

**West of England Combined Authority  
'Bee Bold' Pollinator Fund  
Guidance Note**

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## **‘Bee Bold’ Pollinator Fund: Introduction**

The £1m Pollinator Fund follows on from the Combined Authority’s ‘Bee Bold Awards’ and aims to deliver on the West of England’s objective to increase the abundance of wildlife by 30% by 2030.

The Fund has been created to support community-led ecology projects that enhance biodiversity and pollinator habitats across the West of England region. Specifically, it will be aimed at providing grant funding from £1,000 to £100,000 to a range of smaller-scale projects that offer multiple environmental and societal benefits, with an emphasis on supporting pollinators and community engagement.

This first funding call seeks proposals for medium to large projects located in the region seeking between £10k - £100k. A funding call for smaller projects will be launched this October.

### **Available funds**

A total of £1m of grant funding is available. Our intention is to run additional funding rounds over the course of 2023-2025. The amount of funding allocated per round will depend on the scale, scope and quality of applications received.

### **Bee Bold Pollinator Fund Objectives**

The Fund aims to support community-led ecology projects that enhance biodiversity and pollinator habitats, incorporating an aspect of community engagement.

The two primary objectives, which all projects applying to the fund would be required to deliver against, are as follows:

- 1) **To create and enhance the biodiversity in the area with an emphasis on improving pollinator habitats** to contribute towards the regional ambition to increase the abundance of wildlife by 2030; and
- 2) **To raise awareness and empower communities** to take action to address the ecological emergency in order to:
  - Increase engagement with the natural environment (e.g. time spent in the natural environment);
  - Increase the number of people engaged in social action for the environment (e.g. volunteering work, participation in conservation work etc.);
  - Improve environmental attitudes and behaviours (e.g. willingness to change lifestyle and behaviours to benefit wildlife and pollinators); and
  - Achieve health and well-being benefits (e.g. mental and physical health as well as improvements in air quality and climate regulation)

In addition, proposed projects need to meet two or more of the following secondary objectives:

- Enhance the environmental management and quality of an area by planting a variety of plants for pollinators, focusing on native species as much as possible;
- Target interventions in ‘the best places for nature’ by aligning with the [Nature Recovery Network](#);
- Increase community access to pollinator habitats and green space meeting the ‘Access to Natural Green Space Doorstep Standard’ (i.e. a Green Space of at least 0.5ha within 200m of where people live);
- Deliver a wider range of environmental and social benefits or ecosystem services e.g. water purification, air quality, space for recreation and climate mitigation and adaptation;
- Improve the health and wellbeing of communities and biodiversity while helping to improve community spaces (including social prescribing); and
- Increase opportunities for people from protected and disadvantaged groups to access and engage with nature.

### Round 1 focus

This first funding call seeks proposals for medium-large projects located in the region seeking between £10k - £100k.

### Eligible applicants

Applications are open to:

- Volunteer, community groups, and NGOs;
- Town councils, parish councils and unitary authorities;
- Schools and education organisations;
- Youth groups, sports clubs, buildings of worship; and
- Not for Profit Organisations (including charities) managing community spaces.

We welcome applicants from standalone organisations or consortia. For consortium applications, the details of all members will need to be provided within the application form.

Proposed projects would also need to be within the Combined Authority area.

## How to apply

- Download an application form from the Combined Authority's website.
- Complete all sections of the application form
- Submit your completed form to [environment@westofengland-ca.gov.uk](mailto:environment@westofengland-ca.gov.uk) including the words "Bee Bold" Pollinator Fund in the subject line.
- For any queries or clarifications regarding your application, please raise these via the same address as above, before submitting your completed application.

## Deadline for applications

Applications will need to be submitted to [environment@westofengland-ca.gov.uk](mailto:environment@westofengland-ca.gov.uk) by 5pm on Sunday 18th September 2022.

## What the funding can be used for

A wide range of project proposals will be considered as long as they meet the Fund's objectives. Examples of suitable projects include but are not limited to:

- Creation of native wildflower meadows / patches in community spaces and schools;
- Planting for pollinators in community spaces;
- Multi-beneficial green infrastructure delivering the objectives set in the [Joint Green Infrastructure Strategy](#) and Nature Recovery Networks;
- Green Roofs - on public/community buildings; and
- Outdoor classrooms or education settings with suitable planting.

Projects can also include infrastructure to improve access - new paths or upgrading current informal paths.

## Match funding

For grant requests of £10k or more, applicants must be able to demonstrate at least 20% match-funding (this can be in-kind e.g. value assigned to staff or volunteer hours, land made available or financial contributions) is secured.

## Key requirements for applications

All Projects should:

- Be focused on delivery, with projects to be completed by May 2023 (and where this isn't possible, reasons and alternative timelines set out).
- Be focused on actual delivery and not have a primary focus of providing funding for staff resources or delivering further evidence.

- Deliver on the Fund's primary objectives and a minimum of two of the Fund's secondary objectives.
- For grant requests of £10k or more, demonstrate at least 20% match-funding (this can be in-kind or financial contributions) is secured.
- Be in a ready-to-deliver state - where there are outstanding landowner permissions or development work required to deliver the project, this should be clearly outlined within the application form, including providing evidence of when the permissions are likely to be given.
- Be able to confirm longevity of the site, i.e. provide assurance that site use/permissions will not be changed after completion, and sustainable ongoing site management has been factored into the delivery plan.
- Have completed all sections of the application form including the due diligence information.

## Completing the application form

Applicants are required to complete all sections of the application form. This includes providing organisation / lead applicant information and declarations and supporting necessary due diligence checks.

## Questions

This application form comprises of five questions that form the award criteria, all of which must be completed.

We request that the level of detail included in your application is proportionate to the scale of funding sought i.e. a greater level of detail will be expected for projects seeking larger amounts of funding. The use of bullet points and lists is acceptable, but applicants should complete all sections as fully as possible, noting suggested word limits.

This application form and project assessment comprises of five award criteria to confirm the proposal:

- i. Offers compelling project design and realistic delivery plan
- ii. meets the fund's objectives
- iii. is financially affordable and offers value for money
- iv. is achievable with a clear approach to management, and
- v. incorporates an element of community engagement (compulsory for large projects >£10k).

If you require guidance on the completion of your application form, please contact the West of England Combined Authority Environment team via [environment@westofengland-ca.gov.uk](mailto:environment@westofengland-ca.gov.uk)

Applicant's responses should be clear and succinct about what the project is, where it will be located and what it will deliver. Applicants are also asked to provide an estimate of volunteer participation (total voluntary hours) and to confirm permissions for project site.

### Question 1: Project Design & Delivery

Applicants are asked to provide a description of the project that will be undertaken, including detailing the desired outcome and metrics that are anticipated.

The project description should include information on anticipated timescales for delivery and an information on how the project will be managed to ensure that is delivered on time and to budget.

Applicants must also provide a summary of their intended outcome, and the supporting evidence or assumptions behind these outcomes. This supporting evidence may be from previously delivered projects or research and outside evidence.

### **Question 2 : Meeting the Fund objectives**

How does the project contribute to the Bee Bold Pollinator Funds' two primary objectives, and briefly how are these objectives/outputs going to be delivered? The two primary objectives are as follows:

**To create and enhance the biodiversity in the area with an emphasis on improving pollinator habitats** to contribute towards the local ambition to double the abundance of wildlife from 2018 levels by 2050; and

**To raise awareness and empower communities** to take action to address the ecological emergency

[Indicative 250 word limit]

Applicants are also asked to indicate which other (secondary) Fund objectives their project delivers - tick all that apply from the listed options. [No further detail is required, but we would suggest drawing out wider benefits/outputs within the project description (Q1) if these are not clear.]

Applicants are asked to provide details, to the extent they have them on intended planting choices for the project site i.e. species of plants and/or trees or other design management features that will support wildlife. In doing so, applicants are encouraged to note the extent that native species will be prioritised.

[Indicative 250 word limit]

Applicants must also confirm whether the project site will be publicly accessible once completed, and pledge to use peat free compost and avoiding pesticide use where relevant.

### **Question 3: Financial Value for Money**

Applicants are required to breakdown estimated whole project costs and confirm any amount of match-funding and its status (pledged, confirmed etc). All match funding will need to be secure and in place prior to entering into funding agreements. Please ensure that you specify whether any match-funding is in-kind or financial/cash. To note, a minimum of **20%** match-funding is compulsory for all projects seeking over £10k.

Applicants must also confirm what amount, if any, of the requested funding will be spent on staffing or capital costs for physical assets associated with the delivery of the proposed project. Further detail must be provided on any intended staffing spend, including proportion of overall requested grant funding.

#### **Question 4: Project Management**

The first funding round is intended to support projects that can be delivered/completed before the end of May 2023, ideally making use of the Spring 2023 planting season.

Applicants must confirm if delivery to this timeline is possible and give a brief summary of planned delivery timelines along with details of how you intend to manage the project through to completion. Fine to use bullet pointed lists for delivery timelines.

[Indicative 200 words max]

Applicants are also asked to set out plans for the ongoing future use and management of the project space, i.e. regular ongoing maintenance.

[indicative 100 words]

#### **Question 5: Community Engagement question**

An aspect of community engagement is compulsory for larger projects (>£10k).

Applicants should provide an overview of any community engagement aspect(s) to their project through the full project lifecycle.

This should include brief explanation of how you have and will engage with any relevant stakeholders including those who may use, or live nearby the project site, and your approach to volunteer recruitment. Do also include any intended educational aspects to your project.

Volunteer participation e.g. in the project delivery, counts even if there is no ongoing community engagement or education element to your project.

[Indicative 250 word]

## Scoring Criteria

- Applicants should submit responses to all sections of the application form, observing indicative word limits.
- The Combined Authority has the absolute discretion to disregard any appendices, either in part or in full, that contain information that is not relevant supporting information.
- Responses to each application form section will be scored on a grading system from 0 (zero) to 5 (five) as set out below. That score will then be weighted in accordance with the percentage weighting allocated to each section of the application form.

Award Criteria for Application Questions		Percentage Weighting (100%)
3.2.1.1	Question 1: PROJECT DESIGN & DELIVERY	25%
3.2.1.2	Question 2: MEETING THE FUND OBJECTIVES	25%
3.2.1.4	Question 3: FINANCIAL VALUE FOR MONEY	20%
3.2.1.5	Question 4: PROJECT MANAGEMENT	20%
3.2.1.6	Question 5: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT	10%
Total Weighting		100%

## Application Scoring Methodology

- The following scoring methodology shall be used for all applications
- The following scores shall be awarded to each section of the application form based on the proposals received and the degree of confidence that, on the basis of the facts known to the evaluation panel at the time of making the assessment, the proposal meets the interpretation of the applicable score. Factors which the evaluation panel will take into account in making this assessment are set out below for each score.
- The evaluation panel will individually score responses to each application form section in accordance with the above procedure, after which, the panel will meet to moderate and produce a single score for each applicant's response to each section.

Scoring criteria	Max score

Assessment	Interpretation	
Unacceptable	Does not meet the requirement. Does not comply and/or insufficient information provided to demonstrate that the applicant has the ability, understanding, skills, resource required to deliver the project. OR No response	0
Serious Reservations	Satisfies the requirement with major reservations. Considerable reservations of the applicant's relevant ability, understanding, skills, resource required to deliver the project, with little or no detail to support the response.	1
Minor Reservations	Satisfies the requirement with minor reservations. Some minor reservations of the applicant's relevant ability, understanding, skills, resource required to deliver the project, with little or no detail to support the response.	2
Acceptable	Satisfies the requirement. Demonstration by the applicant of the relevant ability, understanding, skills, resource required to deliver the project, with detail to support the response.	3
Good	Satisfies the requirement with minor additional benefits. Above average demonstration by the applicant of the relevant ability, understanding, skills, & resource required to deliver the project. Response identifies factors that will offer potential added value, with detail to support the response.	4
Excellent	More than meets the requirement with significant additional benefits. The applicant has demonstrated an excellent fit with the required ability, understanding and resources to deliver the proposed project. Additional benefits are clear through with consideration given to the ongoing maintenance of the project space.	5

- Successful applicants will enter into a Grant Funding Agreement which will need to be signed by both the Combined Authority and the applicant.
- The Grant Funding Agreement will need to signed by an accountable officer from the applicant's organisation (e.g. Director)

### Due Diligence

- As part of the appraisal of applications, the Combined Authority will undertake due diligence prior to making a recommendation for funding.
- Included in the application form is a due diligence declaration, which must be completed and submitted as part of your application.
- Depending on the type of organisation applying, due diligence checks may require supplying the last three years full filed accounts and authorising the Combined Authority to undertake a credit check with a third-party credit reference agency.

Where required, this process is a necessary to secure funding and is needed in order to ensure funding is only provided to financially sound and compliant organisations.

- As part of the assessment of submissions, the Combined Authority may have further due diligence questions in addition to those requested in the declaration. Applicants must ensure that they have a representative available to answer any clarification questions (if they arise) in relation to its application submission and must be prepared to provide the Combined Authority with copies of all documentation requested in respect of any self-certification.

## Subsidy Control

- We expect that all of the activities and projects we fund through the Pollinator Fund will be for non-economic activities. In these cases grant will be issued as ‘no subsidy’ and the Subsidy Control Act will not apply. This means that applicants will not be applying for projects that lead to them offering a good or service to the market.
- The definition of ‘offering a good or service to the market’ is broad and does not exclude not-for-profit activities, the activities of social enterprises, or of local authorities or any other public entity. No particular form of legal entity is automatically exempted from potentially offering a good or service to the market, what is assessed is the actual activity for which grant is sought.
- In cases where applicants are aware that the project they are applying for will, when complete, lead to them, or a third-party, generating income they should carefully set out the source of this income, its forecast value and the intention for which it is being generated. (Please note that generating income is not a requirement of the Pollinator Fund and nor are projects that do generate income automatically ineligible.) The Authority will then make an assessment as to whether the activities applied for are economic or not.
- In cases where we believe applications that we want to support do meet the definition of economic activities, we will issue subsidy under the Minimum Financial Assistance exemption of the Subsidy Control Act. This will require the completion of a declaration form that we will provide and an assessment of that declaration before subsidy can be confirmed and issued

## Modern Slavery and Responsible Procurement

- The Combined Authority is committed to responsible and ethical procurement practices, and aims to achieve this through its Procurement Strategy and supporting policies.
- The Combined Authority recognises its responsibility to take a robust approach to ethical and sustainability issues, especially around modern slavery and human trafficking, which it is absolutely committed to preventing, within its supply chains.
- The Combined Authority is committed to sourcing services, supplies, and/or works in a way that takes into account ethical and sustainable considerations, including: economic, social, labour, and environmental factors, whilst always aiming to procure and act in a way that is morally right, open, fair, and transparent.
- The answers provided in your response will be evaluated on the basis of pass/exclude. Applicants who self-certify that they do not meet the requirements of this section will be excluded. The provision of insufficient or false information and/or any responses that leads the Combined Authority, acting reasonably, to conclude (considering the risk that the relevant answer concerns the applicant's ability to properly perform the contract) that it would be inappropriate to select the applicant on this occasion, will result in exclusion. Exclusion grounds may apply at any point in the application process up to the award of agreement.
- In respect of section 5.6 and your responses at 5.6.4 and 5.6.6, where you have stated "agree" to both, your response shall constitute a pass. Where you have stated "disagree" to one or both, your response shall constitute a fail.

### Clarifications

- The Combined Authority reserves the right to make an award decision without holding any clarification meetings with applicants. Should the Combined Authority wish to enter into clarifications, clarification meetings may be held with applicants to discuss their applications in their entirety.
- In the event that clarifications are required, the results of the clarification will be used to amend application evaluation scores in relation to relevant parts of an application.

### Allocation process

- Once the applications have been scored, officers will make recommendations to the CEO of the West of England Combined Authority to make the final funding decisions.
- Funding recommendations will be made based on the scores of bids received and the amount of funding sought and available.
- The funding decisions available to CEOs are:
  - Offer funding - to successful, high scoring applications.

- Offer conditional funding - funding will be granted subject to conditions being met (e.g. planning permission granted, match funding secured). Where a conditional offer of funding is made, the conditions will be clearly stipulated.
- Not to fund - funding application not supported at this time.
- For successful applicants seeking grant awards over £10k:
  - 20% of funds will be paid in advance.
  - A further 40% of funds will be paid once 60% total grant expenditure and match funding is reached (during delivery).
  - The remaining 40% of funds will be paid upon completion.

Evidence of expenditure will be required.

### Decision Notification

- Final decisions on funding will be made in October 2022.
- Successful applicants will be notified after this date and issued a grant offer letter.

### Reporting Requirements

- Successful applicants will be expected to comply with the all of the combined authority's reporting requirements in order to receive grant funding. This will include but not be limited to completing timely claims, disclosing the appropriate documents (invoices, bank statements), reporting on milestones / outputs, final delivery, and any information for any programme evaluation.

### Evaluation

- Evaluation: The Combined Authority may commission an independent evaluation to evaluate the impact of the programme. Providers will be expected to work closely with the evaluator for example collecting and sharing participant data, creation of case studies, information on course design and in some cases taking part in interviews of focus groups to share your experiences of being part of the pilot. Successful providers will be expected to share their bids with the evaluator following grant award.

## Terms & Conditions

- Prior to the award of any grant, there will be a Grant Funding Agreement which will need to be agreed and signed by both the Combined Authority and the successful applicant(s). This will be subject to you having secured the necessary landowner(s) permissions for the project site.

