

EUROPEAN FOREST INSTITUTE

Grant submission guidelines

G-04-2023

Establishing Climate-Smart Forestry and forest restoration pilots in Europe

1. ACTIVITY TO BE SUPPORTED BY THE GRANT

Introduction

European forests cover more than 1/3 of the land area and they play a vital role in Europe's environment, economy, and society. Forests provide a multitude of benefits to society in terms of climate regulation, raw materials, habitats for biodiversity, and many other services. Climate change is a major challenge to European forests, as demonstrated by recent heat waves, extended drought periods and disturbances (storms, wildfires, insect outbreaks). Climate change may lead to shifts in tree species ranges, changes in forest productivity and increased disturbance damage. Hence, it is important to assess to what extent adaptation measures are needed to counteract and cope with ongoing climate change and forest disturbances.

Climate-Smart Forestry (CSF) has been suggested as an approach to connect mitigation with adaptation measures, enhance the resilience of forest resources and ecosystem services, and meet the needs of society^{1,2}. CSF has been introduced as a holistic approach to guide forest management in Europe and builds on the concepts of sustainable forest management, with a strong focus on climate and ecosystem services. Two important components of the concepts are to (i) increase carbon storage in forests in conjunction with other ecosystem services, and to (ii) enhance the health and resilience through adaptive forest management. CSF aims to have a mix of measures by developing spatially-diverse forest management strategies that acknowledge all carbon pools simultaneously to provide longer-term and larger mitigation benefits, while supporting other ecosystem services.

Climate change is also an important threat to European forest biodiversity. Despite ambitious policy targets at multiple policy levels, biodiversity is under increasing threat and degradation of ecosystems continues at an alarming rate. In the EU, the majority of forest habitat and species in protected as well as managed forests are in a non-favorable conservation status. As a result, there is a need to restore degraded ecosystems across the EU, including forests, and in particular those that have the most potential to capture and store carbon and prevent and reduce the impact of disturbances (e.g., from storm, wildfire or insect outbreaks).

To guide forest practitioners on effective CSF and restoration management practices, evidence is needed on how CSF and forest restoration affect forest functioning and can support climate change mitigation, adaptation, and biodiversity in specific regional settings, including uncertainties.

Objectives and outcomes

FORWARDS is a project funded by the European Union that will prototype the ForestWard Observatory, a pan-European monitoring and evaluation tool that will help in demonstrating the impact of climate change on forests, guiding decision-making for practical forest management. As part of its activities, FORWARDS will establish a network of CSF and restoration pilots to provide science-based reference knowledge to guide forest management.

The aim of this Call for grants is to set up CSF and restoration pilots across Europe as a basis for developing an evidence-based understanding of effective CSF and restoration management practices in supporting climate change mitigation, adaptation, and biodiversity.

Supported projects and activities

Supported projects must address all the issues listed below:

- Establish new field trials in forests for CSF and restoration management practices or test new practices in existing field trials.
- Address at least one of the following topics:
 - Strengthening of forests and forest management for climate change mitigation.
 - Enhancing the resilience of forests to natural disturbances and/or droughts.

¹ Verkerk, P.J., Costanza, R., Hetemäki, L., Kubiszewski, I., Leskinen, P., Nabuurs, G.J., Potočník, J., Palahí, M., 2020. Climate-Smart Forestry: the missing link. *Forest Policy and Economics* 115, 102164. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.forpol.2020.102164>.

² Bowditch, E., Santopuoli, G., Binder, F., del Río, M., La Porta, N., Kluvankova, T., Lesinski, J., Motta, R., Pach, M., Panzacchi, P., Pretzsch, H., Temperli, C., Tonon, G., Smith, M., Velikova, V., Weatherall, A., Tognetti, R., 2020. What is Climate-Smart Forestry? A definition from a multinational collaborative process focused on mountain regions of Europe. *Ecosystem Services* 43, 101113. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecoser.2020.101113>.

- Adaptation of forests and forest management to new growing conditions.
- Restoring forest biodiversity, ecosystem functioning and ecosystem services.
- Conduct field measurements in controls and treatments, considering both living forest biomass and forest soils. This should include at least tree and stand-level measurements, including tree species, diameter at breast height, height, tree locations, crown dimensions, defoliation (according to ICP-Forest³), increment.
- Address impacts of management practices on multiple CSF and restoration indicators including at least carbon stocks and sequestration in forest biomass and soil, forest damage, tree species composition, forest productivity, and dead wood.
- Provide open access data to measurement data from the field trials.

Data and results from the supported activities must be made available open access upon completion of the project, and feed into the ForestWard Observatory that is being developed by the FORWARDS project. Optionally, applications could indicate whether measurement data could be made available in real time. Effects of the tested CSF and restoration management practices may become apparent beyond the duration of the projects that are funded under this call. Applications must therefore include a plan (incl. funding) that elaborates how the field trials and measurements will be continued for a minimum of three years beyond the duration of the project.

Available funding

The grant of max. 140,000 € will allow for establishing new or continuing existing field trials in forests for CSF and restoration management practices. The proposed budget for the project may however be greater than 140,000 €. Up to five projects will be awarded in this Call.

Projects are expected to start in January 2024 and last a maximum of 18 months. The activities shall be completed at the latest by August 2025, although with assured continuation of the trial(s) for a minimum of three years.

Applications must indicate the European and biogeographic region(s)⁴ that is targeted by the project. European regions (North Europe, Central-West Europe, Central-East Europe, South-West Europe and South-East Europe) follow country groups as defined by Forest Europe in its State of Europe's Forests reports⁵.

2. QUESTIONS

Questions regarding the grant process must only be sent to the following address:

forwards@efi.int

Questions can be sent until:

10 October 2023

Questions and answers for this grant process will be published weekly from week 33 at <https://efi.int/grants-training/grants/G-04-2023> until

13 October 2023

Individual questions will not be replied to separately.

Potential applicants are advised to visit <https://efi.int/grants-training/grants/G-04-2023> regularly before the deadline for the submission of applications for any Q&A, and updates or modifications regarding this grant process.

³ https://www.icp-forests.org/pdf/manual/2020/ICP_Manual_part04_2020_Crown_version_2020-3.pdf

⁴ <https://www.eea.europa.eu/data-and-maps/figures/biogeographical-regions-in-europe-2>

⁵ https://foresteurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/SoEF_2020.pdf

3. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Grant applications can be submitted by one legal entity or a consortium of legal entities.

Applicants must, by the deadline for submission of the Application, meet the following criteria to be eligible for the grant:

Criteria	Description of criteria	Clarification
E1	Applicant is a legal entity (legal person)	If the application is submitted by a consortium (grouping of legal persons represented by a coordinator), this criterion applies to all the participants This call is not open for applications from natural persons
E2	Applicant eligible for funding under the European Union Horizon Europe Research and Innovation Programme	If the application is submitted by a consortium, this criterion applies to all the participants

Applications not fulfilling the above stated eligibility criteria will be rejected.

Furthermore, the following legal entities (legal persons) will not be eligible for funding:

- Beneficiary or associated partner of the FORWARDS project under the Grant Agreement No. 101084481
- Entities subject European Union restrictive measures
- Israeli entities due to activities in the territories occupied by Israel (European Commission Guidelines No 2013/C 205/05)
- Public interest trusts established under the Hungarian Act IX of 2021 or any entity maintained by such a public interest trust (Council Implementing Decision 2022/2506)

4. ADMISSIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

All applications shall apply the following structure:

- I. Administrative information
 - Application Form-Part A, following Template annex 1
 - Power of Attorney for Coordinator, as applicable, following template annex 3
 - Declaration, using Template annex 4
 - All the administrative information (Annexes 1,3, and 4) must be submitted in a single pdf document
- II. Technical Description
 - Application Form- Part B, following Template annex 2
 - The length of the technical description must not exceed 15 pages and shall be submitted in one single PDF document (this does not include the instructions and guidance provided in annex 2).
 - Technical Description must be written in English

Formatting rules for the documentation under subsections I. and II.

- Font: Calibri
- Minimum font size: 11 pt (except for tables and figures where it should be minimum 10 pt)
- Line spacing: 1
- Orientation: Portrait. For the tables or any Gantt/pert chart, landscape orientation can be used if necessary for the purpose of fitting of the tables or for legibility.

- Page size and margins: Page size A4, all margins (top, bottom, left, right) should be at least 2 cm (not including any footers or headers)

All the documentation (application forms and annexes) must be submitted in PDF (Two separate pdfs for I. and II.).

What procedures to follow for applying:

Grant application shall only to be submitted by the applicant (coordinator as applicable) to:

grants@efi.int

Please note that it is not allowed to send the email to another recipient (i.e. not in the To: field, the cc: field, or the bcc: field)

The email with the application shall contain only the following heading in the subject line:

G-04-2023, Establishing Climate-Smart Forestry and forest restoration pilots in Europe

The grant application must have been received by EFI by the following deadline at the latest:

31 October at 21:00 UTC

5. AWARD CRITERIA

Criteria that will be applied for awarding of the grant:

A1	Excellence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Clarity and relevance of the objectives. ▪ Soundness of the proposed methodology, including the underlying concepts, assumptions, and interdisciplinary approaches. ▪ Open science practices including sharing of research data.
A2	Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Quality, coherence, and effectiveness of the work plan, including extent to which the resources and tasks assigned are in line with the objectives of the activities. ▪ Complementarity of the participants and extent to which the consortium brings together the necessary expertise. ▪ Appropriateness of the management structures and decision-making mechanisms, including risk management.
A3	Impact (Legacy)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Credibility of the plan (incl. funding) on how the field trials and measurements will be continued beyond the duration of the project in other activities by the applicant(s).

Applications will receive a score of 0-5 for each of the criteria. Scores can be given in half points.

Applications must receive a score of at least 3 points in each of the categories A1, A2 and A3, to be considered for award of a grant.

For each European region (lot), the application with the highest total score A1 + A2 + A3 will be awarded the grant.

In case of equal scores, the following will apply: Applications will be prioritised according to score under criteria A1, then A2, and thereafter A3.

6. GRANT DISBURSEMENT

EFI will disburse the grant in lump sum instalments (fixed sums):

- 35% entry into force of the grant agreement
- 25% upon approval of the interim technical report, due in M9

- 40% upon approval of the final technical report, due in M18

Applicants must, however, as part of the Application include the global amount needed to cover all implementation of the project.

7. GRANT AGREEMENT

Template grant agreement is provided as annex 5.

8. VALIDATION OF LEGAL AND FINANCIAL CAPACITY

A. Validation of legal capacity

Following award of the contract, before the contract can be signed by EFI the following documentation must be provided by the Applicant (all legal entities) having been awarded the contract:

- i. Legal entities
 - Proof of registration or similar that the entity is established under national or international law
 - Authorisation for signatory
- ii. Consortia
 - If a application is submitted by a consortium, the above requirements apply for all members of the consortium.

B. Validation of financial capacity

Applicants awarded a grant must provide the following documentation before the grant agreement can be signed by EFI: Profit and loss account, Balance sheet, Explanatory notes that form part of the above-mentioned financial statements.

The requirement to submit documentation will not apply if the Applicant awarded the contract is:

- a public body
- a consortium where one participant is a public body

Documents are to be submitted in English or as a certified translation to English.

EFI can waive the requirement if the required documentation is not available and not required under statutory applicable law, in which case a self-declaration will be required.

If an application is submitted by a consortium, the required documentation is to be submitted by all entities in the consortium.

Special requirements apply for the following types of entities:

- Subsidiaries: if own financial statements are not prepared, subsidiaries may provide consolidated accounts and the audit report of the parent company it belongs to if:
 - The subsidiary is exempt under national law from statutory audits;
 - Only consolidated statements of the parent company the entity belongs to are available; and
 - The parent company assumes joint liability for all debts of the subsidiary
- Entities operating cash-based accounting, must provide:
 - Bank statements containing information on available cash, savings, short and long-term bank debts
 - Signed declaration on liabilities (short and long-term payables and other non-bank debts, and assets (fixed assets, short and long-term receivables)
- Newly established entities that have not yet closed accounts must provide:
 - Estimated financial data in a business plan or similar document

C. Submission of documentation

The Applicant awarded the contract must submit the required documentation under 8A and 8B within a deadline set by EFI. If the documentation is not submitted within the deadline EFI will in a new decision reject the application.

9. TERMS AND CONDITIONS FOR SUBMISSION OF AN APPLICATION

- 9.1 In addition to what has been stated in the Call for grant and these Grant submission guidelines, EFI applies the EFI Grant rules which have been made available at <https://efi.int/grants-training/grants/efi-grant-rules>
- 9.2 By submitting an application for a grant, the applicant accepts all the terms and conditions set out in the Call for grant and these Grant submission guidelines (including its annexes), and waives all other terms.
- 9.3 EFI may reject an application that is not in compliance with the instructions in the Call for grant or the Grant submission guidelines.
- 9.4 No information communicated in this grant process, including the Call for grant and these Grant submission guidelines (including its annexes), bind EFI in any way to an award or a grant agreement. EFI shall only be bound by written grant agreements.
- 9.5 An applicant must be able to prove, to the satisfaction of EFI, any information given as part of its application. Failure to do so, within a time limit set by EFI, may result in rejection of the application.
- 9.6 EFI may ask the applicant for clarifications regarding any information submitted as part of the application. EFI may reject any applicant from the grant process that fails to submit the requested clarification.
- 9.7 Only applications sent to grants@efi.int will be considered.
- 9.8 Applications submitted after the deadline for submission will not be considered.
- 9.9 An Applicant may only submit one application. In case of multiple applications from the same economic operator EFI will only consider the last one received.
- 9.10 Withdrawal of an application shall be done in writing.
- 9.11 Information provided by the applicants cannot be considered confidential, unless so designated by EFI
- 9.12 All applications shall be quoted in Euros.
- 9.13 Expenses incurred in the preparation and dispatch of an application will not be reimbursed by EFI.
- 9.14 Applications must be legible. EFI may reject applications that are not legible.
- 9.15 EFI will disregard any information given by an Applicant outside the format for submission as stated in the Call for Grant or Grant submission guidelines.
- 9.16 The application shall be complete when submitted. EFI will disregard additional documentation or information submitted separately from the application, where not requested by EFI.
- 9.17 EFI may at its own discretion disclose the contents of any application, as well as information on the Beneficiary awarded the grant as well as any other information of the grant awarded.
- 9.18 Unless otherwise stated in the Call for grant and these Grant submission guidelines, the Application and all correspondence related to it shall be in English. EFI retains the right to correspond in English with the Applicant even if the application may be submitted in a language other than English.
- 9.19 Applicants are not entitled to contact EFI staff members or any other person referred to in the EFI grant rules after the closing date of the receipt of applications to ask for information on the evaluation. EFI may eliminate from the evaluation any Applicant contravening this provision.

ANNEXES

- Annex 1: Application Form Part A
- Annex 2: Application Form Part B
- Annex 3: Power of Attorney for Coordinator
- Annex 4: Declaration
- Annex 5: Grant Agreement Template