

**EUROPEAN FOREST INSTITUTE**

**Grant submission guidelines**

**G-01-2024**

**Citizen and Stakeholder Engagement in CSF and forest restoration**

## **1. ACTIVITY TO BE SUPPORTED BY THE GRANT**

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### **Introduction**

Forests provide a variety of ecosystem services for society, including climate regulation, biodiversity, and recreation among others. The escalating threat of climate change poses significant challenges to forest services and productivity, evident in recent disturbances such as extreme wildfires, windstorms, and insect outbreaks. To enhance forest resilience and ability of the forest to cope with the potential impacts of climate change, a holistic forest management approach is needed. Climate-Smart Forestry (CSF) has been introduced as a holistic approach to guide forest management in Europe and builds on the concepts of sustainable forest management, with particular emphasis on climate and ecosystem services. CSF integrates mitigation with adaptation measures to enhance the resilience of forest resources and ecosystem services while addressing the needs of the society. Its framework encompasses three interconnected components: increasing carbon storage in forests and wood products while providing additional ecosystem services, enhancing the health and resilience of forests through adaptive management practices, and promoting the sustainable use of wood resources as substitutes for non-renewable, carbon-intensive materials. Additionally, CSF incorporates restoration efforts, which involve the rehabilitation of degraded forest areas to improve their ecological functionality and overall health. Examples of CSF initiatives include implementing agroforestry systems to diversify land use while increasing carbon sequestration and restoring degraded forests through reforestation and afforestation projects to improve biodiversity and ecosystem services.

Crucial to the effective implementation of CSF is the coordination of citizens and stakeholders— having a shared vision of what the forest should look like and provide, and co-producing knowledge. The engagement of citizens and stakeholders is important to ensure that diverse interests, perspectives, and local knowledge are integrated into the creation of sustainability solutions. Engagement contributes to the reduction of marginalization of under-represented participants in decision-making, increases stakeholder trust and capacity to implement actions, and fosters social learning where stakeholders can learn from one another and cultivate new knowledge while forging new relationships. It also promotes ownership and collaborative decision-making processes, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of adaptation measures and improving the adoption of sustainability initiatives while addressing the needs and concerns of various stakeholders in forest management.

### **Objectives and outcomes**

FORWARDS is a project funded by the European Union that will prototype the Forest-Ward Observatory, a pan-European monitoring and evaluation system that will help assess how European forests respond to the impacts of climate change. It will document current restoration activities concerning forests, biodiversity, carbon, and soils and explore various restoration options to guide decision-making processes towards climate-smart forest management. One of the aims of the FORWARDS project is to engage and empower citizens and stakeholders in the co-creation of solutions that will support the future of forests amidst climate change challenges. In the project, engagement and co-design will help in shaping a platform solution that is responsive to specific stakeholder interests and prioritizes user needs. This approach ensures that project results resonate effectively with diverse stakeholder groups, fostering greater uptake and implementation of project outcomes. For sustained impact, engagement activities on different administrative levels are important, including policy-related dialogues or consultations that span across sectors.

To set up the Observatory and support the implementation and scaling up of CSF and restoration sites, this call seeks to promote greater engagement of citizens and stakeholders in advancing CSF and restoration efforts. It aims to (1) increase awareness of the need for CSF, (2) assess the potential social impacts of CSF, and (3) develop inclusive initiatives that empower local communities, organizations, and other stakeholders to actively co-create and contribute to CSF decision-making processes and the development of policy recommendations.

### **Supported projects and activities**

This call will support activities that employ various levels of engagement ranging from local community initiatives to larger regional or national programmes in Europe. Supported projects and activities will complement existing or implement new social engagement activities in the context of CSF and forest

restoration. Novel engagement ideas are encouraged to ensure that supported activities remain dynamic and adaptable to changing needs and opportunities in forest management and climate resilience, as well as to foster a culture of creativity and experimentation among citizens and stakeholders. Stakeholders refer to all the actors who can influence, or who are impacted by forest management decisions. This includes individuals, groups, policymakers, businesses, or entities that can contribute to providing relevant inputs for FORWARDS as well as organizations that can make use of the project outputs. FORWARDS distinguishes citizens as a specific group of stakeholders which encompass local communities residing in or near forests who can indirectly affect how forests are managed yet do not hold decision-making authority in this domain. It should be noted that for this call, only groups or organizations with legal entities are eligible to apply. In view of the foregoing, this call invites projects and activities that directly address at least one of the following three objectives:

- Increase awareness and provide knowledge on the need for CSF: This objective seeks to educate citizens and stakeholders on the importance of CSF and restoration efforts in mitigating climate change impacts. Examples include:
  - Developing educational campaigns and materials such as citizen science apps, board games, or online resources that highlight CSF-related topics.
  - Initiating art contests or exhibits focused on CSF and the importance of forests in climate change mitigation.
  - Organizing guided forest excursions or nature walks to promote dialogues and knowledge sharing on CSF-related topics.
- Assess the potential social impacts of CSF: This objective aims to understand how CSF and restoration efforts may affect citizens and stakeholders for mutual learning and developing adapted forest management approaches. Examples include:
  - Conducting stakeholder surveys or feasibility studies to gather insights and perceptions of local communities on forests and forest management as a basis for developing integrated CSF approaches.
  - Facilitating community mapping workshops and other participatory methods to document local knowledge and cultural values related to forests and forest management as relevant for CSF and forest restoration.
  - Applying participatory video or storytelling techniques to capture CSF-related perspectives and stories of youth, women and other specific stakeholder groups.
- Develop structures and processes to include perspectives and aspirations of citizens and stakeholders in management strategies: This objective focuses on inclusivity and puts emphasis on empowering citizens and stakeholders to actively co-create and contribute to decision-making processes and policy development. Examples include:
  - Organizing joint visioning development or multi-stakeholder dialogues on CSF practices.
  - Establishing collaborative partnerships, community advisory committees or other institutionalised forms of citizen participation in forest management.
  - Providing capacity building opportunities, volunteering activities, or traineeships to engage in CSF activities.

Project activities shall be documented in a report adhering to applicable data protection laws (e.g., GDPR). The report should encapsulate the project overview, outcomes, and lessons learned. Beneficiaries are expected to provide a comprehensive documentation of the project including the objectives, activities undertaken, results obtained and their future implications. It should include an assessment of how the grant funds were utilized and the extent of which project objectives were achieved.

During project implementation, beneficiaries are welcome to engage in dialogue with the FORWARDS project on engagement activity methods, or for an exchange of experiences with the engagement activities in FORWARDS for mutual learning. Beneficiaries should plan for regular interactions with FORWARDS in their

planning of resources as selected grant projects may be included as case studies in FORWARDS reports for knowledge-sharing purposes.

Participation in such case studies will be voluntary and any other shared information will be used only with explicit consent.

### Available funding

Up to five grants will be awarded in this call, with each project receiving funding up to €17,500. These may build on previous activities and may be cofinanced with own or other sources, but double financing of the same activities is not allowed. Retroactive funding is also not allowed, meaning that a grant may not fund activities that have already been completed.

Projects may start in December 2024 the earliest, with an implementation period of up to 18 months. The activities shall be completed at the latest by December 2026.

## 2. QUESTIONS

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

forwards@efi.int

Questions can be sent until:

31 July 2024

Questions and answers for this grant process will be published at <https://efi.int/grants-training/grants/G-01-2024>.

The following schedule will be followed for publication of questions and answers:

- Answers for questions received during the period 30 April 2024 - 31 May 2024 will be published on 10 June 2024
- Answers for questions received during the period 1 June 2024 - 30 June 2024 will be published on 10 July 2024
- Answers for questions received during the period 1 July 2024 – 31 July 2024 will be published on 9 August 2024

Individual questions will not be replied to separately.

Potential applicants are advised to visit <https://efi.int/grants-training/grants/G-01-2024> regularly before the deadline for the submission of applications for any Q&A, and updates or modifications regarding this grant process.

## 3. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

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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

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All applications shall apply the following structure:

##### I. Administrative information

- Application Form - Part A, using template provided in annex 1
- Power of Attorney for Coordinator, as applicable, using template provided in annex 3
- Declaration on Principles for funding and Exclusion from funding, using template provided in annex 4
- Ethics declaration and self-assessment form, using template provided in annex 5
- Gender Equality Declaration, using template provided in annex 6
- All the administrative information (annexes 1, 3, 4, 5, and 6 must be submitted in a single pdf document

##### II. Technical Description

- Application Form - Part B, using template provided in annex 2
- The length of the technical description 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 (separate pdfs for I. Administrative information and II. Technical Description).*

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-01-2024 Citizen and Stakeholder Engagement in CFS and forest restoration

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

1 September 2024 at 21:00 UTC

## 5. AWARD CRITERIA

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Criteria that will be applied for awarding of the grants:

<b>A1</b>	<b>Excellence</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Clarity and relevance of the objectives in relation to CSF and restoration as well as the local context situation</li><li>▪ Soundness of the proposed approach and activities, with consideration of the specific objectives, local contexts, relevant target groups and methods of engagement</li><li>▪ Innovativeness with regard to involving new or different types of, or frequently omitted target groups, applied methods and level of engagement, and discussed topics and issues around forest management and regional development</li><li>▪ Inclusiveness with regard to a broad consideration of interest groups and/or citizen groups, with particular attention on marginalised groups, youth or female citizens</li></ul>
<b>A2</b>	<b>Implementation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Quality, coherence, and effectiveness of the work plan, including extent to which the resources and tasks assigned are in line with the proposed objectives of the activities</li><li>▪ Appropriateness of the implementation arrangements and collaboration structure</li></ul>
<b>A3</b>	<b>Impact (Legacy)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Sustainability in terms of how the activities will be continued beyond the duration of the project and/or how the activities shall create impact and legacy</li><li>▪ Scalability/replicability of the activities, especially the ways in which the activities aim to impact objectives and methods of forest management or regional policies with effect on forest management, ways of communication or links to relevant local, regional, national, or European frameworks, networks or initiatives and institutional structures, or other ways of institutionalising social engagement or public participation</li></ul>

Applications will receive a score of 0-5 for each of the criteria. Applications must receive a score of at least 3 points in each of the categories A1, A2 and A3, with an overall minimum score of 12 points, to be considered for award of a grant.

Applications meeting or exceeding the minimum threshold are clustered into four lots according to the region in which the applicant project is implemented: the three main European regions (North, Central, and South Europe) and a cross-regional for applications that aim to implement activities in multiple regions or on European scale. At least one grant will be awarded for each lot: the application receiving the highest total score A1 + A2 + A3.

In case of equal scores, the following will apply: applications will be prioritised according to score under criteria A1, then A2, and thereafter A3. In case of equal scores under A1, A2, and A3, applications that address relevant aspects of the call that have not been covered by an equally or higher ranked application will be prioritized.

Should, after the selection of one grant recipient per lot or if no application within a lot meets or exceeds the minimum threshold, overall call budget be available, the highest ranked application not selected for award of a grant will be selected (regardless of region), and so forth, until overall call budget is no longer available.

## **6. GRANT DISBURSEMENT**

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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
- 40% upon approval of the final technical report

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

## **7. GRANT AGREEMENT**

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Template grant agreement is provided as annex 7.

Please note that the Grant Agreement is only signed by EFI and the successful Applicant(s) following decision by EFI on award of the Grant(s).

## **8. TERMS AND CONDITIONS FOR SUBMISSION OF AN APPLICATION**

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- 8.1 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>
- 8.2 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.
- 8.3 EFI may reject an application that is not in compliance with the instructions in the Call for grant or the Grant submission guidelines.
- 8.4 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.
- 8.5 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.
- 8.6 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.
- 8.7 Only applications sent to [grants@efi.int](mailto:grants@efi.int) will be considered.
- 8.8 Applications submitted after the deadline for submission will not be considered.
- 8.9 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.
- 8.10 Withdrawal of an application shall be done in writing.
- 8.11 Information provided by the applicants cannot be considered confidential, unless so designated by EFI
- 8.12 All applications shall be quoted in Euros.
- 8.13 Expenses incurred in the preparation and dispatch of an application will not be reimbursed by EFI.
- 8.14 Applications must be legible. EFI may reject applications that are not legible.

- 8.15 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.
- 8.16 The application shall be complete when submitted. EFI will disregard additional documentation or information submitted separately from the application, where not requested by EFI.
- 8.17 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.
- 8.18 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.
- 8.19 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 on Principles for funding and Exclusion from funding
- Annex 5: Ethics Declaration and self-assessment form
- Annex 6: Gender Equality Declaration
- Annex 7: Grant Agreement Template