

On behalf of:



Federal Ministry
for the Environment, Nature Conservation,
Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection



of the Federal Republic of Germany

Frequently Asked Questions

Project Selection Procedure of the Grant programme against Marine Litter „Marine Debris Framework – Regional hubs around the globe” (Marine:DeFRAG)

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1 Selection procedure and duration of funding

1.1 What does “two stage selection” procedure mean?

Projects are selected by the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection (BMUV) / Zukunft-Umwelt-Gesellschaft gGmbH (ZUG) in a two-stage procedure. In the first stage, project outlines need to be submitted, based on the corresponding funding guideline. After successful completion of the first stage of the procedure, promising project outlines are invited by BMUV / ZUG to submit a full project proposal (start of the second stage of the procedure).

In the second stage, the formal project application is subjected to a thorough review, and after approval by the BMUV, the project can begin. All relevant information and templates for the second stage are provided in writing to the selected applicants after the first stage has been completed.

1.2 How should the project outline be submitted?

The project outline should be submitted via the online system Jira, which is linked exclusively during the call period on the ZUG website via the green button "Submit outline". The project outline can be submitted in German or English. An additional submission of the outlines in paper form by post or email is not required.

1.3 What is the maximum project duration at the moment?

The average project duration is three years. In justified exceptional cases and after consultation during the application phase, a longer project duration can be planned. Applicants cannot expect at this stage that possible subsequent phases will be funded by the funding programme. It must be ensured that the project can achieve its goals in the time period applied for.

1.4 What is the difference between implementing organisation / applicant, implementing partners and subcontractors?

An implementing organisation is the applicant and first recipient. Implementing partners are recipients who, according to the project concept, also implement project activities. Subcontractors may be engaged to procure goods, services or works necessary for the implementation of the project. Subcontractors are therefore usually profit-oriented organisations. Subcontractors must be selected through a competitive procurement procedure.

1.5 Can projects have already started before the funding has been approved by the BMUV?

Projects must not have started implementing their activities before official project approval. The conclusion of a supply or service contract attributable to the implementation of the project is deemed to be the start of the project. This also applies to contracts that are concluded with the reservation of a grant. When submitting an application, applicants must declare that the project has not yet begun and that no contract attributable to the implementation of the project has yet been concluded. Proof of intended or already approved third-party funding for the project must be provided together with information on the respective granter of third party funding and the concrete amount of funding.

1.6 Will the implementing partners also receive a grant?

No. Only the main implementing organisation (applicant) will receive a grant and will thus be the only partner that receives direct funding from BMUV. The implementing partner is responsible for forwarding these funds to the implementing partners. After the grant has been approved, a subgrant agreement has to be signed with every implementing partner. Generally, all regulations that apply to the recipient of the initial grant itself must be passed on to the implementing partners.

1.7 Do grant recipients have to follow public procurement law when forwarding funding to implementing partners?

No. This is a classic grant relationship with a partner (who does not pursue profit-making objectives but has an interest of his own in the implementation of the project), not a contract relationship (in which a contract would be carried out by a contractor and payment would be made in return for a service rendered). Thus, the “Unterschwel­lenvergabeordnung” (UVgO, Sub-Threshold Regulation) is not applicable, as it would be in the case of a contractual relationship. The forwarding of grants is regulated in VV No. 12 to § 44 BHO. Pursuant to VV No. 12.1, first sentence, the approval authority may stipulate in the notice of award that the recipient of the grant as the initial recipient may forward the grant in whole or in part. The onward transfer creates a two-stage funding relationship: the first stage is between the awarding authority and the initial recipient, the second stage is between the initial recipient and the final recipient. By forwarding funds in accordance with the specifications in the notification of award, the initial recipient fulfils the purpose of the award (VV No. 12.1, sentence 2).

2 Applicants and implementing partners

2.1 Who can submit a project outline?

The main implementing organisation must be based in Germany. The following organisations may apply: Implementing agencies, NGOs, private companies, universities, research institutions, as well as international and multilateral organisations and institutions based in Germany. Individuals are not eligible for funding.

In order to be capable of successfully implementing a project, the main implementing organisation must have relevant experience in implementing projects in the field of international cooperation in the respective thematic area together with local partners. Furthermore, the project funding volume should be in reasonable proportion to the turnover and performance of the main implementing organisation. Further requirements will be specified in the calls.

2.2 What exactly does “based in Germany” mean? Does a German branch of an international organisation fulfil this criterion?

The location of the corporate body of an organisation is determined in the respective constitution, or by the location of the administration. This also applies to German branches of international and multilateral organisations with activities focused in Germany.

2.3 Is the calculation to be made on an expenditure basis or on a cost basis?

It is stipulated without exception that both the applicant based in Germany and implementing partners (“Weiterleitungsempfänger”) calculate on the basis of expenditure.

2.4 Why is it only possible to work on an expenditure basis?

In the case of a grant on an expenditure basis, no onward transfers are possible. However, these are fundamentally necessary as the projects are to cooperate with implementing partners in the respective partner countries.

3 Project organisation and partnerships

3.1 Are there institutions that are excluded from being an implementing partner?

Individuals are not eligible as implementing partners. Private companies can join projects as implementing partners as long as they do not solely have a commercial interest in the implementation and gain no economic advantage from receiving funds. Governments may not receive funding for regular ministerial activities.

3.2 What is “political backing / endorsement”? How and when should the interest of the political partner and its willingness to cooperate be secured and demonstrated?

For all projects of the Grant Programme against, explicit “political backing” by the partner government(s) in the project country/region is mandatory. Political endorsement by political partners is required from national, ministerial level. In the first selection stage, an initial assessment must be made by the main implementing organisation with regards to existing political support, and a contact/reference person in the government of the partner country (political partner) must be given.

In the second selection stage, the political endorsement must be ensured by the implementing organisation and BMUV and be submitted prior to the approval of the grant. Further information about this will be supplied at the beginning of the second stage.

Please note: Project proposals will not be approved without political backing. In order to implement the projects, the governments of the partner countries must have clearly expressed an explicit interest in cooperating with the Federal Republic of Germany on the prevention of marine litter.

3.3 Is the political partner’s department relevant?

For project approval, the governments of the partner countries must have clearly expressed an explicit interest in cooperating with the Federal Republic of Germany on the prevention of marine litter. The choice of the political partner will depend on the project’s thematic approach. The political partner should be the government department that is responsible for this area in the country. However, due to significant differences between countries, no general statement can be made about which specific departments or ministries are most relevant.

3.4 Is it mandatory to include implementing partners in the project?

The collaboration between different partners and the active involvement of local partners is generally necessary to successfully carry out the project and to successfully embed the project in the partner country. To achieve its goals, a project must therefore work together with local implementing partners.

3.5 3.5. How important is the choice of implementing partners?

Generally, the choice of implementing partners should result in a successful implementation of the project and ensure access to the relevant stakeholders. To sustainably embed the project and its results in the partner country/ countries, sufficient activities should be implemented by local, professional and experienced implementation partners. Project constellations will be assessed individually for every project.

3.6 What role does the number, origin and expertise of the implementing partners play in the selection of the outlines?

In principle, the selection of implementing partners should contribute to a successful implementation of the project and ensure access to the relevant stakeholders. In order to ensure the long-term anchoring of the project results in the partner country, sufficient activities should be implemented by professionally experienced implementing partners in the partner country. Project constellations are therefore assessed individually for each project. No general statement can be made in this regard, but for administrative and capacity reasons it is recommended to limit the number of implementing partners or on-lending recipients to approximately three to five per partner country.

3.7 How should stakeholders from partner countries be involved?

Projects are expected to implement an appropriate amount of their funding and project activities through national stakeholders in the partner countries in order to integrate the project into national structures and ensure the sustainability of project activities. National stakeholders are implementing organisations and subcontractors with official legal status under the applicable national law.

4 Budget

4.1 In which currency should the application be given?

All calculations need to be stated in Euro (EUR).

4.2 Are there any guidelines regarding the maximum amount of funding?

The funding volume granted by the BMU is normally between 3 and 6 million EUR per project. The grant needs to be in proportion to the planned activities. Furthermore, the funding volume should be in proportion to the revenue and financial capacity of the main implementing organisation. More information on this can be found in the grant programme's funding guidelines.

4.3 What are own funds, third-party funds, and in-kind contributions? How many of each should a project have?

Own funds are generally funds provided by the implementing organization to finance part of the total eligible expenses of the project from its own assets. and thus ensure overall project financing.

Third-party funds are funds provided by third parties (e.g. private donors) who have an interest in the project implementation and make them available to finance part of the total eligible expenses.

In-kind contributions are contributions made by the implementing organizations themselves (e.g. existing infrastructure, materials, equipment or knowledge in the form of existing websites). These are only listed as information in the project proposal, as no payment process takes place.

No funding quota has been set. However, a high level of own contribution or the acquisition of third-party funding indicates a high level of identification with the project. The appropriate use of funds must be decided on a case-by-case basis. The main implementing organisation's own funds must be indicated.

4.4 In which format should the budget be submitted? Can we use our in-house budget for-mat?

Since April 2022, the standardised documents provided by ZUG must be used for all newly approved budgets. Please note that budgets cannot be reviewed by ZUG if the password protection has been removed. If you need more table tabs or similar, please inform ZUG. We will make the adjustment and send you a new budget template.

Full budget plans do not yet have to be submitted with the outline (during the first application stage); here, basic information on the budget amount and budget distribution is requested. A detailed budget overview is only required when a full proposal is submitted.

4.5 Why should the funding volume be in proportion to the main implementing organisation's revenue?

The federal government requires that the main implementing organisation is capable of ensuring appropriate use of the funds on a professional and administrative basis.

As the exclusive recipient of funds, it is the responsibility of the main implementing organisation to correctly forward the funds to the implementing partners. This means that, for example, subgrant agreements with the implementing partners have to be concluded, budgets and expenses must be checked during the application and project stage, and reports must be written. To meet those requirements, the availability of sufficient administrative experience and necessary staff is crucial.

4.6 Can partners' contribution to the project also take the form of in-kind contributions?

The applicant and the political partners may, in principle, provide contributions in the form of in-kind contributions. The contributions in kind and non-cash contributions must be reported to the BMUV in the official application form (AZA with financing plan) when applying for funding. Furthermore, a distinction must be made between the verbal mention in the project proposal (section "Other aspects relevant to funding"), in which participation in the form of in-kind contributions can be mentioned, and the illustration in the budget (Annex 3), which only allows the naming of positions that affect expenditure and in which in-kind contributions cannot be included.

4.7 How high must the contribution of an implementing organisation's own funds be to the overall budget? When and where does this have to be provided (project outline or proposal)?

No specific rate for own contributions has been set. However, a significant amount of own funds or the acquisition of third-party funding shows a high level of identification with the project. Appropriate own financial contributions and the mobilisation of additional funding are therefore generally a precondition for project approval. The budgeted own and third-party funds must, as far as possible, already be stated in the project outline.

4.8 Can an institution that is both a political partner and implementing partner also receive a certain percentage of the project resources?

An institution cannot be a political partner and an implementing partner of a project at the same time. It is not possible to fund permanent staff of the political partners, e.g. from the partner ministries or subordinate authorities, from project funds.

4.9 What expenditures are eligible for funding?

All expenditures necessary to achieve the project goal using sound financial management and budgetary rigour are eligible for funding. There is no provision for any economic advantage for the recipient of the grant. Luxury goods, environmentally harmful and military goods (incl. firearms) / technologies/ equipment and investments or services oriented towards such purposes, are excluded from any funding without exception. Moreover, grants on a cost basis are not envisaged. Planning is to be carried out exclusively on an expenditure basis.

4.10 The personnel costs (according to the tariff) have increased compared to the original plan-ning, how should we proceed?

If, during the application process or when submitting an amendment, you find out that the collective wages have increased, then you do not have to use the original wage and salary tables, but should use the updated pay scales (especially if your staff are entitled to be paid according to collectively agreed wages). Please note: The total appropriation does not increase by the amount of the pay scale increases; you may need to make savings in other budget lines.

4.11 How should the salaries of students, scholarship holders and teaching assistants working for the project be recorded?

The budget position "Students" should be entered in the budget format "Annex 3" sent to you in the section "Personnel" as "Assistant". Your position "Scholarship holders" should be entered in "External Services" as "Other - please specify" and there as "Scholarship". For teaching assignments, it would be "Other - please specify" and specify "Teaching assignment".

4.12 What is the deadline for the use of funds for on-lending partners?

Funds must be used as soon as possible (within 6 weeks) after disbursement for payments due in the project (for the purpose of the grant). The deadline for the implementing partner begins on the day after the funds are credited to their account: If this day is not known, from the fourth day after the payment by the initial recipient.

4.13 Do audits have to be budgeted?

No, audits can, but do not have to be budgeted. Please note that interim audits are generally not eligible for funding. Furthermore, expenses for auditors are not eligible for funding in the case of grant recipients, as well as implementing partners, based in Germany.

4.14 An implementing partner has difficulties opening a bank account. How can we proceed?

As the main implementing organisation, you are responsible for checking the creditworthiness and administrative capacities of the implementing partners. You also bear full responsibility for the proper use of the federal grant and are liable for the misconduct of the partner. If you are to make arrangements with implementing partners that involve the on-lending of funds by unusual means (i.e. all methods in which the partner does not have its own project account), then you as the main implementing partner bear full responsibility for this

procedure and, if necessary, the consequences in the event that processing does not take place as you had planned. If the project goal is jeopardised, you are also obliged to inform ZUG.

4.15 Is there a written form and signature requirement for submitting the budgets?

No, such a requirement (sending the signed documents by post, fax or e-mail) only applies to the "AZA" application format. You can also send us the budget (to be submitted in the "Annex 3" format sent to you) via Jira as part of the application review; there is no written form requirement. However, please state the place, date and name and position of the responsible staff member in block capitals on the "Cover Sheet".

4.16 Under what circumstances is inadmissible double funding present? Can we use synergies from projects funded by other funding parties and apply for a project with similar or identical content in this funding procedure?

You may apply for projects with similar content. The prohibition of double funding means that the same project may not be funded by another funding body or under a different title of the same funding body. The Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research (BMBWF), for example, defines double funding (or multiple funding) as the funding of a project by several funding agencies/programmes. There are two possible forms: 1. multiple funding is permitted if costs/parts (of all categories) are funded by different funding administrators/programmes (national and international). Each funding agency takes over a part of the total funding. 2. multiple funding is not permitted if the maximum costs are exceeded. Example: Grant administrator A takes over 60%, grant administrator B 50% of the costs. If an implementing organisation pursues similar projects with the same goal/purpose, but the projects are not one and the same, but different projects (which are also based on different applications), this does not constitute double funding.

5 Partner countries and regions

5.1 What countries can be selected as project countries?

The selected countries must be ODA-eligible. This means that they must meet the criteria for recognition as recipients of Official Development Assistance (ODA). Further information on ODA eligibility can be found on the DAC List of ODA Recipients of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Furthermore, the country or countries should be a significant contributor to marine litter.

5.2 How does the BMU/ZUG define "regional projects"? Do countries in a region have to border each other?

Regional projects are transnational multi-country projects, which take place in one geographic region (e.g., MENA, Sub-Saharan Africa, Central Asia, AOSIS) and whose activities generate a value that exceeds the mere national level. In a region, project countries do not have to be neighbouring. However, regional projects should have an impact on one or more geographically connected marine area(s), river(s) or river catchment(s).

5.3 Are there regions that are specifically relevant for the grant programme?

Generally, the partner countries should be among those with a significant generation of marine litter. Furthermore, countries with high predicted inputs of marine litter in the near future are also relevant. Geographical priorities, if any, will be published in the respective call for outlines.

5.4 Do activities of other projects in the partner country or countries impact a project's eligibility for funding?

Funding a project in a region or partner country where a large number of projects and activities to prevent marine litter are already being implemented does not always represent the most economical and efficient use of funds. Funding projects in a region with fewer already existing projects can often achieve more substantial effects with the same funds. However, the existence of activities and projects funded by other donors in the partner countries are not an exclusion criteria. Instead, it is important that projects are aware of and differentiate themselves from other donor activities in a meaningful way. The creation of synergies with existing projects is particularly important.

6 Miscellaneous on the project conception

6.1 What are “Safeguards”?

Project activities may unintentionally give rise to environmental or social risks. To avoid these risks, projects must take into account the ZUG Safeguards, which are based on the GCF (Green Climate Fund) Safeguards and IFC (International Finance Cooperation) Performance Standards. The Safeguard approach ensures that environmental and social risks are considered and managed and is subject to universal guiding principles, such as respect for human rights. More information on the ZUG Safeguards can be found on the website of the funding programme.

6.2 What does “results and effectiveness of the projects must be verifiable” mean?

By using a logical framework to describe the project, the project implementation can be monitored and the results and effectiveness of the projects can be verified.

6.3 What is an “exit strategy”?

The project concept should show how the project measures and results will be continued or maintained after the end of the funding by the funding programme against marine litter. For example, it must be explained how waste and circular economy systems established by the project will continue to be financed after the end of the project. This must already be sufficiently described in the outline.

6.4 Is a project concept that includes in-situ removal of marine litter (the direct removal of waste out of the water) a criterion for exclusion?

In general, mere in-situ removal measures in the sea or on the coasts – e.g. fishing for litter or beach clean-ups – are not eligible for funding. Exceptions are only possible for the removal of marine litter that cannot reasonably be prevented by a source-based approach. In addition, selected removal measures can be funded as a smaller part of an overarching project concept (e.g. as part of awareness-raising measures or for analysis purposes).

6.5 Can thermal treatment (the incineration of waste to generate electricity) be funded?

As preference is given to sustainable waste treatment methods, thermal treatment or the incineration of waste are not eligible for funding.

6.6 What role do quantifiable measurement of marine litter reduction and the monitoring approach play in the selection of outlines?

To receive funding, the project's outcome must be verifiable. For the first stage of the selection process (outline selection process), a sensible concept for quantifiability and monitoring is crucial. This should be based on standard methods.

6.7 Are there examples of particularly promising project approaches/types?

The aim of the outline competition is to collect a wide range of innovative and holistic proposals. There is therefore no one type of project that is most promising. It is important that the project contributes to a sustainable reduction of marine litter. To this end, the project should follow the requirements described in the funding guidelines and ensure that the project concept is comprehensive, reasonable and technically achievable. Furthermore, the project should consider the needs of the partner country. Transformative and innovative elements should also be included.

6.8 How important are long-term, sustainable reforms in the waste sector compared to local, directly measurable reductions of marine litter?

All projects should aim to be able to achieve both, a long-term, reproducible result as well as direct, local results. In addition to achieving measurable goals while the project is being implemented, the exit strategy should ensure that wide-reaching impacts are achievable or even expandable after the funding has ended. For example, the project can support reforms based on the needs of the partner country. These reforms can create the appropriate political framework conditions for the long-term prevention of marine litter in the partner country. As such, the goal should be to combine both approaches within one project.

6.9 How important is it that a project focuses on the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services?

The grant programme is dedicated to protecting the marine environment by reducing marine litter. Therefore, all of its projects aim to directly or indirectly reduce inputs of marine litter into the marine environment. As a result, the prevention of litter inputs, which pose a threat to ecologically valuable marine and coastal areas and/or to particularly endangered marine species, is taken into account, as is the global long-distance transport of waste.