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Invitation to Apply

(Grants)

Grant for Nature for Climate Fund (NCF): Woodland Creation Accelerator Fund (WCAF)

Grant Reference: [Insert ITA Number]

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### SECTION 1: ITA PARTICULARS AND CONDITIONS OF APPLICATION

#### Glossary

Unless the context otherwise requires, the following words and expressions used within this Invitation to Apply shall have the following meanings (to be interpreted in the singular or plural as the context requires):

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **TERM** | **MEANING** |
| **“Agreement”**  | means the agreement (set out in Annex B) to be entered into by the Authority and the Applicant if its Application is successful. |
| **“Applicant(s)”** | means the organisation(s) being invited to respond to this ITA. |
|  **“Application”**  | means an Applicant’s formal proposal in response to this ITA. |
| **“Authority”** | means the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs acting as part of the Crown |
| **“Bravo”** | means the e-Tendering system used by the Authority for conducting this Application Process, which can be found at http://defra.bravosolution.co.uk |
| **“Conditions of Application”** | means the terms and conditions set out in this ITA relating to the submission of an Application. |
| **“Conflict of Interest”** | means an actual or potential conflict of interest on the part of the Applicant in connection with the ITA or the Agreement. |
| **“EIR”** | means the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (as amended) together with any guidance and/or codes of practice issued by the Information Commissioner or relevant government department in relation to those Regulations.  |
| **‘’EoI’’** | Expression of Interest means the form Applicants will refer to to populate their response |
| **“FOIA”** | means the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (as amended) and any subordinate legislation made under such Act from time to time together with any guidance and/or codes of practice issued by the Information Commissioner or relevant government department in relation to that legislation. |
| **“ITA”** | means this invitation to apply and all related documents published by the Authority and made available to Applicant(s). |
| **“Project”** | means the project for which grants are being made available. |

References to a “Section” and to an “Appendix” are references to a section and to an appendix in the ITA.

Reference to a statute or statutory provision is a reference to such statute or statutory provision as amended or re-enacted. A reference to a statute or statutory provision includes any subordinate legislation made under that statute or statutory provision, as amended or re-enacted.

#### General

1. The Authority is looking to award grants for the Nature for Climate Fund: Woodland Creation Accelerator Fund. This scheme will provide funding for new resource in Local Authorities to support accelerating woodland creation and tree planting targets. This funding is under Section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003.

2. The Authority is using Bravo for this competed grant scheme. The ITA is only available in electronic form, accessed via your web browser <http://defra.bravosolution.co.uk>. Bravo uses terminology for Invitations to Tender (‘ITTs’) to refer to both ITTs and ITAs; however, ITA documentation available on Bravo will clearly indicate where there is a grant Application Process.

3. The Application requires completion of the following:

1. mandatory questions set on Bravo
2. complete the Form of Application in accordance with the instructions set out in Bravo (Annex A here for example only, please use the template provided in the ITA on Bravo)
3. the Expression of Interest form which includes the Qualification Questionnaire, Technical Questionnaire and Commercial Questionnaire (Annex B and Annex C here for example only, please use the templates provided in the ITA on Bravo for your Application)

4. It is important that Applicants provide all the information asked for in the ITA in the order and format specified. This enables the Authority to consider applications fairly and equally.

5. Applicants should read the ITA carefully before submitting an Application. The ITA sets out:

* the Timetable and process for the Application;
* sufficient information to allow Applicants to submit a compliant Application;
* information regarding the evaluation criteria which will be used to assess the Applications; and
* the administrative arrangements for the receipt of Applications.

6. Applicants are responsible for ensuring that they understand the requirements for this Application Process. If any information is unclear or if an Applicant considers that insufficient information has been provided, it should raise a query via the clarification process described below.

7. Applicants are responsible for ensuring that they have submitted a complete and accurate Application and that costs quoted are arithmetically correct.

8. By applying, Applicants accept the terms and conditions in the ITA. Failure to comply with the instructions set out in the ITA or the provision or false, inaccurate or misleading information, may result in the Applicant’s exclusion from this Application Process.

9. If there is any conflict between the information set out in the ITA and the information displayed in Bravo, the information set out in the ITA shall take precedence over the information displayed in Bravo.

####  Proposed Timetable

10. Timetable below is subject to change by the Authority. Applicants will be informed accordingly.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Issue Invitation to Apply (ITA) |  | *13th June 2022* |
| Deadline for clarification questions from Applicants | Date | *27th June 2022* |
| Time | *17:00* |
| Deadline for submission of Applications | *Date* | *8th July 2022* |
| *Time* | *17:00* |
| Applicant Due Diligence Prior to Evaluation |  | *11th July 2022*  |
| Evaluation of Applications  | *Start* | *11th July 2022*  |
| *End* | *22nd July 2022* |
| Post Evaluation Enhanced Applicant Due Diligence |  | *25th July 2022*  |
| Funding award notification |  | *5th August 2022* |
| Funding start date |  | *8th August 2022* |
| Submission of Draft Report  |  | *2nd August 2022* |
| Funding end date |  | *31st March 2025* |
| Submission of information on use of Year 1 funding  |  | *1st March 2023* |

####  Completion of Application

11. By applying, Applicants agree to be bound by the terms of the ITA if the Authority accepts the Application via Bravo.

12. The Authority may amend or withdraw all or any part of this ITA at any time. All applicants will be notified of any such amendment or withdrawal. In order to give Applicants reasonable time in which to take into account an amendment in preparing their Applications, the Authority, at its discretion, may extend the deadline for the submission of Applications and/or any other stages of the Application Process.

13. During the period of this competition all communications from Applicants (including their consortium members, consultants and advisers) must be undertaken using Bravo unless stated otherwise by the Authority. The Authority will not respond to communications made by other means. Applicants should not rely on communications from the Authority other than through Bravo.

#### Submission of Applications

14. Applicants must complete all parts of the Application and submit via Bravo in accordance with the instructions therein.

15. As part of an Application, in accordance with the instructions in Bravo, the Applicant must read and confirm acceptance of Annex A, Form of Application and submit as part of the application.

16. The Application and any documents accompanying it must be in English and submitted in accordance with the ITA.

17. Costs must be submitted in £ Sterling, inclusive of irrecoverable VAT.

18. Only Applications verified as complete and compliant, in accordance with the Conditions of Application, will be evaluated.

19. Applicants must be explicit and comprehensive in their Application as this will be the single source of information used to score and rank Applications. The Authority will only take account of information specifically asked for in the ITA.

20. Where a length of response is stipulated, for example, a word count or page limit, only the information within the set limit will be evaluated.

21. Failure to provide the information required or supply documentation referred to in the Application within the deadline for Applications may result in rejection of the Application.

22. Applicants should only refer to general marketing or promotional information/material if specifically required by the question. General marketing or promotional information/material not deemed specifically relevant to the question may not be accepted.

23. Applicants should answer each question as a stand-alone response. Applicants should not cross-refer to answers given elsewhere in an Application as the same person may not evaluate every response. This may mean repeating information if required.

#### Clarifications sought by Applicants

24. Any request for clarification regarding the ITA should be submitted at the earliest opportunity via Bravo and in any event no later than the deadline for clarifications set out in the Timetable. The Authority shall be under no obligation to respond to queries raised after the clarification deadline.

25. The Authority will respond to all clarifications as quickly as possible but cannot guarantee a minimum response time. The Authority will publish all clarifications and its responses to all Applicants on Bravo other than in exceptional circumstances.

26. If an Applicant believes that a request for clarification is commercially sensitive or that publishing the same together with the Authority’s response as set out above would reveal confidential information, disclosure of which would be detrimental to the Applicant, the Applicant should clearly state this when submitting the clarification request. However, if the Authority considers that:

* the clarification is not commercially sensitive or confidential; or
* all Applicants may benefit from its disclosure

The Authority will inform the Applicant via Bravo, and the Applicant will have an opportunity to withdraw the request for clarification. If the request for clarification is not withdrawn within 48 hours of the notification, the clarification request and Authority’s response will be published to all Applicants.

27. The Authority may not respond to a request for clarification or publish such a request where the Authority considers that the response may prejudice the Authority’s commercial interests or be contrary to public interest. In such circumstances, the Authority will inform the Applicant of its view.

#### Changes to Applications

28. Applicants may modify their Applications prior to the deadline for Applications. No Applications may be modified after the deadline for Applications.

29. Applicants may withdraw their Applications at any time by submitting a notice via Bravo. Unless withdrawn, Applications shall remain valid and open to acceptance by the Authority for 120 days from the deadline for Applications.

#### Receipt of Applications

30. Applications must be uploaded onto Bravo no later than the time and date set out in the Timetable as the deadline for Applications. Applications received before that deadline will remain unopened until that deadline or such time thereafter when all Applications are opened together. The Authority will not consider Applications received after the deadline. The Authority may, however, at its own discretion, extend the deadline and in such circumstances, the Authority will notify all Applicants of any change.

31. If an Applicant is experiencing problems when uploading its Application, it should contact the Bravo helpdesk for assistance and inform the Authority.

#### Acceptance of Applications

32. By issuing this ITA, communicating with an Applicant or an Applicant’s representative or agents or any other communication in respect of this competition, the Authority shall not be bound to accept any Application or award any of the funding for which Applications are invited. The Authority reserves the right to withdraw or terminate the competition at any time.

#### Costs of Application

33. Applicants shall bear their own costs and expenses incurred in the preparation and submission of their Applications. The Authority will not be responsible or liable for those costs regardless of the outcome in relation to individual Applications, even if the Authority amends or terminates the competition.

#### Clarifications sought by the Authority

34. The Authority reserves the right (but is not obliged) to seek clarification of any aspect of an Application and/or provide additional information during the evaluation phase in order to carry out a fair evaluation. Failure to respond in a timely manner and/or to provide an adequate response to such a request may result in rejection of the Application.

#### Confidentiality of the ITA and related documents

35. The contents of this ITA and of any other documents or information published or provided by the Authority in respect of this competition are provided on condition that they remain the property of the Authority and are kept confidential (save in so far as they are already in the public domain). The Applicant shall take all necessary precautions to ensure that they remain confidential and not disclosed, save as described below.

36. Applicants may disclose information relating to the grant Application Process to their advisers and sub-contractors in the following circumstances:

* + disclosure is for the purpose of enabling an Application to be submitted and the recipient of the information undertakes in writing to keep it confidential on the same terms as the Applicant;
	+ the Authority gives prior consent to the disclosure;
	+ the disclosure is made for the purpose of obtaining legal advice in relation to the competition; or
	+ the Applicant is legally required to disclose the information.

37. No Applicant will undertake any publicity activities with any part of the media in relation to this ITA without the prior agreement of the Authority, including agreement on the format and content of any publicity. For example, no statements may be made to the media regarding the nature of any Application, its contents or any proposals relating to it without the prior written consent of the Authority.

38. All central government departments, their executive agencies and non-departmental public bodies are subject to control and reporting within government. In particular, they report to the Cabinet Office and HM Treasury for all expenditure.

39. For these purposes, the Authority may disclose within government any of the Applicant’s documents and information (including any that the Applicant considers confidential and/or commercially sensitive) provided in its Application. The information will not be disclosed outside government during the Application Process. Applicants consent to these terms as part of the Application Process.

**Freedom of Information and Environmental Information Regulations**

40. In accordance with the obligations and duties placed upon public authorities by the FOIA and the EIR, which provide a public right of access to information held by public bodies, the Authority may disclose information submitted to it by an Applicant.

41. If an Applicant considers any information which it supplies to be commercially sensitive or of a confidential nature, the Applicant should:

1. clearly identify such information as commercially sensitive;
2. explain the potential implications of disclosure of such information; and
3. provide an estimate of the period of time during which the Applicant believes that such information will remain commercially sensitive.

42. The Authority will endeavour to maintain confidentiality of information identified by an Applicant as being confidential in nature and/or commercially sensitive. Pursuant to a request for this information under FOIA and/or EIR, the Authority where practicable, will consult with an Applicant before disclosure.

43. However, even where information is identified by an Applicant as being confidential or commercially sensitive, Applicants acknowledge that there may be circumstances in which the Authority may be required to disclose such information in accordance with the FOIA or the EIR (in addition to any other transparency obligations). In particular, the Authority is required to form an independent judgment concerning whether the information is exempt from disclosure under the FOIA or the EIR and whether the public interest favours disclosure or not. Accordingly, the Authority cannot guarantee that any information marked “confidential” or “commercially sensitive” will not be disclosed and accepts no liability for any loss or prejudice caused by the disclosure of information.

44. If an Applicant receives a request for information relating to this competition under the FOIA or the EIR during the competition, this should be passed immediately on to the Authority and the Applicant should not attempt to answer the request without first consulting the Authority.

#### Disclaimers

45. Whilst the information in this ITA and any supporting information referred to herein or provided to the Applicants by the Authority have been prepared in good faith, the Authority does not warrant (expressly or impliedly) or represent that this information is comprehensive reasonable nor accurate, or that it has been independently verified.

46. Neither the Authority nor its respective advisors, directors, officers, members, partners, employees, other staff or agents:

1. makes any representation or warranty (express or implied) as to the accuracy, reasonableness or completeness of the ITA or of any other written or oral communication transmitted (or otherwise made available) to any Applicant;
2. accepts any liability for the information contained in the ITA or any other written or oral communication (including any communications via Bravo) transmitted (or otherwise made available) to any Applicant, or for the fairness, accuracy or completeness of that information; or
3. shall be liable for any loss or damage (other than in respect of fraudulent misrepresentation or any other liability which cannot lawfully be excluded) arising as a result of reliance on such information or any subsequent communication.

Any party considering entering into an Agreement with the Authority following receipt of the ITA should make its own investigations and independent assessment of the Authority and its requirements and should seek its own professional financial and legal advice.

47. Neither the issue of the ITA nor any of the information presented in it should be regarded as a commitment or representation on the part of the Authority to enter into a grant funding agreement. Nothing in the ITA or in any other communication made between the Authority and any other party, should be interpreted as constituting an agreement or representation between the Authority and any other party (save for a formal award of grant funding) or as constituting an agreement or representation that grant funding shall be offered.

#### Canvassing

48. Any Applicant which directly or indirectly canvasses any officer, member, employee, or agent of the Authority or its members or any other relevant body or any of its officers or members concerning the Agreement or this Application Process or who directly or indirectly obtains or attempts to obtain information from any such officer, member, employee or agent concerning any other Applicant, Application or proposed Application will be excluded from this competition and its Application rejected.

49. The Applicant shall not contact any other employee, agent or consultant of the Authority who is in any way connected with the Project during this Application Process, unless instructed otherwise by the Authority.

#### Conflicts of Interest

50. The concept of a Conflict of Interest includes any situation where relevant staff members of the Authority, involved in this grant Application Process have, directly or indirectly, a financial, economic or other personal interest which might be perceived to compromise their impartiality and independence in the context of the grant Application Process and/or affect the integrity of the grant offer.

51. Where the Applicant is aware of any circumstances giving rise to a Conflict of Interest or has any indication that a Conflict of Interest exists or may arise it should inform the Authority of this as soon as possible (whether before or after submission of an Application). Applicants should remain alert to the possibility of conflicts of interest arising at all stages of the grant Application Process and should update the Authority if any new circumstances or information arises, or there are any changes to information already provided to the Authority. Failure to do so, and/or to manage properly any conflicts of interest may result in rejection of an Application.

#### Changes to an Applicant’s circumstances

52. The Authority may:

* + - reject an Application where there is a change of identity, control, financial standing or other factor which may affect the Authority’s evaluation of the Application; or
		- revisit information contained in an Application at any time to take account of subsequent changes to an Applicant’s circumstances; or
		- at any point during the Application Process, require an Applicant to certify there has been no material change to information submitted in its Application and in the absence of such certificate, reject the Application.

#### Joint Applications, Collaboration and Subcontracting

53. A Local Authority can only submit one application which is either as a sole bid or as part of a Partnership. Where a consortia Application is proposed, Applicants are required to complete the relevant questions in the Qualification Questionnaire contained within the Expression of Interest form.

54. Relevant information should be provided in the Application in respect of each organisation that will play a significant role in the delivery of the Project.

55. Where an organisation in a joint Application changes at any time during the competition, the Applicants should inform the Authority immediately via Bravo. In such circumstances, the Authority reserves the right to take such action, including excluding the organisation from participation in the competition, where the change in membership is material to the Authority’s evaluation of the Application.

56. The Applicant shall ensure that its sub-contractors and advisers abide by the terms of the ITA.

#### Costs

57. As stated above, costs and any financial data provided must be submitted in £ Sterling, inclusive of irrecoverable VAT. Where official documents include financial data in a foreign currency, a Sterling equivalent must be provided.

58. Where applicable, the Commercial Questionnaire sets out the minimum cost information required for the Application. The Authority may request a more detailed breakdown of any cost information provided as part of an Application.

59. It is the Applicant’s responsibility to ensure their Application accurately reflects their VAT liabilities. If the application is successful and it subsequently transpires there has been an error in the Application, the Authority shall be under no obligation to increase Grant Funding to meet any VAT liability of the Applicant.

#### Notification of Award

60. The Authority will notify successful and unsuccessful Applicants via Bravo of the results of their Application.

### SECTION 2: EVALUATION MODEL

#### Application Evaluation

61. Evaluation of Applications will comprise of the stages set out in the table below.

| **Stage of evaluation process** | **Section Reference**  | **Evaluation Criteria**  | **Question Weighting (%)**  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Stage 1 | **Part 1:****Lead Applicant Information and Application Model**(Bravo online questionnaire) | All information requested must be provided. Not scored but failure to provide all information will result in a ‘fail’ and elimination from the Application Process. | Not scored  |
| Stage 2 | **Part 2: - Grounds for Exclusion**(Bravo online questionnaire) | All sections must be completed.Failure on mandatory eligibility criteria will result in elimination from this Application Process.  | Pass/Fail |
| Stage 3 | **Part 3: Economic and Financial Standing** (Bravo online questionnaire) | Financial information is assessed to determine the economic and financial standing of the organisation.A ‘fail’ will result in elimination from this Application Process. | Pass/Fail  |
| Stage 4 | **Part 3:– General Declarations** (Bravo online questionnaire) | Failure on mandatory criteria will result in elimination from this Application Process. | Pass/Fail |
| Stage 5 | **Part 3: Conflict of Interest**(Bravo online questionnaire) | The identification of an actual/ potential conflict of interest will be assessed to determine whether it will result in elimination from this Application Process. | Pass/Fail |
| Stage 6 | **Part 3: Modern Slavery Act 2015**(Bravo online questionnaire) | Any potential issue identified in this stage will be assessed to determine whether it will result in elimination from this Application Process. | Pass/Fail |
| Stage 7 | **Part 3: Insurance**(Bravo online questionnaire) | Any potential issue identified in this stage will be assessed to determine whether it will result in elimination from this Application Process. | Pass/Fail |
| Stage 8 | **Part 3: Mandatory Requirements**(Bravo online questionnaire) | Failure on mandatory criteria will result in elimination from this Application Process. | Pass/Fail |
| Stage 9 |  **Form of Application** highlighting any commercially sensitive information.(Bravo online questionnaire- please use the template attachment to complete and submit) | Not scored but failure to accept the Form of Application will result in a ‘fail’ and elimination from the Application Process. | Not Scored |
| Stage 10 | **Part 3: Declarations**(Bravo online questionnaire) | Not scored but failure to confirm declaration statements will result in a ‘fail’ and elimination from the Application Process | Not Scored |
|  | **Expression of Interest Form** |  |  |
| Stage 11 | **Qualification Questionnaire**(Expression of Interest form) | This section will indicate your eligibility and lot allocation. Failure on Questions 1, 2, 3 and 5 will result in elimination from this Application Process.Response to Question 4 will determine which lot your application will be allocated to provided eligibility is passed.  | Pass/FailLotted |
| Stage 12 | **Technical Questionnaire** (Expression of Interest form) | This section will be evaluated in accordance with criteria stated in the Expression of Interest form. | Q6 Not scoredQ7 – **Evidence of Need**Weighting = **15%**Q8 – **Commitment to Planting by 2025**Weighting = **18%**Q9 – **Deliverability**Weighting= **22%**Q10 – **Public Access** Weighting= **5%**Q11 – **Deprivation** Weighting= up to **10%****0 LSOAs= 0%****1-3 LSOAs = 5% over 3 LSOAs= 10%)** |
|  | **Commercial Envelope** |  |  |
| Stage 13 | **Commercial Questionnaire** (Instruction in Expression of Interest form, Applicant to populate Commercial Questionnaire spreadsheet)  | Costs will be evaluated in accordance with criteria stated in point 68 of this ITA  | **Total amount of funding requested / Number of Full Time Equivalents** Weighting = **30%** |
| Stage 14 | Final score  | Applicants who pass stages 1-10 will be taken through to stage 11 for evaluation. Applicants who pass stage 11 will be taken through to stages 12 to 13 for evaluation. The final score is calculated as follows: 70% is made up from Stage 1230% is made up from Stage 13  |
| Stage 15 | Award Decision | A consensus meeting will be conducted to agree the Application’s final score. The intention is to award to those Applicants evenly across the lots based on ranking at stage 14 until the budget has been allocated. The Authority reserves the right to base the final allocation of funding upon Applications received to achieve the desired outcomes of this fund. |

62. Applications will be evaluated for both technical and commercial merit (including costs) using the evaluation criteria set out in the Expression of Interest form and Commercial Questionnaire spreadsheet

63. Each question will be scored separately, and no reference will be made between the questions. The scoring matrix to evaluate your technical responses is as follows:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Score** | **Comment** |
| 100 | **Excellent** - Response that meets the requirements. Indicates an excellent response with detailed supporting evidence and no weaknesses resulting in a high level of confidence. |
| 70 | **Good** - Response that meets the requirements with good supporting evidence. Demonstrates good understanding.  |
| 50 | **Acceptable** - Response is relevant and acceptable. Meets the requirements – the response generally meets the requirements but lacks sufficient detail to warrant a higher mark.  |
| 20 | **Poor** - Response provides the minimum level of detail to meet the requirements for the first year for which funding is requested and will require further clarity/detail ahead of any further years funding. |
| 0 | **Unacceptable** - Nil or inadequate response. Failed to provide confidence that the proposal will meet the requirements. An unacceptable response with serious reservations. |

64. To ensure the relative importance of both sets of criteria is correctly reflected in the overall score, a weighting system will be applied to the evaluation:

* the technical merit score will be weighted and will form **70%** of the final score;
* the score awarded for cost will form **30%** of the final score.

65. Each scoring question is given a weighting to indicate the relative importance of that issue in the overall evaluation. Weightings are provided in the above table for each question in the Technical Questionnaire.

66. A panel appointed by the Authority will undertake Evaluation of Applications. Each panel member will first undertake an independent evaluation of the Applications applying the relevant evaluation criteria for each question. The evaluation panel will then hold a moderation meeting to reach a consensus of the marking of each question.

67. The Evaluation panel is as follows-

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Technical Evaluators** | David West (Forestry Commission) |
|  | Rebecca Waite |
|  | Louise Hill |
|  | Indi Marriott  |
| **Commercial Evaluators** | Janna Eastment |
|  | Emma Tully |

#### Evaluation of Commercial Envelope

68. The maximum marks available for this part of the Evaluation will account for 30% of the total evaluation score and will be awarded to the lowest unit cost submitted by the Applicant. The remaining Applicants will receive marks on a pro rata basis from the lowest to the highest cost.

The unit cost submitted by the Applicant as part of the Commercial Questionnaire will be used for this evaluation. The calculation used is as follows:

Total amount of funding requested (£)

Number of Full Time Equivalents

Score = Lowest Unit Cost x [30%] (Maximum available marks)

 Unit Cost

For example, if three Applications are received and Applicant A has quoted £100 as their unit cost, Applicant B quotes £150 as their unit cost and Applicant C quotes £200 as their unit cost then:

Applicant A Score = £100/£100 x [30%] (Maximum available marks) = 30%

Applicant B Score = £100/£150 x [30%] (Maximum available marks) = 20%

Applicant C Score = £100/£200 x [30%] (Maximum available marks) = 15%

### SECTION 3: PROJECT REQUIREMENTS – Woodland Creation Accelerator Fund

The Authority’s requirements and details of what you can apply for are provided within **Annex B**: Accompanying Notes for Applicants and Expression of Interest Form.

The templates for you to use to submit your responses can be found in Bravo. Please ensure when submitting the documents you adhere to the following naming conventions:

* ‘Applicant Name\_Form of Application’
* ‘Applicant Name\_WCAF\_Expression of Interest’
* ‘Applicant Name\_WCAF\_Commercial Questionnaire’

If you do have an additional supporting document such as a Community Forest Letter of Support, please also follow naming convention ‘Applicant Name\_Name of Supporting Document’.

### ANNEX A: Form of Application

#### Form Of Application

Grant Funding For **[insert grant ITA name]**

Grant Ref: [**insert bravo ITA reference]**

1. We have examined the invitation to apply for grant funding and its appendices set out below (the **ITA**) and hereby offer to start the approved project in accordance with the attached documents commencing [Insert commencement date] for the period specified in the ITA.
* Invitation to Apply (ITA) Particulars and Conditions of Application (Section 1)
* Project Requirements (Section 3)
* Form of Application (Annex A)
* Section 31 Grant Determination Letter (Annex D)
* Memorandum of Understanding (Annex E)
1. If this Application is accepted, we will execute the Agreement and any other documents required by the Authority within 10 days of being asked to do so.
2. We agree that:
	1. before executing the Agreement substantially in the form set out in the ITA, the formal acceptance of this Application by this Authority or such parts as may be specified, together with the documents attached shall comprise a binding agreement between the Authority and us;
	2. pursuant to the Electronic Communications Act 2000, the Agreement will be executed electronically using the Authority's electronic tendering and contract management system;
	3. we are legally bound to comply with the confidentiality provisions set out in the ITA;
	4. any other terms or conditions or any general reservation which may be provided in any correspondence sent by the Authority in connection with this application process shall not form part of this Application without the prior written consent of the Authority;
	5. this Application shall remain valid for 120 days from the deadline for Applications;
	6. the Authority may disclose our information and documents (submitted to the Authority during the competition) more widely within Government for the purpose of ensuring effective cross-Government grant processes, including value for money and related purposes;
	7. We will abide by the Code of Conduct for Recipients of Government General Grants [Code of Conduct for Recipients of Government General Grants](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/771152/2019-01-15_Code_of_Conduct_for_Grant_Recipients_v._1.01.pdf#:~:text=The%20publication%20of%20a%20Code%20of%20Conduct%20for,behaviour%2C%20into%20line%20with%20those%20placed%20on%20suppliers.)
	8. we will be bound by our costs proposal for the delivery of the project as incorporated in our Application in the Commercial Questionnaire on Bravo. We understand that in the case of costs increasing, no additional funding will be available from the Authority;
	9. the Agreement is inclusive of any element of Value Added Tax and is for the for the full grant funding period;
	10. the costs proposed are made up as per the costs schedules for individual sections of the goods and/or services as applicable;
	11. where the project costs increase because an error has been made as to the amount of VAT payable and not recoverable by the Applicant, the Authority shall be under no obligation to increase the grant funding awarded to meet any VAT liability; and
	12. the Applicant will invoice the Authority against the agreed activity schedule for work done and the Authority will pay in accordance with the Agreement.

#### General

1. We confirm that:
	1. the details provided of match funding (if relevant) secured to assist with furthering the project outcomes are true and correct;
	2. there are no circumstances affecting our organisation which could give rise to an actual or potential conflict of interest that would affect the integrity of the Authority’s decision making in connection with the ITA or the Agreement; or
	3. if there are, or may be such circumstances giving rise to an actual or potential conflict of interest we have disclosed this in full to the Authority.
2. We undertake and it shall be a condition of the Agreement that:
	1. the amount of our Application has not been calculated by agreement or arrangement with any person other than the Authority and that the amount of our Application has not been communicated to any person until after the closing date for the submission of Applications and in any event not without the consent of the Authority, except where the disclosure, in confidence, of the approximate amount of the Application was necessary to obtain insurance premium quotations required for the preparation of the Application;
	2. we have not canvassed and will not, before the evaluation process, canvass or solicit any member or officer, employee or agent of the Authority in connection with the project and that no person employed by us has done or will do any such act; and
	3. we have not made arrangements with any other party about whether or not they may submit an Application except for the purposes of forming a joint venture.

### ANNEX B: Accompanying Notes for Applicants and Expression of Interest Form

**Woodland Creation Accelerator Fund (WCAF)**

**Accompanying Notes for Applicants**

(PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING NOTES **BEFORE** COMPLETING YOUR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST FORM)

1. **Background**
	1. Local authorities across England have identified tree and woodland planting as a key part of their response to the climate change and biodiversity crises. A lack of capacity to develop and design planting proposals, to consult widely, apply for capital grants and organise planting has been identified as a key barrier to progress.
	2. The Woodland Creation Accelerator Fund (hereafter the Fund) is a simple fund with a total value of just under £8,000,000. It is designed to provide financial support to increase the capacity of specialist skills within local authorities enabling them in turn to accelerate the delivery of tree planting and woodland creation commitments. **The ultimate goal of the fund is to enable more trees planted particularly in winter seasons 2023/24 and 2024/25**.
	3. All upper tier authorities (county councils, unitary councils, London boroughs, metropolitan boroughs, combined authorities) are eligible to apply. The only exceptions are LA Woodland Creation Partnerships and successful TCAF applicants who are already in receipt of direct support for staff from the Nature for Climate Fund (NCF). For local authorities located within Community Forests, please see Section 5. The WCAF only applies to England.
	4. Capital funding already exists for local authorities to plant trees and woodlands. Advice and case studies are available from local Forestry Commission area teams and from organisations such as the Woodland Trust. This Fund completes the range of support available by funding new staff and consultants to move projects forward.
	5. The Nature for Climate Fund has funding available until 2025. There is no guarantee that support payments will be available after this date, so local authorities are encouraged to move quickly and take advantage of the funding while it exists.
2. **What will the Woodland Creation Accelerator Fund resource?**
	1. This is a revenue only fund (funding new staff and / or consultants). It is designed to be simple and flexible.
	2. We want you to tell us what you need in terms of additional staff / consultants. As well as thinking about your own planting plans, please also consider tree planting applications from others in your area. Is there a consultation ‘bottleneck’ with your historic environment record which is slowing down or even delaying private land applications, for example?
	3. It is most important that we strive to plant the right tree in the right place and for the right reasons. Consider if you need a strategy for planting or specific expertise (GIS mapping) to assist you? Do you need an additional resource to ensure that effective community consultation has taken place?
	4. We would expect typical applications to seek funding for new posts such as woodland creation officers, community engagement posts, project officers, specialist consultants or a blend of these. The key thing is that you apply to the Fund for your specific local needs.
3. **How much can I apply for?**
	1. Awards will be allocated with discretion – a scoring criteria will be applied followed by a decision panel to ensure that funding is spent in line with the overarching goals.
	2. The ceiling for a single local authority grant is **£150,000 - this is the total sum.** The money will be spread over two financial years 22/23 and 23/24 typically split 50:50. The first payment will be made in August 2022. The second payment in April 2023 contingent on activity in 22/23.
	3. Where local authorities are applying as a partnership, the total grant ceiling is raised to **£300,000.** In the Expression of Interest (EOI) please provide further information about your partnership.
	4. There is **no requirement for match funding**.
	5. Please note that the Fund cannot be used to fund existing staff.
	6. In the EOI, please specify how you intend to spend the money requested.
4. **Urban tree planting / rural woodland planting / levelling up**

* 1. We are keen to ensure that the Fund enables both urban tree planting projects and large woodland schemes to move forwards. Please indicate in the EOI whether the majority of your proposed planting is in urban or rural locations or both. **While the fund is called the *Woodland Creation Accelerator Fund* it should be noted that we also welcome applications that are based on individual trees.**
	2. In line with the government’s levelling up agenda, we are also keen to support those local authorities who have not been in a position to benefit from other NCF funds in the past due to a lack of specialist staff capacity.
1. **Tree and woodland planting commitment**
	1. A key part of the EOI is for you to tell us how many trees or hectares you will plant by 2025 which have been enabled by the Fund. We are particularly looking for realistic and deliverable proposals, so please provide any justification for your estimates. In particular we want to know the number of trees / hectares planted in the two planting seasons of 23/24 and 24/25 winters.
2. **Local authorities located within Community Forests**
	1. If your authority is located within one of theCommunity Forests, please discuss your proposal with the Community Forest Director and attach a letter of support which confirms the need and that there is no double funding for the posts requested.

*DEFRA reserves the right not to make an award if the proposal does not meet the objectives of a Community Forest Plan.*

1. **Recruitment**
	1. We are currently experiencing a national shortage in suitably qualified forestry specialists. Please consider this in your recruitment plans. You might consider up-skilling project managers and also engaging a specialist consultant or offering a flexible package that appeals to someone returning to work with a family etc. Please tell us about any creative approaches you will take with recruitment.
2. **How do local authorities apply?**
	1. Your Application will be submitted via the e-Sourcing platform ‘Bravo’. You need to be registered to apply and can find the site here- <https://defra.bravosolution.co.uk/web/login.html>
	2. Once registered, the ‘Invitation to Apply’ (ITA) can be accessed to view all relevant information and submit your application.
	3. Please review the ITA document carefully before submitting your Application following all instructions contained within. The Application will consist of mandatory questions on Bravo, completion of the Expression of Interest form, a Commercial Questionnaire and Form of Application.
3. **Application period**
	1. The application period will run for four weeks from 13th June 2022. Applications must be submitted by the deadline set in order to be considered. Applications will not be considered if they arrive outside of this period.
4. **What happens once the EOI has been submitted?**
	1. Once all of the EOIs have been submitted, we will lot applications into:

i) rural

ii) urban

iii) mixed

By lotting your Application according to the proportion of urban planting, it can be assessed with like for like Applications. This ensures a competitive bid process. The aim is to evenly allocate funding across the lots, though we reserve the right to base the final allocation upon Applications received to achieve the desired outcomes of this fund.

An assessment will be made against the following three primary areas:

* Evidence of need
* Commitment to planting by 2025
* A deliverability assessment

An Advisory Board comprising of subject matter experts will be involved in the final selection and assessment. This is a competitive bid process and we are hoping to fund at least 50 local authorities. We anticipate that the assessment process will take no more than two weeks

1. **Further support**
	1. See [Welcome to ADEPT | ADEPT (adeptnet.org.uk)](https://www.adeptnet.org.uk/) to view a joint webinar between ADEPT and Forestry Commission on WCAF.
	2. If you have any specific enquiries not covered by the above information or the FAQ documents for applicants, please contact via Bravo.
	3. Successful applicants will be required to take part in a programme of monitoring and evaluation. This will be conducted by The Association of Directors of Environment, Economy, Planning and Transport (ADEPT) to the end of the period of the Nature for Climate Fund programme and will capture the impact of this funding on accelerating tree planting and woodland creation.
2. **Awards**
	1. Awards will be made to successful Applicants (subject to satisfying due diligence checks) once the Evaluation of Applications is complete and the Grant Determination Letter and Memorandum of Understanding have been agreed been signed by all parties.

**Woodland Creation Accelerator Fund (WCAF)**

**Expression of Interest Form**

**Please add your Applicant Name here**

**Section 1: Qualification Questionnaire**

**Q1 – Are you an eligible upper-tier authority?** *Please answer Yes or No*

**Q2 – Have you received any Nature for Climate Fund (NCF) monies towards staff costs? (For Example: from the Trees Call to Action Fund (TCAF) or the two Woodland Creation Partnerships: Cornwall and Northumberland Fund)** *Please answer Yes or No*

**Q3 – Will this application result in trees planted by 2025?** *Please answer Yes or No*

**Q4 - Would you describe the planting you propose to complete as: i) mostly rural ii) mostly urban or iii) mixed?** *Please select the description which best fits your Application*

**Q5 – If you are located within a Community Forest have you attached a letter of support from the Community Forest Director?** *Please answer Yes or No*

**Section 2: Technical Questionnaire**

**Q6 – Are you applying as a sole authority or as a partnership?** (maximum 200 words)

* *If you select ‘partnership’ – please tell us about your partnership and its status e.g., partnership agreement in place.*

**Q7- Evidence of Need: In one page or less, please describe below why you need this additional resource?** Weighting= 15%

*Evaluation Criteria includes-*

* *Evidence of current resource for this work*
* *Evidence of a shortfall of resource capacity required to deliver your plans*
* *Detail of innovation within recruitment plans around the current shortages of specialist forestry staff*
* *Description of any barriers to planting you are addressing*

**Q8- Commitment to planting by 2025: As a result of increased capacity, how many trees (or hectares) do you estimate you will plant in the winter seasons 23/24 and 24/25? How did you reach these estimates (the basis of your assumptions)? (maximum of 300 words)** Weighting= 18%

*Evaluation Criteria includes-*

* Scale of planting
* *Legitimacy of estimates*

*Input basis of assumptions here…*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Winter Season 23/24** | **Winter Season 24/25** |
| *Input figures…*  | *Input figures…* |
|  |  |

**Q9- Deliverability: How will increased capacity help accelerate tree and woodland planting in your area? (maximum one page)** Weighting= 22%

*Evaluation Criteria includes-*

* *The work new resource will complete in Years 22/23 and 23/24*
* *Maximising resource proposed*
* *Legacy plans for this resource beyond 2024*

**Q10 – Approximately what % of the above new planting will be accessible to the public?** Weighting= 5%*‘Public access’ refers to access by foot via public footpath or permissive access to all or part of the new woodland / tree planting*

**Q11– How many of your proposals of planting fall on land located within Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) which are within the 25% most deprived according to the national Index of Multiple Deprivation?** Weighting= 0 LSOAs= 0% **|** 1-3 LSOAs = 5% **|** over 3 LSOAs= 10%)

**Section 3: Commercial Questionnaire**

To respond to this section, please refer to the Microsoft Excel spreadsheet entitled **‘WCAF Commercial Questionnaire Template’** to input your costing information as per the instructions contained within the document.

When submitting your completed spreadsheet to Bravo, please follow the naming convention **‘Applicant Name\_WCAF\_Commercial Questionnaire’**.

**End of Form**

### ANNEX C: WCAF Commercial Questionnaire Template

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### ANNEX D: Section 31 Grant Determination Letter

## *Text  Description automatically generatedWoodland Creation Accelerator Fund*

##

## Template for Grant Determination Letter

NAME

EMAIL

DATE

Grant Determination Number: 31/ (to add)

WACF Reference: WACF-21/22-REF

Dear Applicant,

**Funding awarded by the Woodland Creation Accelerator Fund (WCAF) Grant Determination for 2022: 31/** (to add)

In exercise of the powers conferred by section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003, the Secretary of State (the Minister of State) at the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA) is pleased to formally award xxxxxx Council a revenue grant of £xxxx, This arrangement makes the following determination:

**Citation**

1) This determination may be cited as the Woodland Creation Accelerator Determination (2022) [No31/xx].

**Purpose of the grant**

2) The purpose of the grant is to provide support to local authorities in Englandfor the additional staff / consultants required to accelerate plans for tree and woodland planting.

This is a non-ringfenced revenue grant, therefore it is a condition of the grant that funding must only be used for the intended purposes.

**Determination**

3) The Minister of State determines the amount of grant to be paid as set out in Annex XX.

The grant determination is to fund Year 1 activities only, for the financial period FY 2022/23, the indicative amount awarded for 2023/24 is also outlined in Annex XX.

This offer is made subject to agreement of the WCAF Memorandum of Understanding. It is your responsibility to read and understand the Memorandum of Understanding. Please retain a copy of all documents for your own records.

Please confirm your organisation’s acceptance of this grant offer by returning a signed Acceptance of Offer letter to xxxxxxxxxxx. In all cases this must be completed by the Senior Officer Responsible and signed using an electronic signature.

**Next Steps:**

* **Sign and return the enclosed Acceptance of Offer letter within 10 working days.**
* **Sign and return the enclosed WCAF MoU**
* **Submit the completed WCAF Claim Form for Payment 1**

No payments can be made until we have received the above.  Subject to that, DEFRA will aim to make the first payment of the grant, within 10 working days of receiving your correctly completed paperwork.

If you have any questions about this grant offer, please contact us via email, quoting your application reference number.

**Treasury consent**

4) Before making this determination in relation to local authorities in England, the Minister of State obtained the consent of the Treasury.

Signed by authority of the Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

**Edward Barker**

**Director – Natural Environment, Trees & Landscapes at DEFRA**

[xx xxxx] 2022

### Annex E: Memorandum of Understanding

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