



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs



Darwin Initiative Extra

Supplemental Guidance Notes for Applicants: Round 28

2021 - 2022

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 itsi.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-LTS International.

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)
Application Templates
Flexi-Grant User Guide
Claim Forms

Change Request Forms
Terms and Conditions
Reporting Forms
Project Database

If you can't find the answer, please contact the Darwin Administration Team:

Darwin Initiative

www.darwininitiative.org.uk

darwin-applications@itsi.co.uk

+44 (0) 131 440 5181

For queries specific to using the Flexi-Grant system, email: flexigrant@itsi.co.uk

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This publication is available at www.gov.uk

Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at darwin.initiative@defra.gov.uk

PB 14683

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.
Country	Normally refers (unless otherwise stated) to any country on the eligible country list (see 2.7 and Annex A in "Darwin Initiative: Guidance Notes for Applicants: Round 28"), 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 of funding decisions.
Evidence	Ranges in format, quality and relevance and include, documented and undocumented experiences, data, studies, policies, best practices etc. but is particularly valued when it is quality assured, accessible and applicable.
Fellows	Funding for Fellowships is now possible within any of the grants to strengthen the capability and capacity of eligible countries, if it is justified and demonstrates value for money (see Annex D in "Darwin Initiative: Guidance Notes for Applicants: Round 28").
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 Partner	The partner who will administer the grant and coordinate the delivery of the project, accepting the Terms and Conditions of the Grant on behalf of the project.
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-LTS	Darwin Initiative Administrator, and 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 (for example representation on a Project Board or Management Committee), and a formal relationship with the project that may involve staff costs and/or budget management responsibilities.
Poverty	Poverty is multi-dimensional and not solely about a lack of money; encompassing a range of issues to fulfil basic needs and better one's life with dignity.

Project Leader	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.
Scale	The ability to take a proven approach and evidence to deliver greater impact either through larger grants or through uptake by stakeholders or other mechanisms.
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.
Value for Money	Good value for money is the optimal use of resources to achieve the intended outcomes. Value for money is not about achieving the lowest initial price.

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This Guidance should be read in conjunction with the Darwin Initiative: Guidance Notes for Applicants: Round 28, Finance Guidance and resources available on the [Forms and Guidance Portal](#).

1 Darwin Initiative Extra

- Grant: £600,000 - £5,000,000
- Application Stages: One
- Duration: 2 – 5 years
- Anticipated number of Awards: 4-5
- Operating between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2027 (N.B. projects should start no later than end of Q2, 30 September 2022).

Competitive Darwin Initiative Extra grants are expected to strongly demonstrate the potential to scale further after completion and go on to successfully secure large-scale support (or mainstreaming) from elsewhere including:

- UK's ODA portfolio, or
- multilateral funds supported by the UK (e.g. Green Climate Fund, Global Environment Facility, Climate Investment Funds, NAMA Facility), or
- produce market-ready solutions or
- enable widespread stakeholder uptake by other means.

Capability and capacity building activities should form a core role within the approach, to underpin the legacy of the grant. This can be delivered through structured training, fellowships (see Annex D in Guidance Notes for Applicants: Round 28), and/or through the design and delivery of the partnership with local partners being given stretching roles or receiving tailored mentoring/support to develop their capabilities.

Active Darwin Initiative Main projects are able to apply prior to completion in order to allow, if successful, a scaling of activities under Darwin Initiative Extra. Applicants should provide absolutely clarity in distinguishing the 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.

As with Darwin Initiative Main, projects will be expected to provide clear and strong evidence on the potential to scale, with a corresponding higher ambition, significance of outputs and quality of proposal to match the scale of finance and opportunity.

1.1 Size of projects

Competition is expected to be strong as we anticipate making between 4-5 awards, dependent on the quality and characteristics of the applications received.

An application **will not score more highly** if it is seeking a grant towards the **maximum available finance or duration**. Smaller projects, seeking smaller grants or running for shorter periods of time (within those eligible for the type of grant applied for), are also encouraged.

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

The **value for money assessment** in terms of the scale and legacy of the expected impact relative to cost (see Finance Guidance), is a more important consideration than the absolute size of the project. Each project should have a realistic, and not an overly ambitious, budget and timeframe.

1.2 Evaluation of projects

With the scale of Darwin Initiative Extra Projects being significant, we anticipate that they will be evaluated at a mid-point commissioned by the Fund Manager. This mid-point evaluation (mid-term review) will seek to assess and learn from how the project is being delivered, what is working and what isn't, what could be improved and whether the project is on course to deliver the intended Outcome.

In the final year of the project, the Lead Partner will be responsible for completing an **Independent Final Evaluation** of the project, to be submitted with the project's Final Report. This should seek to answer questions such as:

- What measurable outcomes, both intended and unintended, occurred?
- How much of these outcomes can be attributed to the project?
- Have different groups been impacted in different ways, how and why?
- How has the context influenced outcomes?
- Can the project be reproduced or scaled?

Unlike the Mid-term review, the cost of the Independent Final Evaluation should be included in the project's M&E budget.

This Independent Final Evaluation must be competitively awarded in the first year of the project to a body that is independent of all the Project Partners, to support the design of the evaluation and that data collection processes are established from the start to support efficient evaluation. The proposed methodology for this evaluation should be discussed and agreed with the Darwin Initiative Fund Manager if the project is awarded support.

2 How to Apply

2.1 Darwin Initiative Extra Round 28 Timetable

The timetable for this round of Darwin Initiative Extra funding for 2021-22 is as follows:

Applications (via Flexi-Grant only) Deadline – **23:59 GMT on Monday 6 December 2021**

Results expected in **March 2022**

Projects expected to start from **1 April 2022**

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 Administration Team.

2.2 Completing the application form

All applications must be submitted:

- through Flexi-Grant, using approved templates where appropriate.
- 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, and
- signed, with a PDF signature uploaded as part of the Flexi-Grant application.

Competition for funding is strong, applications which:

- are incorrect or incomplete
- do not match all published criteria, including eligible countries and dates
- are submitted using the incorrect template

will be rejected as ineligible.

2.3 Supporting Evidence

Only the supporting evidence set out below should be submitted.

If the **essential evidence** is not submitted **with your application form**, or submitted on an incorrect/unofficial template, **it will be rejected as incomplete.**

The application form **provides sufficient space to make your case**, and the submission of unrequested material will significantly **detract from your application.**

All material must be uploaded to Flexi-Grant as a **PDF** or **Excel** file (JPEG is only acceptable for application signature).

2.3.1 Cover Letter

Required: The cover letter is an opportunity to support your application, it should be brief (2 sides maximum) and where possible refer to the application for further details rather repeating them here. The letter can set out clearly how you have responded to feedback and/or stakeholder input from previous applications during the design phase.

The Cover Letter should be uploaded as a **single PDF file.**

2.3.2 Theory of Change and Logframe

Required: A visual representation of the Theory of Change should be submitted along with a completed logframe using the template provided and **submitted as a single combined PDF file.** There is no set template for the Theory of Change, it is for the applicant to determine how to visually present it; however, **guidance is provided**, and it should fit on a single A4 page.

2.3.3 Budget and Financial Evidence

Required: Budget submitted using the correct Excel template, and fully compliant with the Finance Guidance.

See Finance Guidance for details of the financial evidence required to be submitted with your application to demonstrate Financial capability and capacity including audited or independently examined accounts for the last two years.

2.3.4 Project Timeline

Required: Project timeline is presented using the template provided, and uploaded as a **single PDF file**.

2.3.5 Risk Register

Required: A copy of the initial Risk Register, with Delivery Chain Risk Map, using the template provided. The Issue Log, included in the template, will only need to be edited once the first issue materialises during project delivery and therefore should be left blank at this stage.

2.3.6 CVs and Job Descriptions

Required: One-page CVs or job descriptions of all the key project staff **named in the application form**. 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.

These CVs/job descriptions should be merged and uploaded as a **single PDF file**.

2.3.7 Letters of support

Required: Letters of support from all project partners (including the lead partner) should be on **headed paper and must be in English** (or with an English translation); letters of support from stakeholders are desired but not considered essential. Those written by high profile stakeholders or project partners are expected to be stronger, than from others, and act **as evidence of:**

- **support** for the application and the **importance** of the work to your organisation
- your **relationship** with partners and actors within the **project country**
- **support** for the need of the **proposed project** (including any proposed Fellows)
- your **ability** to achieve high **quality results** and productive **partnerships**

If it is not possible to obtain a letter of support from any of the project partners, please explain why.

These Letters of Support should be merged and uploaded as a **single PDF file**.

2.3.8 Safeguarding Policy

Required: A copy of the Lead Partner's safeguarding policy which includes a **statement of commitment to safeguarding** and a **zero-tolerance statement** on bullying, harassment and sexual exploitation and abuse, and must be submitted as a **single PDF file**.

2.3.9 Counter Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Policy

Available on request: A copy of your policy setting out how the Lead Partner complies with legislation and relating to anti-bribery and anti-corruption as covered in the Terms and Conditions **does not need to be submitted** but may be requested.

2.3.10 Ethics Policy

Available on request: Evidence that the Lead Partner will meet the **key principles of good ethical practice** (see 3.5 in “Darwin Initiative: Guidance Notes for Applicants: Round 28”) should be demonstrated in your response to the Ethics question in the application form. A copy of your ethics policy **does not need to be submitted** but maybe requested.

2.3.11 Optional evidence

A **map or list of references** can be **optionally** submitted a **single combined PDF** file to support your application; but these **must not exceed 5 sides of A4 in total**, or it will make your application ineligible.

Table 1: Summary of Required and Optional supporting evidence

Darwin Initiative Extra	
Cover Letter	Required (2 sides of A4 maximum)
Theory of Change and Logframe	Logframe required on the template provided. ToC required (1 side A4 maximum) but no specific template.
Budget and Financial Evidence	Required on correct Excel template. Audited or independently examined accounts for the last two years
Project Timeline	Required on Timeline template
Risk Register	Required on Risk Register Template, with Delivery Chain Mapping completed. Issues Log should not be completed.
CVs and Job Descriptions	Required, one-page CVs or job descriptions of all the key project staff named in the application form.
Letters of support	Required from all project partners, absence needs to be justified. Optional from key stakeholders.
Safeguarding Policy	Required
Counter Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Policy	Not required, but available on request.
Ethics Policy	Not required, but available on request.
Map, and List of references	Optional, maximum of 5 sides of A4.

3 Assessment Process

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, www.darwininitiative.org.uk/about-us/).

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 Moderation Panel.

An overview of the process for assessment is:

- 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 Review:** Applications are scored by at least three members of DEC, against the assessment criteria to inform the discussion at the Moderating Panel.
- 3) **Moderating Panel:** DEC discusses comments and agrees the strongest applications to recommend for funding.
- 4) **Funding Decision:** Defra reviews DEC's recommendations and awards the grants.

A number of due diligence checks are conducted on applicants at various stages of the process to assess and/or confirm the information provided and compliance with the expectations of the fund, for example financial checks to test and confirm applicant's capability and capacity.

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 Moderating Panel.

3.1 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.

If you are successful you will receive an offer of funding.

The Darwin Initiative 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, Darwin Initiative retains the right to withdraw the offer.

Only unsuccessful applicants whose applications were competitive will receive feedback.

3.2 Resubmission of applications

If your application is unsuccessful, you may submit a revised application to a future round.

A resubmitted application will **only be accepted once**, unless there is prior agreement owing to exceptional circumstances or the proposed project is significantly different.

Any resubmission should include a **cover letter** with your application, outlining how you have responded to any feedback to strengthen your application.

3.3 Assessment Criteria

Applications are assessed by members of the Expert Committee against the criteria below. Unless noted, all benefits or impacts are in reference to the host country.

3.3.1 Darwin Initiative Extra Assessment Criteria

The assessment of the proposal is based the following criteria; Assessors scores are added into a single score to inform the Moderation Discussion.

- Assessors are looking for **evidence** that proposals are **innovative and distinctive**, with a strong probability of **delivering sustainable benefits** and a **scalable approach**.

**Assessor Score = Score 1 Technical Merit of Proposed Project (0-6 points) +
Score 2 Biodiversity Impact of Project (0-6 points) +
Score 3 Poverty Reduction Benefits (0-6 points)**

Score 1: Technical Merit of Proposed Project (0-6 points)

- 1) The **methodology and budget** outlined is robust, clear and appropriate to meet the identified need and achieve the targeted outcome, with a well-defined exit strategy in place.
- 2) Is **led by an in-country organisation** and/or involves **substantial participation of local partners, stakeholders, and communities**.
- 3) The project includes work that is **innovative and distinctive**, with targeted **Outputs and Outcomes** that are **new, additional, and measurable (SMART)**, **aligned to 2021 Monitoring Evaluation and Learning Guidance**; it will not cut across or duplicate work already being funded or completed.
- 4) Provides a clear plan of how it will **make evidence** (including data, lessons learnt and best practices etc.) widely and publicly **available**.
- 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 **scale** and **legacy** of the expected **impact relative to cost**.
- 7) **Risks** are identified, assessed and managed with **clear mitigation actions**.
- 8) The **Project Team** has the capability and capacity to deliver a high-quality biodiversity conservation-poverty reduction project as evidenced by the submitted CVs, and includes identified local partners.

Score 2: Biodiversity Impact of Project (0-6 points)

- 1) Will make a clear contribution to the biodiversity priorities identified in **national policy**, and in turn **Multilateral Environmental Agreements**.
- 2) Will raise **awareness and understanding** of the value of biodiversity and the services it provides in identified stakeholders.
- 3) Improves the conservation, restoration and sustainable use of biodiversity (including agrobiodiversity) at **genetic, species or landscape/seascape** scales.
- 4) Addresses how **environmental risks**, with a particular focus on biodiversity, will be appropriately assessed and managed
- 5) Clearly identifies **specific targeted biodiversity outputs and outcomes**, including how this will be monitoring and demonstrated.
- 6) **Integrates management** of land, water and living resources to promote conservation and sustainable use in an equitable way.
- 7) 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.

Score 3: Poverty Reduction Benefits (0-6 points)

- 1) The project clearly demonstrates how it aims to **deliver lasting benefits via a clear poverty reduction objective** related to identified poor and/or vulnerable stakeholders.
- 2) Clearly identifies **specific targeted poverty reduction outputs and outcomes**, including how this will be monitoring and demonstrated.
- 3) **Upper-Middle Income Countries** projects also demonstrate that they will either:
 - have an impact in Least Developed or Low-Income Countries, or
 - contribute to the global public good, or
 - contribute to a critical issue that could not be made elsewhere.
- 4) In helping to **reduce poverty** of identified stakeholders, the project **also contributes** to the conservation and/or sustainable use of **biodiversity**.
- 5) Strong understanding of in-country Stakeholders through **evidence of engagement**, clearly identifying who, how many will benefit, and how they will benefit.
- 6) **Safeguarding and ethical issues** will be managed to a high standard.
- 7) **Gender inequality** is understood and reflected in the design, monitoring and evaluation of the project; intentional or unintentional increase inequality will be prevented.
- 8) Will deliver evidence to strengthen the **awareness and understanding** of the links between poverty reduction and biodiversity.

3.3.2 Assessment Scoring

Points	Description
6	<i>Strong Demonstration.</i> Substantial evidence presented that it meets all the of assessment criteria, with no concerns raised ; 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.</i> Good evidence presented that it meets most of the assessment criteria, no major concerns identified. 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.</i> The proposed project meets most of the assessment criteria, no major concerns identified. 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.
3	<i>Moderate Demonstration</i> that the proposed project meets many of the assessment criteria, some concerns raised. 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.</i> The project meets some of the assessment criteria, or has raised concerns. 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.</i> The proposed project is unsatisfactory and meets only a few criteria, or raises important concerns. The proposal is likely to require significant revision.
0	<i>Not demonstrated.</i> The projects fails to meet any of the criteria outlined and raises serious concerns e.g. flawed approach, subject to serious technical difficulties or risks, unclearly written that it cannot be properly assessed, or is duplicative.