# Tree Production Innovation Fund

# Guidance to Applicants

In responding to the questions in the application form you should address the following points.

# Part 1 Application Detail

Note that the lead applicant must be a UK based business, sole trader, organisation, or research organisation. Should the lead applicant not be UK based, the application will be rejected. Public bodies are required to partner with private sector third party organisations to be eligible for funding.

Applications should be submitted to Forest Services by 23:55 on 11th May 2022. To make an application, please complete the TPIF application form and submit it to: tpif@forestrycommission.gov.uk before the closing date. Applications must be supported by a completed finance spreadsheet. Notification of success will be made to all applicants by 14th June 2022.

## Description of Project

The public description of the project should be a brief non-confidential description of the project that the Forestry Commission may use in online or printed publications; please describe the project objectives, key deliverables and expected benefits.

## Eligibility Criteria

This section seeks information to address the Eligibility Criteria: all projects seeking funding will be assessed against these eligibility criteria before progressing to evaluation against the Assessment Criteria.

Answer **all** questions. A negative or zero response to any question will result in the application being rejected.

# Part 2 Assessment Questions

All questions have a set word limit and any information exceeding this will not be evaluated.

## Question 1: Challenge (20%)

* Identify which of the three challenges the project will address.
* Explain how the proposed innovation will overcome barrier(s) to production.
* Describe how the outputs of the proposal will:
	+ result in enhanced quantity, quality and/or diversity of planting stock available for tree planting in England.
	+ better equip nurseries to supply the trees required for new woodlands and urban planting projects.
* Outline the specific need for and benefits of the proposed innovation in the context of nearest current options.

## Question 2: Approach and Innovation (10%)

Explain:

* Where the focus of the innovation will be in the project (i.e. application or development of existing technologies/approaches used elsewhere in the world, application or development of existing technologies/approaches used in other sectors, or a totally new approach);
* How this project fits with current technologies/approaches;
* And describe the nature of the outputs you expect from the project. Note that these will be detailed in any agreement.

## Question 3: Team resources and track record (10%)

* Describe the roles, skills and relevant experience of all members of the project team in relation to the approach you will be taking.
* Describe the resources, equipment and facilities required for the project and how you will access them.
* Provide details of any vital external parties, including sub-contractors, who you will need to work with to successfully carry out the project.
* If collaborative, describe the current relationships between the project partners and if/how these will develop as a result of the project.
* Highlight any gaps in the team that will need to be filled.

## Question 4: Market awareness (10%)

Specify the impacts this project is expected to have. How will you ensure the outputs are widely beneficial?

* How will the project outputs facilitate domestic tree nursery production?
* Will the impacts purely be of benefit to the project team and its direct customers, or will they have wider applicability?
* Will the outputs be practicable and widely accessible?
* Will the project require or result in collaboration across the sector? What will this collaboration look like and how might it benefit the tree nursery sector?

For highly innovative projects, explain:

* What the route to market might be;
* And how the project will seek to explore the market potential.

## Question 5: Deliverability (10%)

In support of responses to this question, applicants may submit a supplementary Gantt chart or equivalent outlining key activities, milestones and deliverables with their application.

Please outline:

* The main work packages and milestones of the project, lead partner assigned to each, and the total cost of each one;
* and describe your approach to project management, identifying any major tools and mechanisms that will be used to ensure a successful project outcome.
* Highlight your approach to managing the most innovative aspects of the project;
* Governance and the management reporting lines;
* your project plan in sufficient detail to identify any links or dependencies between work packages or milestones.

## Question 6: Risks (10%)

* Identify the main risks and uncertainties of the project, including the technical, commercial, managerial and environmental risks. Highlight the most significant ones, providing a risk register if appropriate.
* Explain how each of these risks will be mitigated.
* List any project inputs on the critical route to completion such as resources, expertise or data sets and how these will be met.

## Question 7: Additionality (10%)

* Tell us if this project could go ahead in any form without public funding and if so, the difference the public funding would make; such as a faster route to market, more partners, reduced risk. What would happen if the application is unsuccessful?
* Describe the likely impact of the project on the business of the partners involved.
* Explain how this project would change the nature of research and development activity the partners would undertake and related spend.

## Question 8: Costs and value for money (10%)

###### Match funding is not a requirement to be eligible for the TPIF. However, applicants are strongly encouraged to consider match funding where possible to demonstrate better value for money. Please reference your finances spreadsheet where appropriate.

###### Justify the total project cost and the grant being requested in terms of the project goals.

###### Outline any financial contributions (match funding) the partners will be making.

###### Explain how this project represents value for money to the FC and the taxpayer.

###### Justify the balance of costs and grant award across the project partners.

###### Justify any sub-contractor costs and explain why they are critical to the project.

###### Outline how goods and services will be procured to ensure value for money.

## Scoring

Scoring will be based purely on the detail included within the application form. The following evaluation system will be applied to each of questions:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Score** | **Description** |
| 0 | Unacceptable - Nil or inadequate response. Fails to demonstrate how the eligibility criteria are met. |
| 1 | Poor - Response is partially relevant and/or poor. The response contains insufficient/limited detail or explanation to demonstrate evidence of meeting the eligibility criteria.  |
| 2 | Acceptable - Response is relevant and acceptable. The response provides sufficient evidence of meeting the eligibility criteria and covers the majority of points expected for a given criteria. |
| 3 | Good - Response is relevant and good. The response provides full details of how the eligibility criteria will be fulfilled covering all of the points expected for a given criteria.  |
| 4 | Excellent - Response is completely relevant and excellent overall, possibly exceeding requirements. A well thought through project with all elements of question fully addressed and detail provided that exceeds some or all of the requirements. The response is comprehensive and provides a high level of detail on how the eligibility criteria are met. |

For question 1 (Challenge), the score will be doubled giving this criterion a 20% weighting. In the event of a tie and there being insufficient funds to support all projects, responses to ‘Challenge’ will be used to break the tie, with the highest score winning.

In addition, for the overall project, the level of innovation will be assessed by the evaluation panel as follows:

## Degree of innovation (10%)

0 – None: proposals are not innovative.

1 – Limited: use of existing technologies in novel ways/settings.

2 – Moderate: proposals demonstrate a novel approach, drawing on both new and existing forest nursery technologies and/or working practices.

3 – High: development or application of a technology, product or working practice that is entirely new to English forest nursery production

4 – Very high: development or application of an entirely new technology or product.

Please note that the TPIF is not a capital grant. Proposals must be innovative in order to be eligible for funding.

An application that scores 0 in response to any question will be rejected. Proposals must score a minimum of 20/40 to be eligible for funding.

## Example

For an application scored as follows:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Question | Score (out of 4) |
| 1. Challenge
 | 3 |
| 1. Approach and Innovation
 | 2 |
| 1. Team, resources and track record
 | 4 |
| 1. Market awareness
 | 2 |
| 1. Deliverability
 | 2 |
| 1. Risks
 | 3 |
| 1. Additionality
 | 3 |
| 1. Costs and VFM
 | 3 |
| 1. Degree of innovation
 | 3 |

The score for challenge would be doubled (3 x 2 = 6) and added to the remaining eight scores giving a total score of 28/40.

## Part 3 Finances

You must complete and submit a TPIF Finances Spreadsheet with your application.

The eligible costs shall include:

* Personnel costs related to researchers, and other supporting staff to the extent employed on the project;
* Contribution sought towards costs of equipment required to complete the project. Where equipment is not used for its full life, only the depreciation costs corresponding to the life of the project shall be eligible.
* Costs of contractual research, knowledge and patents bought or licensed from outside sources at arm’s-length conditions,
* Costs of consultancy and equivalent services used exclusively for the project;
* Operating expenses, including costs of materials, supplies and similar products, incurred directly as a result of the project.

The following expenditure is ineligible:

* Costs or overheads such as rent, and utilities apportioned to those staff directly or indirectly employed on the project.
* Travel and subsistence expenses.
* Costs incurred outside of the project delivery window.
* Costs involved in preparing your application.
* Costs currently being met by another grant scheme.

## Part 4 Funded activities and outputs

Detail the specific activities that will be funded and the expected outputs of the project. For multi-year proposals, break down activities into the financial years in which they will be carried out and outputs into the financial years in which they will be delivered. Where applicants do not wish to apply for grant funding in FY’s 2023/24 and 2024/25, they should leave corresponding boxes blank. The activities and outputs stated in part 4 will form part of any grant agreement.

## Required outputs

## All successful applicants will be required to complete a full report of the project, detailing achievement against stated outcome and outputs, lessons learnt, a complete cost breakdown outlining how the grant funding has been spent and any need for further development, by 27th March 2023. A preliminary report covering progress made towards project milestones, expenditure, emerging results and next steps must also be provided by the 31st October 2022. Templates for both preliminary and final reports will be provided to successful applicants by the FC. Applicants with multi-year proposals will be required to complete and submit preliminary and final reports on an annual basis.

## Terms and conditions

The terms and conditions that will apply to this grant are available online at the TPIF application webpage.

## Grant payment

Payments will be made by BACS transfer following receipt of claim forms. In any given financial year, applicants will be eligible to submit claims at both the preliminary and final reporting stages, and on up to two additional dates of their choosing. All claims must be supported by evidence of eligible expenditure (i.e. invoices/ timesheets) and, where not accompanied by a preliminary or final report, a progress update to demonstrate that works have been carried out as per the activities and outputs stated in the grant agreement. In 2022/23, the due dates for preliminary and final reporting are 31st October 2022 and 27th March 2023, respectively.

## Confidentiality

If you consider the information contained within your application to be commercially sensitive, you must notify the Forestry Commission of this when submitting your application. This will then be considered when requests for clarification are received. If relating information is relevant to all Applicants and you have indicated that you consider this commercially sensitive, we will discuss with you before releasing any information and may be unable to support the request due to the competitive bids process.

The Forestry Commission reserves the right not to answer clarifications where it considers that the answer to that clarification would or would be likely to prejudice commercial interests.

## Enquiries

You can get further help from the FC by emailing your enquiry to tpif@forestrycommission.gov.uk. Find out how to [make a complaint or appeal](https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/forestry-commission/about/complaints-procedure).