

Environment Fund

Better Environment in our Local Urban Spaces - BELLUS



Introduction

This Call for proposals document is part of a package which also includes the following documents:

- Common Provisions
- Guidelines for Applicants
- Guidelines for Evaluators
- Frequently Asked Questions

The Guidelines for Applicants are related to the Environment Fund. More specific and additional guidelines on the BELLUS Call are included in the Frequently Asked Questions. Applicants are encouraged to read the present guidelines in conjunction with the abovementioned documents, prior to submitting an application. These documents can be accessed online through the following link: <https://era.org.mt/environment-fund/>

General considerations

This Call is issued under the scope of the Environment Fund, hereinafter referred to as the Fund, established under Article 32 of the Environment Protection Act (Cap. 549), hereinafter referred to as the Act. The Fund is managed and administered by the Environment and Resources Authority (ERA) and governed by the Act and the Common Provisions. The Fund is aimed at financing projects, programs and schemes related to, and costs intended to achieve and manage, the aims and objectives of the Act, as well as relevant studies and works which may help remedy any harm caused to the environment and its natural resources.

The Fund shall support actions which are clearly tailored towards benefiting the environment as defined in the Act, with the objective of protecting, restoring and/or improving the quality of the environment, including the natural landscape, air, water and soil, and to halt and reverse biodiversity loss and to address the degradation of ecosystems.

This Call falls under the following themes of the Fund as stipulated under Article 2 of the Common Provisions:

- Improving the local environment, including greening urban areas and quality of countryside;
- Biodiversity and nature protection.

Scope

As the regulator and guardian of the Maltese environment, ERA has an obligation to protect the natural environment and its benefits derived from ecosystem services the natural environment provides to each and every one of us. This Call aims at fulfilling part of ERA's goal by improving environmental conditions, awareness and wellbeing. It further aims to bring nature back to our cities, towns and villages through green initiatives and the application of nature-based solutions in urban, peri-urban and rural areas, with activities aimed to implement more green spaces within public areas. Projects are meant to benefit the general public common good, contribute to enhance public environmental stewardship and sustainability, the improvement of biodiversity, as well as to contribute towards the mitigation of the urban heat island effect.

Target Projects

Applicants must put forward project proposals targeting the following initiatives:

- Green-Blue Infrastructure¹ initiatives in the urban, peri-urban and rural environment (including inter alia permeable pathways, rubble walls and maintenance of existing rubble walls, ecosystem-based rainwater collection / water reuse systems, bioswales, flood protection and erosion control).
- Removal and replacement of existing impermeable hard paving with healthy soiled ground areas².
- Removal of Invasive Alien Species and their replacement with native indigenous flora where pertinent^{3,4,5}.
- The establishment of public community gardens (neighbourhood gardens) managed by residents.
- Forestation initiatives utilising native indigenous flora^{2,5}.
- Conservation and restoration initiatives in sensitive natural areas situated close to the urban environment.
- Communication, education, public awareness and citizen science in line with the above target projects.

¹ Investing in the Multi-functionality of Green Infrastructure (GI)- An information Document to support GI Thinking in Malta <https://era.org.mt/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/GI-InformationDocument-ERA-2019.pdf> and Green Paper on Greening Buildings in Malta: Initiatives for Green Walls and Roofs for Residential, Commercial, and Industrial Buildings <https://era.org.mt/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/IPC-FC-Green-Paper.pdf>.

² For more information about tree and shrub planting see <https://era.org.mt/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/GuidelinesLandscaping-MalteseIslands-EMU-2002.pdf> and <https://era.org.mt/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/SpeciesLandscaping-MalteseIslands-MEPA-2009.pdf>.

³ Should include monitoring actions for sprouting. For more information kindly refer to: <https://era.org.mt/topic/list-of-invasive-alien-species-of-union-concern/> and <https://era.org.mt/national-strategy-for-preventing-and-mitigating-the-impact-of-invasive-alien-species-ias-in-the-maltese-islands/>.

⁴ For more information on the removal of invasive alien plants, kindly refer to: <https://era.org.mt/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/PlantInvaders-RestorationGuidelines-MEPA-2013.pdf>

⁵ For more information on indigenous species refer to <https://era.org.mt/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/TreesAliens-RuralAreas-AnnexI.pdf>

Budget

The overall budget for this Call shall be EUR 500,000. Funding per project will be capped at a minimum of EUR 50,000 and a maximum of EUR 100,000. The budget breakdown must reflect realistic and reasonable costs for each proposed action. Funding will be awarded in instalments, subject to the nature, duration and total budget of the project, as stipulated under Article 12 of the Common Provisions.

Project Duration

Endorsed projects shall need to be implemented within a period of two (2) years. Projects may also include a long-term maintenance plan, to sustain the project even after its completion. For further details, kindly refer to section 18 of Part D in the Guidelines for Applicants 2021 document.

Eligible Participants

Applicants considered eligible for funding under this Call, must be either:

- a public entity, including Local Councils and bodies and associations governed by public law;
- a voluntary organisation, established in accordance with the Voluntary Organisations Act (Cap. 492);
- an educational institution.

There is no pre-defined number of beneficiaries to be involved in the project. A project may include one or more beneficiaries; however, engagement with other relevant beneficiaries is encouraged, more so when this could strengthen the feasibility of the project.

Application Process

Applications must be submitted by the lead beneficiary to ERA via the ERA's ERIS portal before the **30th of September 12:00 p.m. local time**. Incomplete applications and applications submitted after the deadline will not be accepted.

The application has to be submitted via a digital submission through ERA's ERIS system by the lead beneficiary on: <https://eris.eraportal.org.mt/>. One printed copy of the online submitted application form is to be also submitted in hardcopy with original signatures and stamps. For complete details regarding the application process and the documents that must be submitted together with the Application Form, kindly refer to sections 5 to 7 of Part B in the Guidelines for Applicants 2021 document.

Important considerations for applicants

Applicants must ensure that they thoroughly read all the guidelines present within the accompanying documents of this Call, in order to ensure the submission of a complete Application Form and also to ensure full compliance with the eligibility criteria present therein. Applicants must ensure that the methods proposed in their project proposals are in full compliance with ERA's official guidelines and/or guidelines endorsed by ERA.

In line with section 6.10 of Part B of the Guidelines for Applicants, the applicant must submit together with the Application Form *inter alia*, any relevant permit or assessment for the project or a permit application clearly indicating the application number and date of application submission, as well as a site plan for physical works and site maps where necessary. The applicant must then submit the letter of approval/refusal of the permit without delay upon its receipt from the relevant authority. The applicant is bound to inform ERA on such permit decisions, even after the deadline for submission of this Call.

Successful applications may be subjected to a quality check by the Authority before funds are awarded. Should the applicant fail to revise the project proposal to fit the quality assessment, the project proposal will no longer be accepted for funding.

All expected risks related to project implementation, together with mitigation measures, are to be included as part of the application form. Applicants must list the main constraints that could possibly occur during the implementation of the project and come up with solutions to mitigate those constraints.

The project proponents must ensure that their project proposal contributes to the scope of this Call with defined expected impacts and clear, reasonable, attainable and measurable targets. Moreover, applicants must also ensure that their project proposals includes a significant communication, education, public awareness and involvement element, of between 5-10% of the project budget proposed. This condition shall not apply to projects targeting communication, education, public awareness and citizen science as their main initiative.

Overheads (indirect costs) covered under this call will be capped at 5% on the eligible costs for each beneficiary. Applicants must ensure that overheads are included in their project proposals.

For further guidance on the Fund and the BELLUS Call, applicants may contact ERA via email funding.era@era.org.mt.