

# **EUROPEAN FOREST INSTITUTE**

## **Grant submission guidelines**

**G-03-2022**

**Bioregions Open Innovation Challenge 2022**

## 1. ACTIVITY TO BE SUPPORTED BY THE GRANT

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The grants under the Bioregions Open Innovation Challenge 2022 aim to support targeted activities to convert business innovation, social innovation, product innovation, or process innovation ideas (from now on called “*solutions*”) into reality.

Targeted Activities include:

- Networking, pitching, and presentation
- Prototyping and piloting activities
- Adaptation of solutions to regional reality
- Training, mentoring, and capacity building
- Travel, logistic and consumable costs related to the above

The funding under the grant is provided by the European Forest Institute (EFI) Bioregions Facility, which aims to catalyse innovation and entrepreneurship in forest bioeconomy in its member regions: Basque Country, North Karelia, North Rhine-Westphalia and Catalonia. Thus, granted solutions must solve, totally or partially, specific challenges, defined by Bioregions members.

For the Bioregions Open Innovation Challenge 2022, the challenges are:

- Carbon Farming & Climate-Smart Forestry
- Forest Monitoring, Early Warning and Response
- Unleashing the potential of Non-Wood Forest Products

A detailed description of the challenges is presented below.

A maximum of three grants of 7,000 euro will be awarded for the development of a solution in response to the challenge. Implementation period for the activities supported by the grant is nine months.

Each application can only address one challenge; Each Applicant can only apply for one challenge.

### Challenge 1: Carbon Farming & Climate-Smart Forestry

#### Introduction

Forest carbon offsets can be considered a forest product with a large market potential among individuals, public institutions, and companies that want to materialise their commitment to mitigating climate change. If done right, forest carbon offsets can contribute both to climate change mitigation, and to more sustainable and multifunctional forest management. However, this promising opportunity is yet to be implemented at a significant scale, as wicked barriers persist.

## Context

Forests play a critical role in achieving climate neutrality. Reduced net emissions can be achieved through afforestation, ecosystem restoration, improved forest management, increasing soil carbon, reducing disasters, storing carbon in long-lived wood products, and substituting fossil and energy intensive materials in construction, manufacturing, and energy production. All these activities can be used to offset carbon emissions in other sectors and have the potential to generate additional income in support of sustainable forest management. Climate-smart forestry seeks to maximise this positive contribution, while also enhancing forest resilience, the provision of ecosystem services, and strengthening forest value chains.

The European Commission has also launched the Carbon Farming Initiative to stimulate and reward carbon benefits produced in the primary sector. Regional authorities and different stakeholders inside and outside the forest sector are willing to develop functional carbon markets in support of climate-smart forestry. However, there are important barriers that need to be overcome. Carbon benefits need to be verified and monitored cost effectively and transparently. Rewarded activities should not be limited to afforestation and forest preservation, but also include carbon benefits from improved forest management, avoided disasters, incorporating carbon pools in soils, and in harvested wood products. It is also important to develop reliable tools and approaches, that facilitate engagement of forest owners and managers to stimulate the offer side, as well as the engagement of companies and organisations in the demand side. As forests produce many other ecosystem services, provisions to bundle multiple ecosystem services into novel reward mechanisms are urgently needed.

## Challenge priorities

Innovative ideas, methods, prototypes, close-to-market, or market-ready solutions to help engage all relevant actors in carbon farming and climate-smart forestry activities. The proposed solution can be technological, business model related, managerial or social, addressing one or more of the following priorities:

- Monitor, trace, certify and monetise forest carbon and other ecosystem services, increasing reliability and trust on the carbon benefits produced.
- Facilitate engagement of all actors (forest owners, companies, citizens, etc.) activating and matching carbon offer and demand.
- Incorporate the different carbon sinks (e.g., biomass, soils, forest products) in carbon markets, and possibly co-marketing other ecosystem services.
- Incorporate avoided carbon emissions in forest disturbances, e.g., rewarding wildfire prevention and other climate change adaptation activities.

## **Challenge 2: Forest Monitoring, Early Warning and Response**

### Introduction

Climate change has huge consequences for European forests and the services they provide. Changes in temperature, precipitation, and the frequency of extreme weather events, among other factors, are leading to increased impacts of forest pests, diseases, and the

expansion of invasive species. In some cases, air quality problems may cause additional stress. It is extremely important to deploy new technologies and to empower forest stakeholders in timely and accurate monitoring of forest conditions, and improve risk assessment, early warning and response.

#### Context

Forest authorities, forest managers, owners and other stakeholders are seeking solutions to increase their capacity to monitor forest conditions, identify and detect forest threats, and deploy effective management measures - before, during and after incidents. North Rhine-Westphalia, like most regions in central Europe, is facing increased challenges to cope with bark beetle outbreaks. Basque country, as many other Atlantic regions, is facing increased impacts from foliar fungal and subcortical diseases, as well as foraging insects. Catalonia, like all Mediterranean regions, and North Karelia, like all boreal regions, need to strengthen monitoring capacities to detect decay or other impacts of climate change early. The digital revolution, including satellite, airborne and land-based data acquisition, machine learning, IoT and cloud services are opening new opportunities, as well as the capacity to engage and empower new actors in forest monitoring.

#### Challenge priorities

Innovative ideas, methods, prototypes, close-to-market, or market-ready solutions to improve forest health. Innovation can be technological, business model related, managerial or social, addressing the following priorities:

- Forest monitoring solutions based on readily available data, open-source GIS platforms.
- Novel diagnosis and risk assessment solutions for pests and diseases of high actual or potential impact.
- Methods and approaches for spatial explicit risk assessment, and seasonal forecast of pests and diseases outbreaks.
- Innovative tools and approaches for social engagement, awareness raising and empowerment in forest health, including via gamification and e-learning.

### **Challenge 3: Unleashing the potential of Non-Wood Forest Products**

#### Introduction

Non-Wood Forest Products (NWFPs) can contribute in many ways to human health and wellbeing. They are part of our natural and cultural heritage, and important resources that can support a sustainable bioeconomy with wild foods, natural cosmetics and biomaterials, such as cork and resins. NWFPs can support nature-based tourism and territorial marketing approaches for the benefit of entire communities. However, the large potential of NWFPs is frequently underdeveloped, as significant hindrances remain.

#### Context

There is a general need for better solutions for inventory, monitoring, and yield forecast of NWFPs, as well as tools to determine and enforce sustainable harvest levels, both to cope with climate change and to avoid the risk of unsustainable practices. NWFP value chains

can be greatly enhanced through, for example: i) innovative forest management and agro-forestry approaches ii) co-producing NWFPs along with wood and other ecosystem services to engage forest owners in active management, and support wildfire prevention activities; iii) improving harvest, and collection operations, including logistics, to increase profitability and the quality of life for the workforce; iv) generalising the traceability for products, especially edibles, that are collected in the wild, as this is a necessary tool for v) developing innovative marketing channels and market differentiations; vi) developing new products of higher added value; and especially through vii) innovative business models that can create shared value for different local stakeholders, as in territorial marketing approaches.

Mushrooms, truffles, berries, and aromatic plants are common priorities among the bioregions. Chaga and birch sap are emerging NWFPs in North Karelia, while Catalonia has also specific interests in cork, pine nuts and natural resins.

#### Challenge priorities

Innovative ideas, methods, prototypes, close-to-market, or market-ready solutions to create value and more multifunctional management through NWFPs value chains.

Innovations can be technological, business model related, managerial, or social, addressing the following priorities:

- Solutions for inventory, monitoring and yield forecast, including those to include NWFPs in Forest Inventories.
- Novel tools and approaches for resource management, more efficient value chains, harvesting / collection, traceability, and certification.
- New products, and services based on NWFPs and novel business models for rural areas.
- Innovative solutions for awareness raising, engagement and empowerment of forest owners and managers in NWFPs value chains, including via gamification, and e-learning.

The grants will be awarded following a two-stage process:

1. Applicants will submit an Application submission form - stage 1.
2. Applicants for applications exceeding the award criteria threshold for stage 1 will be invited to submit an Application submission form - stage 2, as well as to deliver a presentation/pitch, followed by questions and answers by the evaluation committee, which together will be evaluated according to the award criteria for stage 2.

EFI will inform the Applicants invited to stage 2 on how to submit the Application submission form - stage 2.

The online presentation/pitch will consist out of a presentation (max. 10 minutes) by the applicant followed by questions and answers by the evaluation committee (max. 20 minutes).

The presentation/pitch must address the following:

1. Solution and technology to implement it
2. Fit of the solution to one or more of the Bioregions Facility's regions
3. Roadmap: activities, resources required and available, engagement with stakeholders

The presentation/pitch will be recorded by EFI.

Evaluation according to the award criteria for stage 2.

## 2. QUESTIONS

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Questions regarding the grant process may be sent to the following address:

G-03-2022@efi.int

EFI is not bound to reply to questions received later than the following deadline:

8 January 2023 at 23:00 UTC.

Questions and answers for this tendering process will be published at <https://efi.int/grants-training/grants/G-03-2022> on

13 January 2023

Individual questions will not be replied to separately.

Potential applicants are advised to visit <https://efi.int/grants-training/grants/G-03-2022> regularly before the deadline for the submission of applications for any updates or modifications regarding this grant process.

### 3. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

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

Criteria	Description of criteria
E1	<p>Applicant is legally established or resident in one of the following countries:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Member States of the European Union, including their overseas departments and outermost regions</li><li>• Member States of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA)</li><li>• United Kingdom</li><li>• Albania</li><li>• Montenegro</li><li>• North Macedonia</li><li>• Bosnia and Herzegovina</li><li>• Serbia</li><li>• Ukraine</li><li>• Andorra</li><li>• San Marino</li></ul>

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

Applications fulfilling the above stated eligibility criteria will be evaluated on award criteria, stage 1.



#### 4. ADMISSIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

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All applications shall, to be considered in [stage 1](#), apply the following structure:

##### I. Administrative information

- Cover letter, using template annex 1
- Identification form, using template annex 2
- Declaration, using template annex 3
- Power of Attorney for Coordinator, as applicable, using template annex 4

##### II. Technical proposal

- Application submission form – stage 1, using template provided in [annex 5A](#)  
*(Please note that annex 5B is not submitted in Stage 1)*

#### Procedure to follow for applying, stage 1:

The Grant application shall only to be submitted to [grants@efi.int](mailto:grants@efi.int).

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

Application for grant G-03-2022, Bioregions Open Innovation Challenge 2022

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

12 February 2023, 23:00 UTC

**Procedure to follow if invited to [stage 2](#):**

The Applicant will submit Application submission form – stage 2, using template provided in annex 5B, as further instructed in writing by EFI.

Applicant will be invited to give an online presentation/pitch (max. 10 minutes) by the applicant followed by questions and answers by the evaluation committee (max. 20 minutes).

The presentation/pitch must address the following:

1. Solution and technology to implement it
2. Fit of the solution to one or more of the Bioregions Facility's regions
3. Roadmap: activities, resources required and available, engagement with stakeholders

## 5. AWARD CRITERIA

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### Award criteria for stage 1

Criteria that will be applied:

<b>Excellence</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Understanding of the state of the art and existing solutions</li><li>▪ Key differentiation and added value of solution proposed as compared with existing solutions</li></ul>
<b>Impact</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ The extent to which the solution addresses the requirements of the challenge</li></ul>

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

Applications must receive a score of at least a total of 7 points, of which at least 2.5 points in each of the categories *Excellence* and *Impact*, to be invited to a presentation/pitch and considered in stage 2 (award criteria for stage 2).

### Award criteria for stage 2

Criteria that will be applied:

<b>Presentation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Level of clarity, conviction, and engagement</li></ul>
<b>Context and fit</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Understanding of the regional context and the challenge to solve</li><li>▪ Appropriate fit of the solution to one or more of the Bioregions Facility's regions</li></ul>
<b>Implementation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Capacity and skills to develop and implement the proposed solution</li><li>▪ Quality and effectiveness of the Roadmap, including extent to which the resources assigned guarantee the implementation of the solution</li></ul>

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

Applications must receive a score of at least 2.5 points in each of the categories *Presentation*, *Context and fit*, and *Implementation*, to be considered for award of a grant.

The three Applications with the highest total score for *Presentation, Context and fit*, and Implementation will be awarded a grant, irrespective of challenge applied for.

In case of equal scores: Applications will be prioritised according to score under criteria *Implementation, Context and fit*, and *Presentation*.

## 6. TERMS AND CONDITIONS FOR SUBMISSION OF AN APPLICATION

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- 6.1 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>
- 6.2 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.
- 6.3 EFI may reject an application that is not in compliance with the instructions in the Call for grant or the Grant submission guidelines.
- 6.4 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.
- 6.5 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.
- 6.6 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.
- 6.7 Only applications sent to [grants@efi.int](mailto:grants@efi.int) will be considered.
- 6.8 Applications submitted after the deadline for submission will not be considered.
- 6.9 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.
- 6.10 Withdrawal of an application shall be done in writing.
- 6.11 All amounts shall be quoted in Euros.
- 6.12 Expenses incurred in the preparation and dispatch of an application will not be reimbursed by EFI.
- 6.13 Applications must be legible. EFI may reject applications that are not legible.
- 6.14 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.
- 6.15 The application shall be complete when submitted. EFI will disregard additional documentation or information submitted separately from the application, where not requested by EFI.
- 6.16 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.
- 6.17 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.

- 6.18 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	Declaration
Annex 4	Power of Attorney
Annex 5A	Application submission form – stage 1
Annex 5B	Application submission form – stage 2
Annex 6	Grant agreement