GCBC Research Grant Competition 4 (RGC4)

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQS)

Below is a compilation of clarification questions we're frequently asked about GCBC's Research Grant Competitions. These apply to the Concept Note stage and have been updated to reflect the specifics of RGC4. We'll continue adding to this list as further questions arrive.

If you have a question not answered below, contact us at infogcbc@gcbc.org.uk

The Basics

- *Where can I find guidance on the eligibility of non-UK based Research Organisations?*
  You can find the Research Organisation Questionnaire in Annex 09 of the competition pack. Note that at Concept Notes stage, you only have to confirm that you can adequately respond to the questionnaire (and consequently that your organisation meets the criteria to lead a consortium). If your concept note is successful, you will have to provide appropriate evidence at Full Proposal stage.

- *My UK-based organisation is not yet registered with UKRI as a Research Organisation, but we have submitted an application. Can we apply to GCBC?*
  Yes, but you must be able to confirm that you submitted the application to UKRI before the 19th October 2026. If UKRI subsequently does not approve your registration your GCBC application will become ineligible.

- *What language can we submit the application in?*
  All parts of the application must be submitted in English.

- *Will GCBC accept multi-country proposals?*
  Yes.

- *Can an organisation that has been awarded a grant in previous funding rounds apply for subsequent funding?*
  Yes.

Partners and Consortia

- *If a Global North organisation leads a consortium, should they give part of their budget to organisations in ODA countries?*
  Yes. If the lead applicant is based in the Global North, we would expect a reasonable proportion of the overall budget to be spent by partner organisations based in the ODA-eligible countries named in Annex 1 of the theme paper

- *Is the participation of a UK-based organization mandatory for consortia applying to the RGC4 call? If it is not mandatory, does including a UK partner give the proposal any advantage in the evaluation.*
  The participation of a UK-based organisation is not mandatory, and including a UK-based organisation does not give an advantage to the application.

- *Can private companies apply for funding?*
  No. Only research organisations that are not-for-profit may lead an application. They can be privately owned but must be non-profit and must meet the UKRI criteria for being considered a research organisation. Private companies can be partners but must not generate profit directly from the project but otherwise all reasonable expenses incurred can be covered.

- *Can a participating company retain ownership and protect its pre-existing software, models and data while meeting the requirements for sharing research results? Please clarify the distinction between background intellectual property and project-funded outputs, including any licensing, open-access or disclosure obligations.*
  More information on intellectual property rights is included in the draft Grant Funding Agreement that will be provided with the RGC4 Invitation to Apply documentation available when the Concept Note window opens on

19th October. An excerpt from the GFA is noted below indicating that Defra will be granted rights to all IPR Material. -
*Intellectual Property in all IPR Material will be the property of the Grant Recipient. Other than as expressly set out in these Conditions, neither Party will have any right to use any of the other Party's names, logos or trademarks on any of its products or services without the other Party's prior written consent.
*The Grant Recipient grants to the Authority a non-exclusive irrevocable and royalty-free, sub-licensable, worldwide license to use all the IPR Material for the purpose of supporting the Funded Activities and other projects.

- *Are government organisations eligible to apply?*
  Parastatal or government organisations can be consortium partners as long as GCBC funding is not being used for activities those organisations should ordinarily carry out.

- *Can you clarify what you mean by "based in" is that legal entity status in that country or just registered? e.g. are branch offices of INGOs eligible as a partner in the focal geography.*
  It is sufficient for the organisation to be registered in the country and if the offices of an INGO partner are in the focal geography that would be eligible.

- *Can a single organisation submit an application, or must organisations be a part of a consortium?*
  Both are permissible. However, all applications need to have at least one organisation based in one of the ODA eligible countries in the focal geographies of the RGC4 theme paper– either as the project lead or as an implementation partner. Organisations intending to submit an application not supported by implementation partners should take into consideration that GCBC sees value in creating research partnerships that will endure bond the life of individual projects

- *If the Lead Organisation is legally registered in an eligible ODA country within the focal geography, must the consortium still include a separate in-country implementing partner?*
  No - if the lead organisation is registered in an eligible country, that is sufficient. The application should be submitted by that in-country

organisation's office. In this case, a separate in-country partner is not essential.

- *Would a UK multi-agency lead application be considered?*
  No. The GCBC does not allow a multi-agency lead as the contractual arrangement needs to be with one organisation who will implement delivery in line with the terms of the Grant Funding Agreement and who will have responsibility for the management of the grant funds.

- *Are letters of support from partner organisations and governmental institutions mandatory at the Concept Note stage?*
  Letters of support are not required at the Concept Note stage, however you will be asked to confirm that nominated partners support the Concept Note.

- *Can an organisation be a part of more than one Concept Note submission?*
  Yes. Providing you have clear and distinct projects that align with the aims of GCBC. Note that when beginning a submission, you must create a separate account and log in details for each individual application.

- *Can you confirm whether a lead institution is permitted to submit more than one proposal under this call.*
  There is no restriction on the number of applications that can be made by one organisation, furthermore your organisation can apply on multiple proposals as lead or as co-applicant.

- *Can the PI be in any other European country different than the UK (e.g. Germany, France, Switzerland)? From admin point of view how this would work for money transfer? currency conversion?*
  Yes. Lead organisations can be based outside of the UK. This includes other European countries. Administrative details will be resolved when successful projects are contracted.

- *Does the Principal Investigator need to be the same person as the project leader or can they be different people?*
  For the Concept Note you will need to nominate a Contact Person and a Principal Investigator -both from the Lead Organisation. They can be the

same person or different depending on the project's expected management and governance structure.

- *Must the Principal Investigator (PI) hold a permanent position at the lead organization?*
  No. However the PI must be contracted to the Lead Organisation for the duration of project implementation.

- *Is a Principal Investigator who was awarded funding under last year's call (RGC3) eligible to apply again this year, either as PI or as part of a new proposal?*
  Yes, previous PIs can be part of new proposals.

- *Should the application be formally submitted by one of the participating institutions, or is it submitted directly by the PIs in their individual capacity?*
  Applications should be submitted by the Lead Organisation. The appropriate individual within that organisation may vary- it may be the PI or it may be someone with a contract management role. The applicant should decide who is most appropriate.

- *We are thinking about action research through civil society organisations. Is a partnership with a university absolutely necessary?*
  A partnership with a university is not essential but the lead organisation must be a research organisation.

- *Can a United Nations agency, specifically the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), act as the Lead Research Organisation under the RGC4*
  UN Agencies are eligible to lead or partner with a GCBC project but if applying as the Lead Organisation they must be able to verify that they are a research organisation.

- *Can U.S.-based universities participate as members of the consortium?*
  Yes.

- *Can a non-research institute (e.g. a local NGO) be part of a consortium?*
  Yes. Local NGOs (and many other types of institution) can be partners in an application that is led by a research organisation.

- *Is official presence in the country by the lead organization an eligibility requirement?*
  A lead organisation may be based outside the ODA country (or countries) in which research will be conducted. However, in such a case at least one partner organisation must be based in the ODA-country.

- *We are a UK-based organisation with a presence in three Latin American countries. Can we present a proposal that covers two of these three countries?*
  Applications that cover multiple countries in focal geographies are welcome. Partners must be legally registered organisations in the ODA-eligible country

- *Can public universities (universities sponsored by government) apply?*
  Yes.

The Budget

- *Can you confirm the exact amount of funding we will receive?*
  Grants must not exceed a total value of £1.5m and be of a minimum value of £200k. We encourage proposals for projects of any size within this range and will seek to fund a portfolio of projects of different sizes and types.

- *Could you point us to the applicable RGC4 grant terms and guidance covering these points?*
  More information is included in the draft Grant Funding Agreement that will be provided with the RGC4 Invitation to Apply documentation available when the Concept Note window opens on 19th October.

- *Is match funding required to apply?*
  No. Cost-sharing and in-kind contributions are welcome and should be made clear in the Concept Note.

- *Can research activities in non-eligible countries be included in a multi-country proposal if matched funding is available to cover those costs?*
  Any research activities that are carried out in ineligible countries cannot form any part of the project being implemented under GCBC. All resources and funding for GCBC must be managed and accounted for completely separately from any other projects being implemented from other funding sources.

- *If a global north organisation leads a consortium, would they give part of their budget to organisations in ODA countries?*
  Yes. If the lead applicant is based in the global north, we would expect a reasonable proportion of the overall budget to be allocated to partner organisations based in the ODA-eligible locations of the project.

- *Before finalising our budget, could you clarify how GCBC's funding flows to multi-country teams and what reporting/currency-conversion rules apply*
  Only one organisation may serve as the lead applicant. Under this arrangement, the lead organisation will be responsible for disbursing funds to consortium partners (sub-grantees) and subsequently claiming reimbursement from GCBC. All financial reporting must be submitted in GBP, with any expenditures incurred in other currencies converted using the applicable OANDA exchange rates.

- *We are exploring a model of joint leadership of a project- can you advise how this would work?*
  Joint leadership of a project is not permissible. GCBC will have a single contract with the Lead Organisation of each project. The Lead Organisation will manage contractual arrangements with the partner organisations named in the application.

- *Which currency should the submitted budget be in for the grant competition?*
  Great British Pounds (GBP).

- *The guidance indicates 'the value of any individual grant may not exceed 25% of the applicant's (Lead Organisation's) average income/turnover for the past 3 years'. Does this apply to the Lead Applicant's average income, or should all partners satisfy the criteria?*
  This applies to the Lead Applicant's turnover. The 25% target is to reassure GCBC that you will be able to safely manage the budget of the grant.

- *What is the overhead or administration cost limit for each research grant?*
  Overhead or administrative costs should not exceed 15%. This does not include MEL costs.

- *Are there any preliminary criteria that applicants should consider when estimating their costs in the initial stage?*
  When outlining the indicative budget in your Concept Note, please ensure that you carefully consider all relevant budget subcategories, including: staff costs, travel costs, equipment costs, sub-contractors costs, and overhead costs. At this stage, detailed information is not required; however, it is important to note that only a 10% variance is allowed between the Concept Note budget and the Full Proposal budget, if an applicant is invited to prepare a full proposal. As a result, the Concept Note budget should be carefully planned and considered from the outset.

- *How do I find more detail about the budget e.g. indirect cost?*
  The overhead rate for this grant is set at 15%. Further information will also be provided with the application documents.

- *When you refer to "larger grants" in the guidance, do you mean proposals requesting funding close to the £1.5m ceiling, or is there a specific budget range that GCBC considers to be a large grant? Are there any examples of project types that would typically fall into that category?*
  Larger grants are those closer to the £1.5m limit. Examples of existing grants and values (up to £1m) are available on the GCBC website.

- *What are the rules for what proportion of the full budget a partner organisation can receive?*
  There are no strict rules. However, CN assessment will consider how the budget is shared between partners and whether the allocations are appropriate to the role of each partner. Whilst the Lead Organisations usually receive the largest proportion of the budget, assessment will consider whether budget allocations allow for meaningful engagement of partner organisations in the project.

- *Could you clarify the 10% budget change rule? Does it apply only to the overall amount requested, or also to the share allocated to each partner? And how much can the consortium composition change between concept note and full proposal?*
  The 10% rule is strictly applied to the overall budget. The share allocated to each partner should be broadly similar between Concept Note and Full Proposal, but more variation is acceptable. We would not expect the consortium composition to change and please note that the Lead Organisations must confirm that partner organisations have agreed to inclusion in the Concept Note.

- *Could you please confirm whether the Principal Investigator (PI) is eligible to receive salary support?*
  Yes- the PI's salary is an acceptable cost.

- *Is there a limit on the percentage of the PI's time that can be covered by GCBC funding?*
  No. The PI (or any other individual within the partnership) can have up to 100% of their time covered- providing this is justified by their contribution to the project

- *Are PhD scholarships eligible for this call?*
  No. Funds for studentships are not an eligible cost under this grant competition.

Focal Geographies

- *Should applications to the Coral Triangle focal region be limited to marine/coastal ecosystems, or more broad to include terrestrial, freshwater etc?*
  Terrestrial and freshwater ecosystems are also in-scope for the Coral Triangle

- *We are already working with some organisations in the Andes, particularly from Ecuador. Please let me know whether the Amazonian side of Ecuador (and possibly Peru) could be considered as a potential candidate site for our research project.*
  The sites under consideration must be within the Amazon Basin, i.e. to the east of the Pacific/Atlantic watershed, to be in-scope for this call.

- *Is coral-related project conducted in the East Coast (South China Sea) of Malaysia in scope for this call?*
  Yes, this is eligible.

- *Apart from mangroves of the South China Sea and Sundaland forests, are coral reefs in the South China Sea eligible within the Coral Triangle region?*
  Yes, they are eligible.

- *Can one project be carried out across multiple regions (for e.g. countries from both Amazon and Congo Basin), or do we have to stay strictly within one region?*
  Yes- a single project can cover multiple focal regions.

- *Are the highlands in the Amazon basin (eastern Andean slopes) considered in the focal regions?*
  Yes.

- *Is it possible to consider the Galapagos Islands as our study area? It is part of Ecuador, but it has its own government regimen and regulation*
  No. The research theme states that proposals are welcome in priority ecosystems within the Amazon. The Galapagos Islands are not within the Amazon.

- *Given that security constraints often limit external field access in the focal geographies, what frameworks does GCBC recommend for ensuring knowledge generation, project management, and safety protocols for local, in-country partners who carry out ground validation in amber and red zones?*
  We expect applicants to take account of the particular context and circumstances for the location where their research is intended to be implemented. We would also expect applicants to develop a risk management plan and mitigation strategy that considers all available travel and security guidance, including FCDO Travel Guidance and trusted and reliable local sources. The safety and security of field teams and project staff is always of the highest priority, and this should be clearly demonstrated in the project's risk management strategy and approach. It should also be noted that GCBC will assess the level of risk and if risks are considered to be too high and risk management strategies insufficient, the project will not be permitted to proceed.

- *Could you confirm if Zambia is eligible for this call? It is located in the Congo Basin (one of the geographic areas of the call) and is an LDC on the DAC list, however they do not seem to appear as an eligible country on the call guidance.*
  Zambia is not in scope for this call. As listed in the Theme Paper, Congo Basin countries include only - Cameroon, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Republic of Congo.

Miscellaneous

- *Are projects expected to focus exclusively on research, or can they also include a practical implementation or piloting component alongside the research?*
  Practical implementation and piloting are permitted if they help position the research for greater influence.

- *Are there any methods that are not welcome by the GCBC? For example, the inclusion of arts and humanities methods into interdisciplinary research?*
  Yes, GCBC welcomes innovative approaches relevant to the theme, as long as the methodologies used constitute research

- *Can projects include capacity strengthening, co-development or practical implementation/piloting where these are integral to the research. For example, testing governance or policy approaches with government stakeholders and generating evidence on what works?*
  Yes. Research must be at the core of the project, but we welcome proposals that include capacity strengthening, co-development or practical implementation/piloting where they contribute to uptake of research results.

- *Are there any specific formatting requirements or guidelines that we should follow when preparing the concept note? Our understanding is that, at this stage, you are not expecting a fully developed proposal. However, having a clearer sense of the expected level of detail, length, and components to be included in the concept note would be extremely helpful.*
  The format for Concept Note applications will be released when the call opens. It will require less detail that Full Proposals.

- *What is the due diligence requirement for consortia leads?*
  We expect lead organisations to be responsible for ensuring due diligence is conducted on partner organisations in the consortium. Due diligence is carried out before contracting.

- *What is the disciplinary background of assessors?*
  Their backgrounds are varied. The majority are researchers working on natural resource management issues. For this call we have sought additional regional expertise.

- *Do you provide feedback at Concept Note stage?*
  Yes, feedback will be provided at the concept note stage. However, because a large number of concept notes are expected, the feedback is likely to be relatively high-level rather than detailed.

- *Do you have examples or recommendations for working in countries where government priorities don't align with the GCBC agenda, or where government engagement on GCBC-related issues is limited or absent?*
  Please see the GCBC website for information on current projects.

- *Are there any papers published of the results of any of the examples you provided during the presentation?*
  Yes - go to the GCBC website and refer to the world map with GCBC projects and their relevant sites.

- *The Darwin Main Initiatives seem very similar, and have overlap in geography, e.g. Sundaland Biodiversity Hotspot. It's not clear to me how these two programmes differ?*
  The key difference is that GCBC is a research programme. Darwin Main is not.