Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund

Guidance Notes for Applicants: Round 11

2024 - 2025

Please note: A review of UK government spending is due to be held before the current funding round completes. We will seek to inform applicants as soon as we can should this have an impact on the Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund. We encourage all applicants to apply as normal, but to bear in mind that results or start dates may be delayed and to plan your project with this in mind.

As an overview, all applications must be submitted:

- through the Flexi-Grant online application portal using approved templates;
- with all questions and sections completed, referencing evidence where required, word count indicates the level of detail required; if appropriate "n/a" is acceptable,
- in English;
- attaching the required supporting evidence, and
- signed, with a PDF signature uploaded as part of the Flexi-Grant application.

More information on the application process, including links to the Flexi-Grant application portal can be found [here](#).

> **Competition for funding is very strong, applications which**:
>
> - are incorrect or incomplete, including missing evidence/attachments or
> - do not match all published criteria, including eligible countries and dates or
> - are submitted using the incorrect/unofficial template, or incorrect file format, or
> - exceed stated page limits
>
> **will be rejected as ineligible**.

In addition to this guidance document, there are a number of other guidance documents and resources available which will help you in preparing your application. Please see the 'apply' page on the [IWT Challenge Fund website](#) for all relevant guidance documents.

If you can't find the answer, please contact the IWT Challenge Fund Administration Team at BCF-IWTCF@niras.com. Calls (Teams/Zoom/ Phone) can be arranged by email.

For queries specific to using the Flexi-Grant system, email: BCF-Flexigrant@niras.com

c/o NIRAS, Pentlands Science Park, Bush Loan, Penicuik, UK, EH26 0PL

Glossary

Biodiversity	"Biological diversity" means the variability among living organisms from all sources including, terrestrial, marine and other aquatic ecosystems and the ecological complexes of which they are part; this includes diversity within species, between species and of ecosystems.
Biodiversity Challenge Funds	Collective name for Defra's Darwin Initiative, Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund and Darwin Plus.
Capability & Capacity	Capability refers to the types of ability (skills and knowledge) required for a task; Capacity refers to the amount of ability at a point in time to deliver a task.
Complementary	Whilst distinct, activities are compatible and support the delivery of result, as opposed to having a negative impact on each other such as duplication or competition for resources.
Country	Normally refers (unless otherwise stated) to any country on the list of countries eligible for funding under the IWT Challenge Fund (see section 3.4), and not countries such as the UK.
Defra	IWT Challenge Fund is a programme of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), UK Government.
Demand Reduction	Interventions aimed at reducing demand for illegal wildlife trade products.
Ethics	The values, such as fairness, honesty, openness, integrity, that shape how an individual or an organisation operates and interacts with others.
Evidence	Is information that demonstrates project actions, outputs, outcomes and impact. It varies in format, quality and relevance and can include, documented and undocumented experiences, data, studies, policies, best practices, from a range of perspectives. However, evidence is particularly valued when it is quality assured, accessible and applicable.
GESI	Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (see section 3.7).
International organisations	Organisations that may have a presence in an eligible country, but a head office located in a country not listed as an eligible country (see section 3.4).
Innovation	The implementation of a novel or significantly improved approach (product, ways of working, and/or process) that differs from previous approaches. Innovation can include the implementation of tried and tested approaches in geographies, scales, contexts and ways than have not been used before.
Illegal Wildlife Trade (IWT)	All unlawful activities associated with the commercial exploitation and trade of wildlife, including live organisms, their parts or derivatives. Wildlife includes all wild fauna, flora, and fungi. Activities can be in contravention of national or international laws and regulations governing wildlife trade, for example, but not limited to, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).
IWT Challenge Fund Advisory Group (IWTAG)	IWTAG is a group of independent experts in IWT and poverty reduction that provide strategic advice, assess proposals and makes recommendations to Defra on funding decisions.

Lead Applicant	The individual who leads on the submission of the application and supporting materials, and will be the project contact point during the application process.
Lead Organisation	The organisation who will administer, lead and coordinate the delivery of the grant, accepting the Terms and Conditions of the Grant on behalf of the project.
Local/national organisations	Organisations of an eligible country (see section 3.4), with either a national or local remit, always formally registered within that country, and typically led by a national of the country.
Logframe	Logframes are a monitoring tool to measure a project's progress; comparing planned and actual results.
Matched Funding	Additional finance that is secured to help meet the total cost of the project, including public and private sources, as well as quantified in-kind contributions.
NIRAS	IWT Challenge Fund Administrator; first point of contact for projects and applicants.
ODA	Official Development Assistance – commonly known as overseas aid – is when support, expertise or finance is supplied by one government to help the people of another country via activities that promote economic development and welfare as a main objective.
OSJA	Overseas Security and Justice Assistance – a UK government process that considers risks to human rights and international humanitarian law that may emerge as a result of UK assistance to justice or security sectors overseas.
Partner(s)	Have a formal governance role in the project, and a formal relationship with the project that may involve staff costs and/or budget management responsibilities; this includes the Lead Organisation.
Poverty	Poverty is multidimensional and not solely about a lack of money; it encompasses a range of issues that hinder people's abilities to meet their basic needs and better their life with dignity including a lack of income, land, or other means of access to the basic material goods and services needed to survive with dignity, or a deficiency in healthcare, security, education or necessary social relations.
Project Leader	The individual with the necessary authority, capability and capacity, and a full understanding of their role and associated obligations, who takes responsibility for delivering value for money, managing risk and financial controls whilst fulfilling the terms and conditions of the grant.
P(SEAH)	(Protection from) Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment.
Safeguarding	Broadly means preventing harm to people and the environment. In practice, efforts often focus on taking all reasonable steps to prevent sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment (SEAH) from occurring, and to respond appropriately when it does.
Scale/ Scalability	The ability to deliver greater impact of a proven approach, either through expanding the scope of activities within a given geography or focal issue, taking the approach into a new geography or focal issue, or through uptake by stakeholders that promotes systemic change.

Stakeholder	Are consulted, engaged and/or participate in project activities as they have an interest or concern in the project and its impact. They can also be partners, but if not, they would not have a budget management, or a formal governance role, within the project. Stakeholders are not homogenous groups, and will include layers of diversity within them (see section 3.7)
Theory of Change	Explains the process of change by outlining causal linkages taking activities through to a desired outcome, being explicit about the assumptions underlying the expected causal pathways, and including an analysis of barriers and enablers as well as indicators of success. Often set out in a diagram and narrative form.
Value for money	Good value for money is the optimal use of resources to achieve the intended outcomes. Value for money is assessed using FCDO's 4Es approach which considers Economy, Efficiency, Effectiveness and Equity of spending on development initiatives.

Contents

There are several key changes for Round 11 of the IWT Challenge Fund.

- *The **Evidence** scheme has changed from a two stage process to a one stage process;*
- ***Gender Equality and Social Inclusion** and **Safeguarding** requirements have been clarified;*
- *An updated version of the IWT Challenge Fund Standard Indicator Guidance has been published;*
- *The approach to assess how projects are considering poverty reduction has been expanded.*

This list is not exhaustive, and it is important you read and understand all guidance in full to ensure you meet the key fund requirements, including the eligibility requirements, and to strengthen your application.

1. Introduction

The Illegal Wildlife Trade (IWT) Challenge Fund forms part of the UK Government's long-standing commitment to eradicate IWT. It competitively awards grants that seek to provide innovative and scalable solutions to reduce pressure on wildlife from illegal trade and, in doing so, reduce poverty in eligible countries (see section 3.4). The fund was launched in 2014 and has had significant reach: committing over £51m to 157 projects up to Round 9; working with local communities in over 60 countries across Africa, Asia, Latin America and Europe. It runs alongside Defra's Biodiversity Challenge Funds, including the Darwin Initiative and Darwin Plus, and also the Ocean Community Empowerment and Nature (OCEAN) Grants Programme. Please carefully consider which fund is the best fit for your proposed project.

There are three funding schemes to apply for as outlined below:

IWT Challenge Fund Extra: Grants ranging from £600,000 to £1,500,000, are for projects aimed at expanding activities that have already demonstrated success and impact at a smaller scale. This can be through landscape or replication scaling, or through delivering systems change which will have sustained impact beyond the project's original scale. Applications should provide evidence of the interventions success at a smaller scale, its potential impact at a larger scale, and the political and operational feasibility to scale. Competition for Extra grants is expected to be strong, and we anticipate making only a limited number of grants of this size.

Active IWT Challenge Fund Main projects can apply to IWT Challenge Fund Extra. Applicants will need to make a case for how new support would deliver additional activities and Outputs.

Duration: Projects should last between 2 to 4 years maximum. Projects are required to complete by 31 August 2029.

IWT Challenge Fund Main: Grants ranging from £75,000 to £600,000, are expected to deliver strong results to tackle IWT and poverty reduction based on good evidence, and strongly demonstrate the potential to scale. Main grants will be awarded to projects which test new and innovative interventions to provide proof of concept at a smaller scale. Applications should provide evidence for

the problem the intervention addresses, the gap it fills in existing approaches, and indicate its potential to be scaled in a real-world setting.

Duration: Projects should last between 1 to 3 years maximum. Projects are required to complete by 31 August 2028.

IWT Challenge Fund Evidence: Grants ranging from £20,000 to £100,000, are for projects which gather evidence to design an intervention. Applications should describe how the improved evidence base will be used to design an intervention where there is a gap in approaches. Projects may include, for example, market research to design and baseline demand reduction interventions. Applicants are encouraged to develop evidence projects into full interventions as part of follow-on applications to the IWT Challenge Fund.

Applications that contain significant interventions that are not focussed on evidence building should consider applying for an IWT Challenge Fund Main grant, as this maybe more appropriate.

Duration: Projects should last up to 2 years maximum. Projects are required to complete by 31 March 2027.

Table 1: Summary of Project Grants

Grant	Duration	Application Stages	Estimated Annual Number of Awards	Type of Project	Grant amount
Extra	2-4 years	2	1-2	Demonstrating a clear scaling pathway, building on good evidence from smaller projects to scale further	£600,000 - £1,500,000
Main	1-3 years	2	8-15	Providing good evidence, expected to deliver strong results, and demonstrate the potential to scale	£75,000 - £600,000
Evidence	Up to 2 years	1	<10	Focused on evidence gathering to design IWT interventions	£20,000 - £100,000

Figure 1: The timetable for IWT Challenge Fund Funding Rounds for 2024-25 are as follows:

IWT Challenge Fund Extra and Main:

Call for Stage 1 Applications open from **Tuesday 20th August** to **23:59 GMT** on **Monday 28th October 2024**. Results expected by **early February 2025.**

Call for Stage 2 is by invitation only (application link to be provided) by **early February 2025**.

Stage 2 Application Deadline – **22:59 GMT (23:59 BST)** on **Monday 31st March 2025.** Results expected by end of June 2025 **at the earliest**.

Successful projects are expected to start from 1st September 2025.

IWT Challenge Fund Evidence:

Call for Applications open from **Tuesday 20th August** to **23:59 GMT** on **Monday 28th October 2024**. Results are expected by **early February 2025 at the earliest**.

Successful projects are expected to start from 1st April 2025.

All Funding Rounds:

You should consider the best date to start your project to allow for start-up and recruitment, based on the expected notification of results.

All applications will be acknowledged within 5 working days of the funding round close. If you have not heard after 5 days, please contact the IWT Challenge Fund Administration Team via BCF-IWTCF@niras.com.

Please note: A review of UK government spending is due to be held before the current funding round completes. We will seek to inform applicants as soon as we can should this have an impact on the Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund. We encourage all applicants to apply as normal, but to bear in mind that results or start dates may be delayed and to plan your project with this in mind.

2. What kind of projects can be supported by the IWT Challenge Fund?

The intended impact of the IWT Challenge Fund is to provide innovative and scalable solutions to reduce pressure on wildlife from illegal trade and, in doing so, reduce poverty in eligible countries.

Applications should propose ideas that test or scale approaches in line with one or more of the IWT Challenge Fund themes:

1. Reducing demand for IWT products;
2. Ensuring effective legal frameworks and deterrents;
3. Strengthening law enforcement;
4. Developing sustainable livelihoods to benefit people directly affected by IWT.

These align with the themes that were agreed and reconfirmed by global leaders at the IWT Conference Series in 2018. Figure 2 suggests areas under each theme where the IWT Challenge Fund can advance global efforts and drive innovation. Applications supporting more than one theme will not achieve a higher score, and ticking themes that your proposal does not directly address may negatively affect your score.

Defra welcomes applications that cover a broad range of interests across these themes. If a large number of applications are received, we will prioritise projects that align with Defra's current strategic priorities. Please see Figure 2 below that provides further information on the thematic areas.

Figure 2: Thematic, species and geographic focus areas for IWT Challenge Fund projects.

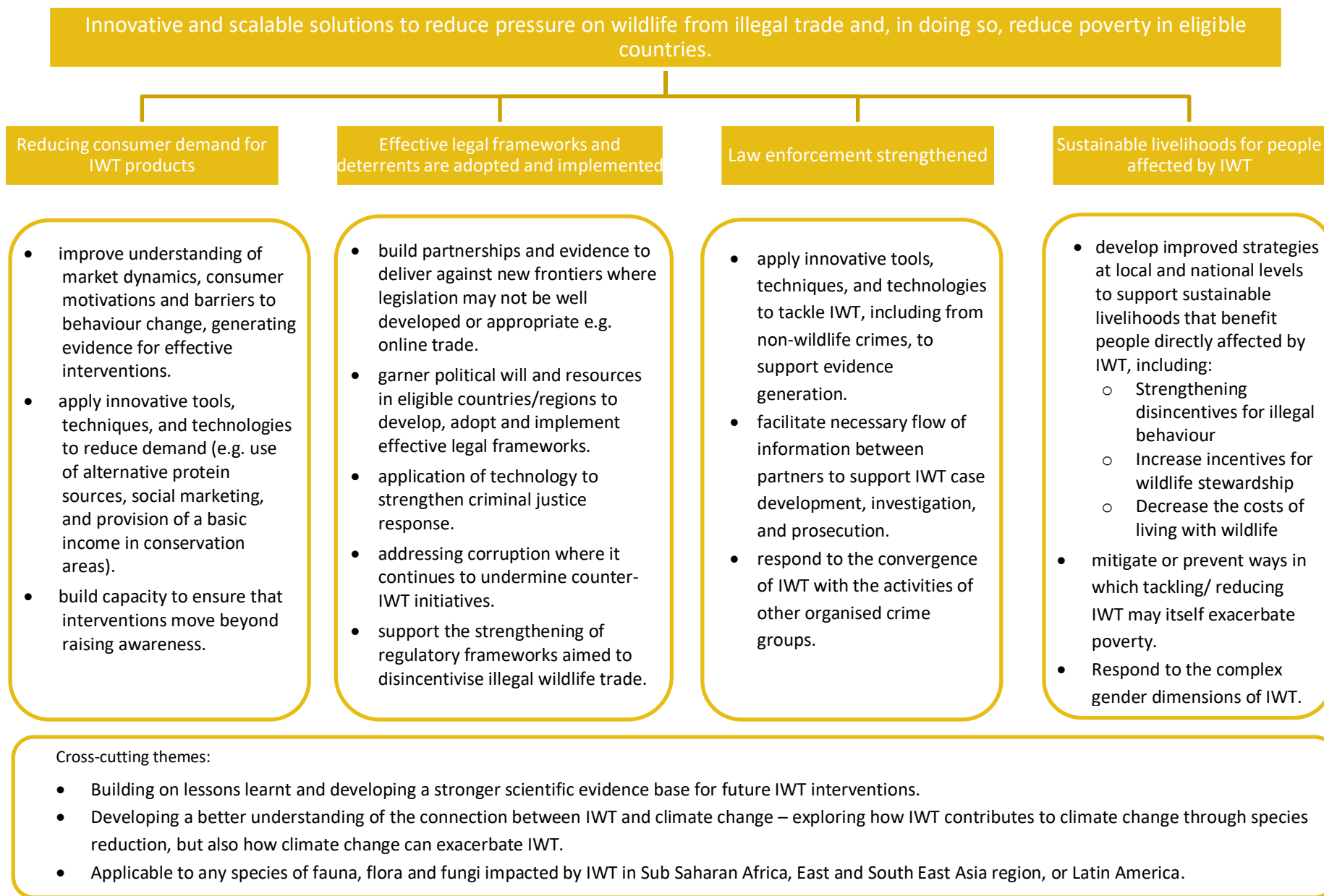| Innovative and scalable solutions to reduce pressure on wildlife from illegal trade and, in doing so, reduce poverty in eligible countries.			
Reducing consumer demand for IWT products	**Effective legal frameworks and deterrents are adopted and implemented**	**Law enforcement strengthened**	**Sustainable livelihoods for people affected by IWT**

• improve understanding of market dynamics, consumer motivations and barriers to behaviour change, generating evidence for effective interventions.
• apply innovative tools, techniques, and technologies to reduce demand (e.g. use of alternative protein sources, social marketing, and provision of a basic income in conservation areas).
• build capacity to ensure that interventions move beyond raising awareness.
	• build partnerships and evidence to deliver against new frontiers where legislation may not be well developed or appropriate e.g. online trade.
	• garner political will and resources in eligible countries/regions to develop, adopt and implement effective legal frameworks.
	• application of technology to strengthen criminal justice response.
	• addressing corruption where it continues to undermine counter-IWT initiatives.
	• support the strengthening of regulatory frameworks aimed to disincentivise illegal wildlife trade.
		• apply innovative tools, techniques, and technologies to tackle IWT, including from non-wildlife crimes, to support evidence generation.
		• facilitate necessary flow of information between partners to support IWT case development, investigation, and prosecution.
		• respond to the convergence of IWT with the activities of other organised crime groups.
			• develop improved strategies at local and national levels to support sustainable livelihoods that benefit people directly affected by IWT, including:
			   o Strengthening disincentives for illegal behaviour
			   o Increase incentives for wildlife stewardship
			   o Decrease the costs of living with wildlife
			• mitigate or prevent ways in which tackling/ reducing IWT may itself exacerbate poverty.
			• Respond to the complex gender dimensions of IWT.

Cross-cutting themes:
- Building on lessons learnt and developing a stronger scientific evidence base for future IWT interventions.
- Developing a better understanding of the connection between IWT and climate change – exploring how IWT contributes to climate change through species reduction, but also how climate change can exacerbate IWT.
- Applicable to any species of fauna, flora and fungi impacted by IWT in Sub Saharan Africa, East and South East Asia region, or Latin America.

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Along with identifying project theme(s), applications should make a clear case for:

- **Innovation** – Demonstrating how the proposed interventions are innovative, needed, and likely to be effective. Where there is evidence from historical and existing initiatives, including in geographies where there are other projects working on similar or related needs (this includes from the development sector), it is important that the project is able to clearly articulate how its activities and impacts add value. Innovation includes projects that are:
    - Novel to the area – using proven approaches in another geography or stakeholder group.
    - Novel to the sector – using an approach proven in a different sector tackle IWT.
    - Novel to the world – using a new approach, unproven in any sector.

- **Evidence use and generation, and scalability** – Due to the clandestine and complex nature of IWT, significant evidence gaps exist around its scale, impact, and appropriate responses. Improving the development and use of evidence and best practice is essential to support more effective design and implementation of interventions, and global strategies to combat IWT, while also making better use of limited resources. As such, projects must develop evidence of impact (or potential impact if scaled) and contribute to knowledge on best practice for supporting successful IWT interventions (see section 3.5).

    Successful interventions also need to have the potential to be scalable – contributing to a pipeline of proven projects/activities for other public and private investment to support and deliver global change. Approaches to scaling can include testing an approach in a new landscape or geography, or to a new issue or group of stakeholders. It could also include systems changes (e.g. new legislation), or increased capacity of organisations to achieve change (see section 3.8).

- **Capability and Capacity** – All projects should include activities that will enhance and strengthen the capability and capacity of identified local and national partners and stakeholders during its lifetime and in the future. Projects should also facilitate knowledge exchange and co-design with partners and communities. Examples include structured training, work placements, mentoring and partnership working. Please see the glossary for how the IWT Challenge Fund defines Capability and Capacity. The Darwin Initiative Capability and Capacity grant scheme is open to projects with a primary focus on developing the capability and capacity of national and local organisations to efficiently deliver effective and successful biodiversity conservation, including tackling IWT.

- **Poverty Reduction** – All projects are required to integrate considerations of multi-dimensional poverty reduction within the design of their projects. There are many different ways in which a project can support poverty reduction, and approaches will differ from project to project. For further information on best practices in terms of poverty reduction, please see the Illegal Wildlife Trade and Poverty Information Note. The glossary outlines how the IWT Challenge Fund defines poverty. Applications should:
    - state how a project's activities will support poverty reduction, including clearly identified beneficiaries;
    - address the ways in which the project might have negative impacts on poverty reduction e.g. through ill-targeted law enforcement;

- consider engaging partners from the development sector to design more effective and innovative approaches to poverty reduction.

The anticipated impact on poverty should be reflected in the logframe, see the Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Guidance for further details. Projects are also asked to reflect on Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) considerations (see section 3.7 3.7).

Applications are particularly encouraged from sub–Saharan Africa, East and South East Asia and Latin America. A full list of eligible countries can be found in section 3.4.

The full assessment criteria is included in section 5.4 5.4.

3. Project Requirements

3.1 Lead Organisation and Project Leader

Applications must be made by the Lead Organisation, not an individual, agreeing to the Terms and Conditions (see section 3.19) including managing the grant, its finances, reporting and governance. Foreign governments and their agencies cannot be Lead Organisations, though they can be a partner;

We expect Lead Organisations to demonstrate openness, honesty and realism about their capability and capacity, accepting accountability and responsibility for performance along the chain.

Lead organisations:

- Can be based anywhere but we strongly encourage projects to have local/national Lead Organisations where possible;
- Can include UK government agencies;
- Must not be seeking funds with a maximum annual value that exceeds 25% of the Lead Organisation's average annual turnover/income for the previous 3 years;

There is no limit on the number of applications a Lead Organisation may submit, but we would strongly encourage internal co-ordination to ensure all submissions are competitive. Defra may consider the number of applications from an organisation as part of their decision making process when awarding grants. Please see the Finance Guidance for more information on the requirements for a Lead Organisation.

The Project Leader is the individual with the necessary authority, capability and capacity, and a full understanding of their role and associated obligations to take responsibility for:

- delivering value for money, managing risk and financial controls whilst fulfilling the terms and conditions of the grant;
- being the first point of contact for all aspects of project management, and will be responsible for the overall management of the project and accountability of the award, on behalf of the institution they represent;

Where the Project Leader is not employed by the Lead Organisation, the reasoning behind should be made clear in the application, including their capability to control and be held accountable for the proposed project.

Given the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, the Biodiversity Challenge Funds (BCFs) has taken the decision to suspend all bilateral engagement with Russia, including sending any funds to any Russian organisation. Russian organisations are ineligible to be a Lead Organisation or Partner or involved on any BCFs grant. If you are unclear whether these restrictions apply in your specific case, please contact us.

3.2 Key Ecosystems, Approaches and Threats

Applicants are asked to identify up to three conservation actions that characterise your approach and up to three threats to biodiversity you intend to address.

- **Actions** that characterise your approach using the IUCN – CMP Unified Classifications of Conservation Actions Needed (Version 2.0) (see Table 2).
- **Threats** you intend to mitigate as they placing pressure on biodiversity using IUCN Threats Classification Scheme (ver. 3.2) (see Table 3).

Please refer to the original IUCN publications for greater detail.

Table 2: Level 2 Actions under the IUCN – CMP Unified Classifications of Conservation Actions Needed. (v 2.0)

Level 2 Actions	Level 3 Actions
1. **Land / Water Management**	site/area stewardship, ecosystem & natural process (re)creation
2. **Species Management**	Spp. stewardship, re-introduction & translocation, ex-situ conservation
3. **Awareness Raising**	outreach & communications, protests & civil disobedience
4. **Law Enforcement & Prosecution**	detection & arrest, criminal prosecution & conviction, non-criminal legal action
5. **Livelihood, Economic & Moral Incentives**	enterprises & alternative livelihoods, better products & management practices, market-based incentives, direct economic incentives, non-monetary values
6. **Conservation Designation & Planning**	protected area designation &/or acquisition, easements & resource rights, land/water use zoning & designation, conservation planning, site infrastructure
7. **Legal & Policy Frameworks**	laws, regulations & codes, policies & guidelines
8. **Research & Monitoring**	research & status monitoring, evaluation, effectiveness measures & learning
9. **Education & Training**	formal education, training & individual capacity development
10. **Institutional Development**	internal org. management & admin, external org development & support, alliance & partnership development, financing conservation

Table 3: Level 1 under the IUCN Threats Classification Scheme (ver. 3.2)

Level 1 Threats	
1. Residential & commercial (incl. tourism) development	7. Natural system modifications (fires, dams)
2. Agriculture & aquaculture (incl. plantations)	8. Invasive & other problematic species, genes & diseases
3. Energy production & mining (incl. renewables)	9. Pollution (domestic, commercial, agricultural)
4. Transportation & service corridors	10. Geological events
5. Biological resource use (hunting, gathering, logging, fishing)	11. Climate change & severe weather
6. Human intrusions & disturbance (recreation, war)	12. Other threats

3.3 Species

IWT Challenge Fund support is available to projects that relate to any species of fauna, flora and fungi impacted by IWT.

3.4 Eligible Countries

The IWT Challenge Fund is entirely Official Development Assistance (ODA) funded, and therefore projects must promote the economic development and welfare of eligible countries as a primary objective. The eligible countries listed in Table 4 below are all on the current OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) List. Proposals are particularly encouraged from sub–Saharan Africa, East and South East Asia and Latin America. However, projects will in practice be expected to be mostly focused on Low Income and Lower Middle-Income countries. Available funding will be ring-fenced to ensure that at least 70% is allocated to projects in Low Income and Lower-Middle Income Countries.

Upper Middle-Income countries (UMICs) are eligible, however, projects applying to work in a UMIC must clearly demonstrate a stronger case for support. This includes operating in areas of high importance for biodiversity and a clear poverty reduction need. Such applications must also clearly demonstrate that they will also:

- advance knowledge, evidence and impact in Least Developed or Low-Income Countries, or
- contribute to a global public good, for example by advancing understanding and/or strengthening the knowledge base related to biodiversity conservation/sustainable use and poverty reduction, or
- contribute to serious and unique advancements on a critical issue as a result of specific circumstances of the upper-middle income country that could not be made elsewhere.

Countries that have exceeded the high-income threshold for three consecutive years graduate from the ODA eligible list[1]. Applicants need to be aware that funding will cease if a project country graduates from the ODA eligible list during implementation.

An assessment of the likelihood of graduation impacting the project will be conducted by the Fund Administrator prior to a funding decision for any projects in this round that include for example China, Costa Rica, Guyana, Malaysia, Panama, St. Lucia and any other country that will potentially cease to be ODA eligible.

Please note that funding cannot be awarded to organisations or countries that are the target of UK government sanctions

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[1] oe.cd/dac-list-oda-recipients noting that not all ODA eligible countries are eligible under the IWT Challenge Fund.

Table 4. Eligible countries

Low-Income Countries	Lower Middle-Income Countries	Upper Middle-Income Countries
Afghanistan	Algeria	Argentina
Angola	Bhutan	Armenia
Bangladesh	Bolivia	Belize
Benin	Cabo Verde	Botswana
Burkina Faso	Cameroon	Brazil
Burundi	Congo	China (People's Republic of)
Cambodia	Côte d'Ivoire	Colombia
Central African Rep.	Egypt	Costa Rica
Chad	Eswatini	Cuba
Comoros	Ghana	Dominica
Dem. People's Rep. of Korea	Honduras	Dominican Republic
Dem. Rep. of the Congo	India	Ecuador
Djibouti	Iran	El Salvador
Eritrea	Jordan	Equatorial Guinea
Ethiopia	Kenya	Fiji
Gambia	Kyrgyzstan	Gabon
Guinea	Lebanon	Georgia
Guinea-Bissau	Micronesia	Grenada
Haiti	Mongolia	Guatemala
Kiribati	Morocco	Guyana*
Lao People's Dem. Rep.	Nicaragua	Indonesia
Lesotho	Nigeria	Iraq
Liberia	Pakistan	Jamaica
Madagascar	Papua New Guinea	Kazakhstan
Malawi	Philippines	Libya
Mali	Samoa	Malaysia
Mauritania	Sri Lanka	Maldives
Mozambique	Tajikistan	Marshall Islands
Myanmar	Tunisia	Mauritius
Nepal	Uzbekistan	Mexico
Niger	Vanuatu	Namibia
Rwanda	Viet Nam	Niue
São Tomé and Príncipe	Zimbabwe	Occupied Palestinian Territories
Senegal		Panama*
Sierra Leone		Paraguay
Solomon Islands		Peru
Somalia		Saint Lucia
South Sudan		Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
Sudan		South Africa
Syrian Arab Republic		Suriname
Tanzania		Thailand
Timor-Leste		Tonga
Togo		Türkiye
Tuvalu		Turkmenistan
Uganda		Venezuela
Yemen		
Zambia		

* Guyana and Panama will potentially cease to be eligible to receive ODA in 2026, and therefore cease to be eligible for this fund.

3.5 Evidence and refined best practices

Monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) are integral components of all IWTCF projects. In particular, IWT Challenge Fund projects should demonstrate that they are:

- Based on the best available evidence and scientific theory;
- Have a robust monitoring and evaluation framework to demonstrate impact and value for money;
- Be able to demonstrate how they are going to promote learning and support best practice, including through the open access of project outputs. For further guidance on open access and data sharing (see section 3.11).

Where applicable, a project should provide evidence of how it is building on existing work in the same thematic or geographic area. Project proposals should demonstrate an understanding of existing, related activities, and must identify how the proposed project aligns, and adds value, to these. A lack of awareness or understanding of related activities can undermine confidence in the proposal. The UNODC World Wildlife Crime Report, published in early 2024, may be of use to project leads when considering the role of their project in responding to global IWT trends.

Projects should aim to generate evidence on the impacts of the interventions they employ. There are numerous methods of attribution but they can generally be categorised as either counterfactual (quantitative) or theory-based (qualitative). In the counterfactual paradigm, an impact is defined as the comparison between what occurred and what would have occurred in the absence of the intervention (the counterfactual state). Attribution of impacts using theory-based approaches relies not on direct observation or estimation of a counterfactual, but on a deep understanding of the causal chains that link interventions to impacts. The means of attribution, or the methods used to measure impact, will depend on the type of intervention and indicators, but most projects will need to rely on multiple methods (both counterfactual and theory-based) to build a robust body of evidence.

It is important that project teams have the capacity from the outset to understand the methods that will be necessary to attribute impacts. Further guidance is given in the Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Guidance and Standard Indicator Guidance, available on the resources page of the IWT Challenge Fund website.

3.6 Capability and capacity

A significant limiting factor in tackling IWT is often gaps in capability and capacity. Human and technical capacity, poor infrastructure, limited collaboration, and a lack of suitable equipment can all hinder efforts to tackle IWT across the illegal supply chain, especially in eligible countries where resources may be scarce. All grants should include activities and/or structures that will enhance and strengthen the capability and capacity of identified local and national partners, and stakeholders during its lifetime and in the future. This includes local communities, national organisations, and the private sector.

Projects can enhance the capability and capacity of stakeholders through structured training, work placements, mentoring, improved infrastructure, technology and equipment, and partnership working. Projects can and should include activities that enhance the underpinning capabilities such as financial, communication, monitoring and evaluation, safeguarding, and risk management.

Capacity and capabilities can be built through partnerships to share knowledge and experience and develop effective and sustainable solutions to IWT. This includes working with local communities, the private sector (whose infrastructure and processes are used to facilitate illegal trade, such as the transport, technology, and financial sectors), NGOs, academia and government.

Project proposals should also give consideration to appropriate exit strategies to ensure that any benefits realised in the duration of the project can also be sustained post-funding (where applicable). This includes how knowledge, skills, data and evidence will extend beyond the lifetime of the project.

3.7 Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI)

Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) is comprised of two key terms, the BCFs define these as follows:

- **Gender Equality**: is about addressing inequalities and transforming the distribution of opportunities, choices and resources available to girls, women and non-binary individuals so that they have equal power to shape their lives and participate in the process thereby increasing equality between people of all genders.
- **Social Inclusion**: refers to the process of improving the terms of individuals and groups to take part in society, and the process of improving the ability, opportunity and dignity of people disadvantage and historically excluded from decision making and spheres of influence on the basis of their identity to take part in society.

GESI adopts an 'intersectional' approach, recognising that groups are not homogenous, and that people face overlapping discrimination based on age, disability, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity and other characteristics i.e. individuals can face multiple barriers.

The IWT Challenge Fund considers groups that self-identify as Indigenous People and Local Communities (IPLC) to be members of the individuals/groups covered by the Social Inclusion process as they have been disadvantaged and historically excluded from decision making based on their identity.

Evidence from the *Ecosystem Services for Poverty Alleviation* (www.espa.ac.uk) programme, and WWF's report on *Gender and Illegal Wildlife Trade*, demonstrates that individuals access resources differently depending on their gender and social background. For example, due to gender differences in roles and responsibilities, women in rural communities are often the main collectors of wild plant food and firewood, with men focusing on timber, wild meat, and control access rights and tenure due to patriarchal structures. As a result, women and men develop knowledge about different species, their uses and their management.

An understanding of how gender and social characteristics can result in exclusion, discrimination, and inequalities is fundamental to project design. Addressing these inequalities and ensuring equal participation of all can have a direct impact on an individual's ability to meet their basic needs and their access to income or services such as healthcare, security and education. Without a consideration of GESI, the aim of ending poverty (UN's Sustainable Development Goal 1: No Poverty) cannot be achieved.

Considerations of GESI are crucial to developing stronger projects and programming that provide a better understanding of relationships with the environment (knowledge, needs, roles and priorities). It helps identify the multitude of ways that different people access, use and control natural resources and ecosystem services, potentially enabling equal (or equitable) opportunities for all to benefit.

3.7.1　GESI in your application

The BCFs commit to a **minimum GESI sensitive programme**. A GESI Sensitive approach is understood to demonstrate programming will "do no harm", not exacerbate inequality, ensure meaningful and context appropriate engagement, and participation of those involved in the project. For further information please see our GESI Ambition Statement.

The approach taken to promoting equality between persons of different gender and social backgrounds, and ensuring individuals achieve equitable outcomes will be assessed at the proposal stage. While it is acknowledged there may be nuances in how projects deliver on a GESI sensitive approach through the various schemes, all successful projects must be able to demonstrate that they:

- Understand the GESI context in which the project is working within and ensure activities and interventions take contextual factors into account in the design and implementation of the project.

- Ensure inclusive and meaningful participation of all those engaging with the project.

- Will not contribute to or create any further inequalities[2].

The above are essential to projects achieving the minimum GESI sensitive standard however, projects are encouraged to push beyond these to deepen and improve their GESI contribution. For information on how to achieve a more ambitious GESI approach, please see Figure 3.

Figure 3: Definitions of the differing levels of GESI ambition

Projects that address basic needs and vulnerabilities of women and marginalised groups

Projects that increase equal access to assets, resources and capabilities for women and marginalised groups

Projects that address unequal power relationships and seek institutional and societal change

Sensitive → **Empowering** → **Transformative**

Projects that are able to demonstrate the integration of GESI considerations in their design and delivery plans, are likely to score more highly than those that cannot.

As a minimum, all projects are expected to report indicators disaggregated by gender but are encouraged to include gender or GESI focused indicators, where applicable.

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[2] As no action is neutral, by not giving due consideration to GESI, projects could unintentionally exacerbate inequalities, reinforce barriers or cause harm to already disadvantaged groups.

When planning your projects approach to GESI, some key questions that may be useful to consider are:

• What are the prevailing gender and social norms in the host country/location in relation to division of labour, access and control of resources, and ability to participate in decision making?

• How do these prevailing norms affect the project, in terms of what it can achieve, how it will engage with stakeholders, and how it needs to be designed?

• How will the project impact (positively and negatively) those engaged with the project in their domestic, economic and community roles and responsibilities, and in term of access to and control over assets?

• How will the project ensure equitable opportunities for those engaged in the project to influence and participate in decision making?

• How will the project ensure meaningful participation of stakeholders in project activities?

• Does the intervention address underlying barriers that exclude certain groups from accessing opportunities created?

• How will risks and unintended negative consequences be identified, avoided or mitigated against, and monitored?

Further resources include:

- UN Environment Programme – Why gender is important for biodiversity conservation
- UNDP – Gender Equality and Social Inclusion
- ISSD – Mainstreaming Gender Equality and Social Inclusion in Nature-Based Solutions for Climate Change Adaption
- ICF – Building sustainable development with Gender Equality and Social Inclusion in mind

3.8 Scalable Approaches

The IWT Challenge Fund is particularly interested in approaches and evidence that, if proven, have the potential to be scaled to deliver greater impact.

The application will ask applicants to set out their ambition and vision to scale their work in any of the following ways:

- **Landscape scaling:** test an approach and then apply it more broadly at the landscape/seascape level.
- **Replication scaling:** test an approach and apply it in another geography, or to another issue or stakeholder group.
- **Systems change scaling:** support system changes (e.g. legislation) that have impacts beyond their original scale.

- **Capacitation scaling:** leaving a legacy of higher capacity to achieve change, e.g. through improving the capacity of organisations, key individuals, or regionally (e.g. geographic clusters of projects, combining to build capacity and momentum).

Successful approach could be scaled through new finance or through uptake by stakeholders, markets or other mechanisms.

3.9 Risk management

Please see the Biodiversity Challenge Funds Risk Management Guidance for more information.

3.10   Communications

All grants are funded by UK public money (raised through taxation), so it is important to be able to clearly communicate how public money is being used.

Initially, each applicant is asked to provide a very short, plain English summary in the application form of what the project will do, which will be used in communication activities. This summary should be written for an audience with little or no prior knowledge of the issue.

During delivery, projects will be expected to engage and support wider communications and awareness raising activities to inform audiences what they are planning, learning and achieving.

3.11   Open access policy and data sharing

The UK Government is committed to push for a global transparency in the availability and use of data to improve accountability, decision making, and to help deliver sustainable development outcomes to people living in poverty.

Projects are likely to generate significant outputs including datasets, best practices, peer-reviewed journal articles and technical reports which will be of value to other countries and stakeholders. All evidence and data produced must be made freely available and accessible to all users, unless there are particular sensitivities involved.

Data collection, analysis, management and storage protocols should be established to ensure the integrity of evidence and its subsequent use within the project, the IWT Challenge Fund and beyond.

This includes all derived and raw data on species, land cover and land use, through appropriate national, regional and global databases. For help in identifying databases, please refer to: Compendium of guidance on key global databases related to biodiversity-related conventions[3].

The application should demonstrate that the publication of results and secure data storage has been thought through, a plan exists, and appropriate resources are included.

You may include appropriate costs in your budget to support open access publishing but be realistic about when articles will be published. It is likely that dates will fall outside the formal project, so it is worth considering matched funding for these costs.

Further information on open and enhanced access can be found on GOV.UK.

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[3] UNEP-WCMC. (2018). Compendium of guidance on key global databases related to biodiversity-related conventions. Cambridge (UK): UNEP-WCMC. https://doi.org/10.34892/9XC8-0D10

3.12 Transparency

Successful project applications, and reporting, will be published on the relevant fund website and elsewhere.

If there are any sensitivities within a project, for example detailed species location data that would increase threats, please bring this to our attention and these can be considered for redaction prior to publication.

3.13 Monitoring and evaluation (M&E)

A robust monitoring framework supports both the efficient delivery of the project as well the capability to demonstrate the direct or potential impact, and value for money achieved.

Further guidance is given in the Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Guidance and IWT Challenge Fund Standard Indicator Guidance, available on the fund website.

IWT Challenge Fund Extra projects are required to commission an Independent Final Evaluation to report by the time that the project completes. The costs of this should be included in the project budget, and within the total project cost for M&E.

3.14 Value for money

Projects must demonstrate strong value for money in terms of expected impacts from each pound spent. They must present a realistic budget and feasible timescales in what they hope to achieve.

> **What is value for money?**
>
> - **Value for money means aiming for the best feasible project for amount spent.** This means drawing on evidence to carefully appraise possible objectives and delivery options.
> - **It does not mean only doing the cheapest things.** We need to understand what drives costs and make sure that we are getting the best outcomes for the lowest price.
> - **Nor do we just do the easiest things to measure.** We need to explain what we value, be innovative in how we assess and monitor value for money and what results we are trying to achieve with UK taxpayers' money.
> - **Value for money is not something that applies only to project design.** It should drive decision making throughout the project cycle and in relation to running costs and evaluations.

Partners must demonstrate that they are pursuing continuous improvement, and applying stringent financial management and governance to reduce waste and improve efficiency. This can include the consideration of evidence from relevant historical and existing initiatives, and reflect this in project design, incorporating lessons learnt, to maximise the chance of success.

Projects should secure matched funding to help meet the total cost of the project, from public and/or private sources, as well as quantified in-kind contributions as far as possible.

Please see the Finance Guidance for further information.

Projects should openly acknowledge the work of others (past and present), and in particular demonstrate in their application an understanding of projects within their area (thematically and/or geographically) to clearly establish how the project will be complementary and add value. Funded Projects should not significantly cut across or duplicate the work of others as this is inefficient and provides poor value for money.

A project's value for money in terms of its expected impact relative to cost (see Finance Guidance), is a more important consideration than its absolute size and length.

All projects will have to meet financial and reporting requirements, therefore the costs of meeting these should be factored into proposals. For example, an evidence project that lasts longer than two years is unlikely to represent good value for money because of the high transactional costs involved with its delivery relative to the IWT Challenge Fund grant size.

3.15 Safeguarding

Defra believes that everyone regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation[4] has the right to be protected from all forms of harm, abuse, neglect and exploitation.

If you have any questions or concerns around Safeguarding or Protection from Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment (PSEAH) please contact the fund administrators NIRAS for further advice and guidance[5].

> *All organisations within a project must uphold the IASC 6 Core Principles and/or the relevant standards on PSEAH of the Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS) as required by the terms and conditions of the grant (see section 3.19).*
>
> *Future terms and conditions of the grant are likely to include the Common Approach to PSEAH (CAPSEAH) in addition to the standards above.*

To be eligible for funding, the Lead Organisation must demonstrate that they:

1. have appropriate and proportionate safeguarding policies and procedures in place, tailored to the project, and reflecting GESI factors and power relationships, to protect staff, implementing partners, the public, and beneficiaries. The policy must include a statement of commitment to safeguarding and a zero-tolerance statement on inaction to tackling bullying, harassment and sexual exploitation and abuse;

2. have in place a Code of Conduct signed by all staff and volunteers that sets out clear expectations of behaviours - inside and outside the workplace - and what will happen in the event of non-compliance or breach of these standards;

3. have an accessible and clearly communicated whistle-blowing mechanism which protects whistle blowers from reprisals, and includes clear processes for dealing with concerns raised;

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[4] The Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund is a UK government fund, and it is against UK law to discriminate against someone because of a protected characteristic, these are: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation (Protected characteristics | EHRC (equalityhumanrights.com)).

[5] The Safeguarding Resource and Support Hub is an online resource with further guidance on strengthening your organisation's PSEAH procedures.

4. proactively share safeguarding policies with all partners, ensuring that they *understand and meet the required standards*, offering support where required as part of their Due Diligence process for working with downstream partners;

5. ensure all staff from lead organisation and project partners are trained in safeguarding and PSEAH;

6. provide community sensitisation on expected standards of behaviour of staff and how to report complaints and provide feedback on services; appropriate and proportional to the project activities;

7. actively identify, assess and monitor safeguarding risks in the project risk framework;

8. have clear investigation and disciplinary procedures for SEAH allegations and complaints that are survivor centred, and in line with best practice[6].

Additionally, Defra strongly encourages organisations to follow the safer recruitment guidelines and engage a member of staff to act as a Safeguarding Focal Point (SFP) to monitor and ensure safeguarding is embedded throughout the project lifetime.

> *Inability to demonstrate the above does not automatically exclude you from applying, rather it can help you identify priority areas for strengthening your safeguarding processes and procedures. If you feel this applies to you, please contact the fund administrators prior to applying.*

Defra are committed to ensuring that where possible sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment (SEAH) is prevented, and all people are protected. However, it is recognised that cases of SEAH do arise. Defra operate a zero-tolerance to inaction on SEAH and projects are required to take all reasonable and adequate steps to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment of any person (staff, implementing partners, the public and beneficiaries) linked to the delivery of the grant.

All projects must immediately report to Defra (ODA.Safeguarding@defra.gov.uk) any allegations or strong suspicions of sexual exploitation, abuse or harassment, this includes those that are *not directly related to the programme but would be of significant impact to their partnership with Defra or the reputation of Defra or UK aid*. Failure to report to Defra any allegation, even in the case where it's determined to be unfounded, may result in funding being suspended or stopped.

Applications and projects' safeguarding approach is assessed against the CAPSEAH Principles and Minimum actions. For more information on how your organisation can meet the minimum actions please see CAPSEAH Practical Guidance for Organisations and/or Projects.

3.15.1 Human rights

All UK supported projects must uphold our values and be consistent with our domestic and international human rights obligations. Human rights and International Humanitarian Law risks must be considered by projects prior to funding to ensure projects identify and mitigate risks. This includes where there is a likelihood that the project's involvement may inadvertently lead to unlawful arrest or detention, unfair trial or unfair treatment of detainees in custody.

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[6] Safety of all parties involved in an allegation is paramount. For an example of appropriate SEAH investigation guideline see here.

Applications must consider what measures may be taken in order to mitigate any risk that might directly contribute to a violation of human rights and/or International Humanitarian Law.

Further information on the assessment of projects operating in the security and justice sector can be found in [Overseas Security and Justice Assistance (OSJA) guidance](#). Please note these assessments are led by Defra and applicants will be consulted where applicable.

Further information about the UK Government's approach to Human Rights can be found on GOV.UK: https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/human-rights-internationally.

3.15.2 Intelligence focused IWT activities:

Intelligence-led or focused law enforcement activities carry significant physical, legal, psychological, ethical and organisational risks. These activities include (but are not limited to) the use of human sources (commonly known as 'informants'), and covert investigative activities of any type which involve the purposeful use of covert tactics (i.e. covert surveillance of any type) or assets (i.e. covert agents or officers). These risks are likely to extend beyond the direct control of organisations who support investigative law enforcement agencies. This is a very specialised area of law enforcement which should be stringently evaluated for achievability and impact. There are many overseas jurisdictions where legal frameworks enabling the protection of sources, methodology, and tactics is not undertaken, and many aspects of this type of work may have to be disclosed. This includes pure intelligence gathering (as opposed to evidence gathering). This extends to being unable to prevent the disclosure of the identity of sources of information or sensitive methodology.

Defra therefore discourages the use of covert investigative tools and methods unless grantees have strong, relevant expertise within the project team, which will need to include verifiable or certificated experience in a law enforcement context. Applications should also demonstrate how you will ensure safe implementation of such tactics, security of sources and methodologies, and any sensitive criminal intelligence or data collected. There should be an explicit reference acknowledging and identifying the relevant risks involved, along with achievable mitigation. Any activity of this type must be confirmed by the grantee to be lawful within their project country.

3.16 Ethics

Projects are expected to meet the key principles of good ethical practice, and demonstrate this in the application. All projects must:

- meet all legal and ethical obligations of all countries and organisations involved in the project, including relevant access and benefit sharing legislation pertaining to the utilisation of genetic resources, and associated traditional knowledge;
- follow access and benefit sharing best practice where legislation is incomplete or absent;
- include strong leadership and participation from contributing countries and the communities involved to enhance the incorporation of their perspectives, interests and knowledge, in addressing the wellbeing of those directly impacted by the project;
- recognise the value and importance of traditional knowledge, alongside international scientific approaches, and methods;
- respect the rights, privacy, and safety of people who are impacted directly and indirectly by project activities;
- use Prior Informed Consent (PIC) principles with communities;

- protect the health and safety of all project staff; and demonstrate this through an appropriate Health, Safety and/or Security policy or Security Plan;
- uphold the credibility of evidence, research and other findings.

Funding may be frozen or withdrawn in the event that these principles are not met.

Staff involved in the design or conduct of research should maintain the independence and integrity of the process, including intellectual detachment from personal convictions relating to the topic.

3.17   British embassies and high commissions

All applicants are required to contact British embassies and high commissions in the project country/ies; a list of these can be found on GOV.UK: https://www.gov.uk/world/embassies. The purpose of this is to provide an opportunity for the British embassies or high commissions to be aware of proposed work and potentially advise on any security or political sensitivities. However, we recognise that their capacity to support or engage projects is varied and they may not always be able to respond. Applicants will not be penalised if they are unable to obtain comments from the embassy or high commission to submit alongside their application, provided they have made an attempt to contact them in sufficient time to allow engagement.

All applications may be shared with other UK Government Departments including the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO); and their views may be taken into account in the assessment process.

If your application is successful, the relevant British embassies or high commissions will be informed and may, depending on their resource levels, seek to publicise the award, or be involved in any formal launch, and may wish to develop a relationship with the project during delivery.

3.18   Project Partners

Partnerships can help maximise impact. Organisations with a common vision, combining their complementary resources, experiences and competencies and sharing risk, can maximise impact in terms of scale, quality, sustainability and benefits.

All projects are encouraged to seek and work with local/national partners, particularly where meaningful and early engagement (before the application stage) will help to identify local priorities and co-designed salutations.

Differing from Stakeholders, Partners have a formal governance role in the project, and a formal relationship with the project that may involve staff costs and/or budget management responsibilities. Applications should be co-developed with partners.

In contrast, Stakeholders would not have a budget management, or a formal governance role, within the project but are consulted, engaged and participate in project activities.

3.19   Terms and Conditions

Successful applicants will be issued a grant award letter with the Terms and Conditions that will apply to the grant, including the grant purpose, value, period, and reporting and financial arrangements.

Copies of the Terms and Conditions are available on the IWT Challenge Fund website, and you should understand these fully before making an application to ensure compliance will not be an issue. If applicants, such as public bodies or UN organisations, are subject to established approaches (e.g. with insurance, liability or the Information Act) then please raise this with us as soon as possible if it means they may not be able to accept the Terms and Conditions.

Defra retains the right to amend these conditions at any time.

3.20   Funding from any other UK Government body

Applicants are required to indicate whether they have received, applied for, or plan to apply for any other UK Government funding for their proposed project or a similar project. If this is the case, applicants are required to disclose details of their applications, explaining how the activities funded by the IWT Challenge Fund are distinct and complementary.

However, applicants cannot make multiple funding applications for the same or similar project in the same year to IWT Challenge Fund, Darwin Plus and/or Ocean Community Empowerment and Nature (OCEAN) Grants Programme. Failure to declare multiple applications for the same or similar project could result in all applications being rejected.

4. How to apply

All applications must be submitted:

- through the Flexi-Grant online application portal, using approved templates;
- with all questions and sections completed, referencing evidence where required, word count indicates the level of detail required; if appropriate "n/a" is acceptable,
- in English;
- attaching the required supporting evidence (see Table 5 below), and
- signed, with a PDF signature uploaded as part of the Flexi-Grant application.

> **Competition for funding is very strong, applications which**:
>
> - are incorrect or incomplete, including missing evidence/attachments or
> - do not match all published criteria, including eligible countries and dates or
> - are submitted using the incorrect/unofficial template, or incorrect file format, or
> - exceed stated page limits
>
> **will be rejected as ineligible**.

Table 5: Summary of Required and Optional supporting evidence for Stage 1 and Stage 2.

	IWT Challenge Fund		
	Extra & Main Stage 1	**Extra & Main - Stage 2**	**Evidence**
Cover Letter	**Required (2 sides of A4 maximum).** The cover letter **supports your application by** referring to, rather than duplicating the application. For a Stage 1, new application, highlight significant points about your application or organisation, but avoid repeating information already in the application. Responses to previous feedback should be included in the specific "feedback response" question in the application, not in your cover letter.		
Logframe	**Required** on Stage 1 template.	**Required on Stage 2 / Single Stage template.**	**A simplified logframe** is within the application form.
Budget and Financial Evidence	Required within application form only.	**Required** on correct Excel template. Two sets of audited or independently examined accounts covering the last three financial years.	
Workplan	**Not required**	**Required** on Workplan template	
Safeguarding Policy	**Not required**	**Required** – Lead Organisation's Safeguarding Policy (see section 3.15) must be submitted as a **single PDF file**.	
CVs and Job Descriptions	**Not required**	**Required**, 1 side of A4 per CVs (or job descriptions if vacant) of all the key project staff named in the application form **merged and submitted** as **a single PDF file**. See Annex A. If you cannot secure a CV from a named Project Staff member, please provide an explanation why, along with a summary of the skills and experience of the team member concerned. CVs are important to demonstrate the skills an individual brings to the team.	
Letters of support	**Not required**	**Required** from all project partners (**including from the lead organisation**) on **headed paper** and **must be in English** (or translated – this does not have to be an official translation). If needed, please explain why any partner has not provided a letter of support. Letters of Support from key stakeholders are **encouraged but not required**. Letters of Support must be **merged and submitted** as a **single PDF file**, and provide strong evidence of: • support for the need of the project • the role of the partner in the project • support for the application and the importance of the work to your organisation • your relationship with partners and stakeholders your ability to deliver high quality results and enable productive partnerships any commitment to matched funding	

IWT Challenge Fund			
	Extra & Main Stage 1	**Extra & Main - Stage 2**	**Evidence**
Risk register	Not required	**Main** - Submitted if awarded, on Risk Framework Template, with Delivery Chain Mapping completed. Issues Log should not be completed.[7] **Extra projects** - Required on Risk Framework template, with Delivery Chain Mapping completed. Issues Log should not be completed.	Not required
Counter Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Policy	Not required	Policy setting out compliance with the anti-bribery and anti-corruption Terms and Conditions **may be requested** at any point, but should not be submitted with your application.	
Ethics Policy	Not required	Policy setting out compliance with the key principles of good ethical practice (see section 3.16) **may be requested** at any point, but should not be submitted with your application.	
Map, List of references	Optional, maximum of 5 sides of A4.	To further support your application, if desired a map, and/or list of references can be optionally submitted in a **single combined PDF**; hyperlinks are not permitted, and must not exceed a **maximum of 5 sides of A4** in total as additional pages will **make your application ineligible**.	
Theory of Change	Not required	**Required** for Extra, no specific template. Optional for Main but this should be included within your 5 page optional materials.	Not required

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[7] Applicants may be asked to submit their risk register with their Stage 2 application if concerns about risks are identified at Stage 1 review.

5. Assessment process

All eligible applications that pass the initial review will be assessed by the Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund Advisory Group (IWTAG), who are independent experts in IWT and poverty reduction (see, https://iwt.challengefund.org.uk/about-us/iwt-challenge-fund-advisory-group/).

IWTAG follows a strict code of practice: if any member has been involved in or is closely associated with an application, the applicant or a project partner, they declare their interest and play no role in its assessment or discussion during the sift meeting in which applications are reviewed. These declarations of interests are regularly reviewed. An overview of the process for assessment is:

1) **Initial Review:** Applications that are poor quality, incomplete or do not meet the essential eligibility criteria or standard will be rejected. You will be informed of the reasons for rejection.
2) **Independent Expert Review:** Applications are reviewed and scored by at least three members of IWTAG, against the assessment criteria (see section 5.4) to inform the discussion at the Sift Meeting.
3) **Sift Meeting:** The experts discuss comments and agree the strongest applications to recommend for funding or inviting to Stage 2 (repeating step 2 and 3).

Funding Decision: Prior to funding being awarded Defra reviews IWTAG's recommendations, and due diligence checks. This also includes review of a project's safeguarding procedures, contextual risks and alignment with Defra's policy priorities.

Defra reserves the right to apply more stringent assessment at the Initial Review if the number of applications is high to ensure that the experts can robustly review those with the highest chance of being discussed at the Sift Meeting.

5.1 Results of applications

Once the Funding Decision has been made, all Lead Applicants (both successful and unsuccessful) will receive notification via email from Flexi-Grant.

If you are successful, in the case of a Stage 1 proposal, you will receive an invitation to Stage 2, if successful at Stage 2 or as part of a single stage process, an offer of funding.

Defra retains the right to clarify any issues raised during the application process or to award funding subject to required amendments. If the applicant is subsequently unable to meet the requirements of the award, Defra retains the right to withdraw the offer.

5.2 Feedback

The IWT Challenge Fund receives a significant number of applications, we are therefore unable to provide detailed feedback to all applicants. Only successful applicants or those considered competitive but narrowly miss being invited to Stage 2 or recommended for funding will receive detailed feedback to help strengthen future applications - please see full details below.

- Applicants recommended to Defra for funding are provided specific feedback that form a caveat of funding or a recommendation.

- Applicants invited to submit a Stage 2 application are provided specific feedback on their Stage 1 application; this must be responded to in the specific "feedback response" question in the application.
- Near-misses: applications that are considered competitive but narrowly miss being invited to Stage 2 or recommended to Defra for funding are provided specific feedback on how to strengthen future applications.
- Non-Competitive applications that are significantly below the expected standard and would require substantial work to be competitive are provided no feedback.

5.3 Resubmission of applications

If your application is unsuccessful, you may submit a revised application to a future round.

A resubmitted application will only be accepted once, unless there is prior agreement owing to exceptional circumstances or the proposed project is significantly different. Any resubmission should include a cover letter with your application, outlining how you have responded to any feedback to strengthen your application.

An unsuccessful application may only be resubmitted once, unless the proposed project is significantly different. You must explicitly set out how and where you have addressed all the comments/ feedback in the application form for your resubmitted application: briefly restating the feedback point, then clearly setting out how you have responded to it in the application.

5.4 Assessment criteria

The evidence presented in each application is assessed by members of IWTAG against the criteria below, taking into consideration the type of grant being applied for, and the IWT theme(s) it looks to address. At least three assessors score each application. Each of the assessors' scores are added into a single application score, with an accompanying qualitative rating for poverty reduction, to inform the Sift Meeting.

Project scores are also assessed by the Fund Administrator and Defra. This is particularly important when determining a project's likely impact on poverty reduction, with this being a critical requirement in the award of ODA funding. Defra reserves the right to make the final funding decisions to ensure the continued alignment of the Fund with Defra strategic priorities.

The same scoring criteria is used at Stage 1 and Stage 2, acknowledging the differences between the two stages:

- At Stage 1, assessors are looking for evidence that projects are responding to a need, are innovative, offer value for money and have the potential to deliver a competitive proposal at Stage 2.
- At Stage 2 or as part of the single stage Evidence assessment, assessors are looking for evidence that projects have the necessary experience, support and have strong probability of delivering sustainable benefits, including the feasibility to scale.

Unless noted, all benefits or impacts are in reference to the eligible country.

Assessor Criteria =   IWT Impact (0-6 points)

Technical Merit (0-6 points)

Poverty Reduction (Qualitative Assessment)

IWT Impact (0-6 points)

1) Demonstrates strong evidence of an identified in-country need for innovation/capability and capacity on the IWT and poverty reduction challenge.
2) The project is supporting the development of *innovative solutions and insights that could lead to new effective products, processes or services to deliver more desirable and useful solutions than currently available.*
3) The project is scalable and provides evidence of the intervention's success at a smaller scale and its potential impact at a larger scale.
4) The project has clear logic of why and how its Outputs will contribute towards one or more of the four themes for IWT (below), including how these will be monitored and evidenced and will make a clear contribution to *tackle IWT in the country/ies:*
    - Reducing demand for IWT products
    - Ensuring effective legal frameworks and deterrents
    - Strengthening law enforcement
    - Developing sustainable livelihoods to benefit people directly affected by IWT
5) The project provides *evidence of its potential impact, including the problem it addresses, and the gap it fills in existing approaches. Evidence projects should describe how the improved evidence base will be used to design an intervention, the problem the intervention will address and the gap it will fill.*

6) The project does not duplicate other work, has analysed relevant historical and existing initiatives and will either *build on or take work already done into account in project design to maximise lesson learning and synergies.*

7) The project is tackling an identified and urgent issue relevant to *species of fauna, flora and fungi impacted by IWT.*

8) The project is working with local/national partners, with meaningful and early engagement before the application stage to identify priorities and co-design solutions

Technical Merit (0-6 points)

1) The evidence-based methodology is robust, clear and appropriate to meet the identified need and achieve the targeted Outcome, with a well-defined exit strategy.

2) As appropriate, the project includes work that is innovative and distinctive, with targeted Outputs and Outcomes that are new, additional, and measurable (SMART), aligned to Monitoring Evaluation and Learning Guidance; it will not cut across or duplicate work already being funded or completed.

3) Demonstrates good value for money, in terms of the scale and impact, and includes the ability to leverage matched funding.

4) Risks are identified, assessed and have robust mitigation actions.

5) Demonstrates evidence of a highly collaborative approach, involving early and strong participation of local partners, stakeholders, and communities.
   - Demonstrates how it will strengthen the capability and capacity of key stakeholders.
   - e.g. If project includes markets, demonstrate a strong justification for the choice of focal market both in terms of relevance to conservation and development goals as well as commercial feasibility of intervention[8].

Additional questions considered at Stage 2

1) Safeguarding, security and ethical issues will be managed to a high standard.

2) The project has sustainable post project strategy, has demonstrated the potential and feasibility to scale where appropriate, and is designed to leave a legacy, through a real and lasting impact.

3) The Project Team has the necessary capability and capacity to support the successful delivery of the project as evidenced by the submitted CVs, and includes identified local partners.

4) Provides a clear plan of how it will make evidence (including data, lessons learnt and best practices etc.) widely available and freely accessible.

Poverty Reduction and Gender Equality & Social Inclusion (high/medium/low/none)

Assessors will also make a qualitative assessment of the degree to which poverty reduction and GESI have been considered in the design of the project. Project proposals should clearly indicate:

- A definition of poverty that is relevant to the specific context of the project;
- The project's intended direct or indirect contributions to poverty reduction;
- The project's Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) ambition and how this links to poverty reduction;

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[8] Please see the evaluation carried out by the BCFs on using best practice from the economic development sector, specifically on adopting marked-based approached to enhancing peoples livelihoods, available here.

- A strong evidence base on how this intervention will contribute to poverty reduction (or, if evidence is weak, how the theory will be tested and the programme will contribute to the evidence base);
- A clear plan to monitor poverty-related effects of the programme.

This will be assessed using the framework in Table 6 as shown below. The poverty reduction score will be considered within the context of the themes being addressed within the project, with awareness that some themes may find poverty reduction harder to evidence. As such, a high poverty reduction score does not necessarily require a project to meet all of the points in Table 6. Please see the [Illegal Wildlife Trade and Poverty Information Note](#) for examples of successful IWT/poverty interventions.

Table 6: Poverty reduction – Qualitative Scoring Matrix

	Evaluation question	High	Medium	Low
Stakeholder Engagement	Demonstrates evidence of a highly collaborative approach, involving early and ongoing participation of local partners, stakeholders, and communities, with locally led approaches to poverty reduction proposed.	The project team operate in a participatory way; they centre local communities and locally based stakeholders in the design, management and implementation of the project. The project clearly has locally led and defined solutions to poverty reduction and tackling IWT. The project is focused on empowerment of vulnerable or marginalised communities or groups.	Some participatory strategies proposed. Local communities and locally based stakeholders consulted in the design stage of the project; however, it may not be clear how local stakeholders will lead aspects of the project; or the project will primarily be led, managed and implemented by actors external to the local area (including national and international organisations).	The project offers little or no engagement with local communities or locally based stakeholders in the design of the project. The exception is where there is a robust defence of the ethical reasons for not consulting with local communities e.g. unfairly raising expectations amongst vulnerable communities, or communities that already feel over stretched by external demands.
GESI Ambition	Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) is understood and appropriately reflected in the project's design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Intentional or unintentional increased inequality or exclusion will be prevented.	Using the GESI approach, the project is Empowering / Transformative. GESI principles have been carefully integrated throughout the design of the project; project team show awareness of how IWT and poverty are shaped by intersecting social inequalities (gender, age, race, class, caste, ethnicity, disability, sexuality),and have designed project interventions to address these.	The project is GESI sensitive. The project has considered and mitigated against the risk of doing harm or exacerbating inequality. The project provides some positive measures (e.g. considering the gender balance of the team or designing aspects of the project to empower women) but may fail to include measures that actively tackle all relevant forms of intersecting social inequalities.	The project is not GESI Sensitive. The Project team have interpreted GESI in a limited sense (e.g. as gender balance in the project team); or have not considered gender or social inclusion at all. Project team do not indicate awareness of other forms of intersecting social inequalities and protected characteristics.

	Evaluation question	High	Medium	Low
Programme Team Capacity / Expertise	The proposed project team and partners include development / poverty reduction specialists, with the skills and experience necessary to deliver the poverty component of the project.	Project team have actively partnered with development/poverty reduction experts or organisations. Or strong evidence provided of relevant development expertise within project team.	Consultation with development and/or poverty reduction experts or organisations at the design stage, but they are not involved in managing or implementing the project. Some development expertise within project team.	The project has not consulted development and/or poverty reduction experts or organisations. Little evidence of development expertise within project team.
Definition of Poverty	The project demonstrates a holistic understanding of poverty within the project context and meaningful integration of considerations of poverty to the project's design.	Poverty is defined as lack of power, prestige, ability to shape one's future and thrive, which encompasses but goes further than conventional interpretations of wellbeing. This definition acknowledges how intersecting characteristics may exacerbate inequalities (gender, race, ethnicity, class, caste, sexual orientation, disability).	Poverty is defined as lacking in resources for and access to basic needs such as health, education, security; encompasses livelihoods and is linked to wellbeing.	Includes a basic definition poverty as income/economic deprivation. This may vary along intersecting lines such as gender or age within the same household.
Poverty/IWT intersection	The project has outlined clear logic of the links between poverty and IWT, including why and how its outputs will contribute towards the outcome for poverty reduction..	Clearly defined and articulated link between poverty and IWT, with the project having direct and/or indirect impacts on poverty reduction. Demand reduction projects need to clearly demonstrate how activities in wealthier consumer communities will support poverty reduction in poorer more marginalised communities e.g. clearly articulating how conserving a particular species through in one country/region assists poverty reduction in another country/region; or having a poverty reduction aspect of the project working with robust local or national partners in the country/community where impact is being claimed.	The application indicates some understanding of the links between poverty and IWT. The project does not clearly articulate if it has a direct or indirect link to poverty reduction. For demand reduction projects, the link to poverty reduction is weakly articulated & there is no in-country or in-community component of the project.	The application poorly, or fails to, articulate the link between poverty and IWT; the link is implicit rather than explicit. For demand reduction projects, there is no or little consideration of how to ensure that poorer communities benefit from poverty reduction as a result of demand reduction in wealthier communities.

	Evaluation question	High	Medium	Low
Tackling unintended negative impacts	The project has considered the potential negative impacts on poverty and inequalities of their approach, including how these risks will be mitigated.	The project team have considered how their strategies to reduce IWT can have negative impacts on poverty or inequalities e.g. through incarceration of breadwinners or removal of wildlife trade as a key aspect of local livelihood strategies. The project team have set out clear ways of mitigating negative impacts.	The project demonstrates some understanding of how reducing IWT can increase poverty or inequalities but may require further support to develop fully effective mitigation strategies.	The project does not define or address how reducing IWT could negatively impact on poverty or inequalities. The project team have not included strategies to mitigate risks of negative impacts, where appropriate.
Sustainability	The poverty reduction/GESI components of the project have the potential to lead to longer term, and potentially transformative, benefits.	Poverty reduction and strategies to tackle inequalities are central to the project; strategies aim to be transformative in the long term by focusing on addressing structural inequalities e.g. through supporting aspirations of individuals and communities. Strategies linked to land rights, and empowerment of marginalised and vulnerable communities.	Poverty reduction and strategies to tackle inequalities are part of the project but are unlikely to be transformative in the long term. Examples might include handicrafts initiatives, poultry farming, village savings and loans, ecotourism, biodiversity offsets, payments for ecosystem services.	Poverty reduction and strategies to tackle inequalities are absent or narrowly focused on economic solutions.
MEL framework	The proposed approach to MEL includes how poverty reduction and GESI benefits will be monitored and the linkages between IWT and poverty evidenced.	The project team will regularly review the progress towards poverty reduction/tackling inequalities, with relevant indicators included throughout the MEL framework. The project has provided extensive and well referenced means of verification.	The project team has made some provision for collecting information on monitoring poverty related indicators or proxies thereof. The project has provided sufficient means of verification.	The project team do not intend to monitor or evaluate progress towards poverty reduction/tackling inequalities at any stage.

5.4.1 Assessment Scoring

Points	Description
6	*Strong Demonstration of Evidence.* Substantial evidence presented that it **meets all of the assessment criteria, with no concerns raised**; the majority of which are met to a high standard. There may be a few minor issues which if addressed may improve the project, but they are unlikely to be detrimental to the delivery of the project and should not prevent it from being funded without changes being made.
5	*Good Demonstration of Evidence.* Good evidence presented that it **meets most of the assessment criteria, no major concerns identified.** The met criteria are mostly to a high standard. There are minor issues that could improve the project, but should not prevent it from being funded. It is likely to significantly contribute to the objectives of the IWT Challenge Fund.
4	*Acceptable Demonstration of Evidence.* The proposed project **meets most of the assessment criteria, no major concerns identified.** The criteria it does meet are often to a good standard. There are a few minor issues that would improve this project which they would be advised to consider if funded. It is likely to contribute to the objectives of the IWT Challenge Fund.
Indicative scoring threshold of competitive applications	
3	*Moderate Demonstration of Evidence.* The project **meets many of the assessment criteria, some concerns raised.** Those met criteria are largely to an acceptable standard, and the concerns can be addressed. It has the potential to contribute to the objectives of the IWT Challenge Fund, if the issues are addressed to strengthen it.
2	*Weak Demonstration of Evidence.* The project **meets some of the assessment criteria, or has raised concerns**. Those criteria it does meet are to a modest standard, but the application requires important changes to address the concerns and assessment criteria in order to make it competitive.
1	*Minimal Demonstration of Evidence.* The proposed project is unsatisfactory and **meets only a few criteria, or raises important concerns.** The proposal is likely to require significant revision.
0	*No Demonstration of Evidence.* The projects **fails to meet any of the criteria outlined and raises serious concerns** e.g. flawed approach, subject to serious technical difficulties or risks, unclearly written that it cannot be properly assessed, or is duplicative.

Annex A: Project Team CV

> *All key project staff must be named in the application form and budget,*
> *with a one-page CV or job description (if not yet recruited).*

Key Project Staff includes those that make up the main project team, are critical to project success, but can be from any of the Project Partners.

You must provide a one-page CV or job description (if not yet recruited) for these named project staff, to demonstrate that the project will have the capability and capacity to deliver the Outcome.

If providing a job description please note this should contain the job title, the purpose of the job, duties and responsibilities, required/ preferred qualifications and working conditions.

The table below provides a guide to relevant and useful CV evidence, and information that is less relevant to demonstrating the capability of the Project Team.

Useful evidence	What it demonstrates	How reviewers will use this
Previous roles/ positions on similar projects	Up to date and relevant expertise	If the roles listed are relevant to the proposed project, it will demonstrate appropriate experience leading or working on a similar type of project.
Skills and knowledge	Technical or Specialist skills and knowledge relevant to the proposed project role	Relevant skills and knowledge tailored to the project; it will provide evidence of the individual's match to the project
Country experience	This individual has recent experience of working in project environment (political, social, legislative etc.).	We do not expect all of the team to have worked in the host country but, we do expect some will have experience working in similar countries. This is especially valued in the senior project roles.
List and scale of project funding received	The individual is good at leading projects, managing the budgets and fulfilling reporting requirements.	Good evidence of an experienced project leader in running projects.
Less useful evidence		
List of courses/ lectures given	The individual is a recognised teacher.	Gives no indication of their ability in a non-academic setting.
List of job titles held	Range of experience.	If this is a list of job titles i.e. lecturer, coordinator, researcher then it is unlikely this list will provide much useful detail.
List of published papers	Academic or scientific achievement but may not be relevant to the project.	A list of all papers ever published is of little interest to reviewers. A tailored list of papers, relevant to the project, will demonstrate expertise in this area.
List of Post Graduate Students	This individual is a recognised research supervisor.	Doesn't show that the individual is capable of undertaking project work, although may be relevant if the project involves significant mentoring of local students.