Darwin Plus

Guidance Notes for Applicants

Darwin Plus Main and Fellowship, Round 11

2022 – 2023

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 ltsi.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, Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Guidance, Risk Management Guidance and Finance Guidance before requesting additional assistance, as these provide answers to most queries.

Further resources and templates to support your application are available on the Forms and Guidance Portal, including:

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

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

Darwin Plus

www.dplus.darwininitiative.org.uk	BCF-DPLUS@niras.com	+44 (0) 131 440 5181

For queries specific to using the Flexi-Grant system, email: BCF-flexigrant@niras.com

c/o NIRAS-LTS International Ltd, Pentlands Science Park, Bush Loan, Penicuik, UK, EH26 0PL

Glossary

Biodiversity	"Biological diversity" means the variability among living organisms from all sources including, terrestrial, marine and other aquatic ecosystems and the ecological complexes of which they are part; this includes diversity within species, between species and of ecosystems.
Defra	Darwin Plus is a programme of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), UK Government.
DPAG	Darwin Plus Advisory Group is a group of independent experts in biodiversity and the environment in the UK Overseas Territories that provides strategic advice, assesses proposals and makes recommendations to Defra of funding decisions.
Evidence	Ranges in format, quality and relevance and include, documented and undocumented experiences, data, studies, policies, best practices etc. but is particularly valued when it is quality assured, accessible and applicable.
Lead Applicant	The individual who leads on the submission of the application and supporting materials, and will be the project contact point during the application process.
Lead Partner	The partner who will administer the grant and coordinate the delivery of the project, accepting the Terms and Conditions of the Grant on behalf of the project.
Matched Funding	Additional finance that is secured to help meet the total cost of the project, including public and private sources, as well as quantified in-kind contributions.
NIRAS-LTS	Darwin Plus Administrator, and first point of contact for projects and applicants.
ODA	Official development assistance – commonly known as overseas aid – is when support, expertise or finance is supplied by one government to help the people of another country via activities that promote economic development and welfare as a main objective.
Project 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. They are essential to the success of the project.
Project Leader	The individual with the necessary authority, capability and capacity, and a full understanding of their role and associated obligations to take responsibility for delivering value for money, managing risk and financial controls whilst fulfilling the terms and conditions of the grant.
Scale	The ability to take a proven approach and evidence to deliver greater impact either through larger grants or through uptake by stakeholders or other mechanisms.
Stakeholder	Are consulted, engaged and/or participate in project activities as they have an interest or concern in the project and its impact. However, unlike Project Partners, they do not have responsibilities for budget management or formal governance within the project.
UK Overseas Territory	UK Overseas Territories (*UKOTs* or *OTs*), also known as British Overseas Territories, refer to the Territories listed at 1.3.
Value for Money	Good value for money is the optimal use of resources to achieve the intended outcomes. Value for money is not about achieving the lowest initial price.

Contents

1. Introduction

Darwin Plus is one of Defra's Biodiversity Challenge Funds. The aim of Darwin Plus is to help deliver long-term strategic outcomes for the natural environment in the UK Overseas Territories (OTs).

Biodiversity in the OTs is globally significant, with the OTs boasting some of the world's most delicate and complex ecosystems, and habitats containing many endemic species. It is estimated that the OTs contain an estimated 94% of the biodiversity found within the UK and the Territories combined.

Darwin Plus can therefore help meet commitments under OTs' and UK policies, Multilateral Environment Agreements and the Sustainable Development Goals.

1.1 The new tiers of the Darwin Plus scheme

In 2020, the UK government committed to treble Darwin Plus funding to £10 million per year to support the conservation of the OTs' unique and globally significant biodiversity and help protect and enhance their natural environments.

As a result, following extensive consultation with OTs, stakeholders and experts, from FY 2022/23, the Darwin Plus scheme is expanding to include two new additional tiers. They are:

Darwin Plus Strategic

Darwin Plus Strategic will fund larger transformative environmental projects, encouraging greater ambition and collaboration across the OTs. These will be £1m - £3m projects. The first Darwin Plus Strategic round inviting applicants for funding is expected to open next year, in FY 2023/24, for funding from FY 2024/25.

Darwin Plus Local

Darwin Plus Local will fund smaller environmental projects up to £100,000, and available exclusively to OT-based organisations. Darwin Plus Local will also aim to build in-territory capacity. The first round for Darwin Plus Local will launch by December 2022.

The Darwin Plus website will be updated with information on how to apply when the scheme is launching.

The Darwin Plus scheme will continue its existing Darwin Plus Main and Fellowships tiers and **the guidance in this document is for Darwin Plus Main and Darwin Plus Fellowship.**

Darwin Plus Main

Darwin Plus Main is a continuation of the existing Darwin Plus scheme, now in its eleventh year. Darwin Plus Main invites applications for environmental projects from £100,000 to £1,000,000.

Darwin Plus Fellowships

Darwin Plus Fellowships will continue to be eligible as normal in Round 11. The Fellowship aims to build capacity within OTs through training opportunities for OT nationals or those with a relationship with an OT.

1.2 Objectives of the fund

Darwin Plus supports environmental projects in the OTs, split across four broad themes. Successful Darwin Plus Main projects in Round 11 must demonstrate substantial measurable outcomes in **at least**

one of the themes of Darwin Plus either by the end of the project's implementation or via evidenced mechanisms for post-project delivery.

Preference will be given to discrete projects implementing existing identified environmental solutions on the ground.

Research and scoping work in projects should be clearly justified. As much as possible, you should draw on existing work from other contexts. It should be clear how new research will be applied for meaningful environmental outcomes on the ground.

The broad themes of Darwin Plus Main are:

- **Biodiversity:** improving and conserving biodiversity, and slowing or reversing biodiversity loss and degradation;
- **Climate change:** responding to, mitigating and adapting to climate change and its effects on the natural environment and local communities;
- **Environmental quality:** improving the condition and protection of the natural environment;
- **Capability and capacity building:** enhancing the capacity within OTs to support the environment in the short- and long-term.

There are some activities **which are not eligible** for funding through Darwin Plus:

- activities that would normally be part of a UKOT government's core functions (such as full-time staff salaries or routine management activities);
    - Note that funding can be used for discrete pieces of work that provide data to feed into core activities, for example, mapping OT habitats and soils to inform future environmental management.
- long-term research;
- ongoing maintenance of habitats or protection of species;
- work where the main focus is built heritage.

See the Terms and Conditions and BCF Finance Guidance for more information on eligible and ineligible costs.

1.3 The UK Overseas Territories

From Round 11 Darwin Plus is open to applications from both ODA and non-ODA eligible OTs.

The 14 Overseas Territories are:

- Anguilla
- Bermuda
- British Antarctic Territory (BAT)
- British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT)
- British Virgin Islands (BVI)
- Cayman Islands
- Falkland Islands (FI)[1]
- Gibraltar
- Montserrat
- Pitcairn, Henderson, Ducie & Oeno Islands
- St Helena, Ascension and Tristan da Cunha
- South Georgia & the South Sandwich Islands (SGSSI)
- Sovereign Base Areas of Akrotiri and Dhekelia (on Cyprus)
- Turks & Caicos Islands (TCI)

Regional or multi territory projects are encouraged.

2. Project Requirements

2.1 Lead Partner and Project Leader

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

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

The Project Leader and Lead Partner can be based in any country, and we strongly encourage projects to be led by in-territory partners/organisations.

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 single organisation as part of their decision-making process.

Given the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, **the Biodiversity Challenge Funds has taken the decision to suspend all bilateral engagement with Russia**, including sending any funds to any Russian organisation. This means that Russian organisations cannot be a Lead Partner or Partner on any BCFs grant.

It may remain appropriate for projects to share data with Russian organisations in some circumstances but this should be discussed and agreed with Defra (via the Fund Managers) on a

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[1] When completing the application on the Flexi-Grant portal the Falkland Islands is listed as 'Falkland Islands (the) [Malvinas]. This is something that cannot currently be changed within Flexi-Grant but reference to the Malvinas will be removed before any documents are made public.

case-by-case basis. Any partnerships with Belarusian organisations will also be reviewed on a case by case basis.

For the purposes of this restriction, Russian or Belarusian organisation are defined as:

i. an entity constituted or organised under the law of Russia or Belarus; or

ii. an entity registered in the UK or with substantive business operations in the UK, or another country but controlled by an entity based in Russia or Belarus (e.g. a parent company or by 'Persons of Significant Control').

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

2.2 Partners

Projects are strengthened through collaboration and partnership as the **resources** and/or **technical capability and capacity** to deliver complex environmental projects rarely exist within a single organisation. Additionally, Partners can bring **local experience, knowledge and networks** to the project, or **best practices and lessons learned** from elsewhere.

All Darwin Plus projects are expected to seek in-territory partners, and the meaningful engagement of stakeholders and OT governments. All Darwin Plus applicants are expected to demonstrate meaningful engagement of in-territory partners, stakeholders and OT governments during the development and implementation of projects. Evidence of this engagement should be provided in the application through letters of support at Stage 2, and by indicating their engagement at Stage 1.

Partners differ from stakeholders as they have a **formal governance role** in the project (for example, representation on a Project Board or Management Committee), and a **formal relationship** with the project that may involve staff costs and/or budget management responsibilities.

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

2.3 Conflicts of Interest

A Conflict of Interest is a situation in which a person or organisation is in a privileged position (i.e. has access to information or influence over an activity or decision) and could use that position to give themselves or someone they are connected to an advantage (financial or otherwise) elsewhere.

It is often important to consult those involved in a particular field of work in order to get key information and to achieve objectives. Therefore, the identification of a possible conflict does not always lead to the exclusion of that person or organisation in the activity in question, however it does allow all parties involved to make an informed decision about how they should proceed.

Any potential Conflicts of Interest should be referenced in the covering letter at Stage 2 along with your proposals to mitigate against any allegations of impropriety.

Should a potential or perceived Conflict of Interest arise during the lifetime of the project the Darwin Plus Administrator should be made aware of this immediately.

2.4 Gender Equality

Depending on the context in which you are working, this section may be more or less relevant to your project. It is recognised that some UKOTs do not have a permanent resident human population. You may also find it relevant to consider the gender context of your project's staffing and governance.

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

and conservation actions, it is **vital to understand** gender-differentiated practices, gendered knowledge acquisition and usage, as well as gender inequalities in control over resources.

Where appropriate projects must consider how they will contribute to reducing inequality between genders, with activities expected to generate net benefits for women and children. **At the very least, projects must demonstrate that the proposed work is not increasing inequality.**

The approach taken to **Gender Equality** will be assessed at the proposal stage, and projects are likely to **score more highly** if they are able to demonstrate a strong **understanding of gender integrated throughout** the **project design**.

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 and disability status 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](#)

2.5   Value for Money

Projects must demonstrate good Value for Money in terms of the scale and legacy of the expected impact relative to cost.

Value for Money is delivered through a combination of:

- strong budget forecasting and management
- efficient and effective use of funding to deliver the desired outputs
- sustainability of the intervention
- equitable distribution of any results.

Projects can demonstrate Value for Money by (but not limited to):

- Showing that the proposed work does not significantly cut across or duplicate work, especially that being funded through other environment or research programmes;
- Showing matched funding from other organisations;
- Considering evidence, including lessons learnt, from relevant historical and existing initiatives, and reflecting this in project design;
- Showing project activity will be new and additional, above and beyond what might otherwise have occurred without the project;
- Showing that funding is for a distinct project with a clear end date and specific, measurable results. However, the proposed project can be part of an existing larger programme if it is made clear in the application how it will be a distinct project with results attributable to Darwin Plus funding;
- Not funding ongoing organisational running costs.

For further guidance, see the Finance Guidance on the Forms and Guidance Portal.

2.6   Ethics

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

- meet **all legal and ethical obligations** of all territories and countries 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 Overseas Territories** 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.

2.7 Safeguarding

Defra believes that everyone involved in delivering projects, regardless of age, gender identity, disability, sexual orientation or ethnicity 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 projects.**

It is the responsibility of the Lead Partner to have appropriate and proportionate safeguarding policies and procedures in place, to protect not only direct and indirect beneficiaries but also employees and associated personnel of any organisation or delivery partner.

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 all partners;
- 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.

2.8 Communications

It is important to be able to clearly communicate how 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.

2.8.1 Open access policy and data sharing

The UK government is committed to "push for a global transparency revolution" in the availability and use of data to improve accountability and decision making. It is also a crucial part of our commitment to deliver the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Darwin Plus projects are likely to generate significant outputs including datasets, peer-reviewed journal articles and technical reports which will be of interest to OT Governments and other countries and stakeholders. All outputs from Darwin Plus projects should therefore be made available on-line and free to users whenever possible. This includes all derived and raw data on species, land cover and land use, through appropriate national, regional and global databases.

In your application, please consider the project outputs you expect and how this information can be shared with others. You may include appropriate costs in your budget for 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.

2.8.2   Transparency

To support transparency, successful project **applications**, along with subsequent **reporting**, **will be published** on the Darwin Plus portal and elsewhere.

If publishing **sensitive information** may have negative unintended consequences – such as increasing the threat to species by publishing location data – then please bring this to our attention and these can be considered for **redaction prior to publication**.

2.9   Monitoring and Evaluation

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

Further guidance can be found in the Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Guidance.

2.10 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. Copies of the current terms and conditions are available (see page 2), and you should understand these before making an application to ensure compliance will not be an issue. Defra retains the right to amend these conditions at any time.

3. Darwin Plus Main Projects

The following section provides information on how to apply for funding for Darwin Plus Main.

For information on how to apply for Darwin Plus Fellowship, see section 6 below. For information on the other Darwin Plus tiers, see section 1.1 or the Darwin Plus website.

3.1   Size and duration of projects

Awards for Darwin Plus main projects are between £100,000 and £1,000,000. The overall funding pot in any given year is, however, limited, and depends on previous Darwin Plus commitments. The average project award last year was £300,000, averaging around £100,000 a year. Project budgets should preferably show an even spread over the funding period and as a general rule should not be front-loaded, as this restricts the number of new projects that can be awarded in any year.

The minimum length of a project is 6 months and the maximum length is 3 years.

Applicants for Round 11 of Darwin Plus Main:

- should plan to start on or after 1 April 2023. You cannot start earlier however, successful applicants should be notified by the end of 2022.

- must ensure their budget commitments end **by 31 March 2026**.

Please ensure that your budget is set out by financial year (**1 April – 31 March**). As set out in the Finance guidance, budget cannot be moved between financial years, except in exceptional circumstances. Applicants should take this into account when designing project proposals. For

example, applicants may consider forecasting less activity in the fourth quarter (January – March) of the financial year to account for the risk of delay.

You should have a realistic budget and timeframe for your project, and logframe targets should be achievable. Do not be overambitious.

We are keen to see smaller projects, seeking smaller grants or running for shorter periods of time. We do not give additional weighting to a large project seeking a grant towards the maximum available finance or duration.

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

All financial commitments within the budget **must be completed by the project end date** and within the maximum duration of the grant, as indicated under each grant.

3.2   Darwin Plus Main Round 11 Timetable

The timetable for this round of Darwin Plus funding for 2022-23 is as follows:

> Stage 1 Applications (via Flexi-Grant only) Deadline – **23:59 BST (GMT +1:00) on Monday 27 June 2022**
>
> Results of Stage 1 and invite to Stage 2, expected at the end of **August 2022**
>
> **The Stage 2 application is accessed through the email confirming the Stage 1 result and is by invitation only.**
>
> Stage 2 Application (via Flexi-Grant only) Deadline – **23:59 GMT Monday 17 October 2022**
>
> Results expected at the end of **December 2022 at the earliest**
>
> Projects expected to start from **1 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 Plus Administration Team.**

4. How to Apply for Darwin Plus Main funding

4.1   Completing the application form

All applications must be submitted:

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

Competition for funding is strong. Applications which:

- are incorrect or incomplete
- do not match all published criteria, including eligible dates and page limits on supporting materials
- are submitted using the incorrect template
- do not support work in a UKOT

will be rejected as ineligible.

4.2 Supporting documents

Only the supporting evidence that meets the guidance set out below should be submitted.

If the following **essential** material is not correctly submitted **with your completed application form**, submitted on a modified/incorrect template, or exceeds the required file or page limits your application **may be rejected as incomplete**.

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

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

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

Darwin Plus Main		
	Stage 1	**Stage 2**
Cover Letter	**Required** (2 sides of A4 maximum)	**Required** (2 sides of A4 maximum)
Logframe	**Required** on Stage 1 template	**Required** on Stage 2 template
Budget and Financial Evidence	Only within Flexi-Grant application, no separate template or evidence required	**Required** on correct Excel template. Audited or independently examined accounts for the last two years. Please send as separate PDF documents i.e. two documents. Maximum file size each 5MB.
Project Timeline	Not required	**Required** on Timeline template
Safeguarding Policy	Not required	**Required**
CVs and Job Descriptions	Not required	**Required**, one-page CVs or job descriptions of all the key project staff named in the application form
Letters of support	Not required	**Required** from all project partners and OT Governments absence needs to be justified
Risk Register	Not required	Submitted if awarded on Risk Framework template, with Delivery Chain Mapping completed. Issues Log should not be completed
Counter Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Policy	Not required	Not required, but available on request
Ethics Policy	Not required	Not required, but available on request.
Map, List of references and Theory of Change diagram	Optional, **maximum of 5 sides of A4**	Optional, **maximum of 5 sides of A4**

4.2.1   Cover Letter (Stage 1 & Stage 2)

Required: The cover letter (on headed paper) is an opportunity to support your application: introducing your organisation, the proposal and why they are a strong match for the fund, but it should be succinct and brief (2 A4 sides maximum).

The letter can help highlight and draw attention to certain aspects or values that you raise in your application, including the capability and status of the Lead Partner, but avoid repeating application text in the letter. The letter can also set out clearly how you have responded to feedback and/or stakeholder input provided during its design or from previous applications (including Stage 1 feedback). The letter should explain how you addressed the comments and the application should clearly reflect those changes. The letter should also contain a reference to any potential conflicts of interest.

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

4.2.2   Logframe (Stage 1 & Stage 2)

Required: Completed logframe must use the correct template provided (there are different templates for Stage 1 and Stage 2 Main projects) and be **uploaded as a single PDF file.**

4.2.3   Budget and Financial Evidence (Stage 2 only)

Required: Budget must be submitted using the correct Excel template and must be complete, and be fully compliant with the Finance Guidance (including exchange rate, source and project dates and details of all project funding).

See Finance Guidance for details of the financial evidence required to be submitted with your application to demonstrate Financial Capability and Capacity including audited or independently examined accounts for the last two years, i.e. Lead Partner's last 2 full sets of signed and audited or independently verified accounts, clearly identifying currency shown. Please send as separate PDF documents i.e. two documents. Maximum file size each 5MB.

4.2.4   Project Timeline (Stage 2 only)

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

4.2.5   CVs and Job Descriptions (Stage 2 only)

Required: One-page CVs or job descriptions for each of the key project staff **named in the application form and budget**. If you cannot secure a CV from a named Project Staff member, please provide an explanation why, along with a summary of the skills and experience of the team member concerned.

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

4.2.6   Letters of support (Stage 2 only)

Required: Letters of support are required from all named project partners (including the Lead Partner) and relevant OT Governments. If obtaining letter(s) of support from relevant OT government(s) has not been possible, please explain why not. **All projects must show support from OT-stakeholders such as OT governments and/or OT civil society**

Letters of support can also be supplied for other project stakeholders e.g. Governor's office but are not required. Letters of support should be on **headed paper and must be in English** (or with an English

translation). Those written by high profile stakeholders or project partners are expected to be stronger than from others and act **as evidence of:**

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

At Stage 1, all projects must have agreement and support from all proposed project partners. Projects should also make every effort to engage with the OT Government, and have, in principle, an agreement that the project will be supported at Stage 2. There is a check box on the Stage 1 application form to confirm this. If it is found that you have not engaged with the OT Government(s) at Stage 1 your application may be rejected. Verification checks on engagement with OT Government(s) may be undertaken at Stage 1.

At Stage 2, if obtaining letter(s) of support from relevant OT government(s) has not been possible, please explain why not. All projects must show support from OT-stakeholders such as OT governments and/or OT civil society.

These letters of support should be merged and uploaded as a **single PDF file**.

4.2.7 Safeguarding Policy (Stage 2 only)

Required: 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 at Stage 2 as a **single PDF file**.

4.2.8 Risk Register

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

4.2.9 Counter Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Policy

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

4.2.1 Ethics Policy

To be provided on request: Evidence that the Lead Partner will meet the **key principles of good ethical practice** (see 2.6) should be demonstrated in your response to the Ethics question in the application form. A copy of your ethics policy **does not need to be submitted** but maybe requested.

4.2.2 Optional evidence

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

5. Darwin Plus Fellowship Awards

Darwin Plus Fellowship funding is aimed at building capacity through training and education opportunities for UKOT nationals. For Territories without a permanent resident population, this training is for individuals who are committed to providing support to their chosen Territory and can demonstrate an existing relationship with that Territory. The Fellowship is intended to support Fellows to draw on wider technical and scientific expertise in the fields of biodiversity and the environment to broaden their knowledge and experience. A Fellowship should enable the beneficiary to increase their knowledge and ability to deliver long-term strategic outcomes for the natural environment in the UKOTs.

5.1 Eligibility of the individual

Support is available for nationals of UKOTs who are currently working in the UKOTs on environment and climate change issues, or who have previously worked on a Darwin Initiative or Darwin Plus project in an OT. For Territories without a permanent resident population, individuals who can demonstrate an existing relationship with that Territory may be considered.

Before applying please also check the likelihood of any necessary visas being obtained by the prospective Fellow.

5.2 What can be funded?

Where needs are clearly identifiable and demonstrable, Defra is willing to consider support for Fellows:

- undertaking formal qualifications (where these are linked to any of the four broad themes listed at 1.2 and fall within a Fellowship length of 24 months).
- broadening their own experience of working in any of the four broad themes listed at 1.2 through appropriate related work experience, such as, but not limited to, internships with relevant organisations or training for skills required in relevant sectors.
- developing policy skills (for example, attendance at relevant national or international workshops or meetings);

5.3 Project Leader

The Project Leader for a Fellowship should be the lead individual who will work closely with or supervise the Fellow.

5.4 Eligible costs

Eligible costs (depending on the nature of the Fellowship) include a monthly subsistence, host organisation expenses, travel costs and fees for academic qualifications.

Applications will be considered on their merits in the light of available resources. Defra may not be able to fund all eligible applications.

5.5 Length and start date

Darwin Plus Fellowships can last for up to 24 months.

Start dates can be flexible (to match academic years for example) but Fellowships should not start before **1 April 2023** and must end within 24 months of the start date.

Be aware that the Darwin Plus financial year runs from **1 April to 31 March** and project finances for each year are required to report to these dates.

5.6   Darwin Plus Fellowship Timetable

The timetable for this round of Darwin Plus Fellowship funding for 2022-23 is as follows:

Application (via Flexi-Grant only) Deadline – **23:59 GMT Monday 17 October 2022**

Results expected by the **end of December 2022**

All applications will be acknowledged within 5 working days of the funding round close. If you have not heard by 24 October, please contact the Darwin Plus Administration Team.

6. How to apply for a Darwin Plus Fellowship

6.1   Completing the application form

All applications must be submitted:

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

Competition for funding is strong, applications which:

- are incorrect or incomplete
- do not match all published criteria, including eligible dates
- are submitted using the incorrect template
- do not support work in an eligible UKOT

will be rejected as ineligible.

6.2 Supporting documents

If the following **essential** material is not included **with your completed application form**, your application **may be rejected as incomplete**. All material must be uploaded to Flexi-Grant as either PDF or Excel (JPEG is only acceptable for application signature).

Essential materials for eligible application	Optional materials for application
Darwin Plus Fellowship Application completed on Flexi-Grant	Brief covering letter
Darwin Plus budget table including exchange rate and its source	Letters of support from stakeholders
Letter of support from the Lead Partner expressing their intention to collaborate and endorsement of the proposed Fellowship, and the value of the proposed Darwin Fellowship to the Fellow's Territory	Details of any dialogue with the relevant Governor's Office in the host territory/ies
Letters of support from the proposed Fellow's employer **and** OT government **or** OT-based civil society organisation of the expected value of the Fellowship.	
1 page CVs for Fellow and proposed Project Leader and any other key project personnel named at Q8. CVs should be combined as **one PDF**.	
A project implementation timetable/workplan using template provided	

Additional documents or annexes falling outside of the list above will not be passed to the Darwin Plus Advisory Group (see 'Assessment process' below) for their consideration unless they have been specifically requested by or on behalf of the Darwin Plus Advisory Group.

7. Assessment Process for all funds

Applications will be assessed by the Darwin Plus Advisory Group (DPAG) made up of experts with experience of living or working in the OTs, UK government officials and representatives from relevant statutory advisory bodies. The group will assess the projects against how they meet the funding priorities, the overall impact and technical excellence of each project. Further details on the assessment are set out below.

Arrangements are in place to ensure there are no potential conflicts of interest.

An overview of the process for assessment is:

1) **Initial review:** Applications that do not meet the essential eligibility criteria will be rejected. You will be informed of the reasons for rejection.

2) **Expert review:** Eligible applications are scored by at least three DPAG members against the assessment criteria set out below.

3) **Moderating panel:** The DPAG discusses the comments and scores of the strongest applications to draw up a shortlist to recommend for funding.

4) **Final result:** After reviewing DPAG's recommendations, Defra will make the final decision and award the grants.

7.1 UKOT Government Priorities

As made clear in this guidance all applicants are required to consult the relevant OT Government in the development of their project and letters of support should be provided at Stage 2. If obtaining letter(s) of support from relevant OT government(s) has not been possible, please explain why not. All projects must show support from OT-stakeholders such as OT governments and/or OT civil society.

Relevant UKOT Governments will also be contacted by Defra for feedback on all Stage 2 applications which will assist the DPAG and Defra in their overall assessment and recommendations.

7.2 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, an invitation to Stage 2.

Darwin Plus 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 Plus retains the right to withdraw the offer.

7.3 Resubmission of applications

If your application is unsuccessful, you may submit a revised application to a subsequent Round.

A resubmitted application for a particular project will **only be accepted once**, unless there is prior agreement owing to exceptional circumstances or the proposed project is significantly different to the original application. Applicants should re-submit in the correct format and in accordance with the guidance applicable to the round in which the resubmission is made. Please outline how you have addressed previous feedback in your **cover letter** with your Stage 1 application (ensuring your responses have been included throughout your application as relevant).

8. Assessment Criteria – Darwin Plus Projects

The application will be assessed by the DPAG against the criteria below to generate a score (see **Annex A**). However, a successful project does not need to meet all of the criteria listed below. The DPAG will use these three scores to determine the suitability of projects for funding.

Policy Priorities

- The project implements an existing identified environmental solution;
- Any research or scoping work is clearly justified and shows how it will be applied for meaningful environmental outcomes on the ground;
- The project demonstrates substantial measurable outcomes in at least one of the themes of Darwin Plus, either by the end of the project's implementation or via evidenced mechanisms for post-project delivery;
- The project contributes to the delivery of existing commitments such as those set out within the Joint Ministerial Council (JMC) Communiqués; individual Territories' national biodiversity strategies, environmental action plans and roadmaps, or equivalent; or any commitments under international conventions extended to their Territory;
- The project has good local ownership, as evidenced by commitment from relevant local stakeholders including UKOT Governments or UKOT civil society;
- The project outcomes will contribute to embedding good environmental decision-making in UKOT policies and processes.

Impact

- The project applicant has the capacity and capability to deliver the project;
- The project contributes to environmental goods and services within the UKOT(s);
- The project is sustainable – the outcomes will be sustained after the funding is finished;
- The project demonstrates how it will strengthen the capability and capacity of local partners.

Technical Excellence

- The project has been well-planned and has a clear goal, purpose and outputs;
- The activities are practical and achievable;
- The risks are identified, assessed and have clear mitigation actions;
- The monitoring and evaluation plan ensures changes are measurable and exhibits a clear understanding of the evidence needed to demonstrate these changes, and how this evidence will be shared and made publicly available;
- A well-defined exit strategy is in place from the start of funding;
- The project represents value for money;
- Gender inequality is understood and reflected in the design, monitoring and evaluation of the project; intentional or unintentional increase inequality will be prevented.

9. Assessment Criteria – Darwin Plus Fellowships

The application will be assessed by the DPAG against the criteria below to generate a score (see **Annex A**). The DPAG will use these scores to determine the suitability of projects for funding.

- The Fellowship will result in the substantial **transfer of knowledge** and/or technology to the UKOT relating to any of the four broad themes listed at 1.2;

- The Fellowship is **collaborative**, involving the Darwin Plus Fellow and the Lead Partner at all stages (including development of the proposal). Where relevant, the Fellow should demonstrate their own consultation and collaboration with local institutions or communities in the target territory;

- The Fellowship will **contribute, directly or indirectly**, towards implementation of long-term strategic outcomes for the natural environment in the UKOTs;

- Where appropriate, the Fellowship will **raise awareness** of the potential worth of natural resources and encourage their sustainable use directly or indirectly

- The Fellowship will be of **high quality and scientific** (or other appropriate professional) **excellence**

- The Fellowship will **leave a legacy**, through a real and lasting impact on the Fellow's capacity to help his/her territory meet its long-term strategic outcomes for the natural environment

- The Fellowship should **be additional** – that is, the outputs and outcomes of the Fellowship will not cut across work being funded through other mainstream environmental or research programmes. Research projects, in particular, must tackle work in an area that has previously been neglected or undervalued

- The Fellowship should be, wherever possible, **innovative and distinctive**. It should show a new approach to a problem or issue and not cover old ground - although tested methodology may be used for a new area or issue. To ensure Fellowship work is distinctive, applications should identify how any outputs will be badged and how the Darwin Plus name and logo would be used to help raise the Darwin Plus profile

- The Fellowship demonstrates **good value for money**. Both in terms of actual results from the Fellows work, as well as the benefits of the Fellowship to the Fellow and the UKOT's capacity to meet long term strategic outcomes will be considered

Annex A.   Assessment Scoring

Score	Description
6	The proposed project **meets all the of assessment criteria.** The majority of the assessment criteria are met to a high standard. There are 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	The proposed project **meets most of the assessment criteria.** The criteria it does meet are mostly to a high standard. There are minor issues that could improve the project but these are unlikely to significantly impact the project's success and should not prevent it from being funded. It is likely to significantly contribute to the objectives of the Darwin Plus scheme.
4	The proposed project **meets most of the assessment criteria.** 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 Plus scheme.
3	The proposed project **meets most of the assessment criteria.** Those criteria it does meet are largely to an acceptable standard. It is likely to contribute to the objectives of the Darwin Plus scheme. The project has some issues with design which the team would be recommended to review to increase its suitability for funding.
2	The project **meets some of the assessment criteria**. Those criteria it does meet are to a modest standard. Overall however, it is inconsistent in terms of the assessment criteria. The application requires changes to make it suitably address the assessment criteria to make it competitive.
1	The proposed project is unsatisfactory and **meets only a few of the criteria** outlined The proposed project is likely to require significant alterations to make it address the assessment criteria.
0	For special cases e.g. flawed in scientific approach, subject to serious technical difficulties, unclearly written that it cannot be properly assessed, success depends on the project student or is duplicative of other research **Fails to meet any of the criteria outlined.**

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 and are critical to project success. They 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
UKOT 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 territory but, we do expect some will have experience working in countries or territories with similar environments. 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	What it demonstrates	How reviewers will use this
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 Darwin Plus 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 Plus and eventual wider public domain.

The application should demonstrate that the publication of results and secure data storage has been thought about, 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 Darwin Plus including project details (usually title, lead partner, project leader, location, and total grant value).