

Questions and answers

Trees Call to Action Fund (TCAF) and existing Defra-funded woodland creation partnerships

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Questions and answers from the webinar

Introduction: Trees Call to Action Fund (TCAF) and existing Defra-funded woodland creation partnerships

The [England Trees Action Plan](#) sets out how Defra is funding woodland creation partnerships to support local ambition, capacity and expertise.

Woodland creation partnerships

Partnerships bring local stakeholders together to help deliver sustainably designed woodland which can improve the connectivity of priority habitats and provide enhanced natural capital value within the landscape. Each partnership draws on local knowledge and expertise to identify opportunities for woodland creation and financing while balancing varying local priorities.

Defra is supporting the following organisations and partnerships to create woodlands at landscape scale across regions:

- England's Community Forests
- Great Northumberland Forest
- Forest for Cornwall
- National Forest Company
- [Woodlands for Water](#)

The [TCAF guidance](#) sets out how Defra wishes to see more partnerships, but does not want to create overlapping partnerships:

- **“We will particularly prioritise funding** the development or expansion of partnerships which aim to increase woodland creation at regional or national scale.”
- **“We are not looking for** proposed new woodland creation partnerships in areas already in receipt of Defra Woodland Creation Partnerships funding.”

Questions and answers from the webinar

Woodland creation

1) Could a project apply to create a new woodland creation partnership within the Northern Forest halo area?

As the Northern Forest aims to deliver across a large stretch of the country through a network of local partnerships, we would accept applications for new woodland creation partnerships within the Northern Forest halo area. We would expect these to explain how they will work with existing local strategies and partnerships across the region, particularly with the Northern Forest.

2) Could a project apply to deliver activities other than woodland creation in an area already receiving funding through a Defra-funded woodland creation partnership (see list of these above)?

We would accept applications to deliver activities other than woodland creation, such as access, skills and engagement projects, from areas already receiving Defra woodland creation partnerships funding.

Size of organisation/partnership

3) Will you be prioritising a certain size of organisation? For example, new/small/large.

The size of lead organisation is not one of the assessment criteria. We will assess the size of grant request against an organisation's track record and capacity to manage a partnership project on a regional or national scale.

4) Please can you define regional/national?

Defra has funded a number of woodland creation partnerships at regional level, such as the National Forest Company, England's Community Forests, Forest for Cornwall and Great Northumberland Forest. These have shown the ability of partnerships to engage multiple landowners to create woodlands at scale. We are looking for partnerships which can deliver on a similar scale, for example, county size or greater.

5) If we submit a national application where the partnerships with landowners are developed at a local level, would this be deemed a national partnership?

Yes, working with partners locally, but across a national scale, is appropriate.

Project scope

6) Does the funding apply to hedgerows?

Some capital costs of hedgerow planting can be covered through applications to Countryside Stewardship. Projects may apply to TCAF to facilitate hedgerow planting if they can demonstrate that Countryside Stewardship is not applicable, or for associated costs which cannot be covered through Countryside Stewardship.

7) Can we apply to use the funding for projects that mitigate against pests and diseases, for example ash dieback?

Projects to address pests and diseases need to be at regional or national scale. You should first consider application to one of the following:

- Countryside Stewardship Woodland Tree Health Grant – if you are a landowner with a single-site tree health project

- Local Authority Treescapes Fund – to restock trees outside woods affected by disease
- Tree Health Pilot Scheme – to manage tree health issues in the following pilot regions: North West, South East and London, and West Midlands

8) Can we apply to increase the production capacity of our tree nursery?

No. Defra is developing and providing other funding for tree nursery expansion. We would encourage you to apply to that in due course.

Match funding

9) Can you match fund through community shares? Or your own organisation's funds?

Yes, both of these are acceptable sources of match funding.

10) Can Environment Agency funding be used as match funding?

Funding from Defra group bodies, including Forestry Commission, Environment Agency and Natural England cannot be used as match funding. This would constitute double-funding by government of benefits to be delivered, reducing the value for money of investing public funds.

11) Can local authority funding be used as match funding?

Yes, local authorities raise revenue from a range of sources, including council tax and developer funding. This can be used as match funding in applications.

12) Does match funding need to be secured at the point of submitting an Expression of Interest (EOI)?

No, match funding does not need to be secured for an EOI or full application. If you are successful in receiving a grant, you will need to demonstrate that you have match funding in place before your project can start, or supply a credible fundraising plan. We would assess how realistic the fundraising plan is (and we may require you to underwrite this sum until it is secured).

Applications

13) Is there a limit on the number of applications we can submit, lead or partner in?

You can partner in more than one application if you are a national organisation with the capacity to do so. However, we are interested in funding a range of applicants and groups and you cannot lead more than one application. We anticipate that the fund will be competitive.

14) Will areas without a strategy and/or an action plan be disadvantaged against those who already have something in place?

TCAF aims to bring forward projects which can deliver against the England Trees Action Plan within three years. Our quality criteria asks about deliverability and fit with local plans. If no strategy is in place, you are less likely to provide a competitive application.

15) How much detail is needed for national projects? If we run a national programme, how much detail do we need to put about the locations in the bid?

Please see [fund guidance](#) and [EOI help notes](#). We are interested to see how you will deliver the project and the outcomes you will deliver through the project overall. We do not require details of all site locations at EOI stage, but an overview of which areas you plan to work in.

16) Please confirm what is meant by project “on-costs”.

Project “on-costs” include national insurance, tax, pension and apprenticeship levy (where applicable) for staff directly employed by the project.

17) Can projects funded by the Green Recovery Challenge Fund (GRCF) apply for follow-on funding?

The GRCF has different criteria to this scheme so we are not expecting follow-on projects. However, if you can demonstrate that you have a project which fits with TCAF criteria you may apply. The GRCF cannot be used as match funding and you cannot apply for costs already covered by your GRCF grant.

18) What datasets will be used in assessment, for example: low current tree cover and inequalities in access?

We will be using data from Forestry Commission which is publicly available.

EOIs

19) Why is the timetable for submitting EOIs so tight?

The EOI process is a short and simple request of no more than 800 words outlining the project. If successful, you will be asked to proceed to full application stage which includes seven weeks to complete the application.

20) Can Defra or Forestry Commission discuss a proposal with us before we submit an EOI?

No. We are unable to offer support to all EOI stage applicants due to the timeframe and demand for the fund. The fund is managed by The National Lottery Heritage Fund, and applicants should refer to fund guidance to develop EOIs.

Other questions

21) Are there penalties if not all money is spent by March 2025?

We do not penalise, but March 2025 is the closure of the fund and there will be no extension available for delivery beyond that date. Unspent grant would need to be returned to HM Treasury.

22) Will there be a series of these funding calls with the same criteria? If so, how frequently?

TCAF is a pilot with funding to distribute this financial year (by March 2022). We will review the quality of the application pipeline this year to decide whether there is a case for further rounds. We encourage applicants to apply now and not assume further rounds in future.