitor and ensure safeguarding is embedded throughout the project lifetime.

*Inability to demonstrate the above does not automatically exclude you from applying, rather it can help you identify priority areas for strengthening your safeguarding processes and procedures. If you feel this applies to you, please contact the fund administrators prior to applying.*

Defra are committed to ensuring that where possible sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment (SEAH) is prevented, and all people are protected. However, it is recognised that cases of SEAH do arise. Defra operate a **zero-tolerance to inaction on SEAH** and projects are required to take **all reasonable and adequate steps to prevent** sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment of any person (**staff, implementing partners, the public and beneficiaries**) linked to the delivery of the grant.

All projects **must immediately report to Defra** ([ODA.Safeguarding@defra.gov.uk](mailto:ODA.Safeguarding@defra.gov.uk)) any allegations or strong suspicions of sexual exploitation, abuse or harassment, this includes those that are *not directly related to the programme but would be of significant impact to their partnership with Defra or the reputation of Defra or UK aid*. **Failure to report to Defra any allegation, even in the case where it's determined to be unfounded, may result in funding being suspended or stopped.**

### 3.7 Working with British embassies and high commissions

**All applicants are required to contact British embassies and high commissions in the project country/ies;** a list of these can be found on GOV.UK: <https://www.gov.uk/world/embassies>. The purpose of this is to provide an opportunity for the British embassies or high commissions to be aware of proposed work and potentially advise on any security or political sensitivities. However, we recognise that their capacity to support or engage projects is varied and they may not always be able to respond. Applicants will **not be penalised** if they are unable to obtain comments from the embassy or high commission to submit alongside their application, provided they have **made an attempt** to contact them in sufficient time to allow engagement.

All applications may be shared with other UK Government Departments including the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO); and their views may be taken into account in the assessment process.

If your application is successful, the relevant British embassies or high commissions will be informed and may, depending on their resource levels, seek to publicise the award, or be involved in any formal launch, and may wish to develop a relationship with the project during delivery.

### 3.8 Communications

All grants are funded by UK public money (raised through taxation), so it is important to be able to clearly communicate how public money is being utilised.

Initially, each applicant is asked to provide a very short, plain English summary in the application form of what the project will do, which if successful will be used in communication activities. This summary should be written for a non-technical audience with little or no prior knowledge of the issue, and clearly describe the project plan and intended outcome.

During delivery, projects will be expected to engage and support wider communications and awareness raising activities to inform audiences what they are planning, learning, and achieving.

### 3.8.1 Open access policy and data sharing

The UK Government is committed to push for greater transparency in the availability and use of data to improve accountability, decision making, and to help deliver sustainable development outcomes to people living in poverty.

Projects are likely to generate significant outputs including datasets, best practices, peer-reviewed journal articles and technical reports which will be of value to other countries and stakeholders.

***All evidence and data produced must be made freely available and accessible to all, unless there are particular sensitivities involved.***

Data collection, analysis, management and storage **protocols** should be established to ensure the **integrity of evidence and its subsequent use** within the project, the Darwin Initiative and beyond.

This includes all derived and raw data on species, land cover and land use, through appropriate national, regional and global databases. For help in identifying databases, please refer to: [Compendium of guidance on key global databases related to biodiversity-related conventions](#)<sup>8</sup>. We encourage that where possible and appropriate data is shared directly or indirectly with **Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF.org)** for wider accessibility.

The application should demonstrate that the **publication of results and secure data storage** has been thought through, a plan exists, and appropriate resources are included.

You may include appropriate costs in your budget to support open access publishing but be realistic about when articles will be published. It is likely that dates will fall outside the formal project, so it is worth considering matched funding for these costs.

Further information on open and enhanced access can be found on [GOV.UK](#).

### 3.8.2 Transparency

In order to support understanding and in line with the aim of the Biodiversity Challenge Funds, successful project **applications**, along with subsequent **reporting, will be published** on the relevant fund website and elsewhere.

If there are **any sensitivities** within any of these, for example detailed species location data that would increase threats, please bring this to our attention early and these can be considered for **redaction prior to publication**.

### 3.8.3 Data protection and use of personal data

Information supplied in the application form, including personal data, will be used by Defra as set out in the **Privacy Notice**, available from the [Forms and Guidance Portal](#).

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<sup>8</sup> UNEP-WCMC. (2018). Compendium of guidance on key global databases related to biodiversity-related conventions. Cambridge (UK): UNEP-WCMC. <https://doi.org/10.34892/9XC8-0D10>



This **Privacy Notice must be provided to all individuals** whose personal data is supplied in the application form. Some information may be used when publicising the Darwin Initiative including project details (usually title, lead organisation, project leader, location, and total grant value).

### 3.9 Reporting

Projects must provide **Annual** and **Half Year** progress **reports** that are reviewed each year. These reports must provide robust reporting against intended objectives and include information on outputs, ethics and environmental impact.

All projects are required to submit a **Final Report** at the end of the award.

To continue receiving funding from the Darwin Initiative **reports must be complete and within deadlines**. If you do not meet these requirements your funding can be stopped.

### 3.10 Monitoring and Evaluation

A robust monitoring framework supports both the efficient delivery of the project as well the capability to demonstrate the impact and value for money achieved.

Further guidance is given in the “Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Guidance” and “Standard Indicator Guidance”, available on the fund website.

Darwin Initiative Extra Projects are required to commission an Independent Final Evaluation to report by the time that the project completes. The cost of this should be included in the project budget, and within the total project cost for M&E.

### 3.11 Terms and Conditions

Successful applicants will be issued a grant award letter with **the Terms and Conditions that will apply to the grant**, including the grant purpose, value, period, and reporting and financial arrangements.

Copies of the Terms and Conditions are available (see Page 1), and you should **understand these fully before making an application to ensure compliance will not be an issue**. If applicants, such as public bodies, are subject to established approaches for example with insurance, liability or the Information Act, then please raise this with us as soon as possible as it may not be possible to accommodate them.

Defra retains the right to amend these terms and conditions at any time.

## 4 Funding Schemes

Table 1: Summary of Project Grants

Grant	Innovation	Main	Extra	Capability & Capacity
<b>Duration</b>	1-2 years	1-5 years	2-5 years	1-2 years
<b>Application Stages</b>	Single	Two	Single, with interview	Single
<b>Estimated Annual Number of Awards</b>	<10	15-20	<4	<20
<b>Type of Project</b>	Evaluating novel approaches that if proven could scale	Providing good evidence and expected to deliver strong results, and demonstrate the potential to scale	Demonstrating a clear scaling pathway, building on good evidence from smaller projects to scaling further	Focused on developing the capability and capacity of national and local organisations
<b>Innovation</b> (see 2.5)	High	Moderate	Moderate	n/a
<b>Evidence</b> (see 2.4)	Potentially limited <sup>9</sup>	Good	Strong	Moderate
<b>Scoring Criteria</b>	Technical, Biodiversity, Poverty Reduction, Innovation (weighted)	Technical, Biodiversity, Poverty Reduction	Technical, Biodiversity, Poverty Reduction, Scaling (weighted)	Technical, Capability & Capacity
<b>Grant</b>	£10,000 - £200,000	£100,000 - £800,000	£800,000 - £5,000,000	£50,000 - £200,000

<sup>9</sup> Limited, or evidence from a different sector, meaning that there is a more substantial risk of not delivering the intended results.

## 4.1 Darwin Initiative Innovation

**Darwin Initiative Innovation** grants, ranging from £10,000 to £200,000, are intended to **evaluate a novel approach** that, if proven by evaluation activities, could scale to deliver results for biodiversity conservation and multidimensional poverty reduction.

We expect these grants to carry a higher risk given that novel/new approaches have limited supporting evidence.

**Duration:** Projects should last for between **1 to 2 years** maximum, starting on or after 1 April 2025 (but before 30 September 2025), and **complete by 31 March 2027**.

**Scoring criteria:** Technical, Biodiversity, Poverty Reduction, and Innovation

The **Innovation score** is **weighted (x2)** to emphasise the focus of the grant scheme.

Opportunities to enhance **capability and capacity**, including by delivering projects in partnership and not necessarily via formal training, should be included where feasible (see 2.3).

**Evidence:** The novelty of the approach is likely to mean that the **available evidence** (see 2.4) to support the innovative approach may be **limited**, or come from a **different sector** beyond biodiversity conservation and multidimensional poverty reduction.

The Lead Organisation should demonstrate the **capability to understand and manage** the resulting higher levels of **risk**, including operational, delivery and contextual risk, in order to test and pilot innovative ways to tackle the biodiversity conservation and multidimensional poverty reduction challenge.

With the limited evidence to support more innovative approaches, the design should include **substantial monitoring and evaluation** elements, potentially utilising an **experimental research design**, to enable stakeholders to draw upon a much stronger and robust evidence base to inform future actions including applications for new grants.

**Innovation:** Applicants with a high level of innovation (one or more types as set out in 2.5), are encouraged to apply.

However, if there is a moderate evidence base that would support a larger project that has a good chance of delivering results, then please consider applying to **Darwin Initiative Main**.

**Scaling:** Although testing new or innovative approaches may be the focus of the grant, applicants should be capable of articulating their **ambition for the innovation** should it prove successful including **post-project scaling** (see 2.6) through new finance or through uptake by stakeholders or other mechanisms.

**Risk:** Given the high level of innovation, Darwin Initiative has a higher appetite for delivery risk within this grant, whilst maintaining the low appetite for Safeguarding, Fiduciary and Reputational Risk.

Applications will be assessed on their evidence on the **capability to manage risks**, scenario analysis to map the **probability of different outcomes**, and a clear theory of change that maximises the likelihood of scaling the model and outcomes.

## 4.2 Darwin Initiative Main

**Darwin Initiative Main** grants, ranging from £100,000 to £800,000 (averaging a maximum of £200,000/year<sup>10</sup>), are expected to deliver **strong results** for biodiversity conservation and multidimensional poverty reduction based on **good evidence**, and strongly demonstrate the potential to **scale further**.

**Duration:** Projects should last for between **1 to 5 years** maximum, starting on or after 1 April 2025 (but before 30 September 2025), and **complete by 31 March 2030**.

**Scoring criteria:** Technical, Biodiversity, and Poverty Reduction

The assessors acknowledge the significant differences between the two stages, especially differences in the supporting evidence (e.g. CVs are not required at Stage 1). At **Stage 1** assessors are looking for applicants and proposals that have the **potential to deliver a competitive proposal** at Stage 2. At **Stage 2**, assessors are looking for **evidence** that proposals are **new and distinctive**, with a strong probability of **delivering sustainable benefits** and a **scalable approach**.

**Capability and capacity** building activities should form a **core role** within the approach, to underpin the legacy of the grant (see 2.3).

**Evidence:** available evidence (see 2.4) is expected to be **good**, stronger than that required for Innovation grants, and can include **building on the successes and lessons learnt** from elsewhere including previous projects (whether by the applicants or others).

**Innovation:** Given the need for the proposal to be based on a good evidence base, the level of **innovation is not expected to be high**, but the proposal can contain innovative elements (see 2.5).

**Scaling:** In addition to presenting evidence of how the approach will deliver outputs within the project lifespan, the project should articulate any **evidence to support its ambition** and vision **to scale** (see 2.6) their approach.

## 4.3 Darwin Initiative Extra

**Darwin Initiative Extra** grants, ranging from £800,000 to £5m, are intended for approaches that are on a **clear scaling pathway**: building on **good evidence from previous Biodiversity Challenge Funds<sup>11</sup> projects** and demonstrating the potential to **scale further** by completion, **delivering strong results** for biodiversity conservation and multidimensional poverty reduction within its lifetime.

This can be through landscape or replication scaling, or through delivering systems change (see 2.6) which will have sustained impact beyond the project's original scale.

**Duration:** Projects should last for between **2 to 5 years** maximum, starting on or after 1 April 2025 (but before 30 September 2025), and **complete by 31 March 2030**.

**Scoring criteria:** Technical, Biodiversity, Poverty Reduction, and Scaling

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<sup>10</sup> Averaging a maximum of £200,000/year means that a 2-year project cannot exceed £400,000, 3-year project cannot exceed £600,000 and a 4- or 5-year project cannot exceed £800,000.

<sup>11</sup> Darwin Initiative, Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund or Darwin Plus.

The **Scaling score** is **weighted** (x2) to emphasise the focus of the grant scheme.

**Capability and capacity** building activities should form a **core role** within the approach, to underpin the legacy of the grant (see 2.3).

**Evidence:** Projects will be expected to provide **clear and strong evidence** (see 2.4) from at least one previous Biodiversity Challenge Funds grant on expected results and the potential to **scale**; with a corresponding higher ambition, significance of outputs and quality of proposal to match the scale of finance and opportunity.

**Innovation:** Given the need for confidence in delivering results at the larger scale, supported by strong evidence, the level of **innovation is not expected to be high**, but the proposal should contain innovative elements where they exist (see 2.5).

**Scaling:** Scaling (see 2.6) of the approach should be embedded within the project approach and should be expected to be initiated within the period of the grant.

**Active Darwin Initiative Main** projects are able to **apply prior to completion** in order to allow a distinctive new project to start with a gap, if successful, or a scaling of activities under Darwin Initiative Extra. Applicants should provide **clarity and distinct timings, activities and outputs** between related projects in making the case for new additional support, preventing any duplication (perceived or real) or negatively impacting the value for money assessment of either grant.

#### 4.4 Darwin Initiative Capability & Capacity

Darwin Initiative Capability & Capacity grants, ranging from £50,000 to £200,000, must **focus** on developing the **capability and capacity** of identified **local and national organisations** (civil society, research institutes and public bodies) whilst clearly setting out how the recipients will be able to **efficiently deliver effective** and successful biodiversity conservation and multidimensional poverty reduction impact.

**Duration:** Projects should last for between **1 to 2 years** maximum, starting on or after 1 April 2025 (but before 30 September 2025), and **complete by 31 March 2027**.

**Scoring criteria:** Technical, and Capability & Capacity

The **capability and capacity building** approach (see 2.3) to be used must be formulated and justified with evidence (see 2.4) in the application. Activities can include structured training, fellowships, work placements, mentoring, organisational development, network-building, and can be undertaken across all areas of project activity: biodiversity, poverty reduction and project delivery.

**Structured training** elements must support locally based future and existing environmental leaders and staff of **identified local/national organisations** (reflecting an understanding GESI, see 0) to grow professionally and technically, ideally building lasting positive relationships between participants, and improving their ability to draw on professional and technical expertise relevant to delivering projects in line with Darwin Initiatives objectives.

Where strongly justified, activities can include **very limited practical application** of new skills and knowledge to embed them, but the grant must retain overall **focus on how capability and capacity building will deliver future benefits** for biodiversity and poverty reduction.

**IMPORTANT:** This scheme should not be used for small conservation projects and similar, as such proposals are more suited to Darwin Initiative Main which provides a greater impact opportunity. Small conservation projects and similar are unlikely to be competitive under this scheme, compared to projects with a substantial focus on capability and capacity building.

Grants can support travel between different eligible countries, or for example between the UK and the eligible country (to the UK<sup>12</sup> or for UK-based experts to be posted overseas); however, any activities outside of the project country must be strongly justified.

In addition to technical areas (e.g. biodiversity, sustainable development), training can include financial, communication, monitoring and evaluation, safeguarding, and risk management amongst others.

Benefiting organisations are **encouraged, but not required**, to be in a position, at the end of a Capability & Capacity grant, to lead or partner in a future application the Darwin Initiative or similar funds.

#### 4.5 Size of projects

The size and length of a grant must be determined based on evidence and what is needed to deliver intended outcomes and impacts.

*Projects must present a **realistic budget and realistic timeframe**, and **not be overly ambitious** in what they hope to achieve.*

Ambitious proposals are welcome, but care needs to be taken not to be overambitious (or overly optimistic) as this can undermine confidence in the proposal to deliver its outcomes.

The maximum annual value of funds requested should **not exceed 25% of the Lead Organisation's average annual turnover/income** for the previous 3 years (see Finance Guidance for details).

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<sup>12</sup> Darwin Initiative cannot support/sponsor visa applications, it is entirely the responsibility of the project to ensure correct visas are obtained in time.

## 5 How to Apply

### 5.1 Darwin Initiative Funding Round 31 Timetable

The timetable for Darwin Initiative Funding Rounds for 2024-25 are as follows:

#### Darwin Initiative Main:

Call for Stage 1 Applications from **late May 2024 to 22:59 GMT (23:59 BST) on Monday 8<sup>th</sup> July 2024**; results expected by **mid-October**.

Call for Stage 2 is by invitation only (application link to be provided) by **mid-October**.

*We will be hosting a workshop for applicants invited to Stage 2 – specific dates to be confirmed but likely in early November.*

Stage 2 Application Deadline – **23:59 GMT on Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2024**.

Results are expected by end of **February 2025 at the earliest**.

#### Darwin Initiative Extra:

Call for Applications from **late May 2024 to 22:59 GMT (23:59 BST) Monday 16<sup>th</sup> September 2024**.

Shortlisted applicants will be invited to provide clarifications from **late November 2024 to 23:59 GMT Tuesday 31<sup>st</sup> December 2024**.

Shortlisted applicants will be invited to interview (virtual) expected to be between **Monday 13<sup>th</sup> to Friday 17<sup>th</sup> January 2025**.

Results are expected by end of **February 2025 at the earliest**.

#### Darwin Initiative Capability & Capacity and Innovation:

Call for Applications from **late May 2024 to 22:59 GMT (23:59 BST) on Monday 21<sup>st</sup> October 2024**.

Results are expected by end of **January 2025 at the earliest**.

#### All Funding Rounds:

Successful projects are expected to start from **1<sup>st</sup> April 2025**. You should consider the best date to start your project to allow for start-up and recruitment, based on the expected notification of results.

All applications will be acknowledged **within 5 working days of the funding round close**. If you have not heard after 5 days, please contact the Darwin Initiative Administration Team via [BCF-Darwin@niras.com](mailto:BCF-Darwin@niras.com).

## 5.2 Completing the application form

All applications must be submitted:

- through Flexi-Grant, using approved templates where appropriate/indicated
- with fully answered questions, referencing evidence where possible, the word count indicates the level of detail required; if appropriate, n/a is acceptable.
- in English,
- attaching the required supporting evidence, and
- signed, with a PDF signature uploaded as part of the Flexi-Grant application.

### **IMPORTANT: Competition for funding is very strong. Applications which:**

- are incorrect, incomplete or very poor quality, including missing supporting evidence/attachments/translations, or
- do not match all published criteria, including eligible countries, partners, dates and budget limits or
- are submitted using the incorrect/unofficial template, or incorrect file format, or
- exceed stated page limits,

**will be rejected as ineligible.**

## 5.3 Additional guidance

In addition to this guidance document, there are a number of other guidance documents and resources available which will help you in preparing your application. This includes:

- Finance Guidance
- Flexi-Grant Guidance
- Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Guidance
- Standard Indicator Guidance
- Biodiversity Challenge Funds Risk Management Guidance
- Biodiversity Challenge Funds Terms & Conditions – all of the above can be found on the Forms and Guidance Portal: <https://www.darwininitiative.org.uk/apply/>
- A number of other resources, such as past workshop proceedings and information notes, which can be found here: <https://www.darwininitiative.org.uk/resources/>

Please read all the available guidance before requesting additional assistance, as these provide answers to most queries. If you can't find the answer, please contact the Darwin Initiative Administration Team – contact details are provided on page 2.

## 5.4 Supporting Evidence

The application form provides sufficient space to present your evidence and make your case: **ONLY the requested supporting evidence set out below should be submitted with your application.**



Table 2: Summary of Required and Optional supporting evidence.

	Main - Stage 1	Main - Stage 2	Extra	Innovation	Capability & Capacity
<b>Cover Letter</b>	<b>Required (2 sides of A4 maximum).</b> The cover letter is an opportunity to <b>support your application</b> : it should be focused, referring, where needed, to the application for further details rather than duplicating information. For a Stage 1, new application, you should briefly indicate any significant points about your application or organisation, but not repeat information already in the application. Responses to previous feedback should be included in the specific “feedback response” question in the application, not in your cover letter.				
<b>Logframe</b>	<b>Required</b> on Stage 1 template.	<b>Required</b> on Stage 2 / Single Stage template.			<b>Indicators of Success (a simplified logframe)</b> is within the application form
<b>Theory of Change</b>	<b>Not required.</b>	<b>Not required</b>	<b>Required</b> , no template, <b>1 side of A4, PDF.</b>	<b>Required</b> , no template, <b>1 side of A4, PDF.</b>	<b>Not required</b>
<b>Budget and Financial Evidence</b> See Finance Guidance, available online.	Required within application form only.	<b>Required</b> on correct <b>Excel template.</b> Two sets of audited or independently examined <b>accounts</b> covering <b>the last three financial years</b>		<b>Required</b> on correct <b>Excel template.</b> Two sets of audited or independently examined <b>accounts</b> covering <b>the last three financial years</b> , or other evidence of financial capacity as set out in the <b>Finance Guidance.</b>	
<b>Workplan</b>	<b>Not required</b>	<b>Required</b> on <b>Workplan template</b>			
<b>Safeguarding and associated policies</b>	<b>Not required</b>	<b>Required</b> , Lead Organisation’s Safeguarding Policy and other associated policies (see 3.6) must be submitted as a <b>single PDF file.</b>			
<b>CVs and Job Descriptions</b> See Annex C for further guidance.	<b>Not required</b>	<b>Required</b> , 1 side of A4 per CVs in English (or job descriptions if vacant) of all the key project staff named in the application form <b>merged and submitted as a single PDF file.</b>  If you cannot secure a CV from a named Project Staff member, please provide an explanation why, along with a summary of the skills and experience of the team member concerned. CVs are important to demonstrate the skills an individual brings to the team.			

	Main - Stage 1	Main - Stage 2	Extra	Innovation	Capability & Capacity
<b>Letters of support</b>	<b>Not required</b>	<p><b>Required</b> from all project partners (<b>including from the lead organisation</b>) on <b>headed paper</b> and <b>must be in English</b> (or translated – this does not have to be an official translation). If needed, please explain why any partner has not provided a letter of support.</p> <p>Letters of Support from key stakeholders are <b>encouraged but not required</b>.</p> <p>Letters of Support must be <b>merged and submitted</b> as a <b>single PDF file</b>, and provide strong evidence of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• support for the need of the project</li> <li>• the role of the partner in the project</li> <li>• support for the application and the importance of the work to your organisation</li> <li>• your relationship with partners and stakeholders</li> <li>• your ability to deliver high quality results and enable productive partnerships any commitment to matched funding</li> </ul>			
<b>Risk register</b> See Risk Guidance, available online	<b>Not required</b>	<b>Submitted if awarded, on Risk Framework Template</b> , with Delivery Chain Mapping completed. Issues Log should not be completed.	<b>Required on Risk Register Template</b> , with completed Delivery Chain Mapping. Issues Log should not be completed.	<b>Submitted if awarded, on Risk Framework Template</b> , with Delivery Chain Mapping completed. Issues Log should not be completed.	
<b>Counter Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Policy</b>	<b>Not required</b>	Policy setting out compliance with the anti-bribery and anti-corruption Terms and Conditions <b>may be requested</b> at any point, but should not be submitted with your application.			
<b>Ethics Policy</b>	<b>Not required</b>	Policy setting out compliance with the key principles of good ethical practice (see 3.5) <b>may be requested</b> at any point, but should not be submitted with your application.			
<b>Map, List of references</b>	To further support your application, if desired a map, and/or list of references can be optionally submitted in a <b>single combined PDF</b> . This can include a Theory of Change if not already explicitly required; hyperlinks are not permitted, and must not exceed a <b>maximum of 5 sides of A4</b> in total as additional pages will <b>make your application ineligible</b> .				

## 6 Assessment Process

### 6.1 General process for grants

All eligible applications that meet the required standard will be assessed by the **Darwin Expert Committee** (DEC), who are independent experts in biodiversity and sustainable development (see, <https://www.darwininitiative.org.uk/about-us/darwin-initiative-expert-committee/>).

DEC follows a strict code of practice: if any member has been involved in or is closely associated with an application, the applicant or a project partner, they **declare their interest** and play no role in its assessment or discussion at the Sift meeting.

Defra reserves the right to apply more stringent assessment at the Initial Review if the number of applications is high to ensure that the experts can robustly review those with the highest chance of being discussed at the Sift Meeting.

Due diligence is conducted on all projects prior to award.

### 6.2 Darwin Initiative Capability & Capacity, Innovation and Main process

An overview of the steps for assessing Capability & Capacity, Innovation and Main grants are:

- 1) **Initial Review:** Applications that are poor quality, incomplete or do not meet the essential eligibility criteria or standard will be rejected. You will be informed of the reasons for rejection.
- 2) **Independent Expert Assessment:** Applications are reviewed and scored by at least three experts, against the assessment criteria (7.4) to inform the discussion at the Sift meeting.
- 3) **Sift meeting:** The experts discuss comments and agree the strongest applications to recommend for funding or inviting to Stage 2 (repeating step 2 and 3).
- 4) **Funding Decision:** Defra reviews DEC's recommendations and awards the grants or invite Stage 1 applications to Stage 2.

### 6.3 Darwin Initiative Extra process

Darwin Initiative Extra grants follow the same process as set out above, but has a **Clarification** stage and a **Second Sift meeting**:

- 1) **Initial Review:** Applications that are poor quality, incomplete or do not meet the essential eligibility criteria or standard will be rejected. You will be informed of the reasons for rejection.
- 2) **Independent Expert Assessment:** Applications are reviewed and scored by at least three experts, against the assessment criteria (7.4) to inform the discussion at the Sift meeting.
- 3) **First Sift meeting:** The experts discuss comments and agree the shortlisted applications and clarification points.
- 4) **Clarifications:** Shortlisted applications are required to respond in writing to clarification questions from the Panel, and may potentially attend an interview (virtual).
- 5) **Second Sift meeting:** The experts discuss the applicants' responses and agree the strongest applications to recommend for funding.
- 6) **Funding Decision:** Defra reviews DEC's recommendations and awards the grants.

## 6.4 Results of applications

Once the Funding Decision has been made, **all Lead Applicants** (both successful and unsuccessful) **will receive notification** via email from Flexi-Grant.

Defra retains the **right to clarify any issues** raised during the application process or to award funding **subject to required amendments**. If the applicant is subsequently unable to meet the requirements of the award, Defra retains the right to withdraw the offer.

## 6.5 Feedback

Feedback is a valued method to support the development of capability of potential applicants, and strengthen current or future proposals in support of the objectives of the funds. Feedback may be provided by Darwin Expert Committee, Fund Administrator (NIRAS), and/or Defra.

*Table 3. Feedback*

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**Applicants recommended to Defra for funding** are provided **specific feedback** that may form a caveat of funding or a recommendation.

**Darwin Initiative Main** applicants invited to submit a Stage 2 application are provided **specific feedback** on their Stage 1 application; this **must be responded to in the** Stage 2 application form, briefly restating the feedback point, then clearly setting out how you have responded to it in the application.

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**Near-misses:** applications that are considered **competitive but narrowly miss** being invited to Stage 2 or recommended to Defra for funding are provided **specific feedback** on how to strengthen future applications.

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**Non-Competitive applications** that are significantly below the expected standard and would require substantial work to be competitive, are not provided with specific feedback but are encouraged to consider the application guidance and other available resources ahead of any future applications.

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This feedback is also utilised when reviewing funding guidance, workshops and articles.

## 6.6 Resubmission of applications

An unsuccessful application may **only be resubmitted once**, unless the proposed project is significantly different. You must explicitly set out how and where you have addressed all the comments/feedback **in the application form** for your resubmitted application: briefly restating the feedback point, then clearly setting out how you have responded to it in the application.

## 7 Assessment Criteria by scheme

The **evidence presented** in each application is **assessed** against the **criteria** below, to inform the awarding of grants.

Unless noted, all benefits or impacts are in **reference to the host country**.

At least **three experts assess** each application, with the scores combined into the **Application Score**; this score only informs the Sift Meeting, it does not determine the outcome.

All applications are expected to demonstrate an **acceptable level of evidence** (4 points or more in each score, see 7.6) to exceed the **indicative competitive threshold**.

The *Innovation Score*<sup>a</sup> for applications in the Innovation scheme is doubled to emphasise the importance of this characteristic to the scheme. Similarly, the *Scaling Potential Score*<sup>b</sup> for applications in the Extra scheme is also doubled to emphasise the importance of this characteristic.

Table 4 Assessment Criteria by scheme

Scheme Score	Innovation	Main (Stage 1 & 2)	Extra	Capability & Capacity
Technical Merit	0-6 points	0-6 points	0-6 points	0-6 points
Biodiversity Impact	0-6 points	0-6 points	0-6 points	
Poverty Reduction	0-6 points	0-6 points	0-6 points	
Capability & Capacity				0-6 points
Innovation <sup>a</sup>	(0-6 points) doubled			
Scaling Potential <sup>b</sup>			(0-6 points) doubled	

### 7.1 Darwin Initiative Innovation

Assessors are looking for proposals that are **strongly innovative and distinctive**, with a strong potential to **deliver sustainable benefits** and a **scalable approach** if proven by the embedded and **substantial monitoring and evaluation** elements.

Applications are considered against the standard indicators. The Biodiversity Impact and Poverty Reduction scores are added together and then divided in half to obtain a single score. The **Innovation score is weighted (x2)** to emphasise the focus of the grant scheme.

## 7.2 Darwin Initiative Main

The **same criteria are used at Stage 1 and Stage 2**, but the assessors acknowledge the significant differences between the two stages especially differences in the supporting materials (e.g. CVs are not required at Stage 1), and evidence requested.

- At **Stage 1** the Assessors are looking for applicants and proposals that have the **potential to deliver a competitive proposal** at Stage 2.
- At **Stage 2**, Assessors are looking for **evidence** that proposals are **innovative and distinctive**, with a strong probability of **delivering sustainable benefits** and a **scalable approach**.

## 7.3 Darwin Initiative Extra

Assessors are looking for **evidence** that proposals are likely to **deliver strong results and sustainable benefits**, while clearly demonstrating the **capability to scale further**.

## 7.4 Darwin Initiative Capability and Capacity

Assessors are looking for strong proposals that will **strengthen the capability and capacity of national and local organisations** to develop and deliver effective and successful biodiversity conservation and multidimensional poverty reduction projects in the eligible countries.

## 7.5 Assessment Criteria

The **quality and extent of evidence** provided in applications is **assessed, taking into account the characteristics set out** under each score, to determine a single score (0-6) with 4 being the indicative scoring threshold of a competitive application. Some scores are doubled to emphasise the key characteristics of the scheme (see Innovation and Extra).

### *Technical Merit Score (0-6 points)*

- 1) The evidence-based **methodology and budget** is robust, clear and appropriate to meet the identified need, achieving the outcome within a realistic timeframe and cost, and has a well-defined exit strategy in place.
- 2) Demonstrates evidence of a highly **collaborative approach**, involving early and strong participation of **local partners, stakeholders, and communities**.
- 3) As appropriate, the project is **innovative and distinctive**, with clear **Outputs and Outcome** that are **new, additional, and measurable**, not cutting across or duplicating existing work.
- 4) Provides a clear plan of how it will **make evidence** (including data, lessons learnt and best practices) **widely available and accessible**.
- 5) Demonstrates how it will strengthen the **capability and capacity of local partners**.
- 6) Demonstrates **good value for money** (including the ability to **leverage** additional matched funding) in terms of the expected **impact relative to cost**.
- 7) **Risks** are clearly identified, assessed, and have robust **mitigation actions**.
- 8) The **Project Team** has the capability and capacity to deliver at a **high-quality technical and professional standard** as evidenced by the submitted CVs, and identified local partners.

### Biodiversity Impact Score (0-6 points)

- 1) Will make a clear contribution to an **identified biodiversity need in the country/ies**, at a scale relative to the amount of funding.
- 2) The **work is new and additional**, building on and not repeating past or duplicating current activities.
- 3) Improves the conservation, restoration and sustainable use of biodiversity (including agrobiodiversity) at **genetic, species or landscape/seascape** scales.
- 4) Clear **logic** of why and how its **outputs** will contribute towards the **outcome for biodiversity**, including how these will be monitored and evidenced.
- 5) **Integrates evidence and management** of land, water and living resources to promote conservation and sustainable use in an equitable way.
- 6) Strengthens how **evidence** of biodiversity and ecosystem services is **incorporated into poverty reduction objectives and economic decision making** at the local and/or national level.

### Poverty Reduction Score (0-6 points)

- 1) The project objectives clearly demonstrate how it aims to **deliver lasting and meaningful benefits** for identified poor and/or vulnerable stakeholders, at a scale relative to the amount of funding.
- 2) Clear **logic** of why and how its **outputs** will contribute towards the **outcome** for poverty reduction, including how these will be monitored and evidenced.
- 3) In helping to **reduce poverty** of identified stakeholders, the project **also contributes** to the conservation and/or sustainable use of **biodiversity**.
- 4) Strong **understanding** of in-country stakeholders through **evidence of early engagement**, clearly identifying who they are, how many will benefit, and how they will benefit.
- 5) **Safeguarding and ethical issues** are clearly understood and will be managed to a high standard.
- 6) **Gender equality and social inclusion** is understood and appropriately reflected in the project's design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation; intentional or unintentional increased inequality or exclusion will be prevented.
- 7) If engaging in markets or economic activities, up to date **market evidence** underpins the proposed approach and demonstrates that it is likely to be **commercially viable**.

### Capability & Capacity Score (0-6 points)

- 1) Demonstrates strong **evidence** of a clearly **identified and defined in-country capability and capacity need**.
- 2) The work is **new and additional**, building on and not repeating past training, capability or capacity building and strengthening.
- 3) The **methodologies** to build and embed capability and capacity are **sound and appropriate**.
- 4) **Safeguarding and ethical issues** are clearly understood and will be managed to a high standard.
- 5) **Gender equality and social inclusion** is understood and appropriately reflected in the project's design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation; intentional or unintentional increased inequality or exclusion will be prevented.
- 6) There is a **clear legacy** that the strengthened capability and capacity will **result in new** high-quality **in-country** activities and projects with strong **biodiversity conservation** and **multidimensional poverty reduction outcomes**.

### Innovation Score (0-6 points)

- 1) Strong **evidence** that the innovation is **appropriate to the local context** and responding to an **identified need**.
- 2) Robustly designed and embedded **monitoring and evaluation** activities to enable an effective evaluation of the innovation.
- 3) Demonstrates that the Lead Organisation has the capability and capacity to **manage the elevated innovation-related risks**.
- 4) Demonstrates that the Lead Organisation understands the **uncertainty and probability** of different outcomes.
- 5) The proposal is clearly game-changing, innovative, disruptive, and ambitious; could **lead to exciting new products, processes or services** to deliver more desirable and impactful solutions than currently available.
- 6) The innovation, if proven by the project's evaluation, has the **potential to be replicated and adopted** to deliver sustained and cost-effective impact at scale.

### Scaling Potential Score (0-6 points)

- 1) The Lead Organisation is **highly organised** with the **capabilities and capacity** to facilitate change at scale.
- 2) The approach demonstrates an understanding of **human behaviour** and intends to **empower people and/or local partners** with the necessary incentives, capabilities, knowledge and control.
- 3) The project provides a **very strong evidence base** from previous BCF grants and political-economic understanding to provide **confidence** that it can **deliver at this scale on a pathway to greater ambition**.
- 4) Where applicable, there are significant **areas/markets** that **share the key characteristics** of the project site(s); the **opportunities where to scale are clearly articulated**.
- 5) The partners have established **relationships with actors** with the capability, capacity and incentives to support the desired change or have credible plans to build these relationships.
- 6) Where possible, **trade-offs** and **factors impacting the rates** of uptake and adoption are understood and articulated.
- 7) The approach is **adaptive and agile**, capable of effectively responding to changing contexts and feedback on progress.
- 8) **Impact can still be delivered** if uptake is significantly **lower or slower** than anticipated.



## 7.6 Assessment Scoring

Points	Description
6	<i>Strong Demonstration of Evidence.</i> Substantial evidence presented that it <b>meets all the of assessment criteria, with no concerns raised</b> ; the majority of which are met to a high standard. There may be a few minor issues which if addressed may improve the project, but they are unlikely to be detrimental to the delivery of the project and should not prevent it from being funded without changes being made.
5	<i>Good Demonstration of Evidence.</i> Good evidence presented that it <b>meets most of the assessment criteria, no major concerns identified</b> . The met criteria are mostly to a high standard. There are minor issues that could improve the project, but should not prevent it from being funded. It is likely to significantly contribute to the objectives of the Darwin Initiative.
4	<i>Acceptable Demonstration of Evidence.</i> The proposed project <b>meets most of the assessment criteria, no major concerns identified</b> . The criteria it does meet are often to a good standard. There are a few minor issues that would improve this project which they would be advised to consider if funded. It is likely to contribute to the objectives of the Darwin Initiative.
<b><i>Indicative scoring threshold of competitive applications</i></b>	
3	<i>Moderate Demonstration of Evidence.</i> The project <b>meets many of the assessment criteria, some concerns raised</b> . Those met criteria are largely to an acceptable standard, and the concerns can be addressed. It has the potential to contribute to the objectives of the Darwin Initiative, if the issues are addressed to strengthen it.
2	<i>Weak Demonstration of Evidence.</i> The project <b>meets some of the assessment criteria, or has raised concerns</b> . Those criteria it does meet are to a modest standard, but the application requires important changes to address the concerns and assessment criteria in order to make it competitive.
1	<i>Minimal Demonstration of Evidence.</i> The proposed project is unsatisfactory and <b>meets only a few criteria, or raises important concerns</b> . The proposal is likely to require significant revision.
0	<i>No Demonstration of Evidence.</i> The projects <b>fails to meet any of the criteria outlined and raises serious concerns</b> e.g. flawed approach, subject to serious technical difficulties or risks, unclearly written that it cannot be properly assessed, or is duplicative.

## Annex A. Eligible Countries

Table 5 Eligible Countries

Low-Income Countries	Lower Middle-Income Countries	Upper Middle-Income Countries
Afghanistan	Algeria	Argentina
Angola	Bhutan	Armenia
Bangladesh	Bolivia	Belize
Benin	Cabo Verde	Botswana
Burkina Faso	Cameroon	Brazil
Burundi	Congo	China (People's Republic of)
Cambodia	Côte d'Ivoire	Colombia
Central African Rep.	Egypt	Costa Rica
Chad	Eswatini	Cuba
Comoros	Ghana	Dominica
Dem. People's Rep. of Korea	Honduras	Dominican Republic
Dem. Rep. of the Congo	India	Ecuador
Djibouti	Iran	El Salvador
Eritrea	Jordan	Equatorial Guinea
Ethiopia	Kenya	Fiji
Gambia	Kyrgyzstan	Gabon
Guinea	Lebanon	Georgia
Guinea-Bissau	Micronesia	Grenada
Haiti	Mongolia	Guatemala
Kiribati	Morocco	Guyana*
Lao People's Dem. Rep.	Nicaragua	Indonesia
Lesotho	Nigeria	Iraq
Liberia	Pakistan	Jamaica
Madagascar	Papua New Guinea	Kazakhstan
Malawi	Philippines	Libya
Mali	Samoa	Malaysia
Mauritania	Sri Lanka	Maldives
Mozambique	Tajikistan	Marshall Islands
Myanmar	Tunisia	Mauritius
Nepal	Uzbekistan	Mexico
Niger	Vanuatu	Namibia
Rwanda	Viet Nam	Niue
São Tomé and Príncipe	Zimbabwe	Panama*
Senegal		Paraguay
Sierra Leone		Peru
Solomon Islands		Saint Lucia
Somalia		Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
South Sudan		South Africa
Sudan		Suriname
Syrian Arab Republic		Thailand
Tanzania		Tonga
Timor-Leste		Türkiye
Togo		Turkmenistan
Tuvalu		West Bank and Gaza Strip
Uganda		
Yemen		
Zambia		

\* Guyana and Panama will potentially cease to be eligible to receive ODA in 2026, and therefore cease to be eligible for this fund (see 2.8).

## Annex B. Safeguarding

### Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Six Core Principles

1. Sexual exploitation and abuse by anyone associated with a BCF project constitute acts of gross misconduct and are therefore grounds for termination of employment.
2. Sexual activity with children (persons under the age of 18) is prohibited regardless of the age of majority or age of consent locally. Mistaken belief regarding the age of a child is not a defence.
3. Exchange of money, employment, goods, or services for sex, including sexual favours or other forms of humiliating, degrading or exploitative behaviour is prohibited. This includes exchange of assistance that is due to beneficiaries.
4. Any sexual relationship between those associated with a BCF project and a person benefitting from the project that involves improper use of rank or position is prohibited. Such relationships undermine the credibility and integrity of humanitarian aid work.
5. Where anyone associated with a BCF Project develops concerns or suspicions regarding sexual abuse or exploitation by anyone else associated with a BCF project, whether in the same organisation or not, they must report such concerns via established reporting mechanisms.
6. Everyone associated with a BCF project are obliged to create and maintain an environment which prevents sexual exploitation and abuse and promotes the implementation of their code of conduct. Managers at all levels have particular responsibilities to support and develop systems which maintain this environment.

Adapted from the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) [Six Core Principles](#)

### Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability

The Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability (CHS) sets out the essential elements of principled accountable and high-quality aid. Protection from Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Sexual Harassment (PSEAH) is essential to this.

How an organisation should prevent and respond to allegations of sexual abuse and harassment is woven throughout the Core Humanitarian Standard.

The CHS Alliance published a verification tool called the PSEAH Index to help organisations to verify their performance against the CHS by determining whether they have the right policies and practices in place to protect people in vulnerable situations.

To access the PSEAH Index tool, please visit the CHS Alliance [here](#).

## Annex C. Project Team CV

***All key project staff must be named in the application form and budget, with a one-page CV or job description (if not yet recruited).***

Key Project Staff includes those that make up the main project team, are critical to project success, but can be from any of the Project Partners.

You must provide a **one-page CV or job description** (if not yet recruited) for these named project staff, to demonstrate that the project will have the capability and capacity to deliver the outcome.

The table below provides a guide to relevant and useful CV evidence, and evidence that is less relevant to demonstrating the capability of the Project Team.

Useful evidence	What it demonstrates	How assessors will use this
<b>Previous roles/ positions on similar projects</b>	Up to date and relevant expertise.	If the roles listed are relevant to the proposed project, it will demonstrate appropriate experience leading or working on a similar type of project.
<b>Skills and knowledge</b>	Technical or Specialist skills and knowledge relevant to the proposed project role.	Relevant skills and knowledge tailored to the project; it will provide evidence of the individual's match to the project
<b>Country experience</b>	This individual has recent experience of working in project environment (political, social, legislative etc.).	We do not expect all of the team to have worked in the host country but, we do expect some will have experience working in similar countries. This is especially valued in the senior project roles.
<b>List and scale of project funding received</b>	The individual is good at leading projects, managing the budgets and fulfilling reporting requirements.	Good evidence of an experienced project leader in running projects.
<b>Less useful evidence</b>		
<b>List of courses/ lectures given</b>	The individual is a recognised teacher.	Gives no indication of their ability in a non-academic setting.
<b>List of job titles held</b>	Range of experience.	If this is a list of job titles i.e. lecturer, coordinator, researcher then it is unlikely this list will provide much useful detail.
<b>List of published papers</b>	Academic or scientific achievement but may not be relevant to the project.	A list of all papers ever published is of little interest to reviewers. A tailored list of papers, relevant to the project, will demonstrate expertise in this area.
<b>List of Post Graduate Students</b>	This individual is a recognised research supervisor.	Doesn't show that the individual is capable of undertaking project work, although may be relevant if the project involves significant mentoring of local students.

## Annex D. Biome, Action and Threat Typologies

To support analysis, projects should indicate in the application between 1 to 3:

- **biomes** that are of focus using the [IUCN Global Ecosystem Typology 2.0](#) (see Table 6) and
- **actions** that characterise their approach using the [IUCN – CMP Unified Classifications of Conservation Actions Needed \(Version 2.0\)](#) (see Table 7).
- **threats** you intend to mitigate as they placing pressure on biodiversity using [IUCN Threats Classification Scheme \(ver. 3.2\)](#) (see Table 8).

Please refer to the original IUCN publications for greater detail.

Table 6: Realms and Biomes of the IUCN Global Ecosystem Typology 2.0

<b>1. Terrestrial Realm</b>	4.1. Rivers and streams
1.1. Tropical-subtropical forests	4.2. Lakes
1.2. Temperate-boreal forests & woodlands	4.3. Artificial fresh waters
1.3. Shrublands & shrubby woodlands	<b>5. Freshwater Marine Realm</b>
1.4. Savannas and grasslands	5.1. Semi-confined transitional waters
1.5. Deserts and semi-deserts	<b>6. Marine Realm</b>
1.6. Polar-alpine	6.1. Marine shelves
1.7. Intensive land-use systems	6.2. Pelagic ocean waters
<b>2. Subterranean Realm</b>	6.3. Deep sea floors
2.1. Subterranean lithic systems	6.4. Anthropogenic marine systems
2.2. Subterranean freshwaters	<b>7. Marine Terrestrial Realm</b>
2.3. Anthropogenic subterranean freshwaters	7.1. Shoreline systems
2.4. Subterranean tidal systems	7.2. Supralittoral coastal systems
<b>3. Freshwater Terrestrial Realm</b>	7.3. Anthropogenic shorelines
3.1. Palustrine wetlands	<b>8. Freshwater Marine Terrestrial Realm</b>
<b>4. Freshwater Realm</b>	8.1. Brackish tidal systems

Table 7: Level 2 Actions under the IUCN – CMP Unified Classifications of Conservation Actions Needed. (v 2.0)

Level 2 Actions	Level 3 Actions
<b>1. Land / Water Management</b>	site/area stewardship, ecosystem & natural process (re)creation
<b>2. Species Management</b>	Spp. stewardship, re-introduction & translocation, ex-situ conservation
<b>3. Awareness Raising</b>	outreach & communications, protests & civil disobedience
<b>4. Law Enforcement &amp; Prosecution</b>	detection & arrest, criminal prosecution & conviction, non-criminal legal action
<b>5. Livelihood, Economic &amp; Moral Incentives</b>	enterprises & alternative livelihoods, better products & management practices, market-based incentives, direct economic incentives, non-monetary values
<b>6. Conservation Designation &amp; Planning</b>	protected area designation &/or acquisition, easements & resource rights, land/water use zoning & designation, conservation planning, site infrastructure
<b>7. Legal &amp; Policy Frameworks</b>	laws, regulations & codes, policies & guidelines
<b>8. Research &amp; Monitoring</b>	research & status monitoring, evaluation, effectiveness measures & learning
<b>9. Education &amp; Training</b>	formal education, training & individual capacity development
<b>10. Institutional Development</b>	internal org. management & admin, external org development & support, alliance & partnership development, financing conservation

Table 8: Level 1 under the IUCN Threats Classification Scheme (ver. 3.2)

Level 1 Threats	
1. Residential & commercial (incl. tourism) development	7. Natural system modifications (fires, dams)
2. Agriculture & aquaculture (incl. plantations)	8. Invasive & other problematic species, genes & diseases
3. Energy production & mining (incl. renewables)	9. Pollution (domestic, commercial, agricultural)
4. Transportation & service corridors	10. Geological events
5. Biological resource use (hunting, gathering, logging, fishing)	11. Climate change & severe weather
6. Human intrusions & disturbance (recreation, war)	12. Other threats