



EUROPEAN FOREST INSTITUTE

EUROPEAN FOREST INSTITUTE NETWORK FUND

Guidelines for applicants

Call for the period 2018-2019

Closing date for proposals: 15 December 2017, 17:00 CET

October 2017

EUROPEAN FOREST INSTITUTE

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1 GENERAL INFORMATION

This document provides practical guidelines to the EFI Network Fund call rules and procedures for submission, evaluation, selection and approval of EFI Network Fund actions.

2 EFI NETWORK FUND

2.1 Aim and type of activities

The aim of the EFI Network Fund is to support transnational cooperation of the EFI member organisations in implementing the new EFI Strategy.

The fund is financed from annual fees and other voluntary contributions by the EFI member organisations and/or other sources.

The EFI Network Fund supports strategic networking activities, such as: joint research initiatives, knowledge networking and capacity building.

These activities aim at:

- Development of a common understanding/definition of the subject matter
- Coordination of information seeking, identification, collection and/or data curation
- Comparison and/or performance assessment of theory/ model/ scenario/ projection/ simulation/ narrative/ methodology/ technology/ technique
- Achievement of a specific tangible output that cannot be achieved without international coordination (e.g. due to practical issues such as database availability, language barriers, availability of infrastructure or know-how, etc.)
- Dissemination of research results to the general public or to stakeholders (e.g. policy makers)
- Fostering knowledge exchange and the development of a joint research agenda around an existing or emerging topic of scientific and/or socio-economic relevance
- Involving specific target groups (e.g. newly established research groups, early stage researchers, the under-represented gender, teams from countries/regions with less capacity in the field of the proposed Action)

2.2 Thematic focus

The proposals under this EFI Network Fund call shall address one or more of EFI' s strategic themes:

1. Bioeconomy

Proposals under this theme shall address the need for generating and connecting knowledge to action at the interface of markets, products, policies and forest resources including sustainability implications. The following topics are a priority:

- a. The future demand and supply of forest products, forest biomass and ecosystem services, and their implications for sustainable forest management as well as for afforestation and plantation forestry.
- b. Sustainability impact assessment and monitoring of forest-based products and services value chains.

- c. The future markets of increasingly diversified and cross-sectoral forest-based products and services as a result of socioeconomic and policy changes.
- d. The role of innovation and digitalization, and policies affecting sustainable bioeconomy development.

2. Resilience

Proposals under this theme shall address the need for new interdisciplinary knowledge as a basis for effective, integrated policies and land-use strategies. In this context, the following topics are a priority:

- a. The impacts of global change and related risks on forest socio-ecological systems, and the strategies to enhance and restore their capacity to adapt and provide forest ecosystem services and products.
- b. Policies, strategies and management practices to enhance biodiversity in a rapidly changing environment, considering different regional and socio-economic settings.
- c. Strategies and management practices to enhance the role of forests and trees in increasing the resilience of rural areas to climate change, including a better understanding of agroforestry.
- d. The role of urban forestry, nature based solutions and wood construction in developing climate smart cities, better rural-urban interfaces and enhancing health and wellbeing in urban areas.

3. Governance

This theme addresses emerging forest governance challenges and opportunities based on the understanding of interests, expectations and perspectives (e.g. urban versus rural, local versus global) from different stakeholders and sectors on forest land uses and forest management goals. The following topics are a priority:

- a. Forest and land use conflicts and synergies, including an understanding of key societal demands and the trade-offs between forest ecosystem services, products and land uses.
- b. The design of appropriate forest and land use governance schemes, including new and innovative approaches to involve stakeholders, align diverging interests and seek synergies.
- c. The impacts of different supply chains and international trade, including agricultural commodities, for international forest governance, land use conflicts and sustainable development.
- d. European forest-related policies and forest governance, addressing both regional diversity within Europe as well as emerging global challenges and opportunities.

2.3 Participants

EFI Network Fund activities are open to all EFI Associate and Affiliate member organisations, with a valid membership status¹. Also, participants from other organisations can participate in activities funded by EFI Network Fund, however they are not eligible for receiving financing from the EFI Network Fund.

EFI units or staff members are not eligible as partners and receiving funding from the EFI Network Fund.

¹ EFI membership fee is paid for the year in which the proposal is submitted (by the deadline of the call) and for the years the project is receiving the grant from the EFI Network Fund (by the deadline indicated in the membership fee invoice).

2.4 Funding

Proposals with a duration of up to 2 years are eligible for funding.

The EFI Network Fund funding rate is up to 80% of the budgeted costs per participant, with a maximum contribution of 100,000€ per proposal.

EFI Associate and Affiliate member organisations with a valid membership status² are eligible to be reimbursed.

For the EFI Network Fund call 2018-2019 a total budget of 400,000€ is foreseen.

² EFI membership fee is paid for the year in which the proposal is submitted (by the deadline of the call) and for the years the project is receiving the grant from the EFI Network Fund (by the deadline indicated in the membership fee invoice).

3 PREPARING AND SUBMITTING A PROPOSAL

3.1 Submitting a proposal

All the EFI Network Fund proposals shall be submitted by a network of proposers, represented by the main proposer affiliated to an EFI member organisation. The proposals shall be submitted through the web form (available at:

http://www.efi.int/portal/members/membership_service/benefits/efi_network_fund/).

All enquiries concerning the EFI Network Fund call (e.g. call documents and procedures, proposal templates), shall be addressed to the call secretariat by sending an email to Ms. Katriina Pajari (katriina.pajari@efi.int) with a subject: EFI Network Fund.

3.2 Eligibility criteria

EFI Network Fund proposals shall, to be eligible for funding, comply with the following eligibility criteria:

- **Network of proposers:** proposal shall include at least 4 EFI member organisations from at least 4 different European Regions (for list of countries by region see Annex 1).
- **Main proposer:** The main proposer shall be an EFI member organisation.
- **Address EFI's strategic themes:** proposals shall address at least one of the EFI strategic themes listed in section 2.2.
- **Budget:** The requested EFI Network Fund Contribution does not exceed 100,000€.
- **Deadline:** all proposals shall be submitted by the indicated call deadline and via the web form (see section 3.1).
- **Proposal format:** proposals shall respect the format and page limits described in section 3.3 of this document.
- **Language:** proposals shall be written in English.

3.3 Proposal template

All the proposals shall apply the following structure:

- General Information (1 page)
- Technical Annex (maximum 10 pages)
- Project Partners (max. 1 page per organisation)

When submitting the proposal, you must use the template available at http://www.efi.int/portal/members/membership_service/benefits/efi_network_fund/ and follow the instructions thereby provided.

The length of the proposal shall not exceed the number of pages indicated and shall be submitted in one single PDF document.

The style of the provided proposal template shall not be modified (Arial font, size 10, line spacing 1, top, bottom, left, right margin 1.5 cm).

3.3.1 General Information

The following information about the proposal shall be provided:

Section	Description	Length
Title	The title of the proposal should describe at a glance what the proposal is about.	Max. 50 characters with spacing.
Acronym	Only original acronyms should be adopted, i.e., not in use by any other public or private entity or a research group, even if they are a part of the Network of Proposers.	
Theme addressed	Please indicate which of EFI's strategic theme(s) and topic(s) (see section 2.2) are addressed by this proposal.	
Summary	Short abstract illustrating the challenge that the proposal is going to address. A revised version of the text of this section will be used as a summary of the Action to be published on EFI Network Fund website, should the proposal be approved.	Max. 250 words
Keywords	These should exclusively refer to the content of the proposal. Keywords may be composed by multiple words. Generic keywords, such as "interdisciplinary", "research coordination", "science" or "networking", as well as their combinations, should be avoided as they bring no information on the specific expertise needed to evaluate the proposal.	Min. 3 - Max. 5 keywords

The maximum length of the general information of the proposal shall not exceed **one (1) page**. Pages exceeding this limit will not be considered in the evaluation.

3.3.2 Technical Annex

The Technical Annex needs to address the following sections:

Section 1: Scientific excellence

Section 2: Impact

Section 3: Implementation

The length of the Technical Annex shall not exceed **ten (10) pages**. Pages exceeding this limit will not be considered in the evaluation.

Section 1: SCIENTIFIC EXCELLENCE

1.1 Challenge

- 1.1.1 Description of the challenge (main aim)
- 1.1.2 Relevance

Describe the research question(s) your proposal addresses. You should make a case for the relevance of the identified challenge(s).

1.2 Objectives

Provide a clear and concise description of the objectives showing their pertinence to the identified challenge. Please formulate the objectives in a “SMART” (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Timely) way.

1.3 Added value of networking

- 1.3.1 In relation to the challenge
- 1.3.2 In relation to existing efforts at European/international level

Describe the added value of networking in relation to the identified challenge by highlighting why networking is the best approach. Describe the added value of the proposed activity in relation to former and existing efforts (research projects, other networks etc.) at the European and/or international level.

Section 2: IMPACT

2.1 Expected impact and dissemination measures

- 2.1.1 Expected impact

Describe in a clear way the scientific and/or socio-economic impact realistically envisaged by the proposal in the short and longer-term perspective.

- 2.1.2 Dissemination Plan

Present a clear and attainable plan for dissemination and/or exploitation of results, including Intellectual Property Rights (IPR), if relevant.

Section 3: IMPLEMENTATION

3.1 Description of the work plan

3.1.1 Description of tasks and responsibilities

Provide a detailed description of the different tasks. For each task provide objectives, tasks, activities, milestones and a list of major deliverables. Also show how different tasks are interrelated (e.g., PERT chart).

3.1.2 GANTT chart

Provide a graphical illustration of the time schedule for the different activities, tasks, and deliverables for the proposed Action.

3.2 Network as a whole

Explain why your network of organisations can address the identified challenge and objectives of the proposed activity: make a case for the critical mass, expertise and geographical distribution needed for addressing the challenge and the objectives.

If your network includes any non-member organisations, please explain why they are needed.

Furthermore, if your network misses any of these features, present a clear plan for overcoming the identified gaps.

3.3 Budget

Please provide a budget table, where the total costs and EFI Network Fund contribution are shown per proposer and per main cost categories (i.e., coordination, travel, events, grants, dissemination). Add a description of the rationale for the distribution of the budget.

For preparation of the budget use the Template provided at

http://www.efi.int/portal/members/membership_service/benefits/efi_network_fund/

3.3.3 Project Partners

For each organisation involved in the proposal (proposer), the following information needs to be provided:

Details of Participating organisation
<p>Institution Name: Address:</p> <p>Contact person Title: First Name: Last name: Email: Phone:</p>
<p>Involved Persons Short biography for involved researchers/experts (max. 50 words/person):</p>

Relevant publications and projects

Five most relevant publications during the period 2013-2017:

Five most relevant projects or other activities during the period 2013-2017:

The maximum length for this part is **one (1) page** per member organisation. Pages exceeding this limit will not be considered in the evaluation.

4 PROPOSAL EVALUATION, SELECTION AND APPROVAL

4.1 STEP 1: PROPOSAL EVALUATION

Each proposal is evaluated according to the eligibility and quality evaluation criteria.

Each proposal is checked against the eligibility criteria specified in Section 3.2. The eligibility check is performed by EFI Secretariat. Only eligible proposals are submitted for quality evaluation.

The quality evaluation is considering the following evaluation criteria.

EVALUATION CRITERIA		
SCIENTIFIC EXCELLENCE	IMPACT	IMPLEMENTATION
Soundness of the challenge	Expected scientific impact	Coherence and effectiveness of the work plan
Added value of networking	Dissemination measures	Network as whole
Total score for this section = 30 points	Total score for this section = 15 points	Total score for this section = 15 points
Threshold for this section= 20 points	Threshold for this section= 10 points	Threshold for this section= 10 points
TOTAL SCORE = 60 points		
OVERALL THRESHOLD = 40 points		

Proposal failing to achieve any of the thresholds will not be considered for funding.

Specific questions addressed by the evaluation committee on each criterion:

SCIENTIFIC EXCELLENCE
<p>Soundness of the Challenge</p> <p>Q1 - Is the challenge relevant and timely?</p> <p>Q2 - Are the objectives presented clear and pertinent to tackle the challenge?</p> <p>Q3 - Is the action adequately addressing EFI' s strategic themes?</p> <p>Q4 - Is the proposed approach innovative and state-of-the art?</p>
<p>Added value of networking</p> <p>Q5 - Is networking the best approach to tackle the challenge?</p> <p>Q6 - What is the added value of the proposed activities in relation to former and existing efforts at European and/or international level?</p>
IMPACT
<p>Expected impacts</p> <p>Q7 - Does the proposal clearly identify relevant, and realistic short-term/long-term impacts?</p>
<p>Measures to maximise impact</p> <p>Q8 - Does the proposal identify the most relevant stakeholders and present a clear plan to involve them as participants of the action?</p>

Q9 - Is there a clear and attainable plan for dissemination and/or exploitation of results?
IMPLEMENTATION
Overall coherence and effectiveness of the work plan Q10 - Is the work plan (tasks, activities, timeframe and deliverables) coherent, realistic and appropriate to ensure the achievement of the objectives? Q11 - Is the proposed budget appropriate for the envisaged activities (value for money)?
Network as a whole Q12 - Does the proposed Network envisage the critical mass, expertise and geographical distribution for addressing the challenge and the objectives? If not, does the proposal identify the gaps in the Network and present a clear plan for overcoming the gaps?

Each individual question will be scored in the range 0 to 5 points. Half marks may be given. Evaluators will be asked to score proposals as they were submitted, rather than on their potential if certain changes were to be made.

<p>Interpretation of the scores</p> <p>0 – The proposal fails to address the criterion or cannot be assessed due to missing or incomplete information.</p> <p>1 – Poor. The criterion is inadequately addressed, or there are serious inherent weaknesses.</p> <p>2 – Fair. The proposal broadly addresses the criterion, but there are significant weaknesses.</p> <p>3 – Good. The proposal addresses the criterion well, but a number of shortcomings are present.</p> <p>4 – Very Good. The proposal addresses the criterion very well, but a small number of shortcomings are present.</p> <p>5 – Excellent. The proposal successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion. Any shortcomings are minor.</p>

The evaluation is performed by an evaluation panel, composed of the members of EFI Scientific Advisory Board (SAB), heads of EFI programmes and other relevant experts if needed³. The quality evaluation is conducted in three steps:

Step 1: The members of the evaluation panel evaluate the proposals individually and submit the evaluation scores to the EFI Secretariat.

Step 2: The evaluation committee members meet to resolve potential differences in opinions, by agreeing on a common score within the range of scores awarded by the individual evaluators. The evaluators shall strive for consistency of scoring across the proposals within the evaluation panel.

Step 3: Finally, the evaluation panel ranks all the proposals above the overall threshold and prepares a report for the Board of EFI, reflecting the process and the ranking of the proposals to be funded.

4.2 STEP 2: PROPOSAL SELECTION AND APPROVAL

Based on the report submitted by the evaluation panel (ranking of the proposals) and the available funding, the Board of EFI decides on proposals to be funded, as well as establishing a reserve list of proposals.

³ To avoid potential conflicts of interest, the evaluation panel will only consist of evaluators not participating, or being related to any of the submitted proposals.

5 CALL SCHEDULE

The following tentative schedule is envisaged for the 2018-2019 EFI Network Fund call:

Action	Deadline
Launch of the call	18 October 2017
Closing date and time for proposals	15 December 2017, 17:00 CET
Eligibility check by EFI Secretariat	30 December 2017
Scientific evaluation	29 January 2018
Funding decision	9 February 2018
Funding decision is communicated to the applicants	15 February 2018
Signing of grant agreement with the proposal coordinator	28 February 2018
Start of the projects	1 March 2018

Annex 1: List of European countries by regions

Region	Countries
East Europe	Albania, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, FRY Macedonia, Hungary, Poland, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Ukraine
North Europe	Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden
South Europe	Andorra, Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Malta, Monaco, Portugal, San Marino, Spain, Turkey
West Europe	Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Liechtenstein, Luxemburg, Netherlands, Switzerland, United Kingdom