

EUROPEAN FOREST INSTITUTE

Grant submission guidelines

G-09-2024

Blockchain solutions for monitoring the multifunctionality of European forests

1. ACTIVITY TO BE SUPPORTED BY THE GRANT

Introduction

Climate change, intensive forest management, and other environmental stressors (e.g. air pollution) are creating increasing pressure on the ability of Europe's forests to simultaneously provide multiple ecosystem functions including the biodiversity they harbour and the many ecosystem services they provide. The relationship between forest resilience to climate change, forest management, protection and restoration, and diverse forest ecosystem services are only partially understood, due to the limited availability of data at desired spatial and temporal scales, and the incoherent and scattered information across diverse sources. The fragmented nature of existing information systems and the lack of harmonised monitoring of these relationships and interactions across Europe hinders the consolidation of comprehensive knowledge that is needed for successful planning, implementation and evaluation of evidence-based policies, as well as mitigation and adaptation measures at the European and national levels.

Pan-European Forest information often originates from disparate networks, and detailed data about forests and their functions are in many countries obtained from field measurements as part of national forest inventories or other monitoring schemes. Plot data from such inventories cannot or are not always shared openly, and public sharing of exact coordinates could risk the reliability of remeasurements on permanent plots. Other datasets with access restrictions include for example company data on forest resources, or their products and services. Currently, there is no single point where all information is conveniently brought together.

The fragmented nature of existing forest information makes it unable to fulfil the needs for monitoring the multiple functions of forests and covering topics such as the state and change of forest resources and their soils, biodiversity and conservation, the provisioning of other ecosystem services, forest health and vitality, the socioeconomic demands of forest services, wood flows and the associated climate and socioeconomic impacts, and forest governance and management.

MoniFun is a Horizon Europe project funded by the European Union that will co-create a blueprint for a system for monitoring the state and multifunctionality of Europe's forests, which consolidates currently fragmented information (qualitative and quantitative) into a comprehensive, interoperable information system that integrates existing platforms, and is applicable to the needs of diverse stakeholders, policies, certification schemes and society. As part of its activities, MoniFun will support the exploration of digital solutions, such as blockchain technology, to enable transparent information sharing from decentralized data sources on European forests and their ecosystem services. These solutions aim to provide stakeholders with robust, privacy-preserving, and reliable tools to improve data quality and accessibility. Ultimately, these tools should support informed decision-making, advance sustainability efforts, and foster collaboration through shared, data-driven insights.

Objectives and supported activities

This call aims to support a project that will demonstrate how digital solutions, such as blockchain technology, can be utilized to create transparent and immutable records that enhance trust among stakeholders and ensure data integrity over time. Specifically, this call seeks to support activities that advance the knowledge on these methods in the context of distributed information for forest monitoring. The goal is to improve the accessibility, reliability, traceability, and efficiency of forest-related data collection and analysis. Supported activities must demonstrate and showcase how such digital solutions can offer novel and practical tools to support European level forest monitoring of selected forest function(s).

Available funding

Applications can request a contribution of max. 60,000 euro.

A maximum of one grant will be awarded under this call. The project is expected to start at the latest in September 2025 and last a maximum of 12 months.

2. QUESTIONS

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

MoniFun@efi.int

Questions can be sent until:

28 February 2025

Questions and answers for this grant process will be published at <https://efi.int/grants-training/grants/G-09-2024>

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

- Answers for questions received from the call launch -16 January 2025, will be published on 28 January 2025
- Answers for questions received during the period 17 January 2025 – 17 February 2025 will be published on 27 February 2025
- Answers for questions received during the period 18 February 2025 – 28 February 2025 will be published on 10 March 2025

Individual questions will not be replied to separately.

Potential applicants are advised to visit <https://efi.int/grants-training/grants/G-09-2024> regularly before the deadline for the submission of applications for any Q&A, and updates or modifications regarding this grant process.

3. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

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 is eligible for funding under the European Union Horizon Europe Research and Innovation Program	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 MoniFun project under the Grant Agreement No. 101134991
- 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)
- Legal entities established in Russia, Belarus, or in non-government controlled territories of Ukraine

4. ADMISSIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

All applications shall apply the following structure:

- I. Administrative information
 - i) Application Form - Part A, using template provided in annex 1
- II. Technical Description
 - i) Application Form - Part B, following Template annex 2
 - ii) The length of the technical description must not exceed 12 pages and shall be submitted in one single PDF document (this does not include the instructions and guidance provided in annex 2).
 - iii) 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 must be submitted in PDF format (Two 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-09-2024 Blockchain solutions for monitoring the multifunctionality of European forests

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

16 March 2025 at 21:00 UCT+2

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 in relation to the call topic.▪ Soundness of the proposed methodology, including the underlying concepts, and assumptions.
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 risk management.

Applications will receive a score of 0-5 for criteria A1 and A2. Scores can be given in half points.

Applications must receive a score of at least 3.5 points for criteria A1 and A2 and a total score of at least 8.5 points overall to be considered for the award of the grant.

In case of equal scores, the following will apply: applications will be prioritised according to score under criteria A1 and then A2. In case of equal scores under A1 and A2, applications will be prioritized according to gender balance in respect of the personnel that will primarily carry out the tasks in the project.

6. GRANT DISBURSEMENT

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

- 30% entry into force of the grant agreement
- 70% upon approval of the final technical report

7. GRANT AGREEMENT

Template grant agreement is provided as annex 3.

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

8. NEGOTIATION PHASE

In respect of the application selected for funding, further documentation to validate the legal and financial capacity of the Applicant, provided by and signed by the Applicant, may be required before EFI can sign the grant agreement – as further instructed by EFI. If the requested documentation is not submitted within deadline set by EFI, EFI may 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: Grant Agreement