

# BlueActionAA Evaluator Open Call Guidelines for Applicants

**EMPOWERING COMMUNITY- LED  
ACTION IN THE ATLANTIC & ARCTIC**



This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe Research and Innovation programme under Grant Agreement number 101215504



**BLUEACTIONAA**



BLUEACTIONAA

EMPOWERING COMMUNITY - LED ACTION IN THE ATLANTIC & ARCTIC

Grant Agreement 101215504

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OPEN CALL FOR EVALUATORS



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BLUEACTIONAA

EMPOWERING COMMUNITY - LED  
ACTION IN THE ATLANTIC & ARCTIC

Grant Agreement 101215504

Call id: BlueActionAA

**Call description:** The objective of the call is to establish a panel of expert evaluators to support the assessment and selection of project proposals submitted under the BlueActionAA Community Led Action and the BlueActionAA Transition Agenda funding calls.

This call for evaluators will close on 26/05/2026

Weblink for further information: <https://blueactionaa.eu/>

Contact: [Technical.support@BlueActionAA.eu](mailto:Technical.support@BlueActionAA.eu)

**Open Call platform:** for a first connection: ESF platform (for the first connection and creation of profile). For subsequent connections: <https://esf.smartsimple.ie>



# Table of Contents

<b>BlueActionAA Evaluator Open Call</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>1. Call Introduction</b> .....	<b>1</b>
Project Description .....	1
<b>2. Rules and conditions</b> .....	<b>3</b>
Evaluators profile .....	3
2.2 Conflict of interest .....	5
2.3 Confidentiality .....	5
2.4 Additional Rules .....	5
2.5 Language .....	6
<b>3. Evaluators tasks</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>4. Evaluators selection process</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>5. Payment conditions</b> .....	<b>8</b>
<b>6. Timeline</b> .....	<b>8</b>
6.1 Call open for Evaluator Applications .....	9
6.2 Administrative issue .....	9
6.3 Evaluation of BlueActionAA application .....	9
<b>6. Contact information</b> .....	<b>9</b>
<b>7. Annexes</b> .....	<b>9</b>

## 1. Call Introduction

The purpose of this document is to provide instructions to applicants responding to the **BlueActionAA Evaluator Open Call**, organised by the BlueActionAA project.

These guidelines contain information about the timeline, the eligibility criteria, the evaluation procedure, and the submission requirements of this specific call.

These guidelines are provided for informational purposes only and are not intended to replace the **Consultancy contract** (available in Annex 1), which defines the framework of rights and obligations of the Contracting Parties for this particular call.

### BlueActionAA Project Description

**The EU Mission Ocean and Waters** provides a systemic approach to restoring the health of the ocean, seas, and inland waters by 2030. The scope of the Mission is designed to:

1. protect and restore marine and freshwater ecosystems and biodiversity, in line with the EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030,
2. prevent and eliminate pollution of our ocean, seas and waters, in line with the EU Action Plan Towards Zero Pollution for Air, Water and Soil, and
3. make the sustainable blue economy carbon-neutral and circular, in line with the proposed European Climate Law and the comprehensive vision outlined in the Sustainable Blue Economy Strategy.

### BlueActionAA – Empowering Community-Led Action in the Atlantic & Arctic

is an Horizon Europe funded project (GA 101215504) that seeks to make significant progress toward the objectives of the EU Mission “Restore our Ocean and Waters by 2030”, bridging Mission Ocean’s piloting phase (2021–2025) with its deployment/upscaling phase (2026–2030).

BlueActionAA aims to mobilise and engage communities across the Atlantic and Arctic regions in ambitious efforts to restore and protect marine and freshwater ecosystems.

BlueActionAA will provide comprehensive support to local stakeholders, including financial aid through cascading grants, technical assistance, and capacity-building resources to ensure effective and sustainable ecosystem restoration actions.

The BlueActionAA financial aid will be distributed through two different call types:

- **The BlueActionAA Community-Led Pilot Action Call (BAAC-01)** is dedicated to **delivering cascading grants to community-led pilot actions with long-term impact**. Community-led actions are defined as regional and local communities engaged in collective collaboration for innovation and uptake, acting as agents of change and long-term impact.

BAAC-01 aims to distribute a total of EUR 7,000,000 in the form of lump sum grants, through a single call.

- Expected project budget: EUR 200,000 to EUR 2,000,000
- Expected project duration: 6 to 24 months.
- Expected: Minimum 5 projects will be selected.

- **The BlueActionAA Transition Agenda Calls (BAAT-01 and BAAT-02)** are dedicated to **delivering cascading grants for transition agendas, including strategic roadmaps, policy recommendations and regulatory innovation**. Two calls will be organised, one early 2026 and another late 2026. For the purposes of those calls, a Transition Agenda is a strategic roadmap or actionable multi-year plan to support the achievement of the Mission "Restore our Ocean and Waters by 2030". It sets out priorities, specific actions, expected results and impacts, and identifies concrete pathways for implementation, scaling and future financing, with a focus on the Mission objectives most relevant to the specific community that is targeted.

BAAT-01 aims to distribute a total of EUR 1,000,000 in the form of lump sum grants in the frame of this call.

- Expected project budget: up to EUR 100,000
- Expected project duration: 6 to 18 months.

- Expected number of projects funded: Minimum 10

BAAT-02 conditions will be defined later in 2026.

Please find further information on the BlueActionAA website:

<https://blueactionaa.eu/>

All BlueActionAA calls adhere to EU principles of transparency, equal treatment, avoidance of conflict of interest, and confidentiality, ensuring an objective and clear selection procedure.

## 2. Rules and conditions

### 2.1 Evaluators profile

BlueActionAA is looking for independent evaluators who can assess the quality of the applications submitted to the BlueActionAA Open Calls.

Each application will be evaluated by two independent evaluators

We are looking for evaluators that meet the following criteria:

- Broad understanding of the objectives of the EU Mission “Restore our Ocean and Waters by 2030” (Mission Ocean and Waters)<sup>1</sup>.
- Expertise in one or more of the following knowledge areas: aquatic, coastal, marine and maritime protection, including ecosystem protection, pollution reduction, sustainable and circular blue economy, ocean literacy and data management.
- Familiarity with local contexts across Atlantic/Arctic Basin countries and territories: France, Ireland, Spain, Portugal, Norway, Iceland, Greenland, Faroe Islands, UK and Canada, will be of benefit where this can be matched to proposals for projects seeking to generate impact in any of these territories.

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<sup>1</sup> [EU Mission: Restore our Ocean and Waters](#)

- Expertise in the areas of (one or more): policy, research, engineering, community engagement, coaching, communication, finance or digital innovation.
- Preference will be given to candidates with experience in evaluating proposals for the European Commission or other national or international funding programmes.
- Being legally established/resident in any of the following countries
  - The Member States (MS) of the European Union (EU):  
Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary<sup>2</sup>, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden; including their outermost regions<sup>3</sup>;
  - The Overseas Countries and Territories (OCT) linked to the Member States<sup>4</sup>;
  - Horizon Europe associated countries at the time the BlueActionAA grant entered into force (01/09/2025)<sup>5</sup>.

The evaluators will be responsible for providing an impartial and unbiased review of the received applications, generally focusing on, but not limited to, the following aspects:

- Alignment with the objectives and focus areas of BlueActionAA and Mission Ocean.
- Quality and relevance of the proposed project or initiative.
- Technical feasibility and innovation potential.
- Impact and scalability of the proposed solution.
- Influence on the local/regional communities.

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<sup>2</sup> In the case of Hungary, although it is an MS of the EU, according to [Council Implementing Decision 2022/2506](#), no legal commitments should be entered into with any public interest trust established based on the Hungarian Law IX of 2021 or with any entity maintained by said public interest trust.

<sup>3</sup> The outermost regions of the European Union are Guadeloupe, Martinique, Saint Martin, French Guiana, Reunion, Mayotte, Azores, Madeira, Canary Islands.

<sup>4</sup> [https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/countries/overseas-countries-and-territories\\_en](https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/countries/overseas-countries-and-territories_en)

<sup>5</sup> See 'Third countries associated to Horizon Europe' and associated restrictions here: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/common/guidance/list-3rd-country-participation\\_horizon-euratom\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/common/guidance/list-3rd-country-participation_horizon-euratom_en.pdf)

- Consideration of ethical, legal, and regulatory aspects.
- Evaluation of the applicant/consortium's expertise and capacity to execute the project.
- Financial viability and sustainability of the proposed project.

It is important to note that the number of applications assigned to individual evaluators will depend on various factors: the number of applications submitted, the expertise, and the availability of evaluators' time, etc.

## 2.2 Conflict of interest

An evaluator must not work for an organization **that aims to participate in the open calls of BlueActionAA** or for an organization that is **currently involved** in the BlueActionAA consortium.

All evaluators must sign a **declaration of no conflict of interest** prior to the start of the evaluation process, confirming the above statement.

Evaluators must not have a conflict of interest at the time of their appointment. They must also notify the consortium if such a conflict arises in any of the applications to which they have been allocated.

When an evaluator reports a potential conflict of interest or it is brought to the attention in any way of a representative of the BlueActionAA project consortium, the project consortium will assess the circumstances and determine if there is a conflict of interest. If a conflict of interest is identified, the evaluator will be removed from the application's evaluation. All potential conflicts of interest will be thoroughly investigated by ESF.

## 2.3 Confidentiality

All information connected to the evaluation process is absolutely confidential and evaluators are thus bound by secrecy. They are not permitted to reveal any information regarding the submitted applications, as well as the outcomes of the assessment and selection, to any third party. They are also not permitted to use the application's concepts for their own purposes.

## 2.4 Additional Rules

By applying to this call, the expert:

- Understands that submitting an application (registration) does not guarantee selection as an evaluator for any of the BlueActionAA open calls.
- Understands that they will need to sign a consultancy contract with ESF, along with any other requested documents, if selected to serve as an evaluator for a specific open call.
- Confirms their availability to perform the evaluation within the specified timeframe for the given open call (See section 7. Timeline).
- Confirms their availability to attend the **Onboarding Session on the 30th of June 2026**: This session will provide an update on the evaluation process, the rules for the evaluation of the BlueActionAA applications, help the evaluators to navigate through the ESF platform, and outline the schedule for payments.
- Confirms their availability for the panel meeting within the specified timeframe (See section 6. Timeline).
- Confirms interest in being informed about future opportunities to act as an evaluator in ongoing and upcoming open calls.
- Ensures that they will only evaluate applications from applicants with whom they have no Conflict of Interest.
- Confirms that they have the right to provide the service mentioned in the Consultancy contract and invoice ESF for this service (in compliance with its country's legal requirements and tax obligations).

## 2.5 Language

English is the only official language for this programme. Submissions done in any other language will not be eligible and will not be evaluated. English is also the only official language during the whole execution of the BlueActionAA programme. This means that all the communication and materials will be in English, and all documents and deliverables will be accepted only if they are in English, during the whole process.

### 3. Evaluators tasks

The Evaluator will be required to evaluate the applications that will be assigned to them, following the evaluation process managed by the BlueActionAA consortium. This includes:

- Participation in the onboarding session
- Pre-assessment of the applications
- Participation in a panel meeting to determine a ranked list of applications
- Consensus report of the application: a summary of the pre-assessments and the discussions of the panel, which will be sent to each applicant.

Detail of evaluation process in annex:

The Assessment Form, available in Annex 4, must be completed for each application evaluated.

### 4. Selection process for evaluators

Evaluators will be selected by the ESF based on their competences and the specific needs of the BlueActionAA Community Led Pilot Action Call and the Transition Agenda Call (please refer to section 2.1 for the selection criteria). Particular attention will be paid to:

- CV: The CV of a candidate for evaluator should contain relevant information and should allow corroboration of the information entered in the form. See the application form in Annex 3
- Quality: This criterion evaluates the descriptions of all declared areas of expertise. It also takes into account previous evaluation experience of a candidate.

In the event that the applications do not ensure the adequate pool of expertise and profiles, ESF will independently identify additional experts.

## 5. Payment conditions

BlueActionAA evaluators will receive **100€ for each evaluation that is properly completed and validated by ESF**. This includes all stages of the process, from the pre-assessment to the consensus report for each application, including the participation in the panel day (held remotely).

The **Panel Chair**, selected by ESF from among the evaluators, will receive an additional **300€ extra** for the Panel day.

Each evaluator will sign a **consultancy contract with ESF**, which is the entity in charge of the cascading calls for BlueActionAA. This contract enters into force from the beginning of the evaluation process and will have a validation of one month after BlueActionAA make the evaluation results public.

The evaluator must issue an invoice or a debit note and forward it to ESF. ESF will pay the invoice/debit note through a bank transfer, **strictly in Euros**. The transfer should be made to the evaluator's personal account within 60 days of receiving the invoice.

The invoice/debit note can only be dispatched once the evaluation submission deadline has passed, and no later than 1 month following the evaluation submission deadline.

All invoices will be generated, excluding local VAT with reverse charge. Evaluators with a French billing address will be able to charge French VAT, depending on their status.

Note that evaluators are not forced to have a VAT number, or a National Identification Number. This will depend on the regulation/legislation of their own country.

In the event that evaluators are employees of a different organisation, they should be permitted to apply as individuals, submit their reviews and receive payment accordingly.

## 6. Timeline

## 6.1 Call open for Evaluator Applications

- Opening : **15/04/2026**
- Deadline for submission: **26/05/2026**, 14:00 Brussels time/14:00 CEST\*.

\* The deadline for submission is as stated in this Guidelines document. Please note that the platform for submission's time depends on the user's configured time zone and may or may not coincide with the correct time (this depends on the user, not the platform for submission). Any discrepancies in system time will not be grounds for deadline extension.

## 6.2 Administrative issue

- Evaluators' selection and contract signature: 17/06/26 to 29/06/26
- Evaluators onboarding session: 30/06/26

## 6.3 Evaluation of BlueActionAA application

- Evaluation period: 30/06/26 to 28/08/26
- Panel meeting(s): 08/09/26 to 11/09/26 (evaluator will participate in one remote panel meeting within this timeframe)
- Consensus Reports: 11/09/26 to 17/09/26

## 7. Contact information

BlueActionAA offers a dedicated support channel available for applicants. Please contact [Technical.support@BlueActionAA.eu](mailto:Technical.support@BlueActionAA.eu) for any question you might have.

## 8. Annexes

Annex 1: Evaluator's consultancy contract

Annex 2: Evaluation process

Annex 3: Evaluator's application form

Annex 4: BAAA Applications Assessment form

Annex 5: Col declaration



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