EUROPEAN FOREST INSTITUTE

Grant submission guidelines

G-01-2021

EFI Network Fund, Towards A Harmonised European Forest Monitoring System

1.   ACTIVITY TO BE SUPPORTED BY THE GRANT

Introduction

In the light of the latest policy developments at the EU level (e.g., bioeconomy strategy, climate policy, Green Deal, Biodiversity strategy) forests are more than ever being recognised as a crucial renewable resource for Europe. On one hand, forests are the most important provider of non-food and non-feed biomass, which is essential for the transition from a fossil to a circular bioeconomy; while on the other hand, they are of immense importance for biodiversity conservation, carbon sequestration and the provision of a wide spectrum of other ecosystem services which are key for a sustainable society. Simultaneously, as a consequence of climate change, forests are more than ever exposed to disturbances (e.g., forest fires, storms, pest and diseases), which requires targeted measures to strengthen their resilience and their ability to provide the above-mentioned goods and services.

In this context, decision makers face a challenging task to ensure that forests can continue to deliver wide-ranging ecosystem services, while maintaining and enhancing their resilience. The basis for any management and decision making, should be reliable data, which adequately reflect forests conditions and advanced decision support tools that can enable informed decision making. Although, in Europe, there is a wide array of forest information sources (from local to European level) these are scattered and mostly rely on diverse data sets that are not easy to compare. Despite the efforts to harmonize forest inventory data and the possibilities offered by the rapid development of high-resolution remote sensing methods, there is a lack of European-wide harmonized and robust information on forest resources and their conditions, which limits the possibilities for an informed policy development process and dialogue.

Objective and main outcomes of the study

To support ongoing and future policy processes at the EU level and strengthen the role that forests play in these processes, a harmonized and robust reliable European forest monitoring system is required that can be updated and enhanced as new data, new technologies and new knowledge become available. The system must efficiently integrate different data sources and help to overcome difficulties of data inconsistency.

Thus, EFI is funding a study that will mobilize EFI member organizations with relevant expertise to collectively reflect, contextualize and synthesize existing scientific research and knowledge and develop a conceptual framework for a harmonised European forest monitoring system.

More specifically, the study should produce the necessary outputs to address the issues listed below. The Applicant can propose additional relevant items.

- provide a comparative review to characterise existing global and European level forest information systems and their data sources (e.g., data origin, collection frequency and resolution) in terms of strengths and weaknesses in relation to their performance and compatibility. In addition, provide information on selected modern forest information systems, which successfully combine forest data from different sources (e.g., remote sensing and field measurements).

- identify information gaps (e.g., through interviews, surveys, etc) on forests at European level as well new approaches and tools to better support informed policy making (e.g., establish a list of priority indicators and potential data sources, including tools).

- develop a conceptual framework for a harmonized European forest monitoring system (including potential barriers and synergies with existing systems) that addresses, among other aspects carbon storage, biodiversity, and health of forests and which integrates information from different sources, including for forecasting purposes

- test the proposed monitoring system on a selected case study (or case studies) and evaluate its main strengths and weaknesses in the context of European policy making.

- elaborate suggestions for governance and funding of the proposed system at European level.

- identify and summarise major knowledge gaps and the priority research areas and topics in relation to the development and implementation of a harmonised European forest monitoring system.

The methodological approach shall be adequate to meet the objectives of the study. Importantly, interactive engagement with key stakeholders (e.g., agencies responsible for national forest inventories, European Environmental Agency, European Space Agency, Joint Research Centre) and ongoing national and EU projects in this field should be included and specified in the proposal.

Timeline

The Application shall contain a timeline for the study, adhering to the following milestones:

- Start of the study work: June 2021

- Presentation of the scope of the study and review of existing global and EU level information systems: October 2021 (EFI Annual Conference)

- Finalisation of the project activities: December 2022

2.   ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Applications shall, to be eligible for the grant, comply with the following eligibility criteria:

Criteria	Description	Clarification
E1	Submitted by at least three EFI member organizations (Associate or Affiliate Members), with memberships not suspended, from at least three different countries.	For avoidance of doubt: other economic operators can participate in the Study
E2	The Coordinator must be an EFI Associate Member, with membership not suspended	

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

3. ADMISSIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

I. ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

The Application shall include the following documentation, properly filled out and signed:

a) Cover letter, using template annex 1

b) Identification form, for each of the participating economic operators (Coordinator and Study partners), using template annex 2

c) Power of Attorney for Coordinator, for each of the other participating economic operators (Study partners), using template annex 3

d) Declaration on Principles for funding and Exclusion from funding, for each of the participating economic operators (Coordinator and Study partners), using template annex 4

II. TECHNICAL PROPOSAL

In order to evaluate the application against the award criteria, the Applicant shall submit a technical proposal consisting only of the following elements:

a) **Study title and acronym**

b) **Study summary**, not exceeding 2000 characters

c) **Introduction,** not exceeding three (3) pages

- A description referring to the call text (section 1 above, activity to be supported by the grant) – demonstrating understanding of the context of the study by elaborating on the objectives and challenges

d) **Work plan,** not exceeding three (3) pages

- A description of the methodological approach for the study
- A timeline for the study, adhering to the milestones stated in section 1 above

e) **Team structure,** not exceeding one (1) page

- General description of the team implementing the study
- How the team composition addresses the objectives of the study
- How the study will contribute to a durable cooperation between the team members

f) **Team members,** not exceeding one (1) page per economic operator (Coordinator or Study partner):

- Specific role of Coordinator/Study partner in the study, allocation of tasks
- Key persons involved - Biography of involved experts

- Relevant publications and projects

  ➢ Up to five most relevant publications during the period 2014-2020

  ➢ Up to five most relevant projects or other activities during the period 2014-2020

g) **Outputs and related outcomes description,** not exceeding three (3) pages

Provide a list and description of the planned outputs and related societal outcome

h) **Outreach activities,** not exceeding three (3) pages

Provide a list and description of the planned communication and stakeholder engagement activities to achieve the outcomes of the project and maximise its impact

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The style of the technical proposal must be: Arial font, size 11, line spacing 1, top, bottom, left, right margin 1.5 cm.

The technical proposal must be written in English.

III. BUDGET AND REQUESTED GRANT

In order to evaluate the application against the award criteria, the Application shall include a budget table, where the total costs and the requested grant are shown per participating economic operator (Coordinator/Study partner).

Procedure to follow for applying:

Grant application shall only to be submitted to grants@efi.int.

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

Application for grant G-01-2021, EFI Network Fund

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

30 March 2021 at 21:00 UTC

4.   AWARD CRITERIA

Criteria that will be applied for awarding of the grant:

Excellence	- Clarity and relevance of the proposed activities - Credibility of the proposed methodology - Level of ambition - Soundness of the Application - Complementarity of the team members and extent to which the Application brings together the necessary expertise
Impact	- The extent to which the outputs and outreach activities contribute to the objectives and expected outcomes as stated in the Call for grant and Grant submission guidelines - Contribution to establishing and strengthening a durable cooperation between the team members implementing the study
Implementation	- Quality, coherence, and effectiveness of the work plan, including extent to which the resources assigned are in line with the objectives and expected output and outreach activities - Appropriateness of the allocation of tasks

Applications will receive a score in the range 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 *Excellence*, *Impact*, and *Implementation* to be considered for award of the grant.

The highest total score (*Excellence* + *Impact* + *Implementation*) will be awarded the grant.

In case of equal scores the Applications will be ranked according to the score under criteria *Excellence*, and after that *Impact* and last *Implementation*.

5. TERMS AND CONDITIONS FOR SUBMISSION OF AN APPLICATION

5.1   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.

5.2   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.

5.3   EFI may reject an application that is not in compliance with the instructions in the Call for grant or the Grant submission guidelines.

5.4   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 and duly signed grant agreements.

5.5   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.

5.6   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.

5.7   Only applications sent to *grants@efi.int* will be considered.

5.8   Applications submitted after the deadline for submission will not be considered.

5.9   An Applicant may only submit one application. An economic operator may only be part of one Application. In case of multiple applications from the same Applicant EFI will only consider the last one received.

5.10   Withdrawal of an application shall be done in writing.

5.11   All applications shall be quoted in Euros.

5.12   Expenses incurred in the preparation and dispatch of an application will not be reimbursed by EFI.

5.13   Applications must be legible. EFI may reject applications that are not legible.

5.14   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. This especially means that information exceeding indicated page/word limits will not be considered.

5.15   The application shall be complete when submitted. EFI will disregard additional documentation or information submitted separately from the application, where not requested by EFI.

5.16   EFI may at its own discretion disclose the contents of any application, as well as information on the Applicant awarded the grant as well as any other information of the grant awarded.

5.17   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.

5.18   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	Cover letter
Annex 2	Identification form
Annex 3	Power of Attorney for Coordinator
Annex 4	Declaration on Principles for funding and Exclusion from funding
Annex 5	Model Grant agreement