Objectives

- To provide an introduction to the BCFs

- To 'meet' the key BCFs people and understand their roles

- To outline the administration and reporting requirements under the BCFs

NIRAS

Andy East
BCFs Communications and
Capability & Capacity Lead
BCF-Comms@niras.com

Victoria Reilly-Pinion
BCFs Programme Manager

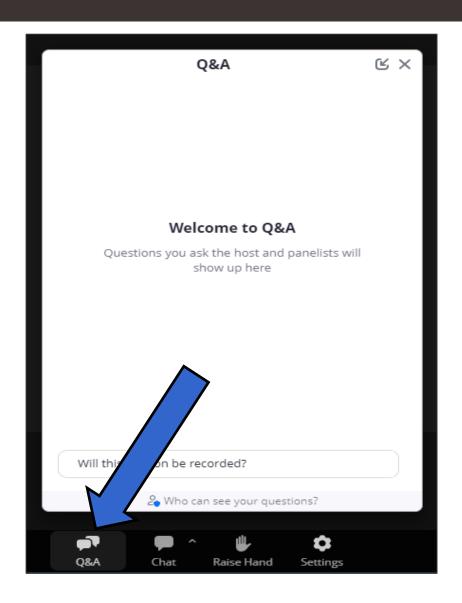**Jessica Tsvetanova**
BCFs Grant Administrator
BCF-Finance@niras.com

Eilidh Young
BCFs Lead Administrator
**Focal point for Darwin Initiative
and Darwin Plus**
BCF-Darwin@niras.com
BCF-DPLUS@niras.com

Rachel Beattie
BCFs Consultant
**Focal point for Illegal Wildlife
Trade Challenge Fund**
BCF-IWTCF@niras.com

Abida Peters
BCFs Safeguarding Manager

Esme Hedley
BCFs Communications and
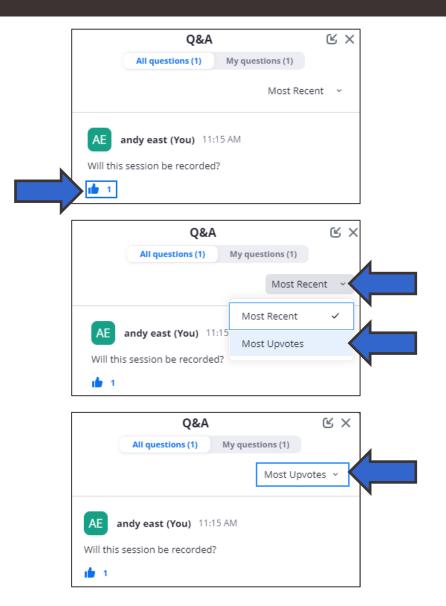Capability & Capacity Assistant
BCF-Comms@niras.com

Linzi Ogden
BCFs Administrator and Finance
Assistant
BCF-Finance@niras.com

Housekeeping - Q&A

Poll

Darwin Initiative Round 31

Darwin Initiative Main

- 401 applications received at Stage 1
- 50 applications invited to Stage 2
- 19 new main projects funded

Darwin Initiative Extra

- 103 applications, 3 funded

Darwin Initiative Innovation

- 187 applications, 9 funded

Darwin Initiative Capability & Capacity

- 316 applications, 16 funded

IWT Challenge Fund Round 11

IWT Challenge Fund Main

- 99 applications received at Stage 1
- 34 applications invited to Stage 2
- 6 new main projects funded

IWT Challenge Fund Extra

- 20 applications, 1 funded

IWT Challenge Fund Evidence

- 45 applications, 7 funded

Darwin Plus Round 13

Darwin Plus Main

- 25 applications received at Stage 1
- 20 applications invited to Stage 2
- 5 new main projects funded
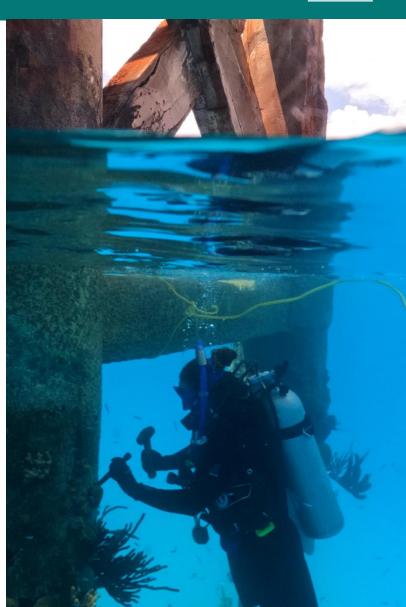
Darwin Plus People & Skills

- 10 applications, 6 funded

Darwin Plus Strategic
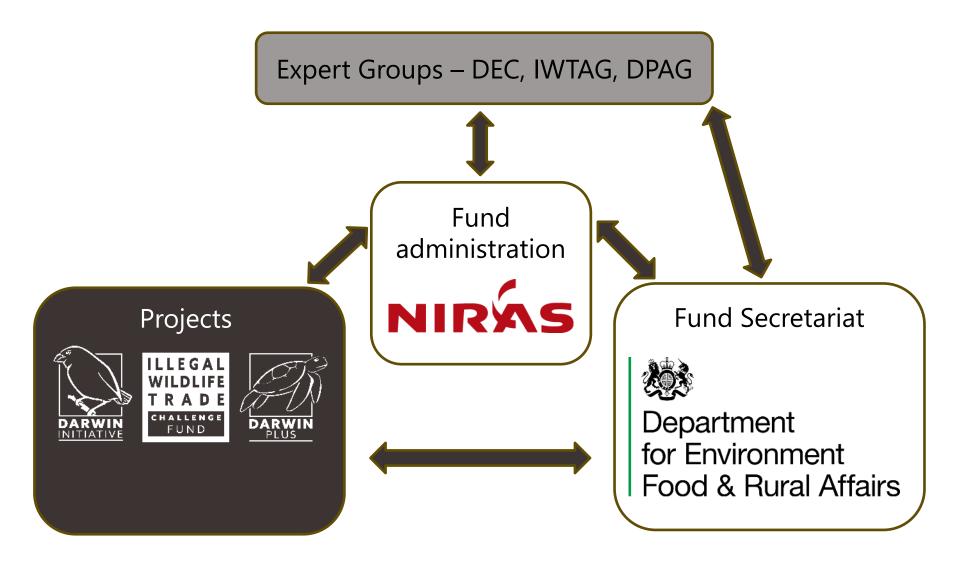
- 5 applications, 1 funded

Darwin Plus Local

- Round 4 – 36 applications, 16 funded
- Round 5 – 58 applications, 31 funded

BCFs Family

BCFs Secretariat

Serene Hargreaves – Senior Programme Manager - Biodiversity Challenge Funds

Ben Yexley – Darwin Initiative Lead – Biodiversity Challenge Funds

Anna Kidd – IWT Challenge Fund Lead – Biodiversity Challenge Funds

Jordan Newman and **Jasmine Parkinson** – Darwin Plus and Biodiversity in the UK Overseas Territories
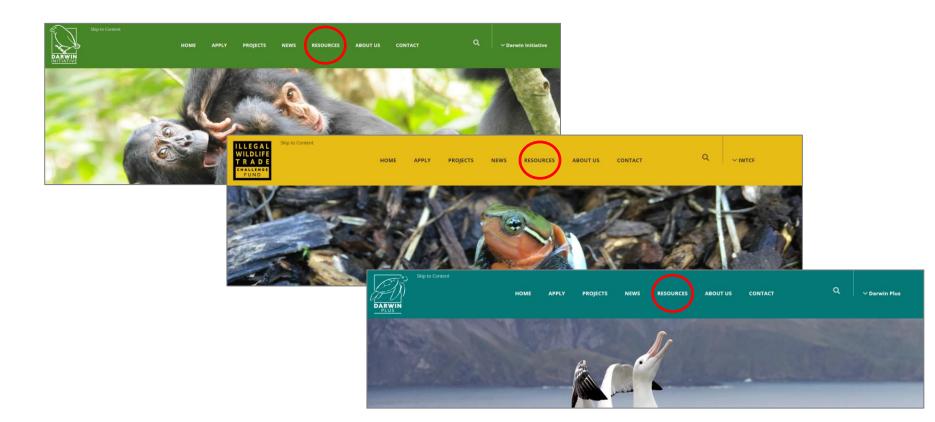
Role of Secretariat

- Overall management and strategy of the Biodiversity Challenge Funds: Darwin Initiative, IWT Challenge Fund and Darwin Plus

- Ministerial advice (Parliamentary Questions, correspondence, briefings)

- Management of NIRAS Contract

- Support to the Expert Groups - DEC, DPAG, IWTAG

- Publicity and events – involving Ministers

- Engagement with overseas Posts

Resources

- https://www.darwininitiative.org.uk/resources

- https://iwt.challengefund.org.uk/resources

- https://darwinplus.org.uk/resources

Poll

Administrative and Financial Requirements

Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs

BIODIVERSITY CHALLENGE FUNDS

Offer Paperwork

- Timing – may be longer if your caveat is still under consideration

- Package of materials including an Offer Letter, Grant Acceptance Form (GAF) and Supplier Form

- Return the GAF and Supplier Form to **BCF-Finance@niras.com**

Terms & Conditions

- Are standard wording across Defra grants so only clearly justified changes will be reflected on each fund's website (Resources > Terms and Conditions)

- Confirms how the funds can be used e.g. no UK party political use

- Outlines the rights retained by Defra should grantees not follow requirements e.g. reclaiming of funds, eligibility of future applications, and are reviewed/updated annually

- Asset register requirement

- Requirements re branding/communicating about your project

- Safeguarding

Financial Reporting Requirements

Current process

- Quarterly advance claims, with Q4 claim based on actuals and in arrears

- Advanced Actuals for selected projects

- Defra retain the right to spot check

- An audit at closure of project (annually for Extra projects)

Total BCF Grant	Spot Audits	Self-declaration	Independent Examiner	Auditor
Less than £50,000	Yes	Per claim, Project End	Not required	Not required
£50,000 to £99,999	Yes	Per claim	Project End – certification by either acceptable	
£100,000 to £1,000,000	Yes	Per claim	No	Project End
More than £1,000,001	Yes	Per claim	Annually	Final Annual Audit

Claims Conditions

- Quarter 1 (Q1) Advance Claim
  Grant Acceptance Form
  Deadline: 30th April

- Quarter 2 Advance Claim
  Annual Report and Q4 Actual
  claim (from Y2)
  Deadline: 31st July

- Quarter 3 Advance Claim
  Annual Audit for Extra projects
  (from Y2).
  Deadline: 31st October

- Quarter 4 Actual Claim
  (dependent on actual
  expenditure)
  Annual Report (from Y2)
  Deadline: 15th May

- Final Claim (Retention is made
  from the Final claim pending a
  satisfactory Final Report)
  Final Report, Final Report Review
  and Grant statement
  **Deadline: < 3 months of
  project end date**

Conditions for Payment

Claim	Deadline	Financial Evidence	Technical Evidence
FY Q1 1st April – 30th June Advance Claim	15th March - 30th April	Year 1: Grant Acceptance Form From Year 2: Annual Grant Acceptance Form Advance Claim	n/a
FY Q2 1st July – 30th September Advance Claim	15th June – 31st July	Year 1: n/a From Year 2: Verified Q4 Actual Claim (from previous FY) even if no outstanding funds to claim	From Year 2: Annual Report Due by 30th April
FY Q3 1st October – 31st December Advance Claim	15th September – 31st October	From Year 2: Extra Projects – annual audit	From Year 2, prior year Annual Report Accepted
FY Q4 1st January – 31st March Actual Claim	15th May from 2025	Confirmation of Actual spend across the FY even if no outstanding funds to claim	Annual Report due by 30th April
Final Actual Claim, less retention	<3 months of project end	Verified Final Actual Claim	Final Report Received
Retention	<6 months of project end	Verified Audit Statement where required	Final Report Accepted

Claims Process

- Electronic claims with a clear signature, which should match the signatory panel provided in your Grant Acceptance Form.

- NIRAS checks claim, project forecasting and that related reporting has been received

- Eligible claims are sent for second approval

- Approved claims then sent for payment

- You will be informed when to expect payment to your account

Key Resources

Resources > Finance Guidance and Claims Templates

Key Resources

Resources > Terms and Conditions

Change Request

Change Requests

- Projects looking to make significant changes (both technical and financial) should submit a Change Request

- This includes:

  – Re-budgets – carry-forwards / no cost extensions language

  – Virements – movement of money between budget lines

  – Changes to logical framework (logframe)

  – Staff changes (senior technical staff) including CV

  – Timing changes (e.g. extensions)

Change Request Form
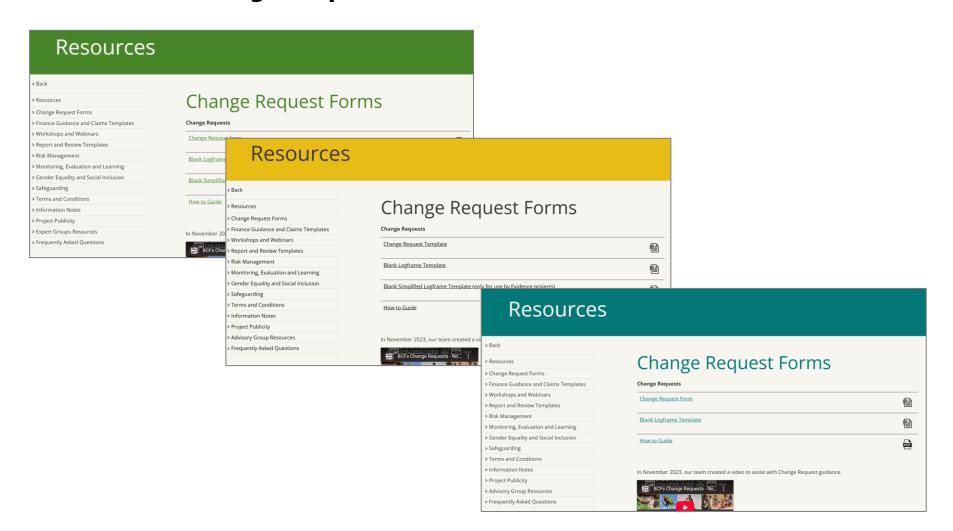
- Requests should be clearly justified – ensure you answer the questions in the form!

- Deadline **31 December each year for financial changes** – strictly applied

- Previous requests noted

- Significant financial changes and implications

- January – March financial requests only under exceptional circumstances (e.g. natural disaster, military coup) and clearly justified.

Key Resources

Resources > Change Request Forms

Issues and Risks
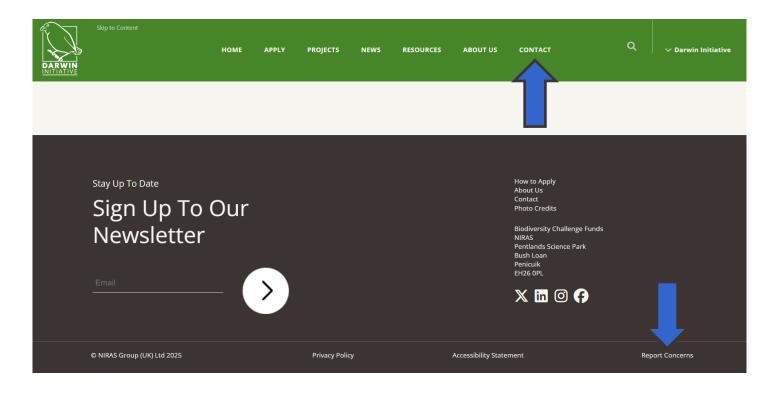
Issues Reporting

Projects have a responsibility to report to Defra in all cases of fraud or safeguarding breaches (whether proven or suspected). These should be reported to:

- Fraud and error concerns: fraudanderror@defra.gov.uk
- Safeguarding concerns: ODA.Safeguarding@defra.gov.uk

Risk Registers
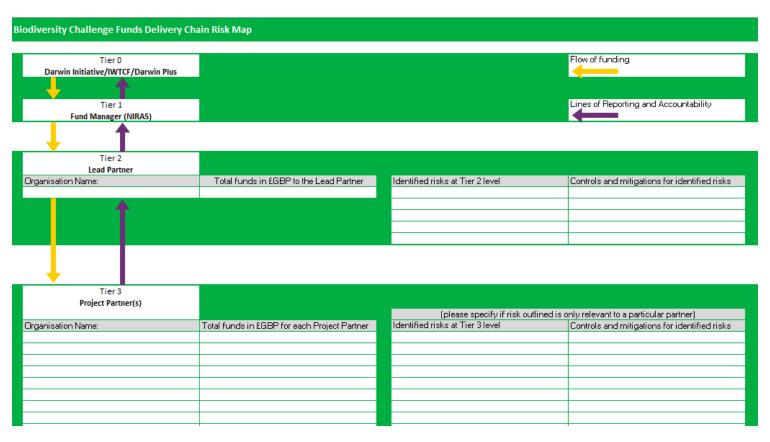
- All projects are required to submit risk register and regularly update
- Respond to questions in Annual and Final Report template:
  - Have any new risks arisen in the last 12 months that were not previously accounted for?
  - Has the project made any significant adaptations to the project design this year to address risk?
- Consider all risk categories

Risk type	Description
Contextual	In-country socio-political events or unrest, or natural disasters
Delivery	Associated with achieving the aims and objectives of the project
Safeguarding	'doing harm' including sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment (SEAH) and health, safety and security of beneficiaries, the public, partners and staff
Operational	Related to capacity to manage the project
Fiduciary/ Financial	Funds not used for intended purposes or not accounted for (including fraud, corruption, mishandling or misappropriation)
Reputational	Interventions or project partner actions which risk project partner or Defra's reputation

Delivery Chain Mapping
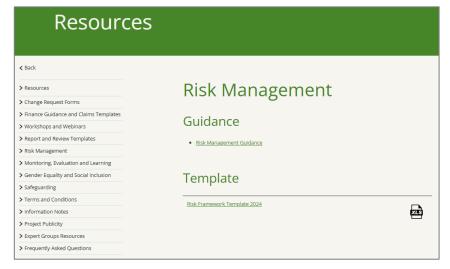
- Complete the "Delivery Chain Risk Map" in the risk register template

- This should outline £ to all partners (now also in your budgets) as well as partner-specific risks and mitigations
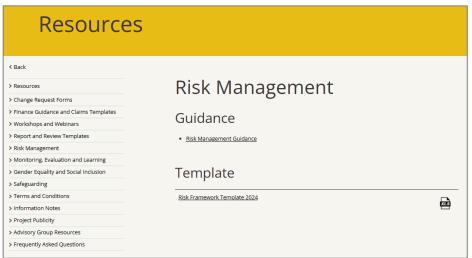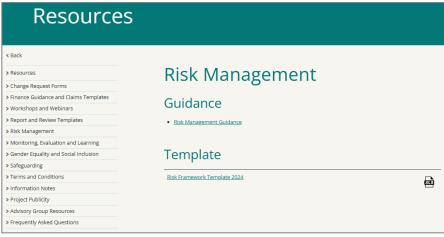
Key Resources

Resources > Risk Management

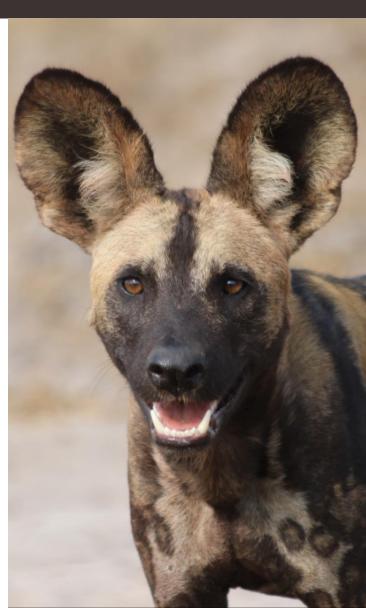Any questions?

BIODIVERSITY
CHALLENGE FUNDS

Reporting

Reporting & Accountability

- There are a number of requirements to ensure the high standard of projects is maintained

- These can be divided into:
  – Project technical reporting
  – Project financial reporting

- Broadly consistent process between schemes

Expectation of Projects

- High **quality** and **scientific**

- **Collaborative**

- **Assist** countries to meet their objectives under the various biodiversity and environmental conventions

Technical Reporting

- Projects report twice per year for the duration of their grant:
  - Half Year reports
  - Annual reports
  - Final reports

- Reports are posted on each project's page under Projects on the website (minus contact details & financial details)

- An Information Note is available

Half Year Reports

- Provide a brief update on project progress

- Opportunity to discuss queries/issues (also available all year round)

- Submitted by **31st October** annually, covering activity from April to September

- Respond to feedback from Experts and issues raised in Annual Reports

- Provide financial information which feeds into portfolio fund management

Annual Reports

- To detail progress against planned activities, Outputs & Outcome

- Good use of indicators & **evidence** (means of verification) reduces reporting burden

- Respond to feedback where previously indicated

- Due **30th April** annually

- All have an independent review

Final Reports

- Provide information on the *overall* success of the project against its proposed outcome, outputs and activities

- Good use of indicators and **evidence** (means of verification) reduces reporting burden

- Also chance to respond to feedback

- Also reviewed independently

- Extra projects also required to commission an Independent Final Evaluation
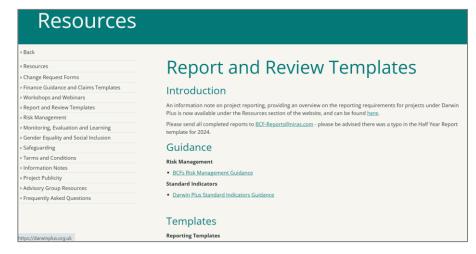
Key Resources

Resources > Report and Review Templates

Poll

Best Practice for Reporting

- Read your application before you start

- Regularly use your logframe

- Submit any significant changes via the formal Change Request process as soon as they arise.

- Support statements with evidence and clearly label this evidence in your reporting

- Involve project partners in reporting

Reporting Template

- Check you are using the latest version of the template.

- Refer to the guiding notes under each question within the reporting template.

- Answer all questions, ensuring your answers align with your original application form (i.e. what you said you would do).

- Provide a clear narrative report in addition to a tabular account of project progress against the logframe (or indicators of success).

- Ensure any changes to your original application are clearly explained or have approval via Change Request if needed.

- Provide clearly labelled and well-sign posted supporting evidence with your report.

Examples of Reporting

In Logframe:

Indicator in Logframe	Progress in 24/25
Number of local people employed by the National Park increases from 10 (2024 baseline) to 60 by 2028.	In 2024/25 a further 40 local people were employed taking the total to 50 in 2024/25. Annex 4 provides the updated Management Plan – page 73 provides data on number of local people employed.

For more information see the Project Reporting Information Note which is available on all three websites. **Resources > Information Notes**

- **Provide evidence to demonstrate where claims come from**, for example:

  "We are making good progress towards our goal, as demonstrated by data provided in table X"

  "Focus groups with local residents about ..... we believe this to be true because [insert quote as evidence]"

- **Move beyond reporting on Outputs** - include evidence on what has changed

  "The workshop provided X community members with knowledge about sustainable pest management. Evidence from a follow-up survey indicated that chemical pesticide use has declined by 50%, which is expected to have positive impacts in local biodiversity (Nature Communication 16, 1360 (2025). Crop yields for previously affected crops have increased by between 10-30%; thus demonstrating a contribution to poverty reduction."

What to avoid (i)

- **Write general statements without evidence**, for example:

  "we are making good progress"

  "we believe this is true"

  "we think that this progress is adequate"

- **Only listing activity Outputs without reference to the outcome of the work,** for example:

  Number of workshops

  Number of plans created

  Number of maps generated

- **Referring to poverty as being only a monetary issue**

Consider non-monetary measures and outline how the project has contributed to the wider components of wellbeing such as health and nutrition, literacy, and governance.

Is your project directly or indirectly benefitting local communities?
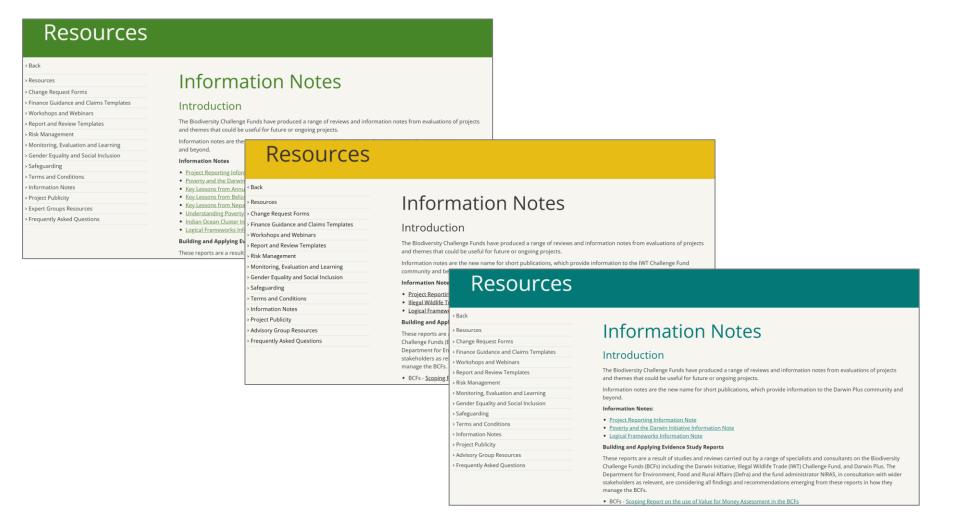
- **Inadequately referring to Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI)**

All projects should carefully and appropriately consider GESI within the design of their project and meet a minimum GESI-Sensitive standard. When reporting, projects should refer to the six principles of a GESI Analysis.

Key Resources

Resources > Information Notes

Safeguarding

Poll

Safeguarding

- Health, Safety and Security (HSS)

- Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment (SEAH)

Who Should Be Safeguarded?

All projects are expected to provide a **safe and trusted environment** which safeguards anyone who the organisation has contact with.

This includes:

- Project Participants
- The public including local community
- Project staff including partners
- Volunteers

This includes where **downstream partners** are involved in project delivery. Ensure appropriate **safeguarding due diligence minimum standards are met.**

Commitment to PSEAH

Schedule 5 – Joint Donor Language on SEAH

1. The Parties have a zero tolerance for inaction approach to tackling sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment ("SEAH").[9] This means the Grant Recipient, and its implementing Grant Recipients, will take all reasonable and adequate steps to prevent SEAH of any person linked to the delivery of this Agreement by both its employees and any implementing Grant Recipient and respond appropriately when reports of SEAH arise. The Grant Recipient must apply the IASC Six Core Principles Relating to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and the following principles and practices when implementing this programme and provide evidence to demonstrate this where required:

   a) Adherence to the IASC-Minimum Operation Standards and/or SEA elements of the Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability;

   b) A survivor-centred approach[10] to SEAH issues;

   c) Strong leadership and signalling on tackling SEAH;

   d) Make all reasonable and adequate efforts to address gender inequality and other power imbalances;

   e) Robust reporting to enhance accountability and transparency;

   f) Ensure that SEAH standards from this arrangement are reflected in funding templates with implementing Grant Recipients, [for UN entities: by means such as, but not limited to, adherence to the United Nations Protocol on Allegations of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Involving Implementing Grant Recipients.]

IASC
Inter-Agency Standing Committee

CHSAlliance

CAPSEAH

Common Approach to Protection from Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment

- IASC 6 Principles
- Relevant CHS standards on PSEAH
- CAPSEAH

What We Want To See

- **Policies & procedures** - Safeguarding, Code of Conduct & Whistleblowing

- **Demonstration of commitment** - senior leader buy in and designated team member to support PSEAH initiatives

- Strong **Complaints and Feedback Response Mechanism** - stakeholders are aware of how to give feedback and raise concerns

- **Community sensitisation** - communities understand the feedback / complaints mechanism and their rights

- Prevention through **risk identification and mitigation**

- **Incident log** and improvements based on feedback and **response** to allegations of SEAH

What We Want To See

- Answer all questions in full

- Remember to have staff safeguarding training numbers ready to complete this section

- We are looking to understand what actions have been taken over the previous year to protect all stakeholders from SEAH.

- Upload any <u>updated</u> Safeguarding or Protection from SEAH policy

Reporting Cases

- What must be reported:
    - Allegation of SEAH where a community member has been harmed by project or partner staff
    - SEAH alleged against any senior staff within a project organisation

- Oda.safeguarding@defra.gov.uk

- Reporting form

- Advice and guidance

Further Support

- Safeguarding resource page can be found on all three BCFs websites: **Resources > Safeguarding**

- [Safeguarding Support Hub](#) – Safeguarding Essentials Pack

- [CAPSEAH](#) principles, minimum recommended actions, practical guidance

- Training: [Kaya's Safeguarding Essentials](#)

- Training: [Safeguarding in the International Aid Sector](#)

- NIRAS Safeguarding Manager

Key Resources

Resources > Safeguarding

Gender Equality & Social Inclusion (GESI)

Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs

BIODIVERSITY CHALLENGE FUNDS

What Is GESI?

Gender Equality & Social Inclusion (GESI) is comprised of two terms:

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

* inclusive of Disability Inclusion and Indigenous People and Local Communities

The Importance of GESI

Evidence demonstrates that individuals access resources differently depending on their gender and social background.

- Biodiversity practices and engagement with natural resources
- Knowledge or use of resources
- Inequalities in management and control of resources

An understanding of gender and social characteristics further identifies the ways in which those affected by exclusion and discrimination are unable to access the same economic opportunities.

Considerations of GESI are therefore crucial to developing stronger and more impactful projects!

Key Requirements

All BCFs projects are required to consider GESI within the design and implementation of their project and **meet a minimum GESI-Sensitive standard**.

All projects must be able to demonstrate they:

- Understand the GESI context the project is working within.

- Ensure inclusive and meaningful participation of all those engaging with the project.

- Will not contribute to or create any further inequalities.

All BCFs projects have been asked to self-assess against the GESI scale within their Annual and Final Reports.

What is GESI Analysis?

A GESI Analysis can help you understand and identify barriers and inequalities an individual or group may experience as a result of their social identity(s) within a specific context.

When should I conduct a GESI Analysis?

Ideally at the design stage. However, there is also value in conducting a GESI Analysis during the implementation phase of your project.

All projects are asked to consider the principles of a GESI Analysis within their Annual and Final Reports.

GESI Analysis (ii)

The following principles should be considered when conducting your GESI Analysis:

- **Rights**: Legal and customary

- **Practice**: Attitudes, customs & beliefs

- **Environment**: Stressors & vulnerability

- **Roles and Responsibilities**: Division of time, space & labour

- **Representation**: Participation, inclusion & power

- **Resources**: Access & control of assets and services

These principles are interconnected and should be considered together, they should not be considered in isolation.

It is also important to acknowledge how social identities - such as ethnicity, age, class, gender, and disability - intersect to shape how individuals or groups are affected by the various principles.

GESI Analysis (iii)

Rights: Legal and customary	Understanding the rights available to individuals and groups through laws, policies and frameworks.
Practice: Attitudes, customs & beliefs	Understanding the various attitudes, cultural norms and power dynamics which may exist in a given context.
Environment: Stressors & vulnerability	Understanding how individuals and groups are affected by environmental stressors and vulnerabilities such as climate change, pollution, urbanisation and use and control of resources.
Roles & Responsibilities: Division of time, space & labour	Understanding the various roles and responsibilities of individuals within a specific context.
Representation: Participation, inclusion & power	Understanding where there are gaps and opportunities within how an individual can participate in society.
Resources: Access & control of assets and services	Understanding what access and control individuals and groups have over resources and services.

Key Resources

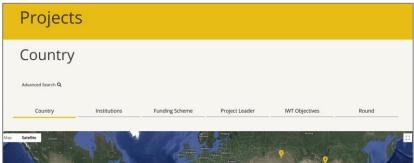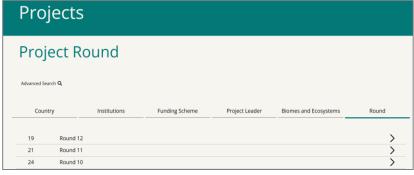**Resources > Gender Equality & Social Inclusion**

Websites

- Darwin Initiative Website: https://www.darwininitiative.org.uk

- IWT Challenge Fund Website: https://iwt.challengefund.org.uk

- Darwin Plus Website: https://darwinplus.org.uk

Logos

Maintaining a high profile for BCFs helps maintain Government funding:

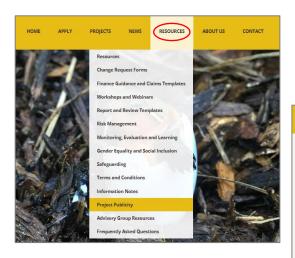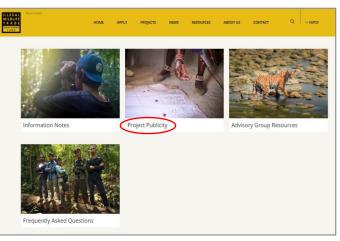- Projects should use the fund specific logo as well as the UK Development logo where possible

- Guidance and fund logos can be found on the "Project Publicity" page under 'Resources' on both the Darwin Initiative, Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund, and Darwin Plus websites

- Contact BCF-Comms@niras.com for a copy of the UK Development logo
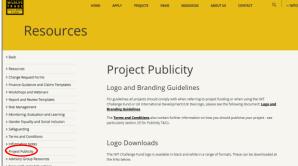
Project Publicity

Resources > Project Publicity

Newsletter

- We share two newsletters per year

- Each newsletter is themed around a particular topic

- We request 1-page A4 articles or less

- Provide high-res images to grab attention

- Distributed widely via e-mail, social media and internally in Defra

- We want to share your stories!

Social Media

Make sure to tag our BCFs socials:
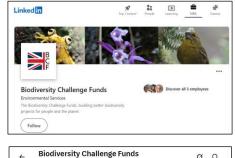
@Biodiversity Challenge Funds

@UKBCFs

@Biodiversity Challenge Funds

@biodiversitychallengefunds

Mailboxes

Please **just email one mailbox** – if you include more than one it may take longer to get a response. Please make sure to include your project reference number in the email.

For finance related queries, Change Requests, and claims: **BCF-Finance@niras.com**

For reporting: **BCF-Reports@niras.com**

For BCF related Comms: **BCF-Comms@niras.com**

All other queries to be sent to the fund specific mailbox:

- Darwin Initiative: **BCF-Darwin@niras.com**

- IWT Challenge Fund: **BCF-IWTCF@niras.com**

- Darwin Plus: **BCF-DPLUS@niras.com**