

BESTbelt



3rd Call for Proposals 2024

BESTbelt – more power for the European Green Belt

Operational Manual

Deadline for submission of concept notes:

04 March 2024 at 23:59

(Central European Time; to convert to your local time, [click here](#))

Applicants are strongly recommended to read this manual in full before completing and submitting a proposal for BESTbelt



BESTbelt



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European Union

This is a two-step call for proposals. First, concept notes will be submitted and evaluated. Then, only applicants whose concept notes have been selected will be invited to submit a full proposal. Finally, full proposals will be evaluated for decision on funding.

Background

The BESTbelt project (hereafter BESTbelt) is based on the experience of the [EU BEST Initiative](#). BESTbelt was launched as an EU pilot project on the initiative of MEPs (Members of the European Parliament) Jutta Paulus and Nicolae Ștefănuță. BESTbelt is a great opportunity to further strengthen and promote local action along the [European Green Belt](#).

The European Green Belt is Europe's longest green network, which evolved along the borders of the former Iron Curtain. The European Green Belt involves countries of the European Union, candidate countries and third countries (see Figure 1; detailed version at [BESTbelt website](#)). BESTbelt provides a grant scheme designed to give **effective support for actions on the ground for biodiversity conservation and restoration as well as sustainable development** along the European Green Belt.

Vision of the European Green Belt Initiative

The European Green Belt, our shared natural heritage along the line of the former Iron Curtain, is to be conserved and restored to function as an ecological network connecting high-value natural and cultural landscapes, whilst respecting the economic, social and cultural needs of local communities.

EuroNatur, as Chair of the [European Green Belt Association \(EGBA\)](#), acts as the lead partner of BESTbelt, and operates as the contractual partner for the beneficiaries (BESTbelt grantees). For the implementation and realization of BESTbelt, the BESTbelt Project Team was formed. It consists of the Regional BESTbelt Focal Points (Baltic: Friends of the Earth Germany Mecklenburg-Western-Pomerania; Central Europe: Friends of the Earth Germany Bavaria – Department Green Belt; Balkan: EuroNatur; Fennoscandia: EuroNatur).



Figure 1: Indicative spatial reference area of the European Green Belt, defined by the European Green Belt Association (EGBA). The northern part of the reference area (Fennoscandia) is under preparation. For the BESTbelt project, the area is defined as 100 kilometres (km) of the border for Norway and Finland, and 5 km on the coastal water.

Principles of BESTbelt

The main principle of BESTbelt is:

- to **provide support for biodiversity action along the European Green Belt.**

The specific principles of BESTbelt are:

- to **facilitate access** to EU-funds for actors in the four regions along the European Green Belt through small grants aiming to unlock local initiatives and potential in the fields of biodiversity conservation, restoration and the sustainable use of ecosystem services. In this regard, local actors may consider nature-based solutions and ecosystem-based approaches to tackle climate change adaptation and mitigation as well as the cultural-historical dimensions of the European Green Belt;
- to **increase the capacity** of these actors to access and effectively manage EU-funds;
- to **strengthen local capacities** through appropriate training focussing on young volunteers and on people in precarious socio-economic situations, including job seekers;
- to **increase the visibility** of the European Green Belt Regions as key contributors to the achievement of EU and global biodiversity targets.

Financial allocation

BESTbelt is providing a small grant scheme designed to give **effective support for actions on the ground at the local as well as the regional level.** BESTbelt funds regular and transboundary projects. The amount available for the BESTbelt Call for Proposals in 2024 is EUR 980.000. In total, the present call aims at funding 11 regular and 9 transboundary projects.

SMALL GRANT SCHEME

A **regular small grant** provides funds up to EUR 40.000. If the project has a particular and justified focus on transboundary cooperation, applicants can apply for a **transboundary small grant** up to EUR 60.000. It is not necessary to request the maximum (or close to the maximum) grant amount available. The budget must be realistically calculated. **The amount requested should be consistent with the proposed project activities and workplan.**

Small grants requested by applicants **must be exclusively funded by BESTbelt:** co-funding cannot be included in the budget of a BESTbelt project. The total budgeted costs of the project must be equal to the grant amount requested from BESTbelt. The intention of BESTbelt is to fund stand-alone projects which are independent from other projects. Funds received from BESTbelt must not be used as own contribution within other projects.

Transboundary cooperation

To promote intensive transboundary cooperation between organisations, partners and countries, BESTbelt offers the possibility to submit a specific application for transboundary projects.

In BESTbelt, transboundary projects involve cooperation between organisations from at least two different countries of the European Green Belt. This can mean projects involving cooperation between neighbouring countries. In this case cooperation occurs across the European Green Belt and with participation of organisations from administrative units on both sides of the European Green Belt on different levels such as countries, counties, regions or municipalities. On the other hand, it can mean projects involving cooperation between countries and related organisations which are located at the European Green Belt but are not neighbouring each other (either countries from one region or countries from different European Green Belt regions).

The maximum budget for intensive transboundary projects is up to EUR 60.000, as the personnel and logistical effort is higher (e.g. when involving a partnership or stakeholders from more than one country). Applicants must clearly demonstrate if and how a cross-border focus of their project enhances the project's impact and explain the role of transboundary cooperation.

The partner structure must involve strong transboundary collaboration. Therefore, to apply for a transboundary small grant, the project consortium must consist of the lead applicant and at least **one co-applicant from another European Green Belt country** (lead and co-applicant cannot be from the same country).

Project duration

Proposed projects may have a **duration of 12 to a maximum of 24 months**. Project duration must necessarily align with the proposed activities and workplan.

Earliest project start date: 01 October 2024.

Latest project end date: 30 September 2026.

Eligibility criteria

Eligibility to apply for BESTbelt funding is based on three criteria: eligibility of applicants, eligibility of activities and eligibility of costs.

ELIGIBILITY OF THE APPLICANTS (I.E. APPLICANT AND CO-APPLICANT(S))

In line with the **BESTbelt principles**, target beneficiaries are organisations that can achieve a sustainable, local impact in the European Green Belt area and implement **activities eligible for BESTbelt funding**. To unlock local potential, it is an asset if applicants are based in the indicative

spatial reference area (see [ArcGIS map](#) and **Figure 1** above¹) of the European Green Belt or cooperate with such a local partner. Due to the current circumstances, the Call for Proposals is suspended in Russia.

To be eligible for BESTbelt funding, lead applicant and co-applicant(s) **must**:

- I. **be registered as a private or public legal entity in one of the countries along the European Green Belt**². Individuals or sole traders are not eligible to receive BESTbelt funding.
- II. **be directly responsible** for the preparation and implementation of the granted project. Applications submitted by a body acting as an intermediary for a third party are not eligible;
- III. **have a bank account in the name of the organisation**. Grants cannot be paid into an account in the name of an individual. Please note that the grant is paid in EUR.
- IV. **be located in at least two different countries of the European Green Belt** (when applying for a **transboundary project**).

Examples of eligible applicants are:

- non-governmental organisations (NGOs);
- civil society organisations (CSOs);
- non-profit organisations;
- sub-governmental bodies i.e. municipalities, cities of a territory, communal services³;
- research organisations.

The lead applicant may apply **individually or with co-applicant(s)**. The lead applicant is the main contact person for the BESTbelt Project Team. The lead applicant represents and acts on behalf of any other co-beneficiary (if any) and coordinates the design and implementation of the action. The lead applicant will bear full responsibility for the technical and financial implementation of the project and the reporting.

At the time of the application, the lead applicant cannot be involved as lead applicant in an ongoing BESTbelt project at the same time.

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.

² List of eligible countries that are eligible for BESTbelt funding: Norway, Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Germany, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Austria, Slovenia, Croatia, Hungary, Italy, Serbia, Romania, Bulgaria, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Kosovo, Albania, Greece, Turkey.

³ Please note that governmental organisations (GOs) on the national level are not eligible.

An organisation can submit a **maximum of one proposal as lead applicant**. However, there is the possibility to apply as co-applicant with one further proposal.

All in all, a **maximum of two concept notes/proposals per Call** and per organisation is allowed. If an organisation is involved in more than two submitted proposals, the proposal received latest will be rejected.

An organisation can be awarded with a maximum of two grants per Call (only one as lead applicant).

CONFLICT OF INTEREST AND INELIGIBILITY

If organisations, or their representatives, that are members of the BESTbelt Steering Committee are involved in a BESTbelt grant application, they will be excluded from the decision-making process concerning the region in which the planned project will take place. In addition, all members of the BESTbelt Steering Committee must sign a Declaration of Impartiality and Confidentiality. Concerning the organisations that are part of the BESTbelt Project Team, those organizational units that are involved in project assessment and management are not at all eligible to apply for grants.

Potential applicants may not participate in Calls for Proposals or be awarded grants if they are in any of the situations listed in the Exclusion Criteria (form 4). In the Applicant Declaration (form 2) and the Co-Applicant Declaration and Mandate (form 3), the applicants must declare that they are not in any of these situations.

ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES

Eligible activities **must**:

- contribute to the **BESTbelt principles with tangible activities on the ground**;
- **be located in one or more areas of the [indicative spatial reference area of the European Green Belt](#)** (see **Figure 1** above). If this is not the case, the applicant must provide a written statement on how the activities contribute to the achievement of the BESTbelt principles. In general, the reference area for the northern part (Fennoscandia) of the European Green Belt is still under preparation. For the BESTbelt project, the reference area is defined as everything within a distance of 100 kilometres (km) from the borders of Norway and Finland, and within a distance of 5 km in case of coastal waters;
- comply with and support reaching the **European Green Belt Vision**⁴;
- contribute to **tangible and measurable impacts** in terms of biodiversity conservation and/or ecosystem restoration, improving ecological connectivity, implementation of Green Infrastructure (with a focus on connectivity on landscape level), sustainable development and/or sustainable use of natural resources and ecosystem services, including nature-based

⁴ <https://www.europeangreenbelt.org/>

solutions, environmental education and/or local capacity building and ecosystem-based approaches to climate change adaptation or mitigation;

- encourage a **partnership-based approach with local stakeholders**;
- guarantee **open access to data, results and all information generated by the project**;
- **not be fundamental research**. Proposals that include research activities must include tangible follow-up actions using the research during the lifetime of the project, i.e. proposal of a practical management plan/new policy, new protected area design, new natural resources management plan, in vivo pilot site activities implementing the results of the research with new management or conservation actions;
- **contribute to raise awareness about the European Green Belt**. For example, by organizing European Green Belt Days events (18 – 24 September each year);
- **enhance transboundary activities and cooperation**. If needed and justified, projects with an intensive transboundary focus can receive a grant up to EUR 60.000.

In line with the vision of the European Green Belt, it is beneficial if projects integrate cross-border element(s) in the work plan (if appropriate).

Examples of eligible activities (non-exhaustive list) are:

- improving the ecological connectivity of habitats (across borders);
- improving the status of threatened species and their habitats;
- vegetation/habitat mapping for supporting tangible activities on the ground of protection and/or restoration of threatened habitat types or for improving Green Infrastructure outside of urban areas (e.g. maintaining hedgerows, green bridges, land conservation, reduce land fragmentation); Strengthening Protected Area management and/or governance effectiveness (training, new/updated PA management plan, participatory activities);
- support local stakeholders' initiatives (e.g. local communities and authorities) to help protect/manage biodiversity, ecosystems, (e.g. ecosystem management, participatory monitoring);
- analyses to better understand/quantify the threats on biodiversity for supporting during the lifetime of the project tangible activities on the ground;
- socioeconomic studies supporting the development of new sustainable economic valorisation of biodiversity, ecosystems and ecosystems services (e.g. ecotourism);
- creation and promotion of green jobs;
- mitigation of specific threats such as climate change impacts, invasive alien species, or poaching/poisoning;
- promotion and deployment of traditional solutions in terms of sustainable management, biodiversity conservation, resilience;
- local and participatory circular economy solutions for preserving ecosystems and reducing pressures on biodiversity;

- introduction and conversion to sustainable agricultural and fisheries good practices promoting species and habitat conservation; agroecological and agroforestry activities;
- public awareness about the European Green Belt, environmental education campaigns, socio-cultural activities, training and capacity building (e.g. youth camps);
- support to local stakeholders' enhanced contribution to biodiversity and sustainable development (e.g. participatory monitoring, eco-sentinels);
- regional cooperation activities, for example:
 - improving coherence and creating synergies between European initiatives along the European Green Belt;
 - developing partnerships, joint initiatives between stakeholders in countries along the European Green Belt to foster regional cooperation on the ground on shared issues;
 - capacity building aimed at networking, sharing knowledge and experience, strengthening stakeholders capacities on the ground in countries along the European Green Belt.

INELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES

Ineligible activities are:

- the purchase of land, involuntary resettlement of people, or activities that negatively affect physical cultural resources, including those important to local communities;
- activities adversely affecting individuals and local communities or where these communities are not supporting the project activities;
- the removal or altering of any physical cultural property (including sites having archaeological, paleontological, historical, religious or unique natural values);
- activities that duplicate work previously funded by other projects;
- financial support to third parties through sub-grants.

ELIGIBILITY OF COSTS

Only eligible costs will be reimbursed. Eligible costs must be:

- necessary for the implementation of the project activities;
- reasonable, justified and consistent with the principles of sound financial management, in particular in terms of value for money and cost-effectiveness;
- generated during the lifetime of the project (costs incurred before the official starting date of the project or after the official end date of the project are not eligible). Expenditures eligible for financing may not have been incurred before the signature of the grant agreement;

- actually incurred by the beneficiary and be recorded in the beneficiary's accounts in accordance with the applicable accounting principles;
- identifiable and verifiable;
- compliant with the requirements of the applicable tax and social legislation.

Categories of eligible costs are:

- **Personnel costs:** the costs of personnel working under an employment contract with the beneficiary or an equivalent appointing act and assigned to the action, provided these costs are in line with the beneficiary's usual policy on remuneration. Those costs include actual salaries plus social security contributions and other statutory costs included in the remuneration;
- **Travel costs:** costs of travel (e.g. transport) and related subsistence allowances, provided these costs are in line with the beneficiary's usual practices on travel;
- **Equipment and supplies costs:** the costs for material related to activities of the project. Purchases must be made in accordance with BESTbelt Procurement Policy (see [application documents](#)) and should be in line with the national and public procurement regulations, if applicable;
- **Local office costs;**
- **Other costs and services:** costs derived from subcontracts, provided the purchases are made in accordance with BESTbelt Procurement Policy and are in line with the national and public procurement regulations, if applicable.

REIMBURSEMENT OPTIONS

Reimbursement of costs for BESTbelt Small Grants are **based on the actual costs** incurred by the beneficiary(ies) and a unit rate for local transportation (use of vehicles owned by beneficiary or private). Beneficiaries have to submit a financial report with supporting documents (invoices, vouchers, etc.) for all expenditures incurred. Electronic documents (text, image, etc.) or files in a readable format must be provided.

The unit rate for local transportation with own vehicles is based on statistical/historical data and it is set at EUR 0.30 per kilometre for all applicants. This value cannot be changed during project implementation.

ELIGIBLE INDIRECT COSTS

Eligible indirect costs are all expenses related to the project which cannot be directly linked to specific actions or activities of the project. Eligible indirect costs are not directly chargeable to the project by the eligibility conditions. Eligible indirect costs shall be eligible for flat-rate financing, **but the total amount must not exceed 7% of the sum of estimated eligible direct costs.** Moreover, they cannot include ineligible costs or costs already declared under another costs item or heading of the project budget (direct costs).

The lead applicant may be asked to justify the percentage requested for indirect costs before the grant agreement is signed.

CONTRIBUTIONS IN KIND AND INELIGIBLE COSTS

Contribution in kind means the provision of goods or services to a beneficiary free of charge by a third party. **As contributions in kind do not involve any expenditure for beneficiaries, they are not eligible costs.**

In addition, the following costs are **not eligible**:

- debts and debt service charges (interests);
- provisions for losses or potential future liabilities;
- costs declared by the beneficiary(ies) and financed by another action or work programme receiving a European Union (including through EDF) grant;
- purchases of land or buildings;
- currency exchange losses;
- credit to third parties;
- contracts that are not awarded in accordance with EU procurement law or local procurement regulations.

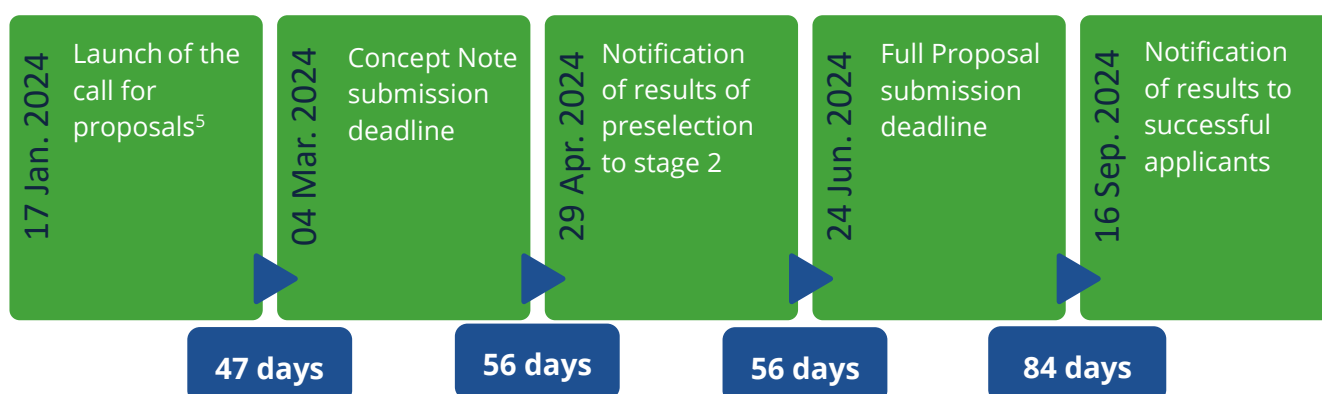
How to apply and the procedure to follow

BESTbelt follows a two-stage application process for Small Grants:

- **Stage 1:** open Call for **Concept Notes**, which consist of short project conceptualizations;
- **Stage 2:** Call for **Full Proposals**, which consist of a more comprehensive application. The project description should be based on the proposed concept note. Applicants are only invited for stage 2, after being selected in stage 1.

Applicants are expected to submit **applications in English**. All forms and guidelines are available in English on the [BESTbelt website](#). **Hand-written applications will not be accepted.**

TIMELINE



⁵ Due to technical reasons, the launch of the call needed to be postponed to 18th January 2024.

DEADLINES

3 rd BESTbelt Call for Proposals	DATE	TIME*
Launch of the call ⁶	17 January 2024	
Deadline for requesting clarifications from the BESTbelt Project Team	23 February 2024	23:59
Deadline for submission of concept notes	04 March 2024	23:59
Notification of results, and invitation to prepare a full proposal	29 April 2024	-
Deadline for requesting clarifications from the BESTbelt Project Team	14 June 2024	23:59
Deadline for submission of full proposals	24 June 2024*	23:59
Evaluation results submitted to the Board ⁷ for decision on selected projects	09 September 2024*	-
Notification of results to successful applicants	16 September 2024*	-

* Indicative dates, depending on the number of submitted proposals.
Please note that all dates/time are set to the Central European Time zone.

APPLICATION

Concept note applications **must be submitted to the BESTbelt Office via email only (bestbelt@europengreenbelt.org) until 04 March 2023 (23:59 Central European Time).**

The submission containing **all application documents of the 3rd Call** must be received before the submission deadline. **Applications received after this deadline will be rejected.** The total size of the documents must not exceed 10 MB in total (email size). Please note that **emails exceeding this limit will not be accepted.**

⁶ Due to technical reasons, the launch of the call needed to be postponed to 18th January 2024.

⁷ The BESTbelt Board consists of the European Commission and EuroNatur.

Before submitting application documents, applicants should ensure that all the requested information have been entered and all the required forms have been filled in appropriately (see checklist within the application forms).

For full proposal applications, see the according section below.

Please make sure to use the application documents from the 3rd Call for Proposals, for the concept note as well as the full proposal stage. Application forms from previous calls are outdated and will not be accepted!

CONCEPT NOTES

Concept notes are requested in the initial phase of the call, and they provide the overall plan of the projects submitted to BESTbelt. The applicants must complete the different sections of the Concept Note Form (form 1). Activities must be clearly formulated. Similarly, the capacity to manage and implement the project successfully must be demonstrated.

From a financial point of view, lead applicants **must only provide an estimate of the requested budget** during this phase. However, the elements outlined in the concept note may not be modified in the full application. In the full proposal stage, the **project budget may not vary** from the initial estimate in the concept note **by more than 20%**. A detailed budget is to be submitted by the lead applicant only if invited to submit a full application in the second stage.

In terms of content, only small changes are allowed between concept note and full proposal stages. In case substantial changes are necessary, however, applicants must contact their respective Regional Focal Point in advance to inform and request the approval of those changes.

Lead applicants must verify that their concept notes are complete using the checklist present at the end of the Concept Note Application (form 1). Only received documents will be evaluated. Incomplete concept notes may be rejected.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) are provided on the [BESTbelt website](#) to support applicants with common inquiries about the call. Requests to clarify questions regarding the 3rd BESTbelt Call for Proposals can be sent via email to the BESTbelt Office **no later than 10 days before the deadline for the submission of project applications.**

The concept note application consists of the following documents: Concept Note Application (form 1), Applicant Declaration (form 2), if applicable, Co-applicant Declaration and Mandate (form 3). Also, see the following regulations: Exclusion Criteria (form 4) and Procurement Regulations (form 5).

FULL PROPOSALS

After the evaluation and pre-selection of the submitted concept notes, successful applicants will be invited to submit a full proposal. **Only invited applicants** are allowed to submit a full proposal. The **application documents for the full proposal will be provided in due time, after the selection of successful project applications in the concept note stage.** There will be sufficient

time to develop full proposals based on the elaborated concept notes that got selected in the first stage.

The following documents are required for the application with a full proposal: Full Proposal Application (form 6), Small Grant Budget (form 7), Logical Framework (form 8), Due Diligence and Financial Capacity Questionnaire – Lead Applicant - (form 9), if applicable, Due Diligence and Financial Capacity Questionnaire – Co- Applicant - (form 10), Financial ID (form 11).

A detailed budget is to be submitted by the lead applicant using the corresponding budget form. The full proposal budget **may not vary** from the initial estimate proposed in the concept note stage by **more than 20%**. **Lead applicants must verify that their proposals are complete using the checklist for proposals, present at the bottom of the full proposal application form. Only received documents will be evaluated. Incomplete applications may be rejected.**

WHERE AND HOW TO SEND THE FULL PROPOSALS

Full proposals must be **submitted to the BESTbelt Office (bestbelt@europangreenbelt.org) via email only**. The submission containing **all application documents** must be received before the deadline for submissions. **Applications received after this deadline will be rejected**. The total size of the documents sent by email must not exceed 10 MB in total (email size). **Emails exceeding this limit will not be accepted**.

DEADLINE

The deadline for the submission of full proposals will be confirmed in the notification email sent by BESTbelt to the lead applicants whose concept notes have been pre-selected. The email containing the complete application documents must be received before the deadline for submission. **Applications received after the deadline will be rejected**.

In case difficulties cannot be solved by the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) available on the [BESTbelt website](#), questions may be sent by email to the BESTbelt Office **no later than 10 days before the deadline for the submission of full proposals**.

Please note that questions and answers that may be relevant to other interested applicants are published on the [BESTbelt website](#) along with other important notices.

Evaluation and selection

Concept notes and full proposals will be examined and evaluated by two independent evaluators according to the criteria set out in this document. The evaluators are members of the BESTbelt Project Team and external experts. In a consensus meeting, the evaluators together with the BESTbelt Project Team will propose a final ranking list per region which will be forwarded to the BESTbelt Steering Committee. The final decision about accepted concept notes and full proposals will be taken by the BESTbelt Board.

All concept notes and full proposals will be assessed according to the following steps and criteria:

STEP 1: ADMINISTRATIVE CHECK

During the administrative check the following will be assessed:

- if the deadline has been met, otherwise the concept note will be automatically rejected;
- if the concept note satisfies all the criteria specified in this document. This includes an assessment of the eligibility of the action. If any of the requested information is missing or is incorrect, the concept note may be rejected on that **sole** basis and the concept note will not be further evaluated;
- the declaration by the lead applicant will be cross-checked with the supporting documents provided by the lead applicant. Any missing supporting document or any incoherence between the declaration by the lead applicant and the supporting documents may lead to the rejection of the application on that sole basis;
- the eligibility of applicants will be verified according to the criteria set out in this document (see section - Eligibility of the applicants (i.e. applicant and co-applicant(s))).

The concept notes that pass this check will be evaluated on the relevance and design of the proposed action.

STEP 2: CONCEPT NOTE EVALUATION AND SELECTION

Concept notes will be assessed using the evaluation criteria in the evaluation grid below.

Concept Note	
Total score: (max 100 points)	0/100
A. PROJECT CONTEXT AND RELEVANCE (max. 20 points)	0
Is the addressed issue and context relevant?	
Are the project measures effective and is there a clear approach of the project to tackle the raised issues?	
B. CONSISTENCY with BESTbelt OBJECTIVES and EUROPEAN GREEN BELT vision (max 20 points)	0
Is the project in line with the BESTbelt (basic) objectives?	
Does the project focus on the European Green Belt and clearly considers the European Green Belt vision?	
C. METHODOLOGY AND COST-EFFICIENCY (max 20 points)	0
How transparent, consistent, and logical is the project setup?	

Are the costs justified and plausible?	
D. PARTNER STRUCTURE AND STAKEHOLDERS (max 20 points)	0
Does the project address and include the relevant partners/stakeholders?	
Does/do the applicant(s) fit into the BESTbelt Grants Scheme?	
E. SUSTAINABILITY, REPLICABILITY AND FEASIBILITY (max 20 points)	0
Is there a clear approach to sustainability and replicability, and are risks assessed?	
Are timelines and workforce realistic and can the applicant provide the necessary capacities and powers?	
Assessment comments:	
Suggestions for Improvement:	

The concept notes are ranked according to the final score awarded. **The threshold is 60.** Concept notes with a total score below this threshold cannot be selected for the full proposal stage.

All applicants will be notified via email by the BESTbelt Project Team about the results of the evaluation of their concept notes (see section Notification of applicants). Only selected lead applicants will be invited to submit full proposals.

STEP 3: FULL PROPOSAL EVALUATION AND SELECTION

The following will be assessed:

- if the submission deadline has been met, otherwise, the application will automatically be rejected;
- the eligibility check will be performed based on the submitted application documents (including the following supporting documents: Due Diligence and Financial Capacity Questionnaire (form 9 for lead-applicants; form 10 for co-applicants).

Eligible full proposals submitted before the deadline will be further evaluated on their quality, including the proposed budget and capacity of the applicants. The evaluation criteria are set out in the evaluation grid below.

Full proposal	
Total score:	0/100
A. CONSISTENCY WITH BASIC OBJECTIVES (max 20 points)	0
Is the project in line with the BESTbelt objectives?	
Is the project well focused on the European Green Belt and complies to its Vision?	
B. RELEVANCE AND EFFECTIVENESS (max 20 points)	0
Is the addressed subject relevant and the work plan adequate to tackle it?	
Are the project measures effective and is there a clear approach for the sustainability and replicability of the project?	
C. PROJECT STRUCTURE AND METHODOLOGY (max 20 points)	0
How transparent, consistent and logical is the project setup?	
Does the project involve and secure the necessary partnerships?	
D. COST-EFFICIENCY AND BUDGET QUALITY (max 20 points)	0
Is the budget volume justified?	
Is the budget logical and complete?	
E. FEASIBILITY AND RESILIENCE (max 20 points)	0
Are timelines and workforce realistic?	
Can the applicant provide the necessary capacities and powers?	
F. SUMMARIZING REMARKS	
Main strong points of the project:	

Main weak points of the project:

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Potential risks that may occur during implementation:

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The proposals will be ranked according to the final score awarded. **The threshold is 60.** Full proposals with a total score below this threshold cannot be selected for funding by BESTbelt.

The evaluators together with the BESTbelt Project Team will propose a final ranking list per region in a consensus meeting.

The European Commission, as member of the BESTbelt Board, will retain the decision-making power regarding the proposals to be selected for the award of a grant in close consultation with the BESTbelt Project Team and the BESTbelt Steering Committee.

Notification of applicants

Applicants will be informed via email by the BESTbelt Project Team about the results of the evaluation in both stages of the call. Applicants can contact the BESTbelt Office (bestbelt@europeangreenbelt.org) for detailed explanation or if they have additional questions about the decision.

The award decision

Following the BESTbelt Board award decision, the future beneficiary(ies) will be notified and offered a contract based on the standard grant agreement. By signing the application form, the applicants agree, if awarded a grant, to accept the contractual conditions of the standard grant agreement.

Recommendations to award a grant are always subject to the condition that the checks preceding the signing of the grant agreement do not reveal problems requiring changes to the budget (such as arithmetical errors, inaccuracies, unrealistic costs, and ineligible costs). The checks may give rise to requests for clarification and may lead the BESTbelt Project Team to impose modifications or reductions to address such mistakes or inaccuracies. It is not possible to increase the grant amount as a result of these corrections nor to increase salary costs at this stage.

Useful links

APPLICATION FORMS

All application forms can be found on the [BESTbelt website](#).

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for the Concept Note stage can be found on the [BESTbelt website](#), too.

Contact details

BESTBELT OFFICE

The BESTbelt Office is located at the EuroNatur office in Radolfzell, Germany.

Website: <https://www.europeangreenbelt.org/bestbelt/>

Email: bestbelt@europeangreenbelt.org