

BlueActionAA Community-Led Action Call – Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

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



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BLUEACTIONAA

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BlueActionAA – Community-Led Pilot Action Call (BAAC-01)

Frequently asked questions

1. About the call

1. What is the BlueActionAA Community-Led Pilot Action Call (BAAC-01)?

BAAC-01 is a cascading grant call under the BlueActionAA project to support **community-led projects** in the Atlantic and Arctic basins that protect, restore and reduce pollution in marine and freshwater ecosystems, and advance a carbon-neutral, circular blue economy. It funds organisations and consortia to pilot or implement innovative solutions aligned with the EU Mission “Restore our Ocean and Waters by 2030”.

2. What are the main objectives of the call?

Projects must contribute to at least one of the Mission Ocean and Waters objective areas:

1. **Protect and restore ecosystems and biodiversity**, e.g. protected areas, ecological corridors, seabed and coastal restoration, free-flowing rivers.
2. **Prevent and eliminate pollution**, including plastic and microplastics, nutrient losses and chemical pesticides.
3. **Advance a sustainable, carbon-neutral and circular blue economy**, including net-zero maritime emissions and low-impact, circular uses of marine and water space.

3. What is meant by “community-led action”?

Community-led actions are initiatives where **regional and local communities** are acting as **agents of change** and fostering long-term impact. Community actors should be meaningfully involved in decision-making, implementation and benefit-sharing, not just as passive stakeholders.

4. What types of evidence are expected to demonstrate 'long-term impact' in a proposal?

To demonstrate "long-term impact," applicants may include any relevant supporting elements, such as agreements, baseline data, KPIs, or commitment letters. However, the inclusion of such materials is not mandatory. The primary expectation is a clear and credible explanation of how the proposed activities will lead to sustained, meaningful outcomes over time.

5. What is the total budget and how much funding is available per project?

The call will distribute a total of **EUR 7,000,000** in the form of lump-sum grants. Project proposals can request between **EUR 200,000 and EUR 2,000,000**. At least **five projects** are expected to be funded.

6. What is the expected project duration?

Projects must last between **6 and 24 months**.

7. What are the key dates?

- Call opening: **28/11/2025**
- Proposal deadline: **29/05/2026, 14:00 Brussels time (CEST)**
- Evaluation period: **01/06/2026 – 29/09/2026**
- Communication of results: **30/09/2026**
- Sub-Grant Agreement Signature: **01/10/2026–30/10/2026**
- Starting date of the projects: **2/11/2026**

8. What is the EoI – Expression of Interest? Is it compulsory? Is there a deadline to complete this?

The Expression of Interest – EoI aims to gather preliminary interest from potential applicants for the call, identify local challenges and needs and identify the potential needs about technical assistance.

This is not compulsory but very useful for the Consortium.

There is no deadline to complete this.

The link to the Call EoI is the following: <https://forms.office.com/e/CYSPXyQn2d>

2. Eligibility and consortium requirements

9. What is the eligibility check ?

Once the deadline for application is reached, the ESF will proceed with the eligibility check: they will make sure that the applications are eligible in term of:

- Countries of the applicant (and co applicant(s))
- Entities of the applicant (and co applicant(s))
- Composition of consortium in accordance with the call guidelines
- Format of the application (all the questions are answered, number of words, font and size of the text, number of pages,

10. Which countries are eligible?

Applicants must be located in:

- EU Member States (including outermost regions)
- Overseas Countries and Territories linked to EU Member States
- Horizon Europe associated countries at the time the BlueActionAA grant entered into force (01/09/2025), including e.g. Norway, Iceland, UK, Canada, New Zealand, etc.

Countries not covered by this list are not eligible.

11. Can an entity outside of the area of action be a partner in a consortia ?

Yes, you can have actors in the consortia that are not based in the area of actions but from the eligible countries.

12. Can parties/actors from non-eligible areas participate in the project ?

Participation is possible in a project, however, they cannot be co-applicants in the project with funding allocated to them.

Nevertheless, they can be included as subcontractors (respecting the sub-contracting conditions) if they have a specific expertise.

13. Is there a preference between transnational actions or local/regional actions ?

The focus of call is on local/regional impact but transnational actions are also welcome.

14. Additional questions on the topic of countries

Can the project be transnational across European partners ? Yes

1. Is there a limit of entities per country ?

No

2. Is there a possibility to have several partners from the same country ?

Yes

3. Is a project focusing on the Caribbean territories eligible ?

Yes, as long as these concern territories linked to the EU member States.
(Dutch, French, etc)

4. Should we cover both the Atlantic and Arctic or can we focus on a specific area?

There is no need to cover both the Atlantic and Arctic

15. What types of organisations can apply (Target Groups)?

Five main Target Groups are eligible:

1. Regional and local public authorities
2. NGOs, foundations, professional, civil society and citizen associations (especially those active in local development / nature conservation)
3. SMEs and large enterprises
4. Cultural and educational organisations
5. Relevant EU research infrastructures, research organisations and academia

Examples include port authorities, fishing and aquaculture communities, maritime operators, tourism organisations, conservation groups and locally based companies. Small and community-based organisations are explicitly welcomed; evaluation will look at proportionality between budget and capacity.

16. What are the consortium requirements?

To be eligible:

- Minimum **2 partners** from **different Target Groups** (those partners can be from the same country)
- Maximum **12 partners** per consortium.
- **You cannot apply as a single entity.**
- At least **one consortium member must have an established link with the local/regional communities** concerned (e.g. operating locally or running local projects).
- Proposals are expected to focus activity and deliver impact within the Atlantic and Arctic Basin area;

17. What does the “link with local and regional communities” mean ?

As the call focuses on producing plans for regional/community plans and solutions to the Mission Ocean objective, the consortia needs to demonstrate that their plan directly benefits their specific region/area or that their plan has the credibility to be considered as a plan by and for the community.

Example : a regional authority being part of the consortium; entities that have clear links to the region in question, etc...

18. Does all of the consortium members need to have an established link with local/regional communities ?

No, the rule states the following: **at least one consortium member must have an established link with local/regional communities"**

→ if other consortium members are not established within those communities, it is not an issue as long as at least one local actor is engaged in the project AND the project's impact is focused on the Atlantic or Arctic regions.

Nevertheless, you should demonstrate HOW concretely "other consortium members" will contribute to the expected impact and which role they will play in the activities.

19. Are research projects eligible ?

No, researchers can be part of the project, but this should not be a focus of the project.

While Horizon Europe overall falls into the category of Research, this specific EU Horizon Europe Topic and Call, is about deployment of already existing solutions (Community-led action call (CLA) in particular), and creating actionable, to-be-concretely-implemented roadmaps (Transition Agenda (TA) calls).

Applied Research can be valuable part of such proposals, but they should not necessarily constitute the focus of this. In that sense, "academic research may not be considered eligible".

20. Can universities or research organisations coordinate?

Yes, research organisations and academic/educational institutions can coordinate project proposals, but the call prioritises community-led, impact-oriented actions rather than academic research-driven projects. Proposals for activities that are primarily research-focused may be considered ineligible.

21. Are BlueActionAA partners allowed to apply?

No. BlueActionAA consortium partners, their affiliated entities and their employees are not eligible to apply or receive financial support through this call.

22. Is it possible to be involved in an application but not as an applicant or co-applicant?

Yes, there can be extra entities like supporting organisations, associated partners, providing that they are not receiving funding.

There is a possibility to have entities employed as sub-contractors, within the subcontracting rules. It is difficult to answer for all possible combinations, so please email info@blueactionaa.eu in case of any doubts.

3. Funding, budget and multiple submissions

23. How is the funding provided?

The grant is paid as a lump sum to the project coordinator. It covers all cost categories (personnel, travel, equipment, overheads, etc.). The coordinator is responsible for distributing funds within the consortium (normally via a consortium agreement).

24. Are there limits on budget structure?

If capital costs (buildings, major equipment, infrastructure, etc.) exceed 30% of the total grant request, the proposal must clearly justify this. Overheads are eligible but cannot exceed 25% of the total requested budget. All costs must be reasonable, aligned with standard accounting practices and with the proposed activities.

25. Are subcontracting costs allowed?

Subcontracting is allowed but not for core/essential tasks. Core responsibilities (e.g. project management, whole work packages, key deliverables) must be carried out by the consortium team. Subcontracting is intended for specialist services (e.g. technical experts, translation, external facilitation) that support but do not replace the project's core work.

The percentage of subcontracting should not be higher than 25%, as per the Horizon Europe Rules

26. Are there mandatory budget items we must include?

Yes, projects must reserve effort/budget for:

Communication & visibility aligned with the BlueActionAA visual identity (incl. visual, video, audio materials).

Site visit by BlueActionAA representatives (mid-project, 1–2 days).

BlueActionAA personnel will cover their own travel while the project partners must provide local hosting arrangements and project personnel to participate in the site visit.

Impact assessment & KPI monitoring, including collaboration with the BlueActionAA impact team (indicatively ~10 staff days).

Networking & coordination: participation in cluster meetings and relevant Mission Ocean / BlueActionAA events approximately every six months.

27. Can an organisation submit more than one proposal?

An organisation may participate in more than one proposal submission. However, **organisations can receive grant only once from BlueActionAA**. In light of this restriction, applicants should therefore consider carefully which call they apply to and whether they wish to engage in more than one submission.

In the event that more than one proposal involving the same applicant is approved for funding, the BlueActionAA call secretariat will engage with the applicant and respective coordinators to facilitate a decision on which project the applicant wishes to be funded and to address any implications for approved project(s) for which they will not be eligible to receive funding.

28. Is there a limit to the amount of funding that organisations can receive?

Yes. An organisation cannot receive financial support of more than EUR500 000 under the Community Led Pilot Action call (funding restrictions per applicant also apply to the Transition Agenda calls).

29. What are the rules on double funding?

Applicants must declare that:

They are not receiving other EU grants for the same work.

They are not planning to submit the same (or substantially the same) work to other EU funding schemes.

BlueActionAA also coordinates with other Mission Ocean Cascade funding calls to detect overlaps. If a consortium/partner appears in multiple similar

projects, they may be asked to choose one call and be removed from the others.

30. Can informal community groups apply?

Yes, Informal groups may need to:

- Partner with an eligible legal entity that will sign the grant agreement and manage the funds, or
- Establish a legal entity before contract signature.

31. Is co-funding required?

The funding rate is up to 100% of eligible project costs. Co-funding is not required, although it is welcomed.

32. What is the difference between co-funding and double funding?

- **Double funding** occurs when the *same work* is financed twice by different programmes (e.g., if BlueActionAA and one of its sister projects support the same activity). This is strictly prohibited.
- **Co-funding** refers to a situation where *additional activities* within the project are financed by an external source (for example, by a national government). This is allowed, provided that activities are clearly differentiated.

33. What costs are eligible?

Typical eligible costs include:

- Personnel costs directly working on the project
- Travel and subsistence for project activities
- Equipment, materials and consumables necessary for implementation
- Subcontracting (e.g. specialised studies, facilitation, communication)
- Communication, dissemination and stakeholder engagement activities
- Monitoring, evaluation and impact assessment

- Overheads/indirect costs (see Question “Can overhead/indirect costs be claimed?”)

Costs must be reasonable, necessary, and incurred during the project period. A non-exhaustive list of eligible and ineligible costs is provided in the call guidelines.

34. Can overhead/indirect costs be claimed?

Yes. Indirect costs (e.g. administrative overheads) may be included as eligible costs in the project budget at a rate not exceeding 25% of eligible direct costs.

4. Project scope and duration

35. What is the expected project duration?

Projects are expected to run for 6-24 months. Proposals should justify the duration in relation to the work plan and expected results.

36. What types of activities are not eligible?

Examples (adapt to your scheme):

- Pure research without clear community-led implementation
- Large infrastructure works (e.g. major construction)
- Activities with significant negative environmental or social impacts
- Actions that primarily benefit a single private entity without clear public benefit

Any activity that conflicts with EU values, environmental legislation, or ethical standards is ineligible.

37. Is it possible to address all 3 Mission objectives ?

Yes, it is possible to address all 3 Mission objectives. You are not obligated to specify a primary objective and the others as secondary but this might help evaluators when reviewing your application.

38. Is the call encouraging projects scaling-up solutions previously funded by the Mission in Phase 1 Atlantic – Arctic Setup & Piloting?

While the call does encourage projects that were previously funded under Phase 1 Atlantic – Arctic Setup & Piloting, it is not limited to these projects. New applications, including those that were not part of the Phase 1, are also welcome and eligible for consideration.

5. Application process

39. How do I apply?

Applications must be submitted via the online application system. Paper or email submissions will not be accepted. All call documents and relevant links are available on the BlueActionAA website:

<https://blueactionaa.eu/community-led-action-call/>

40. In which language should applications be submitted?

Applications must be submitted in English.

41. What is the deadline for submission?

The deadline is **29/05/2026, 14:00 Brussels time (CET)**. Late submissions cannot be accepted.

42. Is there a word limit, a page limit for the application ?

Yes. There is a **word limit per question**, and the application **must not be longer than 11 pages?**

Longer Applications may be deemed ineligible.

6. Evaluation and selection

43. When will applicants be informed of the results?

We aim to inform applicants of funding decisions by the **30/09/2026**.

44. Will I receive feedback on my proposal?

Yes. All applicants will receive summary evaluation comments explaining the strengths and weaknesses of their proposal.

45. What happens if my project is selected

Selected applicants will:

1. Receive a notification of award
2. Complete any requested clarifications
3. Sign a **sub-grant agreement**

The project can start on the date specified in the agreement.

46. Will there be site visits or audits?

Yes, site visits or audits may be conducted as outlined in the call guidance documents. The specific details will be finalised at the signing of the sub-grant agreement and completion of the inception meeting.

7. Contracting, payments and project obligations

47. What is the Sub-Grant (Sub-Grantee) Agreement?

Selected projects sign a **Sub-Grantee Agreement** with the BlueActionAA consortium (represented by ESF). It sets out the rights and obligations of both parties, including implementation duties, payment schedule, reporting, record-keeping, checks/audits, and rules on grant reduction or recovery.

48. How will payments be made?

The lump sum is paid in **instalments** according to a detailed payment schedule (Annex 2 of the Sub-Grantee Agreement). Payments are made in **euros** to a bank account specified by the beneficiary. Currency conversion costs on the beneficiary side are their responsibility.

49. How and when will funds be paid?

Exact modalities are set out in the template sub-grant agreement available on our website.

50. What are our main obligations as beneficiaries?

Key obligations include:

- Properly implementing the project and achieving the agreed milestones and outputs.
- Providing required documents and information on time.
- Immediately informing BlueActionAA of any major changes affecting implementation or eligibility.
- Keeping **original or legally valid digitised records** and documentation, and making them available for checks, reviews, audits and evaluations up to **six years after the end of the BlueActionAA project (31/08/2029 + 6 years)**.
- Cooperating with BlueActionAA's dissemination, communication and impact evaluation activities.

51. What happens if the project underperforms or breaches obligations?

If core obligations are not met, milestones are not achieved, or serious breaches occur (including false information, ethical breaches, inadequate documentation), BlueActionAA can:

- Reject specific payments or deliverables.
- Reduce the grant amount.
- Recover unduly paid amounts, including after project completion, potentially with late-payment interest and legal action according to national law.

In the event of unforeseeable and exceptional events beyond the control of the affected party may prevent the proper implementation of the Project, e.g., natural disasters, pandemics, unexpected government decisions the beneficiary must notify BlueActionAA in writing without delay, indicating the

nature, expected duration, and foreseeable effects. The beneficiary is not considered in breach for obligations impacted by force majeure; however, if the situation cannot be resolved within six weeks after notification, BlueActionAA may decide to terminate the project and adjust payments accordingly.

8. Ethics, environment and social safeguards

52. What ethical requirements apply?

Projects must follow the European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity and address any ethical issues (e.g. vulnerable groups, personal data) in the application. Applicants accept a declaration of honour on ethics during submission. Proposals failing to adequately address ethical concerns or privacy aspects can be rejected and may be referred to an additional ethics review.

53. How is data protection handled?

ESF, as call coordinator, acts as Data Controller for data submitted through SmartSimple. The platform is operated in line with GDPR (EU 2016/679); applicants must accept its terms. Application data may be shared with the BlueActionAA consortium, evaluators, ethics advisor and relevant European Commission officers. Data are retained for up to five years after the end of BlueActionAA to allow for audits.

54. How are conflicts of interest managed (for applicants and reviewers)?

- Applicants sign a Declaration on Conflict of Interest and Double Funding (Annex 4).
- External evaluators are selected via a separate call, must sign a confidentiality and no-conflict declaration, and are screened for current or past affiliations with applicants before assignments.

9. Support and contact

55. Is there support available for preparing applications?

The BlueActionAA team will provide:

- Online information webinars
- A **FAQ section** on the website, updated regularly
- Optional **matchmaking / brokerage** support for building partnerships

Details and registration links are available on the BlueActionAA project website.

For technical and eligibility questions, please contact:

- **Email:** technical.support@blueactionaa.eu
- **Website:** <https://blueactionaa.eu/community-led-action-call/>

Please consult the call text and FAQs before contacting the helpdesk.

56. Are webinars available?

All our webinar recordings are available on our YouTube channel (<https://www.youtube.com/@BlueActionAA>) and official website (<https://blueactionaa.eu/webinars/>)

Please check our website for upcoming webinar dates



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