

# Woodland Creation Accelerator Fund

## Frequently Asked Questions

### What is the Woodland Creation Accelerator Fund?

The Woodland Creation Accelerator Fund is a fund for upper tier local authorities only – providing revenue-only support for the additional staff / consultants required to accelerate plans for tree and woodland planting. It is a simple and competitive fund, offering full support for new staff / consultants over the two financial years 22/23 and 23/24. The fund has been developed in partnership between the Forestry Commission and DEFRA.

### Why is it needed?

We have clear evidence that a lack of capacity / specialist expertise within authorities has been a significant barrier preventing access to capital funds and the delivery of ambitious tree planting commitments. Without additional staff there is a serious risk that authorities will not be able to benefit from the generous capital grants available from the Nature for Climate Fund, which runs until 2025.

### Am I eligible to apply?

All upper-tier authorities in England will be eligible for the Fund, with the only exception being those who are in receipt of revenue funding from the NCF for delivery staff. Examples of ineligible authorities would be the two NCF funded Woodland Creation Partnerships (Cornwall and Northumberland) and the recent recipients of money for staff from the Trees Call to Action Fund (TCAF).

### Do you welcome applications from urban boroughs as well as more rural county councils?

Yes - we are keen to support a mix of both urban and rural focused applications. We will be grouping the completed applications according to the proportions of urban and rural planting to ensure that we are assessing like with like proposals. We also welcome applications from authorities representing more deprived areas.

## How much money is available?

Awards will be allocated with discretion following assessment – we will be applying a scoring criteria and then a decision panel. Individual authorities can apply for up to **£150,000 in total** – split over two financial years. Where authorities are working together in partnership, the ceiling for grant support is up to a total of **£300,000**. We do not require any match funding. The funding ceiling of £150,000 is based on the typical salary costs of two new suitably qualified full-time equivalents.

## What can I apply for?

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 records which is slowing down or even delaying private land applications, for example? – this could be resolved by employing an additional historic environment adviser. We would expect typical applications to seek funding for new posts such as woodland creation officers, community engagement posts, project officers, specialist support staff or consultants or a blend of these. The key thing is that you apply to the Woodland Creation Accelerator Fund for **your specific local needs**.

***Please note - this is a revenue only grant, so do not apply for any capital items such as trees or guards.***

## How do I apply?

Expressions of Interest can only be submitted on the Bravo system

<https://defra.bravosolution.co.uk/web/login.html>

once the **Woodland Creation Accelerator Fund** programme is formally open (June 13<sup>th</sup> 2022). From the home page, click on **view current opportunities** and then scroll down to the **Woodland Creation Accelerator Fund**. There will be a four week 'window' for applications to be submitted. You will be required to answer a limited number of questions.

## What questions will be in the Expression of Interest?

The final EoI form will\* contain questions to ascertain the following?

- If you are applying on behalf of a partnership – what status is your partnership? Could you provide a copy of any current MoU or other agreement?
- Evidence of need – in one page or less please describe why you need this additional resource and how this will help you to accelerate your tree and planting plans to 2025?

- Planting commitment – in one page or less, please confirm your estimated levels of completed tree or woodland planting in the winter seasons 23/24 and 24/25? What have you based your estimates on? How far advanced are your plans?
- Simple budget – a question asking how you intend to spend the grant over two financial years and any legacy plans you have.
- Accessible? – a short question requiring an estimate of public accessibility to the planted trees / woodland.
- Deprivation? – a short question on your authority and the level of deprivation found within.

Note \* - DEFRA reserves the right to amend the final questions and request additional information.

## How will the assessment be completed?

Once all of the EoIs have been submitted, we will group together similar applications according to the proportion of urban planting, in order to be able to compare like-with-like bids. An initial assessment against the following three primary criteria will be completed:

- 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 authorities. We anticipate that the assessment process will take no more than two weeks. Grant offers should be out with local authorities in August.

## When will the grant be received?

For successful local authorities, the grant will be paid in two instalments. The first payment (50% of total) will be made as soon as the grant determination letter and accompanying MOU has been accepted. The second payment will be made at the beginning of the financial year 2023.

Note: DEFRA reserve the right to withhold the second grant payment if no progress has been made following the initial award.

## Once awarded, how will the spending of the grant be monitored and evaluated (M&E)?

The objective of the M&E activity is to ensure the grant is being used in a timely and cost-effective manner, in alignment with the agreed selection criteria and, ultimately will tangibly contribute to woodland creation by 2025. A light-touch approach to M&E will be

adopted that includes six-monthly self-assessments by the respective local authority. The self-assessment will be reviewed by the Fund project management team and its M&E partner, Proving Services. Any areas of interest and/or concern will be followed up by an interview.

**For further information contact the Forestry Commission:**

If you have any specific enquiries not covered by the above FAQ or the information found on Bravo for applicants, please contact the Forestry Commission using the following email [WCAF@forestrycommission.gov.uk](mailto:WCAF@forestrycommission.gov.uk)

**We look forward to receiving your EoI.****General disclaimer**

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