

3rd BESTbelt Call for Proposals 2024 Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Applicants are invited to first consult the BESTbelt Operational Manual and related documents published on the [BESTbelt website](#). In case questions remain, a list of frequently asked questions - and answers - classified by themes can be found below. Requests for additional clarifications can be sent to the BESTbelt Office no later than 10 days (until 23 February 2024) before the closure of the call. The FAQs are frequently updated based on incoming clarification requests which are relevant for all applicants.

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ELIGIBILITY OF APPLICANTS	
Question:	Who is eligible to apply for funding through the BESTbelt project?
Answer:	Lead and co-applicants must be registered as a private or public legal entity in one of the countries along the European Green Belt. They must be directly responsible for the preparation and implementation of the grant project and have a bank account in the name of the organisation. For more details, please see the Operational Manual.
Question:	Can you apply for BESTbelt funds if you are a current partner in other ongoing project with EU funds (ex. LIFE)?
Answer:	Yes, this is possible.

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Question:	Can I apply for BESTbelt funding if I am currently the lead partner in an ongoing BESTbelt project from one of the previous Call for Proposals?
Answer:	<p>No, if your organisation has the lead in another ongoing BESTbelt project from any of the previous Call for Proposals, you cannot apply as a lead applicant in the current 3rd Call. However, your organization may apply as co-applicant in a current application during the 3rd Call for Proposals.</p> <p>Vice versa, if your organisation already functions as co-applicant in one of the ongoing projects, you can still apply as lead applicant under the 3rd Call for Proposals.</p>
Question:	Can I apply as lead applicant and as co-applicant (in two different projects) during the 3 rd Call for Proposals?
Answer:	<p>In total, one organisation can submit a maximum of two concept notes/proposals as lead applicant and/or co-applicant per Call and is allowed to be involved in two BESTbelt projects per Call.</p> <p>Please also check the section "APPLICANT'S ELIGIBILITY" for more answers and clarity.</p>
Question:	If an organisation applies as a lead applicant and as a co-partner applicant, can both project applications be approved or is the project with the higher score going to win?
Answer:	Yes, both project applications can be approved. An organisation can be awarded with a maximum of two grants per call (however, only one as lead applicant).
Question:	Our organisation does not have full employed staff. Will that be a problem?
Answer:	This is no problem. However, please consider if your organisation has enough capacities to implement the project and if your approach has a long-lasting effect beyond the lifetime of the project.

PARTNERSHIP OF THE PROJECT	
Question:	Is it possible that an NGO from one country of the European Green Belt cooperates and applies together with an NGO from another country of the European Green Belt in a transboundary project?
Answer:	Yes, this is possible and in fact the precondition for funding in the category of transboundary projects.
Question:	Is it possible to apply crossover with other countries?
Answer:	Yes, it is possible and even beneficial if projects integrate cross-border element(s) in the work plan (if appropriate). Please consider different regulations and laws depending on the countries involved. Depending on the intensity of transboundary cooperation you may apply for a transboundary project. The maximum budget for intensive transboundary projects is EUR 60.000, as the personnel and logistical efforts are higher. For details, please see the Operational Manual.
Question:	Is it possible to apply as a single organisation, without additional partners?
Answer:	Yes, but keep in mind to foster the local potential on the ground. For this, a local organisation might be a good partner.
Question:	Is there a maximum number of co-applicants?
Answer:	No, there is no maximum number of co-applicants. However, please bear in mind the feasibility of your project and its coordination. Numerous co-applicants could add an administrative layer and complexity to the management of your project.
Question:	Is there a recommended number of people/organisations involved in the project?
Answer:	No, there is no recommendation. Please consider, the more organisations/people are involved the more complexity will be added to the project. Nevertheless, it is an asset to have partnerships within your project. What works well depends on the project concept.
Question:	Will it be disadvantageous to apply without international partners on a solely national basis?

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Answer:	It is an asset if your project promotes transboundary cooperation. If this is difficult in the current situation or it does not fit in your project proposal or the geographic conditions, you can explain your considerations and the decision in your proposal. Please note that for Baltic countries and for the Fennoscandian Green Belt the concept of transboundary cooperation is more flexible due to the characteristics of the European Green Belt in that area.
Question:	What are the possible benefits and downsides of a co-application?
Answer:	<p>(+) Co-application with other partners can be beneficial for the integration of different perspectives and experiences within your field of work. Thus, a wider range of activities might be implemented and at the same time, responsibilities for different project activities can be shared among the partners. The exchange between the partners can have a very generative effect for future activities.</p> <p>(-) The coordination during project implementation as well as reporting might require more effort because necessary information from involved co-applicant(s) must be gathered and the common output synchronized. This could be time consuming and require more capacities compared to working without a co-applicant.</p> <p>In general, building partnerships for the projects under BESTbelt and during project application is very welcome, but please be aware that the consortium should be not too big to remain manageable, and considering that you are applying for a “small grant”. Please also take note that collaboration can and should not be limited to potential co-applicants but should also take place with other stakeholders (on the ground etc.).</p>
Question:	Is it possible to involve national nature protection NGO / GO institutions, even if they are not located within the spatial reference area of the European Green Belt?
Answer:	<p>Lead or co-applicant organisations need to be registered in one of the countries along the European Green Belt (not necessarily within the spatial reference area of European Green Belt). But it is mandatory that the planned project activities will be implemented within the European Green Belt area.</p> <p>The BESTbelt project aims to increase the local potential along the European Green Belt, so involving local partners as co-applicants might be a good idea. Please also consider that only local and regional GOs are eligible.</p>
Question:	Are universities eligible to apply?

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Answer:	Universities are eligible provided they meet the “Eligible Activities” defined in the Operational Manual.
Question:	Can we include PhD students in our project proposal?
Answer:	Yes, you can include PhD students in your project proposal if it fits to the structure of your project. Please notice that projects exclusively focusing on fundamental research will not be funded though.
Question:	Can we include institutions such as national parks and structures in municipalities in our project?
Answer:	Yes, this is possible. There are no restrictions for that, but those institutions/organs need to take relevant part in the project.
ELIGIBILITY OF ACTIVITIES	
Question:	Which activities are eligible?
Answer:	Eligible activities must contribute to the BESTbelt principles and the objectives, be located in one or more areas of the indicative spatial reference area of the European Green Belt (or provide a written statement), comply with the European Green Belt Vision, contribute to tangible and measurable impacts, encourage a partnership-based approach with local stakeholders, guarantee open access to data and results, and not be fundamental research projects. For details, please see the Operational Manual of the 3 rd BESTbelt Call for Proposals.
Question:	What is the spatial scope of the European Green Belt? How many kilometres from the border still fall into the area of the European Green Belt?
Answer:	The extent of the European Green Belt varies between regions and countries. You can find a detailed visualisation for the Baltic, the Central European and the Balkan Green Belt on a map . ¹ The reference area for the northern part (Fennoscandia) of the European Green Belt is still under preparation. In general, for the BESTbelt project, the reference area is defined as everything within a distance of 100 kilometres (km) from the

¹ Due to technical issues, the link to the ArcGIS map was only provided shortly after opening the 3rd Call for Proposals. As interim solution, a static map had been uploaded for a first visualization of the European Green Belt.

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	borders of Norway and Finland, and within a distance of 5 km in case of coastal waters.
Question:	The outer line of the spatial reference area cuts through municipalities: how to deal with that?
Answer:	Eligible actions either must be located in the spatial reference area or a written statement outlining how the planned activities contribute to the achievement of the BESTbelt principles and objectives must be provided.
Question:	Is it possible to apply with a project sole activity is to organize a youth camp?
Answer:	If a youth camp is the essential activity to fulfil the BESTbelt objectives in your project application this is possible.
Question:	Is there a preference on: i) new initiatives vs. ii) continuation of activities/projects?
Answer:	The objective of BESTbelt is to unlock the local potential, therefore, new initiatives integrating local stakeholders are favourable.
COSTS AND BUDGET	
Question:	How should the budget be presented if the project involves co-applicants?
Answer:	Preselected applicants (lead and co-applicants) will have to present the costs of each organisation through different budget lines at the full proposal stage. The budget should be jointly presented in one document (form will be provided).
Question:	Are there any restrictions on how the budget is distributed / shared amongst co-applicants?
Answer:	No, there are no restrictions. The distribution must be consistent with your project. Please, keep the roles of applicant and co-applicant in mind.
Question:	Can two single projects in a transboundary context work together and receive a grant of EUR 40,000 each?
Answer:	No, this is not possible. For intensive transboundary cooperation a maximum budget of up to EUR 60.000 is possible. Applicants must clearly demonstrate if and how a cross-border focus of their project enhances their impact and explain

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	the role of transboundary cooperation. For details, please see the Operational Manual.
Question:	How to design the budget? Is it necessary to request the maximum amount allowed?
Answer:	The total amount of the grant must be spent during the implementation period of the project. The amount should be consistent with the proposed activities and workplan. It is important to be realistic as to what can be achieved and spent during the project. It is not necessary to request the maximum amount allowed, the requested grant may be lower than the maximum amounts (EUR 40.000 for regular and EUR 60.000 for transboundary projects).
Question:	Is there a recommended allocation for the cost distribution? How many percent of the budget should be considered for personal costs?
Answer:	No, there are no such recommendations. It depends on the project concept and should be reflected in its structure. The personal costs must be consistent with the project structure and workload. However, please consider that the applicant is directly responsible for the preparation, management, and implementation of the project and that the supervision and durability of the project must be secured. Therefore, it is highly recommended to include a reasonable amount of staff costs.
Question:	Is it an asset to have a higher or lower budget?
Answer:	No, the amount of the budget is not considered in the selection process. It will only be assessed whether the requested budget corresponds to the planned activities. It is not necessary to request the maximum funding amount.
Question:	The budget in the concept form seems extremely generalized, how should it be structured?
Answer:	The budget should be reasonable, justified and reflect the proposed actions. For the concept note a rough calculation and structure are sufficient. It is helpful though to state your thoughts behind your distribution.
Question:	If members of the project team (manager, financial assistant...) are already employed and paid from other project budgets, is it necessary to list these positions in the budget? How can it be included in the project proposal?

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Answer:	Please list all people who are involved in your proposed BESTbelt project and explain how the BESTbelt budget is distributed. It will help evaluators if you explain the situation shortly in the proposal.
Question:	How should we apply for a project if we have own funding that can be utilized?
Answer:	Own funds and co-funding through other projects are not allowed.
Question:	We have an idea, which requires a higher budget than the small grant. Is it possible to apply for the BESTbelt grant and fund other activities through another grant/sponsorship?
Answer:	BESTbelt aims at empowering local stakeholders to unlock the potential along the European Green Belt. Co-funding is not allowed for the BESTbelt grant. The project must be an independent/stand-alone project and needs to work for itself. If this precondition is fulfilled, the project can be part of a larger vision for a specific region, for which other projects are implemented as well. Important is that the activities of the BESTbelt project are self-contained and complete in themselves.
Question:	Is it possible to subcontract a consultant company, e.g. for organising events? Should they be contracted or become co-applicant?
Answer:	Both options are possible. For subcontracting, please respect the Procurement Regulations (form 5). For more details, contacting the BESTbelt Office and Regional Focal Point is advised.
Question:	Is there a maximum amount allowed on subcontracting?
Answer:	There is no maximum percentage regarding the share of the budget that can be allocated to subcontracting. However, only activities which are not essential to the project can be subcontracted as the lead applicant is directly responsible for the preparation and implementation of the grant project and is not allowed to act as an intermediary. This also means that a reasonable amount must be foreseen for staff costs. In all cases, subcontracting must be duly justified and be in line with the BESTbelt procurement rules.
Question:	Which procurement rules are applicable?

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Answer:	National and/or public sector procurement rules and regulations must be followed. Furthermore, applicants must reconcile any purchases of goods or services with grant funds with the BESTbelt Procurement Policy. Purchases with a total contractual value of less than EUR 5.000 (excluding VAT) can be made through "single sourcing", otherwise they must be based on written quotations from <u>at least three</u> potential suppliers. For details, please refer to the BESTbelt procurement rules.
Question:	Are the costs incurred during the preparation of the proposal eligible?
Answer:	No, only the costs incurred during the implementation of the project are eligible costs.
Question:	Will there be pre-financing (payment in advance) during grant implementation?
Answer:	Yes, the grant will be paid in three rates during project implementation. A first rate will be transferred after signing the contract to finance the start of the project and the following rates will be linked to the reporting scheme. Additionally, some potential gaps might occur between reporting periods which could require a temporary prefinancing from your organisation.
Question:	How to include import taxes?
Answer:	Import taxes are considered as part of the cost of purchasing items and thus should be included within the cost budgeted for the item itself.
Question:	Which kind of equipment is eligible?
Answer:	There are no restrictions on that. Please see the operational manual for more details on eligible costs.
ADDITIONAL INFORMATION	
Question:	Where does the Central European Green Belt end and where does the Balkan Green Belt start?
Answer:	Strictly defined borders between the regions do not exist. Thus, the transitions are fluent depending on the region. If in any specific case it is important for your application, please contact the BESTbelt Office for further clarification.

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Question:	Is Romania part of the Balkan Green Belt or the Central European Green Belt?
Answer:	Please click here to assess to which region of the European Green Belt your country belongs.
Question:	What is the amount of funding reserved for the 3 rd BESTbelt Call for Proposals?
Answer:	The amount of EUR 980.000 is foreseen for this call, and it includes the entire European Green Belt. .
Question:	Is it acceptable to have more words than it is requested in the description?
Answer:	It is helpful for the evaluation process if you stay within the word limit.
Question:	Is there a manual for reporting? How complex and time consuming is the reporting for a BESTbelt project?
Answer:	Grantees will be asked to send progress reports (consisting of a financial and a technical report) about their activities implemented within the respective reporting period. One reporting period covers 6 months. The deadline for reporting usually is 30 days after the end of the respective reporting period. There will be detailed guidelines for reporting. They will be shared during the time of preparation of the project start, and with the successful applicants only.
Question:	Based on which criteria will the projects that will receive BESTbelt funding be selected? How are the "points" managed?
Answer:	The selection criteria are pointed out in the Evaluation Grid in the Operational Manual. The Concept Notes will be evaluated by the members of the Project Team, whereas the Full Proposal will be evaluated by two external evaluators.
Question:	The time until the submission deadline is short and challenging for thorough project preparation – is there a way out?
Answer:	The deadline for applicants to hand in concept notes within the 3 rd Call for Proposals is 4 th March 2024. There will be no prolongation. Please keep in mind that the Call for Proposals is a two-stage approach and that there will be more time for the development of your proposal in the Full Proposal phase.

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Question:	If we have questions regarding the Operational Manual, what can we do?
Answer:	In case of questions, please reach out to the Regional Focal Point or to the BESTbelt Office via email: bestbelt@europeangreenbelt.org .
Question:	Will there be support by the Regional Focal Point after the Concept Note phase?
Answer:	Yes, there will be another webinar/workshop to give support during the elaboration of the Full Proposal. In addition, you can always forward your questions to your Regional Focal Point or to the BESTbelt Office.
Question:	Is it possible to involve Russian organizations as co-applicant or project partner?
Answer:	Due to the current political situation, Russia is excluded from the 3 rd BESTbelt Call for Proposals.
Question:	Is it possible to implement measures on private land? And if so, is it mandatory that the landowner is co-applicant?
Answer:	Yes, if you have permission from the landowner, it is possible to implement project measures on private land. To do so, it is not mandatory that the landowner is co-applicant of the project.