



Darwin Initiative

Guidance Notes for Applicants: Round 29

2022 - 2023



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs



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

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Glossary

Additional	Is the extent to which the outcomes and impact of a project can be demonstrated to have occurred as a result of the intervention, as opposed to would have happened anyway. The additionality may be as a result of an activity being larger in scale, at a higher quality, takes place more quickly, takes place at a different location, or takes place at all as a result of intervention (project). It is the net result of the project, taking in to account the baseline, underlying trends and the activities of other projects in the area.
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.
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).
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 Partner	The partner who will administer the grant and coordinate the delivery, 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-LTS	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.
Poverty	Poverty is multi-dimensional 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.
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.
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.
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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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 stakeholders 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 from resource extraction, commodity production, mining, and transport and energy infrastructure, impacting not only biodiversity but also the livelihoods and wellbeing of these same 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 on the Economics of Biodiversity highlights, action is needed to ensure biodiversity considerations are more effectively embedded in decision-making and institutions. 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.

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

The Darwin Initiative is one of Defra's Biodiversity Challenge Funds, along with Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund and Darwin Plus. It competitively awards grants for biodiversity conservation and poverty reduction activities in eligible countries, helping these countries meet their commitments under the Multilateral Environment Agreements¹, Sustainable Development Goals, and national policy.

2.1 The Aim of the Darwin Initiative

The intended impact of Darwin Initiative is:

The rates of biodiversity loss and degradation are slowed, halted or reversed, and poverty reduced in developing countries.

The Darwin Initiative will support and influence stakeholders to incorporate biodiversity considerations in achieving poverty reduction, through evidence and best practices, and targeting the outcome: **Stakeholders, including local communities, governments, demonstrate sustained improvement in policy and practice that results in gains for biodiversity and reduced poverty.**

Elements of successful Darwin Initiative projects are likely to include:

- Enhancing the **Capability and Capacity** of national and local stakeholders, to help ensure a project's long-term legacy.
- Delivering outputs that will achieve both **biodiversity conservation and poverty reduction**.
- Strengthen the adoption or use of **evidence and best practices** in biodiversity conservation and poverty reduction.

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 (including zoonoses). Darwin projects are expected to co-opt and leverage other finance wherever possible.

¹ 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)

2.2 Biodiversity Conservation and 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 and non-timber products.
- **Loss of crop biodiversity**, and subsequent 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, and animal breeds, without which future productivity levels are at risk, 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. Over 90% of global marine fish stocks are now fully exploited or overfished.

Low-income countries are **proportionally more directly reliant on natural capital** than higher-income countries. Often natural capital is leveraged to build infrastructure and human capital reducing long-term resilience and harming biodiversity and human well-being.

Over the last decades, research into the correlation between biodiversity loss and **outbreaks of fatal vector-borne and infectious zoonotic diseases**, including (HIV/AIDS), malaria, avian influenza, Ebola, and severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) has identified some links, but remains complex and poorly understood.

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.

There are **many different 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 are expected to 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 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. Designs should explicitly consider how planned project activities **relate to poverty** or to the efforts of people and/or states to **reduce poverty**; with **clearly identified beneficiaries**.

The involvement of development specialists is encouraged to understand and design poverty reduction aspects of your project. It is critical that potential negative development impacts and safeguarding issues are identified and mitigated against early in the design process, to avoid unintentional harm.

A recent 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 people in developing countries.

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 stakeholders, to deliver biodiversity conservation and 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**, and the project should be able to build a legacy of people who are able to carry out conservation and development projects more efficiently and effectively in future.

All Darwin Initiative grants must include activities and/or structures that will enhance and strengthen the capability and capacity of identified local and national 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.

Enhanced capability and capacity can be delivered through a wide range of activities and approaches including, but not limited to, structured training, fellowships (see Annex D), work placements, mentoring and the opportunity to deliver projects in partnership with more experienced organisations. Grants focussed on capability and capacity are available, see 4.1, but such activities are expected in all grants. Standalone Fellowship grants are no longer available, but Fellowships can be included within any of the current grants where it is justified.

International Lead Partners should 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 include enhancing underpinning capabilities for example financial, communication, monitoring and evaluation, safeguarding, risk management capabilities.

In supporting locally based existing and future environmental leaders of identified organisations to grow professionally and technically, enhancing their capability draw on expertise through networks and partnerships is encouraged. Such expertise can often be identified within the country or region, but 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 use of evidence to support project design, and the generation of evidence to support effective project implementation and future scaling, is at the core of the Darwin Initiative, and is strongly considered in the assessment of applications.

Evidence ranges in format, quality and relevance and includes, documented and undocumented experiences, data, studies, policies, best practices etc.

The **strengthening, promotion and use of evidence and improvement in best practices** that can be shared to inform the actions of others, and support future scaling-up, is at the core of the Darwin Initiative.

In 2016, the '[FAIR Guiding Principles for scientific data management and stewardship](#)'² were published with the intention to provide guidelines to improve the **Findability, Accessibility, Interoperability, and Reuse** of digital assets (evidence). These principles provide a recognised and useful approach to enhancing the value of evidence and should where possible inform decisions on the collection, storage and dissemination of evidence by projects. Further information can be found at www.go-fair.org

Evidence presented in applications helps identify and select which proposals meet the funding criteria. It can demonstrate that the project partners understand the context, challenges (risks and assumptions) and the opportunities, underpinning the funder's confidence in their capabilities to deliver.

Where projects are proposed in areas of existing related initiatives and activities, demonstrating an understanding of these, how the proposed project fits in and how it adds value will help demonstrate the case for the project.

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

The role of **local knowledge and evidence held by indigenous groups and local communities** is vital to improvements in biodiversity conservation and to poverty reduction. It is important that all evidence gathering, and use is conducted within a **robust ethics framework** 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.

Noting these ethical considerations, all projects should consider the role and application 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.

2.5 Innovation

Innovation, whilst widely understood, can be challenging to define given its dynamic 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.

² <http://www.nature.com/articles/sdata201618>

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 – poverty reduction sector.
3. **Novel to the world** – an innovation unproven in any sector, is applied to the biodiversity conservation – poverty reduction sector.

2.6 Scalable Approaches

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

Projects that have the potential to be scaled to deliver greater impact.

The application will ask 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 system changes (e.g. legislation) that have impacts beyond their original scale.
- **Capacitation scaling:** leaving a legacy of higher capacity to achieve change, e.g. through improving the capacity of organisations, key individuals, or regionally (e.g. geographic clusters of projects, combining to build capacity and momentum).

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 or other mechanisms including, but not limited to:

- the UK's ODA portfolio, including the Darwin Initiative or
- multilateral funds supported by the UK (e.g. Green Climate Fund, Global Environment Facility, Climate Investment Funds, NAMA Facility), or
- philanthropic and private funds, or
- producing market-ready solutions or
- enabling widespread stakeholder uptake.

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 that meet the criteria and objectives (addressing biodiversity conservation and poverty reduction, innovative, enhancing capability and

capacity, scalable) supported by, and enhancing evidence, and which will meet identified needs of 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 some areas that are under-represented in conservation attention at the moment, which are nonetheless important for biodiversity conservation and poverty reduction. 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;
- equitable sharing of benefits;
- enhancing public policy and engaging with business, indigenous groups and other less represented stakeholders;
- 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 developing countries as a primary objective, and the eligible countries listed in **Annex A** are all on the current OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) List. However, projects will in practice be expected to be mostly focused on Low Income and Lower Middle-Income countries.

Upper Middle-Income countries (UMICs) are eligible, however, 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. Such applications must also clearly demonstrate that they will also:

- 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.

Available funding will be ring-fenced to ensure that **at least 70%** is allocated to projects in Low Income and Lower-Middle Income Countries.

3 Project Requirements

3.1 Lead Partner and Project Leader

Applications must be made by the Lead Partner (an organisation), not an individual, agreeing to the Terms and Conditions (see 3.10) including managing the grant, its finances, reporting and governance.

Lead Partners can be based anywhere, but we strongly encourage projects to have in-country Lead Partners.

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.

There is no limit on the number of applications a Lead Partner may submit, but we would encourage internal co-ordination to ensure all submissions are competitive; Defra may consider the number of applications from a partner as part of their decision-making process.

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

3.2 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 strongly expected to seek and work with in-country partners, 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. **Projects should be co-developed with 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

Evidence from the *Ecosystem Services for Poverty Alleviation* (www.espa.ac.uk) programme demonstrates that **women and men use resources differently**. 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.

In addition to the evidential basis, regard for and a prioritisation of gender equality is clearly set out the International Development Strategy (Gender Equality) Act 2014 and UK's International Development Strategy (2022).

The approach taken to **reduce gender inequality** and/or to **take account of any gender-related differences in the needs** will be assessed at the proposal stage, with projects able to demonstrate a strong **understanding of gender**, with it **integrated throughout the design** are likely to **score more highly**.

To shape and inform all biodiversity conservation and poverty reduction actions, it is **vital to understand** gender-differentiated biodiversity practices, gendered knowledge acquisition and usage, as well as gender inequalities in control over resources.

All projects must consider how they will contribute to reducing inequality between genders, with activities expected to *generate* net benefits for women and girls.

If this is not the case for your project, you will need to set out why in your application including how you will ensure that your project will not intentionally or unintentionally increase inequality.

All projects are expected to report **indicators disaggregated by gender** where possible.

Some questions to consider early on:

- What are the prevailing gender norms in the host country 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 will it engage with stakeholders and how it needs to be designed?
- How will the project impact (positively and negatively) girls, boys, women and men in their domestic, economic and community roles and responsibilities and in term of access to and control over assets?
- How will the project provide opportunities for girls, boys, women and men to influence and participate in decision making?
- Does the intervention address underlying barriers that prevent girls and women from accessing opportunities created?
- How will risks and unintended negative consequences be identified, avoided or mitigated against, and monitored?

Girls and women are not a homogenous group, with additional layers of diversity including ethnicity, caste, age, religion, sexuality, disability status, and income that need to be considered. Further resources include:

- [Convention on Biological Diversity – Gender in the conservation of protected areas](#)
- [IIED – Gender and Biodiversity](#)
- [Nature – Gender in conservation and climate policy](#)
- [UN Environment Programme – Why gender is important for biodiversity conservation](#)
- [WWF – Gender and Conservation](#)

3.4 Value for Money

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

- **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.

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

For further guidance, see Finance Guidance.

Funded Projects should not significantly cut across or duplicate work, especially those being funded through other environment and development or research programmes. Applicants should acknowledge the work of others (past and present), and demonstrate an understanding of current projects within their area to clearly establish **how they will add value**.

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.

Projects should consider **evidence** from relevant historical and existing initiatives, and reflect this in project design, incorporating lessons learnt, to maximise the chance of success.

Where there is evidence from historical and existing initiatives, including in geographies where there are other projects working on similar or related needs, it is important that the project is able to **clearly articulate how its activities and impacts 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 developing 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;
- 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, gender identity, disability, sexual orientation, ethnic origin or other protected characteristic has the right to be protected from all forms of harm, abuse, neglect and exploitation. **Defra will not tolerate abuse and/or exploitation by staff or associated personnel involved in Defra-funded ODA projects.**

It is the responsibility of the lead partner to have appropriate and proportionate **safeguarding policies and procedures** in place, tailored to the project, to protect not only direct and indirect **beneficiaries** but also **employees** and associated personnel of any **partners**.

All project partners are expected to take all reasonable and adequate steps to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment (SEAH) of any person linked to the project. Where awareness of suspicions or complaints of SEAH occur, these should be swiftly and appropriately actioned as set out in the Terms and Conditions.

Safeguarding can be addressed through the four pillars of **prevent, listen, respond and learn**.

In order to receive funding, the lead partner must:

- have a **safeguarding policy**, which includes a statement of your commitment to safeguarding and a zero-tolerance statement on bullying, harassment and sexual exploitation and abuse;
- keep a detailed **register of safeguarding issues** raised and how they were dealt with;
- have **clear investigation and disciplinary procedures** to use when allegations and complaints are made, and have clear processes in place for when a disclosure is made;
- **share** your safeguarding policies with **downstream partners**, gaining assurance that they also meet the required standards, offering support to strengthen where required;
- have a **whistle-blowing policy** which protects whistle blowers from reprisals and includes clear processes for dealing with concerns raised;
- have in place a **Code of Conduct** for staff and volunteers that sets out clear expectations of behaviours - inside and outside the workplace - and make clear what will happen in the event of non-compliance or breach of these standards.

Defra has a **zero-tolerance approach to mishandling and non-reporting of safeguarding concerns**; failure to correctly handle or report safeguarding concerns could lead to be funding being withdrawn. Safeguarding is an iterative process; partners must be prepared to discuss concerns and further develop any safeguarding procedures. The Safeguarding Resource & Support Hub (safeguardingsupporthub.org) provides a good resource to support safeguarding objectives.

3.7 Working with UK Embassies and British High Commissions

All applicants are encouraged to make contact with UK Embassies and British High Commissions in the project country; a list of these can be found on GOV.UK: <https://www.gov.uk/world/embassies>

The purpose of this is to ensure that relevant UK Embassies or High Commissions are aware of proposed work, although we recognise that capacity to support or engage with projects is varied. Applicants will not be penalised if they are unable submit comments from the Embassy or High Commission alongside their application, provided they have **made an attempt** to contact 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 UK Embassies or High Commissions will be informed and may seek to publicise the award, or be involved in any formal launch, and may wish to develop a relationship with the project during delivery (depending on their resource levels).

If you need advice on any security or political sensitivities, or if the UK Embassy or High Commission needs to be aware of sensitivities before making any announcement, please tick the relevant box on the application form.

3.8 Communications

Projects are funded from UK Official Development Assistance (ODA).

It is important to be able to clearly communicate how ODA funding is being utilised. Each applicant is asked to provide a very short, plain English summary 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, successful projects will be engaged to support wider communications and awareness raising activities.

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 outputs must be made available online and free to users, unless there are particular sensitivities involved.

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](#)³.

In your application, please consider the project outputs you expect to produce and how this information can be shared widely and freely. You may include appropriate costs in your budget for 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 of ODA spend, and in line with the aim of the Challenge Fund, successful project **applications**, along with subsequent **reporting, will be published** on the Challenge 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**.

3.9 Monitoring and Evaluation

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.

3.10 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.

³ 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>

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	Capability & Capacity	Innovation	Main	Extra
Duration	1-2 years	1-2 years	1-3 years	2-5 years
Application Stages	Single	Single	Two	Single, with interview of shortlisted proposals
Estimated Annual Number of Awards	<20	<10	20-30	<5
Type of Project	focussed on developing the capability and capacity of national and local organisations	testing of 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
Innovation (see 2.5)	n/a	High	Moderate	Moderate
Evidence (see 2.4)	Moderate	Potentially limited ⁴	Good	Strong
Size	Small	Small	Medium	Large
Scoring Criteria	Technical, Capability & Capacity	Technical, Biodiversity, Poverty Reduction, Innovation (weighted)	Technical, Biodiversity, Poverty Reduction	Technical, Biodiversity, Poverty Reduction, Scaling (weighted)
Grant	£50,000 - £200,000	£10,000 - £200,000	£100,000 - £600,000	£600,000 - £5,000,000

⁴ Limited, or evidence from a different sector, meaning that there is a more substantial risk on not delivering the intended results.

4.1 Darwin Initiative Capability & Capacity Grants

Darwin Initiative Capability & Capacity grants, ranging from £50,000 to £200,000, are intended to **focus** on developing the **capability** and **capacity** of national and local organisations (civil society, research institutes and public bodies) to **efficiently deliver effective** and successful biodiversity conservation - poverty reduction projects. To support the embedding of new skills and knowledge, grants can support **practical elements** where they are clearly linked to the strengthening of capability and capacity.

Scoring criteria: Technical, and Capability & Capacity

The **capability and capacity building** approach to be used must be formulated and justified via evidence (see 2.4) in the application. Activities can include structured training, fellowships (see Annex D), 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 should support locally based future and existing environmental leaders and staff of **identified organisations** to grow professionally and technically. They should ideally build lasting positive relationships between participants, and improve their ability to draw on professional and technical expertise in the fields of biodiversity and sustainable development.

Fellowships can be included within the grant, see Annex D for details.

Where justified, activities can include **the practical application of new skills and knowledge** to embed them, but retaining overall focus on capability and capacity building.

Grants can support justified travel between different eligible countries, or for example between the UK and the eligible country (to the UK 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), activities can include strengthening financial, communication, monitoring and evaluation, safeguarding, risk management capabilities amongst others.

The focus of the grant must be on capability and capacity building, and seek to strengthen the ability of benefiting organisations to successfully design and deliver interventions aligned to the objectives of the Darwin Initiative.

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

For projects that contain significant activities that are not focussed on capability and capacity, applicants should consider applying for Darwin Initiative Main Grant, as these maybe more appropriate.

4.2 Darwin Initiative Innovation Grants

Darwin Initiative Innovation grants, ranging from £10,000 to £200,000, are intended to test a **novel approach** that if proven could scale to deliver results for biodiversity conservation and poverty reduction. We expect these grants to carry a higher risk given that they may have more limited evidence and are innovative.

Scoring criteria: Technical, Biodiversity, Poverty Reduction, and Innovation (weighted)

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 Darwin Initiative Main as an option.

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 poverty reduction. The Lead Partner 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 poverty reduction challenge.

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.

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), this can include **Fellowships** (see Annex D for details).

4.3 Darwin Initiative Main

Darwin Initiative Main grants, ranging from £100,000 to £600,000, are expected to deliver **strong results** for biodiversity conservation and poverty reduction based on **good evidence**, and strongly demonstrate to potential to **scale**.

Scoring criteria: Technical, Biodiversity, and Poverty Reduction

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

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).

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.

Capability and capacity building activities should form a **core role** within the approach, to underpin the legacy of the grant (see 2.3), this can include **Fellowships** (see Annex D for details).

4.4 Darwin Initiative Extra

Darwin Initiative Extra grants, ranging from £600,000 to £5m, are intended for approaches that are on a clear scaling pathway: building on good evidence from smaller projects to demonstrating the potential to scale further by completion, delivering strong results for biodiversity conservation and poverty reduction. This can be through landscape or replication scaling, or through delivering systems change which will have sustained impact beyond the project's original scale. We expect these projects to be supported by strong evidence.

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

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 (see 2.5).

Evidence: Projects will be expected to provide **clear and strong evidence** (see 2.4) 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.

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.

Capability and capacity building activities should form a **core role** within the approach, to underpin the legacy of the grant (see 2.3), this can include **Fellowships** (see Annex D for details).

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 **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.

4.5 Size of projects

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

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

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 Finance Guidance for details).

5 How to Apply

5.1 Darwin Initiative Funding Round 29 Timetable

The timetable for Darwin Initiative Funding Rounds for 2022-23 are as follows:

Darwin Initiative Main:

Call for Stage 1 Applications from **late May 2022** to **22:59 GMT** (23:59 BST) on **Monday 25th July 2022**; results expected by **late October**.

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

Stage 2 Application Deadline – **23:59 GMT** on **Monday 12th December 2022**.

Darwin Initiative Extra:

Call for Applications from **late May 2022** to **22:59 GMT** (23:59 BST) **Monday 3rd October 2022**.

Shortlisted applicants will be invited to provide clarifications from **Friday 9th December 2022** to **23:59 GMT Friday 6th January 2023**.

Shortlisted applicants will be invited to interview (remote) between **Monday 16th to Friday 27th January 2023**.

Darwin Initiative Capability & Capacity, and Innovation:

Call for Applications from **early September 2022** to **23:59 GMT** on **Monday 7th November 2022**.

All Funding Rounds:

All applications must be made via **Flexi-Grant**

All results expected at the end of **February 2023 at the earliest**

Successful projects are expected **to start** from **1st April 2023**

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.

5.2 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 very strong, applications which:

- are incorrect or incomplete, including missing evidence/attachments or
- do not match all published criteria, including eligible countries and dates or
- are submitted using the incorrect template, or exceed page limits

will be rejected as ineligible.

5.3 Supporting Evidence

Only the requested supporting evidence set out below should be submitted.

The application form provides sufficient space to present your evidence and make your case.

Applications can be **rejected** or deemed **ineligible** if required supporting evidence is:

- not submitted
- submitted using an incorrect/unofficial template
- submitted using an incorrect file format
- exceeds the set page limit
- not made available on request (if not required at point of submission)

Table 2: Summary of Required and Optional supporting evidence for Stage 1 and Stage 2.

	Capability & Capacity	Innovation	Main		Extra
			Stage 1	Stage 2	
Cover Letter	Required (2 sides of A4 maximum)				
Logframe	Simplified logframe is within the application form (Question #).	Required on the template provided.	Required on Stage 1 template.	Required on Stage 2 template.	Required on the template provided.
Theory of Change	Not required	Required , no specific template.	Not required.	Not required	Required , no specific template.
Budget and Financial Evidence	Required on correct Excel template. Audited or independently examined accounts for the last two years , or other evidence of financial capacity as set out in the Finance Guidance		Required within application form (Question #) only.	Required on correct Excel template. Audited or independently examined accounts for the last two years	
Project Timeline	Required on Implementation Timetable template		Not required	Required on Implementation Timetable template	
Counter Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Policy	Not required , but to be provided on request.		Not required	Not required , but to be provided on request.	
Safeguarding Policy	Required		Not required	Required	
Ethics Policy	Not required , but to be provided on request.		Not required	Not required , but to be provided on request.	
CVs and Job Descriptions	Required , 1 side of A4 per CVs (or job descriptions if vacant) of all the key project staff named in the application form.		Not required	Required , 1 side of A4 per CVs (or job descriptions if vacant) 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 .		Not required	Required from all project partners , absence needs to be justified. Optional from key stakeholders .	
Map, List of references	Optional , maximum of 5 sides of A4 in total.				

5.3.1 Cover Letter

The cover letter is an opportunity to **support your application**, it should be brief (2 sides of A4 maximum) and where possible refer to the application for further details rather repeating them here.

The cover letter must **explicitly set out** how you have addressed the **comments/feedback** (from Stage 1 or previous applications) in the **application form**: briefly restating the feedback point, then clearly setting out how you have responded to it in the application.

The Cover Letter must be **2 sides of A4 maximum** and uploaded as a **single PDF file**.

Required with all applications.

5.3.2 Logframe

Completed **logframe** using the **correct template provided** for the specific fund that you are applying to and must be **submitted as a single PDF file**.

5.3.3 Theory of Change

If required, a **Theory of Change** diagram must be submitted on 1 side A4 maximum, there is no specific template for this.

5.3.4 Budget and Financial Evidence

The budget must be submitted using the **correct Excel template**, and be fully compliant with the Finance Guidance.

See Finance Guidance for details of the **required financial evidence** that must be submitted with your application to demonstrate your Financial Capability and Capacity, including audited or independently examined accounts for the last two years.

5.3.5 Project Timeline

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

Required by all applications, except for Darwin Initiative Main Stage 1 applications.

5.3.6 Counter Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Policy

A copy of your policy setting out how the Lead Partner complies with the anti-bribery and anti-corruption approach as covered in the Terms and Conditions **maybe requested** at any point, but should not be submitted with your application.

Not required, but to be provided on request by all applications, except for Darwin Initiative Main Stage 1 applications.

5.3.7 Safeguarding Policy

A copy of the Lead Partner 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**.

Required by all applications, except for Darwin Initiative Main Stage 1 applications.

5.3.8 Ethics Policy

Evidence that the Lead Partner will meet the **key principles of good ethical practice** (see 0) should be demonstrated in your response to the Ethics question in the application form. A copy of your ethics policy **maybe requested** at any point, but should not be submitted with your application.

Not required, but to be provided on request by all applications, except for Darwin Initiative Main Stage 1 applications.

5.3.9 CVs and Job Descriptions

One side of A4 per CVs (or job descriptions for posts that are currently vacant) 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.

Required by all applications, except for Darwin Initiative Main Stage 1 applications.

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

5.3.10 Letters of support

Letters of support are **required** from **all project partners** (including the lead partner) and should be on **headed paper and must be in English** (or with an English translation – this does not have to be an official translation).

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

Letters of support from key **stakeholders** are **encouraged but not required**.

Letters of support are expected to provide **strong evidence** of:

- **support** for the **need** of the **proposed project**
- the **role of the partner** in the project
- **support** for the application and the **importance** of the work to your organisation
- **your relationship** with partners and stakeholders within the **country**
- your **ability** to deliver high **quality results** and enable productive **partnerships**
- any commitment to **match funding**

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

Required by all applications, except for Darwin Initiative Main Stage 1 applications.

5.3.11 *Optional evidence*

To further support your application, if desired a **map**, and/or **list of references** can be **optionally** submitted in a **single combined PDF**; **hyperlinks** are not permitted

Do not exceed a **maximum of 5 sides of A4** in total for optional evidence as it will **make your application ineligible**.

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, 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.

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 Moderating Panel.
- 3) **Moderating Panel:** 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.

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.

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 Moderation Panel** 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 Review:** Applications are scored by at least three members of DEC, against the assessment criteria (7.4) to inform the discussion at the Moderating Panel.
- 3) **First Moderating Panel:** The experts discuss comments and agrees the shortlisted applications and clarification points.
- 4) **Clarifications:** Shortlisted applications are required to respond in writing to clarification questions from the Panel, and attend an interview (conducted remotely) with nominated members of the Panel.
- 5) **Second Moderating Panel:** 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.

If you are successful, you will receive an offer of funding or, in the case of a Stage 1 proposal for a Darwin Initiative Main Project, an invitation to Stage 2.

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.

The Darwin Initiative receives a significant number of applications, and we are unable to provide detailed feedback to all applicants. Only unsuccessful applicants whose applications were competitive will receive detailed feedback to help strengthen future applications.

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.

Based on the assessments conducted and the discussions at the Moderating Panel, tailored feedback is provided to many of the applicants.

However, where the application is considered non-competitive (e.g. low scoring) we are unable to provide detailed feedback, and will provide common areas of weakness and suggestions to strengthen applications.

This feedback, amongst other sources, is also utilised when reviewing funding guidance and articles.

Table 3. Feedback Table

	Applicants recommended to Defra are provided specific feedback that may become 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 covering letter of the Stage 2 application.
	Near-misses: applications that are considered competitive but narrowly miss being invited to Stage 2 or recommended to Defra are provided specific feedback on how to strengthen future applications.
	Non-Competitive applications that are significantly below the expected standard and would require substantial work to be competitive, are provided non-specific feedback highlighted common areas of weakness and where to find further guidance.

6.6 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.

7 Assessment Criteria by scheme

The **evidence presented** in each application is **assessed** by members of the Expert Committee against the **criteria** below, taking into consideration the type of grant.

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

At least **three assessors** score each application against the scores for the type of grant.

Each of the three assessors scores are added into a **single application score to inform the Moderation Discussion**; note that the application score only informs the Moderation Discussion, it does not determine the outcome.

A grant is expected to achieve, an assessor's average of 4 for each score to be considered competitive. See 7.5 for details of the scoring criteria.

7.1 Darwin Initiative Capability & Capacity Grant Assessment Criteria

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 - poverty reduction projects in the eligible countries**.

Assessor Score =

**Technical Merit Score +
Capability & Capacity Score**

7.2 Darwin Initiative Innovation Assessment Criteria

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.

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 emphasis the focus of the grant scheme.

Assessor Score =

**Technical Merit Score +
Biodiversity Impact Score +
Poverty Reduction Score +
(Innovation Score x2)**

7.3 Darwin Initiative Main Assessment Criteria

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**.

Assessor Score =

Technical Merit Score +
Biodiversity Impact Score +
Poverty Reduction Score

7.4 Darwin Initiative Extra Assessment Criteria

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

Assessor Score =

Technical Merit Score +
Biodiversity Impact Score +
Poverty Reduction Score +
(Scaling Potential Score x2)

7.5 Scoring criteria

The **quality and extent of evidence** in applications are **assessed against the criteria** under each score, with a single score (0-6) being provided.

Technical Merit Score (0-6 points)

- 1) The evidence-based **methodology and budget** outlined is robust, clear and appropriate to meet the identified need and achieve the targeted outcome, within a realistic timeframe and 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 includes work that is **innovative and distinctive**, with targeted **Outputs and Outcomes** that are **new, additional, and measurable** (SMART), aligned to 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 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 **scale** and **legacy** of the expected **impact relative to cost**.
- 7) **Risks** are clearly identified, assessed and have **robust mitigation actions**.
- 8) **Safeguarding and ethical issues** will be managed to a high standard.
- 9) **Gender inequality** is understood and reflected in the design, monitoring and evaluation of the project; intentional or unintentional increased inequality will be prevented.
- 10) 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 includes identified local partners.

Biodiversity Impact Score (0-6 points)

- 1) Will make a clear contribution to an **identified biodiversity need in the country/ies**.
- 2) The **work is new and additional**, building on, 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 benefits for poor and/or vulnerable stakeholders**.
- 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) **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 early 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 increased inequality will be prevented.

Capability & Capacity Score (0-6 points)

- 1) Demonstrates strong **evidence** of an **identified in-country capability and capacity need**.
- 2) The proposal **connects** organisations (and individuals) with a capability and capacity need with project partners with relevant experience.
- 3) The work is **new and additional**, building on and not repeating past training, capability or capacity building and strengthening.
- 4) The **methodologies** to build and embed capability and capacity are **sound and appropriate**.
- 5) The proposed approach includes **hands-on, field or practical activities** to apply and embed new skills and knowledge.
- 6) The grant is **focussed** and will **strengthen** the capability and capacity within an identified and defined geographic and sectoral area.
- 7) 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 poverty reduction objectives**.

Innovation Score (0-6 points)

- 1) Demonstrates strong **evidence of an identified in-country need for innovation on the biodiversity conservation and poverty reduction challenge.**
- 2) Demonstrates that the Lead Partner has the capability and capacity to **manage elevated risks** associated with innovations.
- 3) The proposal is clearly game-changing, innovative, disruptive, and ambitious; could **lead to new effective products, processes or services** to deliver more desirable and useful solutions than currently available.
- 4) The innovation, if proven, has the **potential to be replicated** and **taken up** to deliver impact at scale.
- 5) If successful, the resulting product, process or service is likely to be **cost efficient in delivering impact.**
- 6) The **uncertainty and probability** of different outcomes is **understood** and will be managed effectively.
- 7) The proposed innovation is **appropriate to the local context** and has potential to be sustainable in the longer term.

Scaling Potential Score (0-6 points)

- 1) The Lead Partner is **highly organised** and has the **capabilities** to deliver the project at this scale.
- 2) The approach demonstrates an understanding of **human behaviour** and intends to **empower people and/or local partners** with the necessary capabilities, knowledge and control.
- 3) Smaller interventions present a **strong evidence base** to provide **confidence** that the project 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 to scale are clearly articulated.**
- 5) The partners are **well connected within and outwith the project**, supporting the mobilisation of knowledge and resources.
- 6) Factors impacting and trade-offs between the rates of uptake and the proportion of adoption is understood.
- 7) The approach is **adaptive and agile**, capable of responding to 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 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 of Evidence.</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 of Evidence.</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.
<i>Indicative scoring threshold of competitive applications</i>	
3	<i>Moderate Demonstration of Evidence</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 of Evidence.</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 of Evidence.</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>No Demonstration of Evidence.</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.

Annex A. Eligible Countries

Table 4 Eligible Countries

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

Annex B. Project Team CV

All key project staff should be named in the application form and budget.

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 information, and information that is less relevant or useful in providing the required assurance and evidence of the Project Team capability.

Useful information	What it demonstrates	How reviewers will use this
Previous roles/ positions on similar projects	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.
Skills and knowledge	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
Country experience	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.
List and scale of project funding received	The individual is good at leading projects, managing the budgets and fulfilling reporting requirements.	Good evidence of an experienced project leader in running projects
Less useful information		
List of courses/ lectures given	The individual is a recognised teacher	Gives no indication of their ability in a non-academic setting.
List of job titles held	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.
List of published papers	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.
List of Post Graduate Students	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 C. Awarded Grants

The **award is made to the Lead Partner**, not to an individual. The Project Leader will be the **first point of contact** for all aspects of project management (including financial management), and will be **responsible for the overall management of the project and accountability of the award**, on behalf of the institution they represent.

Contact details will be required for a **nominated individual from the finance section** of the institution to whom the award is made. This person may be identified once the grant has been offered.

Reporting Requirements

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 and 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.

Project datasets

Data collection, analysis, management and storage **protocols** should be established to ensure the **integrity of research findings and their subsequent use** within the research team, Darwin Initiative and eventual wider public domain.

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.

We encourage that where possible and appropriate data is shared directly or indirectly with **Global Biodiversity Information Facility** (GBIF.org) for wider accessibility.

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](#).

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 partner, project leader, location, and total grant value).

Annex D. Fellowships

Previously, Fellowships were a standalone grant within the Darwin Initiative, and details of past awards can be found on the Darwin Initiative website.

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.

Fellows can draw on technical and scientific expertise in the fields of biodiversity and poverty reduction to broaden their knowledge and experience. This expertise can be already in the eligible country, but if justified travel to other geographies can included.

The supervising expert for the Fellow should have a proven track record (minimum of ten years of relevant experience) and be ideally at the forefront of their discipline(s).

The Lead Partner is responsible for directly supporting, or delegating this another Partner, the administration of the Fellow's travel and entry to the UK (if required) as well as subsistence payments. Please ensure you consider the support required to secure an appropriate visa – there is no pre-agreed visa scheme for this award.

Eligibility of the individual

Darwin Fellowships will support promising individuals who:

- are working in biodiversity or poverty reduction, and intend to continue to do so,
- are able of demonstrate a strong commitment to objectives of the Darwin Initiative through formal education or work (paid or unpaid).
- demonstrate the ability and willingness to train others and/or disseminate knowledge (including for policy development) and technology upon completion,
- provide evidence of support for their application from their government or organisation,
- have a good working knowledge of the English language (if travelling to the UK), and
- is a national of an eligible country.

What can be funded?

A Fellow can undertake the following activities:

- formal qualifications related to the objective of the wider project and where the course is no longer than a year (PhDs are not eligible)
- broadening experience of biodiversity or poverty reduction through appropriate related work experience; this can include technical and application writing or a period of mentoring/networking with partner organisations
- developing policy skills for example, through national or international engagement

Projects should demonstrate how the Fellows' skills and knowledge acquired will be applied in the project or country.

English language training

If the proposed Fellow does not have an adequate working knowledge of English required for the Fellowship, it is strongly recommended that they consider taking an English language course early, within the grant, especially if they intend to undertake training in the UK.

Annex E. 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 53) and
- **actions** that characterise their approach using the [IUCN – CMP Unified Classifications of Conservation Actions Needed \(Version 2.0\)](#) (see Table 64).
- **threats** you intend to mitigate as they placing pressure on biodiversity using [IUCN Threats Classification Scheme \(ver. 3.2\)](#) (see Table 75).

Please refer to the original IUCN publications for greater detail.

Table 5: Realms and Biomes of the IUCN Global Ecosystem Typology 2.0

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

Level 2 Actions	Level 3 Actions
1. Land/water protection:	site protection, resource/habitat protection
2. Land/water management:	incl. invasive species control, and restoration
3. Species management:	species focused, incl. harvesting, trade, reintroductions, ex situ
4. Education & awareness:	formal and informal, training
5. Law & policy:	legislation, regulations, standards and codes, compliance and enforcement
6. Livelihood, economic & other incentives:	enterprises, substitutions, market tools, conservation payments and non-monetary values
7. Research:	e.g. taxa, ecology, use and livelihoods, threats and actions, conservation, management, monitoring

Table 7: Level 1 under the IUCN Threats Classification Scheme (ver. 3.2)

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