

Frequently Asked Questions

Specific Grant Agreements in support of non-profit organisations primarily active in the fields of environment and/or climate action, including the clean energy transition

LIFE-2025-NGO-OG-SGA

Invite-based only

(last update 07.05.2025)

(For [generic questions on submission in IT tool](#))

For guidance on the [Model Grant Agreement](#), please refer to the [Annotated Grant Agreement](#). The AGA — Annotated Model Grant Agreement is a user guide that aims to explain to applicants and beneficiaries the EU Model Grant Agreements (General MGA, Lump Sum MGA, Unit MGA, Operating Grants MGA and FPA) for the EU funding programmes 2021-2027.

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This call for proposals is INVITE-BASED only! It only concerns organisations that are signatories of a LIFE 2024 NGO Operating Grant Framework Partnership Agreement

1. Timeline

Q.1. When is the 2025 call for LIFE operating grants launched? When is the deadline for the submission of proposals?

The invitation-based LIFE 2025 call for proposals for operating grants for non-profit entities will open on 22 May 2025 (letters to Framework Partnership Signatories are expected to be sent out on that day). The deadline for submission will be on 25 September 2025.

Q.2. What is the timeline for the LIFE 2025 operating grants evaluation and grant agreements? Will it be like the timeline of past years?

We will start the evaluation process in September 2025 and aim at notifying the applicants of evaluation results by December 2025, to sign the grant agreements by April 2026 at the latest.

Q.3. When will the next FPA call be launched? How many financial years will the next FPA cover?

The next FPA call for proposals is foreseen to be published in April 2026. It will be a multi-annual call launched in view of concluding 2-year FPA covering the 2027 and 2028 financial years of the organisations that will be selected.

2. Technical Proposal

Q.4. Can proposals be submitted in other languages than English?

It is recommended to fill in the technical part of the proposal in English, although proposals may be submitted in any of the official EU languages. Note that the grant agreement, project management files, communication with CINEA and formal reporting will have to be in English.

Q.5. What is the difference between Framework Partnership Agreement (FPA) and Specific Grant Agreement (SGA) and how closely connected should the two proposals be?

The FPA includes a multi-annual strategic plan (two years covering the organisations' financial year 2025 and financial year 2026), while the SGA 2025 focusses on the objectives, activities and outcomes of the second year (the organisations' financial year 2026), plus a detailed budget. The description of activities for the SGA work plan must be aligned to the FPA strategic plan.

Q.6. Is it possible to organize the WPs by theme or type of activity instead of policy areas?

Work packages don't necessarily have to correspond to policy areas. They may be organised by type of activity as well, at your best convenience. However, you should endeavour to use the same approach as for the FPA.

Q.7. Can we modify the given structure of the application template and adapt it to our own WP? Or must we respect the default tasks in the WP?

In the template Work Package 1 is organizational development for all applicants. WP2 and the following are on all other activities, which are generally policy-related. Then you can structure the tasks in each WP, including WP1, as you prefer.

Q.8. Can we include activities that are not linked to environmental / climate policies?

Such activities are not relevant to the objectives of this call, therefore in principle they should not be inserted in the proposal.

Note that all foreseen activities should comply with EU policy interests and priorities (*such as environment, social, security, industrial and trade policy, etc.*) and respect EU values.

Q.9. Section 1.1 “Contribution to the Framework Partnership” of the proposal was not retained in the LIFE 2024 Specific Grant Agreement that was signed. Do we still need to fill it in when preparing the LIFE 2025 SGA Proposal?

Yes, although this section was taken out when preparing the Specific Grant Agreement, we kindly ask you to still fill it in for your SGA 2025 Proposal. However, the information provided here does not need to be detailed and can make cross references to specific work packages. Note that as for the SGA 2024, this section will be removed during the preparation of your SGA 2025 so it should really only be a brief summary of your SGA’s contributions to your FPA, with no elements contained that are not repeated elsewhere in the proposal.

Q.10. Section 2.1 “Work Plan” of the proposal was not retained in the LIFE 2024 Specific Grant Agreement that was signed. Do we still need to fill it in when preparing the LIFE 2025 SGA Proposal?

Yes, although this section was taken out when preparing the Specific Grant Agreement, we kindly ask you to still fill it in for your SGA 2025 Proposal. However, this can be a very simple list or graphical presentation of the Work Packages. Note that as for the SGA 2024, this section will be removed during the preparation of your SGA 2025.

Q.11. In Section 2.2 “Work packages and activities”, instructions provided indicate that “this section concerns a detailed description of the activities during the period covered by the specific grant”. What level of detail is expected?

The description provided of the Work Packages and activities are relevant for assessing the performance of NGOs. When preparing the SGA proposal, the level of detail provided in the description of each WP and foreseen activities must allow CINEA to confirm that the contractual obligations of the grant agreement are met. However, specific and detailed activities targeting directly Union institutions, specific staff or members of the institution^I should not be included and the choice of engaging with Union institutions or some of its members or staff, and presenting specific positions, including examining and explaining the impact of a given policy or policy proposal, rests with beneficiaries^{II}. Beneficiaries remain fully and solely responsible for their own views and actions carried out through their work programme.

^{II} See, for instance, [Guidance on funding for activities related to the development, implementation, monitoring and enforcement of Union legislation and policy](#)

Q.12. In Section 2.2 “Work packages and activities/Work Package 2”, instructions provided indicate “List the specific objectives to which this work package is linked. Link them to policy areas identified in section 3.1”. What Section 3.1 is referred to here?

This is an error in the template. Please just indicate here the specific objectives to be attained by this specific Work Packages within a given timeframe.

Q.13. In the description of every Work Package do we have to include a summary (concise overview) of all activities included in the work package?

You don't have to include a summary before the description of activities. For each activity (T.1, T.2, etc.) you should give a description that includes means, outputs, results, etc.

Q.14. In section 2.2. ‘Work Packages and activities’ – ‘Channels and means’ should we include a list of the structures (e.g., our network) and instruments (e.g., social media, website) and specify how we will use them, or describe the process of how the activity will be implemented?

This depends on the activity: for input to policies, you can chose to describe the channels (e.g. participation in expert groups, in public consultations, etc.) while for the communication activities you can present the different tools and media (newsletters, articles on newspapers, social media, etc.) and you should as well describe how the activity will be implemented to reach the proposed objectives.

Q.15 In section 2.2 “Work Packages and activities”, instructions provided require to “list also expect outputs - immediate as well as medium term results/impacts, including qualitative and quantitative indicators”. Are qualitative/quantitative measures required for each specific activity ?

No, you are not expected to provide quantitative/qualitative for each specific activity you intend on carrying out. You can for example decide to define a few relevant indicators per work package.

Q.16. When copying WP2 table in order to create additional WPs, can we delete the instructions in all additionally copied WPs?

Please, do not remove/delete the instructions, you must keep them in.

Q.17. In section 2.2 “Milestones and deliverables (outputs/outcomes)”, it is stated: "for each deliverable you will have to indicate a due month by when you commit to upload it in the Portal [...]”. Is this also applicable for the operating grants?

Yes, this is also applicable to operating grants. However, as the operating grant duration is only 1 year, you can decide to indicate Month 12 for all deliverables and upload everything in the F&T portal at the end of the implementation period.

Q.18. In section 2.2 “Milestones and deliverables (outputs/outcomes)”, we are requested to provide a list of deliverables associated to each WP and to specify their dissemination level. What is the difference between the given options?

In the portal, the dissemination level of deliverables stems from public (PU) to EU classified. Please note that the dissemination levels [R-UE/EU-R — EU Classified], [C-UE/EU-C — EU Classified], [S-UE/EU-S — EU Classified] refer to Commission Decision 2015/444 of 13 March 2015 on the security rules for protecting EU classified information. Those dissemination levels should not be used for the LIFE programme.

Deliverables with PUBLIC (PU) dissemination level shall be published on the Funding and Tender Portal.

If your deliverables have some degree of confidentiality, you may want to mark them with dissemination level SENSITIVE (SEN). Those deliverables will not be published.

Q.19. How can we correlate Tasks into Deliverables (outputs/outcomes) if the number of Tasks far exceeds the limit on the number of deliverables (10-15)?

We do not expect a strict correlation. It isn't necessary to have one output/deliverable per task. We therefore invite you to identify only key foreseen deliverables so as to stay within the limit of deliverables indicated (10-15).

Q.20. We would need additional pages to properly fill in the SGA application form (part B). Would it be possible to get an extension on the number of pages?

In the F&T portal, applications must stick to the maximum number of pages indicated in the call for proposals. Please note that if you try to upload part B (as pdf) with a higher number of pages, the system will delete the additional pages.

Q.21. Can we add annexes to the application form?

No, no annexes should be added. Any added annex will be disregarded.

Q.22. Would it be acceptable if during the implementation of the work plan, we deviate from the commitment we have made in the FPA proposal (for example we delay or swap the actions which we were planning to take in the mentioned years? E.g., we complete an action planned for 2026 in 2025 and complete an action for 2025 in 2026)?

There is some flexibility, as long as the actions are completed within the FPA timeframe, but no flexibility on the budget (i.e., the budget of each year should be fully spent during that year and can't be transferred). Therefore, you should aim to plan as realistically as possible and to adjust the SGA plan every year.

Q.23. What is meant by "ongoing activity"? Is an activity built on actions of previous years regarded as an ongoing activity?

No, this would not be regarded as an ongoing activity. An ongoing activity is an activity for which implementation has already started, not an activity that builds on previous activities.

Q.24. Is it possible to carry out activities outside the applicant's country?

Yes, but activities planned outside the EU countries are only eligible for funding if they provide direct added value in one or more of the EU Member States for the implementation, updating or development of EU environmental and/or climate legislation (including clean energy transition). In general actions outside of the countries which participate in LIFE are not eligible.

Q.25. If we are involved in an EU-funded action grant, should the WPs mention the activities that we will undertake in the framework of the other EU-funded actions? Or should there be a strict separation?

In the work plan for operating grants, you should include only activities that are eligible for operating grants, therefore other activities funded by other EU-funded grants should not be included. However, if some new eligible activities will build up on a project funded by another programme or strand, the project can be mentioned but a clear separation must be operated, to avoid double funding.

Q.26. Do we need to fill in the Milestones section in the SGA Proposal template?

The milestones section does not have to be filled in as it is not mandatory for operating grants. Please

just provide deliverables in each WP.

3. Financial and Budgetary Aspects

Q.27. What is the budget for the current period?

The currently available indicative budget is 15 M€ for the 2025 NGO SGA Call, i.e. the NGO's financial year 2026.

Q.28. What are the highest and lowest amounts for grants?

The maximum amount that may be awarded by the EU per year is EUR 700,000 per beneficiary, for a maximum rate of 70% of the total eligible expenditure. There is no minimum amount.

Q.29. What is the allowed variance between the amounts that we submit in the individual SGAs? To what extent are we tied to the amount we mention in the "requested grant amount"? Is there a maximum variation percentage?

The individual yearly SGA requested funding should ideally be limited to 1/2 of the total FPA requested funding, otherwise we might incur insufficient funding for all NGOs that were awarded an FPA. Therefore, we ask you to plan carefully the requested EU funding, although some approximation is inevitable.

Q.30. Is financial support to third parties allowed? There is a field in the application form part B: Financial support to third parties (if applicable)

No, financial support to third parties is not applicable for operating grants, as indicated in the Call section *Eligible activities*. Please leave that section empty. The only eligible costs for LIFE NGO operating grants are the LIFE OG NGO personnel costs (A6) (corresponding to the personnel cost categories A1, A2 and A3 in the annotated grant agreement, i.e. employees or equivalent, natural persons under a direct contract or seconded persons) and the LIFE OG NGO subcontracting, purchases and other costs that will be reimbursed at the flat rate of 50% of the eligible LIFE OG NGO personnel costs

Q.31. Can members be funded? What about subcontracting for members?

The LIFE operating grant is a mono-beneficiary grant. Only the beneficiary NGO can claim the costs related to the approved work programme. Therefore, costs incurred by entities affiliated to the NGO or its members are not eligible. Subcontracting should not be used to circumvent this rule. Be advised that any subcontracts (or other procurement contracts) awarded, still have to ensure value for money/lowest price while avoiding conflict of interest.

Q.32. If the NGO is also the beneficiary of an action grant, can it claim overheads for that project?

Where the operating grant covers only part of the usual activity of the beneficiary, indirect costs under the LIFE action grant may be considered eligible if the beneficiary is able to demonstrate clearly that the operating grant does not cover any costs (including overheads) claimed under the action grant. To demonstrate this, the beneficiary must:

a. use analytical cost accounting that allows to separate all costs (including overheads) attributable to the operating grant and the action grant. For that purpose, the beneficiary must use reliable accounting codes and allocation keys to ensure that the allocation of the costs is done in a fair, objective and realistic way.

b. record separately: all costs incurred for the operating grants (i.e., personnel, general running costs and other operating costs linked to the part of its usual annual activities), and all costs incurred for the action grants (including the actual indirect costs linked to the action).
For non-LIFE action grants, please check the eligibility conditions of that specific grant.

Q.33. Will the percentage of EU funding requested make a difference in the evaluation of the SGA?

There are two instances where the requested rate of EU funding is taken into account:

- a. in the assessment of the proposal against award criterion 3 (Resources), particularly the “appropriateness of the budget and resources and their consistency with the work plan”;
- b. in case of dependence of the NGO on the operating grant, to determine how the NGO is addressing this dependence.

Q.34. If the 2025 SGA is signed in Q1/Q2 of 2026, are activities implemented since January 2026 eligible for funding?

Yes, if the NGO's financial year starts in January. The operating grants cover the same period as the NGO's financial year.

Q.35. Which types of costs are eligible under LIFE operating grants?

Only actual personnel costs are to be declared by beneficiaries of operating grants, i.e. LIFE OG NGO personnel costs (A6) (corresponding to the personnel cost categories A1, A2 and A3 in the annotated grant agreement, i.e. employees or equivalent, natural persons under a direct contract or seconded persons). The LIFE OG NGO subcontracting, purchases and other costs will be reimbursed at a flat rate of 50% of the eligible LIFE OG NGO personnel costs. Therefore, the total eligible costs can be calculated as 1.50 x the eligible LIFE OG NGO personnel costs of each NGO. The beneficiaries have to keep supporting documents to demonstrate the actual personal costs incurred (accounting records regarding staff costs, payslips, timesheets, etc...) during and after the implementation of the SGA.

Q.36. Since the total eligible costs will be calculated as staff cost +50% for other costs, how will the auditing procedure be adapted? What would be the required documents to be maintained for justification of the costs incurred: e.g., timesheets, invoices?

Since reimbursement will be based on actually incurred LIFE OG NGO personnel costs, only supporting documents related to these costs should be kept (accounting records regarding staff costs, payslips, timesheets, etc...). The 50% flat rate will cover subcontracting, purchases and other costs for which no supporting documents are needed to determine the eligible amount.

Q.37. Can natural persons "working under direct contract other than employment contract" be hired through (their own) consulting company or are they considered as subcontractors? In fact, very often those consultants who perform tasks equivalent to employees have their own companies for fiscal and legal reasons.

Persons to be considered as ‘Natural persons working under a direct contract’ are self-employed natural persons (e.g. some types of in-house consultants) who work on the action for the beneficiary under conditions similar to those of an employee, but under a contract that is legally not an employment contract. They need to fulfill the special conditions that are further described in the annotated grant agreement (see cost category A2 under personnel costs) and where also examples can be found related to these conditions.

The natural person must be hired under either:

- a direct contract signed between the beneficiary and the natural person (**not through another legal entity**; e.g. a temporary work agency) or
- a contract signed between the beneficiary and a legal entity fully owned by that natural person, and which has no other staff than the natural person being hired.

Q.38. Is the total amount of flat-rate costs calculated in the final report? Do these costs need to be reported item by item in the final report?

It is calculated for the provisional budget at the time of the grant preparation and calculated for the final payment on the basis of the final approved LIFE OG NGO personnel costs. The costs included in the flat rate do not need to be itemised.

Q.39. Do the financial contributions by third parties include the contributions from private donors (private foundations, individuals, corporates, etc.) for which we don't have signed contracts yet? Can we include contributions that we expect from third parties even if we are not yet 100% sure it will be secured?

Yes, you should include in the budget the expected co-funding, even if it is not fully secured yet. This will be corrected within each year's SGA budget.

Q.40. Income generated by the activities: is this commercial activities' income? Are EU tenders included in this category?

This includes any type of income generated by the activities under the NGO operating grant, but does not include the EU operating itself. Activities covered by an EU tender (i.e. leading to a procurement contract) should not be included under the NGO operating grant activities as otherwise there is 'double funding'.

Q.41. Are we obliged to request the amount of 50% of non-staff costs or could we increase staff costs versus non-staff costs?

The 'non-staff costs' under the 'LIFE OG NGO subcontracting, purchases and other costs' are covered by a flat rate of 50% calculated on the 'LIFE OG personnel cost' category. This percentage cannot be changed. If there is a need to reduce the final amount of the EU grant, then the applicant can request a lower amount of EU funding.

Q.42. How do we report non-staff costs? Do we need to show evidence of the expenses incurred?

You will not have to show evidence regarding the costs covered by the 50% flat rate for LIFE OG NGO subcontracting, purchases and other costs.

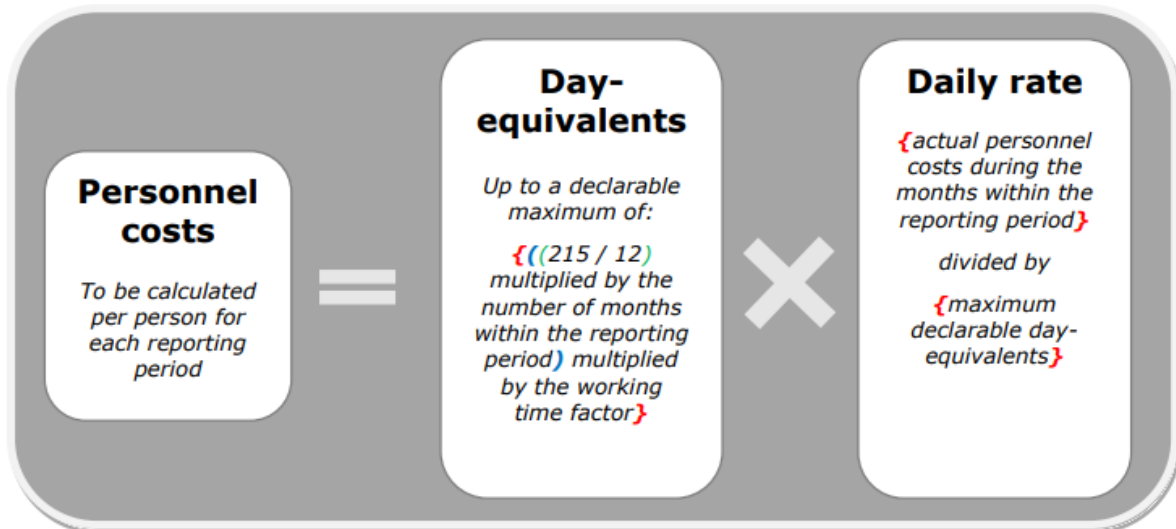
Q.43. Is there a level of flexibility whereby we can transfer up to 20% between budget categories as had been the case with previous LIFE operating grants?

The logic has changed under the LIFE21-27 programme as for LIFE operating grants, there is only one cost category based on actual costs (LIFE NGO personnel costs). The other costs, i.e. LIFE OG NGO subcontracting, purchases and other costs, are covered by a fixed flat rate of 50% on the LIFE NGO personnel costs, so therefore there is no possibility to transfer budget between those two categories.

Q.44. How do we proceed with salary calculation?

As the calculation will depend on the specific situation of the employees, we suggest that you consult the 'Annotated Grant Agreement' referring to personnel costs under A1 cost category (employees) or A2/A3 for natural persons under a direct contract or seconded persons.

For employees in most cases you have to calculate your personnel costs for the operating grant as follows:



Note that adaptations may be needed based depending of the situation of the employee. Examples and further explanation on the eligibility of salary cost components are further explained in the Annotated grant agreement : https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/common/guidance/aga_en.pdf.

Q.45. As our organisation is currently using approximately 80% of the Operating Grant to cover staff costs, can personnel costs also be covered by the flat rate? What happens if we do not spend all of the flat rate for other costs?

LIFE OG NGO subcontracting, purchases and other costs are covered by a fixed flat rate of 50% on the LIFE NGO personnel costs. If the beneficiary does not require the full 50% of the flat rate, then the requested EU funding can take this into account by reducing the maximum amount of EU funding to the level needed to cover your actual costs.

4. Other

Q.46. Can the reports from the auditors that must be submitted in the Participant Register for financial capacity assessment be presented in other languages than English?

Yes, all EU languages are accepted, but if English versions are available, please attach them to the application as well. Audit reports can be submitted as certified copies. A translation does not have to be by a certified translator.

Q.47. Is it possible for an NGO to apply for both LIFE NGO operating grant and LIFE action grant?

It is certainly possible for a beneficiary of an NGO operating grant to apply for an action grant. However, please note that if an NGO receives both an operating grant and an action grant must ensure that the related costs are kept separated, in order to be able to claim overheads under the action grant.

Q.48. How do we deal with activities that overlap with the work programme of an action grant?

Activities cannot be funded twice; therefore, you must ensure that they are planned and declared

only once (either in the operating grant or in the action grant agreement and reports).

Q.49. As part C concerns LIFE Project Indicators , could you explain how this will be linked to the reporting?

At application stage: Part C must be filled in by NGO applicants in the F&T portal. For the financed NGOs, in case your proposal is selected: no reporting of indicators is needed during the execution of the project.

Q.50. In the SGA application forms, the contract number of the linked FPA is requested. What number should be inserted?

This number is your FPA reference number. Please include the 9 digits of the FPA application (without "SEP") in that field of the SGA application.

Q.51. Do we have to submit staff CVs with our application?

No. CVs will be requested only in case of doubt during the evaluation process.