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# BESTLIFE2030: Call for proposals 2023 Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

**\*\*\*Updated on 27/05/2024. New text written in red.\*\*\***



## Questions related to the call

Applicants are invited to first refer to the Guidelines and related documents published on the [BESTLIFE2030 website](#). In case of remaining questions, a list of frequently asked questions – and answers – classified by themes can be found below. Requests for additional clarifications regarding concept notes sent no later than 15 December 2023, which are likely to be relevant to all applicants, will be added in this document.

### Eligibility (applicant profile, activities, overall project design)

**Question 1:** Can I apply if I already benefited from a previous BEST grant? Can a new project continue activities previously financed by BEST?

**Answer:** You can apply again as a former BEST beneficiary provided you still meet the eligibility criteria set in the Guidelines. A new project can continue activities previously financed by BEST, but cannot duplicate them (implement the same activities in the same place).

**Question 2:** Is there a maximum number of co-applicants?

**Answer:** No, there is no maximum threshold. 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 3:** Are universities eligible to apply?

**Answer:** Universities are eligible provided they meet the “special conditions for research organisations” defined in the Guidelines for applicants.



**Question 4:** Can cross-boundary work also involve collaboration with countries outside Outermost Regions (ORs) / Overseas Countries and Territories (OCTs)?

**Answer:** Financing of entities from third countries is only possible under exceptional and limited circumstances. Each case will be examined individually, but the application must show beyond a doubt that the involvement of the third country entity is essential to the project to reach its expected impact in ORs / OCTs. However, an entity from third countries can never be coordinating beneficiary.

**Question 5:** What does duplication of work mean?

**Answer:** Duplication means doing the same action(s) in the same place. The same action(s) can be done elsewhere, or new actions can be implemented at a location where another project was completed / is ongoing.

**Question 6:** Can I submit my proposal with a “to be confirmed” co-financier contribution?

**Answer:** In case you have a co-financier contribution, upload the related signed declaration in the “Additional documents” section of the portal. Please indicate either "Confirmed" or "To be confirmed". If the status is "to be confirmed", this must be explained. Note that, at a later stage, if successful in the selection process, you will be required to provide a signed declaration with "confirmed" status as a pre-condition to sign the Grant Agreement.

**Question 7:** Is there a recommendation for the number of milestones or deliverables?

**Answer:** The same recommendation applies to both milestones and deliverables – they have to be relevant and to the point, and the number depends on the needs and scope of the project. Please use your own discretion in this regard.

**Question 8:** Can we receive funding from other EU programmes in addition to BESTLIFE2030?

**Answer:** LIFE programme funding (which includes BESTLIFE2030) must not overlap with funding from other EU programmes. Applicants must inform the BESTLIFE2030 consortium in their project proposal about any related funding that they have received from the EU budget, as well as any ongoing applications for funding from the EU budget. They must also check that they are not receiving ongoing operating grants from LIFE (or other EU programmes) that could lead to double financing.

The European Commission has noticed that an increasing number of similar or same proposals are submitted to various programmes and carries out systematic checks and cross-checks. Failure to declare that the same or a similar proposal has been submitted to another programme (or worse, already even been partly financed) has serious consequences.

**Question 9:** Does BESTLIFE2030 fund research in any way?

**Answer:** Horizon Europe is the instrument specifically targeting research. Research is not the main focus of the LIFE Programme (and implicitly of BESTLIFE2030), and should not be the main focus of your project. However, limited research aimed to improve and enhance the knowledge data underpinning the project may be carried out. Research must be strictly limited and intrinsically related to the project's objectives and the applicant shall explain in detail how the proper implementation of the project relies on these research activities, showing that the existing scientific



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basis is insufficient, and how the additional knowledge will be used to implement the project actions. In such a case, scientific publications are considered important deliverables of the project.

**Question 10:** Can the BESTLIFE2030 grant be used to fund less than 95% of a project? (Can the grant fund, for instance, a specific work package of a larger project?)

**Answer:** Yes, as long as the expected outcomes are consistent with the BESTLIFE2030 programme’s rules and objectives, and if there is no double funding.

**Question 11:** Can a Belgian company apply alone?

**Answer:** An organization based in an EU member country can be a co-applicant. It must therefore partner with a structure located in the OR/PTOM which would submit the proposal as the main applicant.

**Question 12:** Is an association with less than one year of activity eligible?

**Answer:** Yes, it is eligible, there is no seniority criterion. However, the financial risk will be considered high.

**Question 13:** Are national research institutes eligible?

**Answer:** National research institutes are not eligible as main applicant. However, they are eligible as co-applicant. Furthermore, local research institutes are eligible as lead applicant and co-applicant. Fundamental research is ineligible for BESTLIFE2030. “Direct concrete actions on the ground” must be the focus of all proposals. Thus, projects proposing a mix of action on the ground and research are eligible.

**Question 14:** Is a branch of a large group eligible according to the European nomenclature?

**Answer:** If an organization (company, institution, association) has offices/branches in several regions, these offices/branches must be legally and fiscally registered in these regions in order to be able to apply independently of each other in the different regions.

**Additional note:** *The due diligence analysis is an objective procedure meant to evaluate financial risk of the applicant (low, medium or high) based on the documents provided during the concept note application process. In case of high risk, mitigation measures such as heightened reporting, closer monitoring, etc. will be decided if the application is eventually selected for funding.*

*However, this procedure does not affect or influence an organisation’s eligibility. Eligibility criteria are listed in Art. 2 of the guidelines for applicants.*

**Eligibility (activities)**

**Question 15:** Is the development of a strategic document eligible? In other words, is data acquisition (to then implement field actions) eligible?

**Answer:** This action alone is not eligible without concrete conservation actions during the duration of the project.



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<p><b>Question 16:</b> Concerning the impacts on the ground, should the impacts be visible during the duration of the project? (18 to 36 months)</p>
<p><b>Answer:</b> When setting up the project, it will be necessary to identify indicators which will make it possible to evaluate the actions carried out on the ground. These indicators will necessarily be measurable during the duration of the project.</p>
<p><b>Question 17:</b> How can research themes be included in the projects submitted to BESTLIFE2030?</p>
<p><b>Answer:</b> Conservation stakeholders can contact research organizations with the required expertise in the event that a research component is necessary to carry out the project and vice versa. It is also possible to go through the BESTLIFE2030 regional hub who will try to identify an appropriate structure in the network of local stakeholders if the structure wishing to submit a project does not know of one.</p> <p>It is important to note that research activities cannot constitute the main action of the project. Research must necessarily support operational actions on the ground.</p>
<p><b>Question 18:</b> For a research project, eligible actions must be integrated into the project or can they be implemented afterwards?</p>
<p><b>Answer:</b> They must be integrated into the project during its lifetime.</p>
<p><b>Question 19:</b> Will it be possible to hire consultants to write the complete proposal?</p>
<p><b>Answer:</b> The project will not be able to finance actions carried out before the signing of the grant agreement. However, the regional hubs are there to provide support.</p>
<p><b>Question 20:</b> Training and awareness-raising actions are not considered concrete actions?</p>
<p><b>Answer:</b> No, they must be accompanied by concrete actions targeting a habitat or species.</p>
<p><b>Question 21:</b> Is an old project already financed by BEST eligible with a change of scale?</p>
<p><b>Answer:</b> Yes, the new project can build on the results of the old one and deploy the feedback acquired on other sites. However, an exact replica of a former BEST project is not eligible.</p> <p>In order to ensure complementarity with previous projects funded by BEST and to avoid duplication of activities, applicants are invited to consult the corresponding sections of the <a href="#">LIFE4BEST</a> and <a href="#">BEST2.0+</a> websites.</p>
<p><b>Question 22:</b> Can we submit two similar projects for several different calls for projects? If we are selected for both, must we necessarily abandon one of them?</p>
<p><b>Answer:</b> You can submit similar projects for two calls for projects to increase your chances. On the other hand, you will have to choose one of the financing options. Identical actions cannot be financed twice.</p>
<p><b>Question 23:</b> Is it possible to submit a project that concerns both an overseas territory and a non-EU territory?</p>
<p><b>Answer:</b> The action must take place in an eligible territory, i.e. a European overseas territory. It is, however, possible to involve a non-European organization in carrying out the project if this is essential to guarantee the expected conservation impacts on the eligible territory.</p>



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**Question 24:** Can proposals be a continuation of an already existing project or must they only concern new actions?

**Answer:** In this case, it is preferable to divide the project into several phases to request financing for only one of these phases. Projects already started are not eligible. Expenditure becomes eligible from the signing of the grant agreement by all stakeholders (a priori August or September 2024 for successful proposals of the 1st call).

**Question 25:** Are biodiversity inventories, which are part of the actions listed as eligible on the slideshow, considered as data acquisition or as concrete action on the ground?

**Answer:** Biodiversity inventories are more about the acquisition of knowledge and must therefore be accompanied by more concrete action which makes it possible to obtain "measurable" and "tangible" results (EU terms). Similarly, all actions listed in the guidelines are eligible as long as they are backed by concrete conservation actions. Example: carry out an inventory which will be used at the same time as the project to deploy action to protect the species concerned by the inventory.

**Question 26:** Can the inventory of biodiversity in a private space be eligible?

**Answer:** Yes, if it is accompanied by concrete actions. The private space is eligible but it is necessary to show how the sustainability of the action will be ensured with the owner through a lease or agreement.

**Question 27:** Are small structures wishing to submit a project in a limited territory (a municipality) eligible?

**Answer:** Yes, as long as the municipality is located in an OR/OCT.

**Question 28:** Can an ecotourism project on a protected island (home to protected fauna and flora) involving human activities (bivouacs, agriculture, etc.) and that aims to implement protection and development measures (sorting bins, trails, etc.) fit into the criteria of a BEST project?

**Answer:** Projects can have a broad scope, while necessarily proposing the implementation of concrete actions with at least one key objective linked to the conservation of a habitat, a species or the fight against IAS that it is possible to measure. Example: number of individuals of a threatened species in a better state of conservation, removal of IAS on a given area of a problematic habitat, etc.

**Question 29:** These calls for projects are open to projects carried out between 2 ORs or 2 regions?

**Answer:** Yes, regional cooperation is possible. The project must be carried out in 2 ORs or OCTs. For example, a project carried out in Saint-Martin and Sint-Marteen.

**Question 30:** Can a project which aims to improve knowledge on the distribution/detection of invasive alien species, with the development of early detection tools, be eligible if no management/fighting action is taken behind it? Knowing that this development of detection tools is intended to be transmitted to local stakeholders.

**Answer:** A project relating solely to the acquisition of knowledge is ineligible. In this case, this acquisition of knowledge must indeed be followed by management/fight against IAS actions on the ground.



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**Costs and budget**

**Question 31:** How should the budget be presented if the project involves co-applicants?

Answer: Preselected applications will need to present separately the costs of each organisation involved through different budget lines at the full proposal stage.

**Question 32:** 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 therefore not necessary to request the maximum amount allowed, although this is encouraged.

**Question 33:** Is there a maximum amount allowed on subcontracting?

Answer: Yes – 30% (exceptionally it could be exceeded, but only if well justified, in cases where the necessary skills are not available to carry out all the activities).

**Question 34:** What are the procurement rules applicable?

Answer: The procurement policy and procedures applicable to BESTLIFE2030 beneficiaries are defined in the grant contracts signed by recipients. They may vary depending on the value of the contracts, are applicable to all goods and services procured, and must be respected in all cases.

**Question 35:** 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 36:** 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; they should not be included as separate lines in the budget.

**Question 37:** Do I have to provide quotes as supporting documents (e.g. for equipment) when defining my budget?

Answer: Supporting documents are required at the full proposal stage only if you choose to use a simplified costs option (SCO). We strongly encourage applicants to opt for this option if possible. The use of SCO is explained in the guidelines for applicants. SCO is allowed for staff costs, km, and per diems.

**Question 38:** What is the grant payment schedule? Are advanced payments made? What about the amount allocated to the co-applicant?

Answer: All payments are made to the account of the main applicant who is then responsible for the transfer(s) to the co-applicant(s). The grant will be paid in several instalments: a pre-financing at the beginning of the project; interim payments which are subject to the validation of periodic reports; and a final payment of the remaining balance (minimum 10%) after approval of the final report.



**Question 39:** Can a foundation co-finance a BEST project?

**Answer:** Yes.

**Question 40:** Will advances be possible or will payments be made only by reimbursement?

**Answer:** Advances will be possible as projects are carried out upon submission of interim reports and forecast budgets up to 90% of the total amount of the grant. You will need to be able to advance the remaining 10% before requesting the balance.

The first pre-financing which will be paid upon signature of the agreement is not fixed as a basis, it is up to the project leader to define it: *"the initial pre-financing of max 100% of the estimated budget for the first reference period is paid no later than 30 days after receipt of the signed grant contract and the corresponding payment request."*

**Question 41:** Is there a budget limit for personnel costs?

**Answer:** There is no budget limit on this cost category. However, the costs declared must be realistic and consistent with the implementation of concrete actions on the ground.

**Question 42:** What are the eligible indirect costs? (maximum 7% of eligible direct costs)

**Answer:** These costs correspond to management costs (for example internet, electricity, etc.) for which no proof will be requested at the time of reporting.

**Question 43:** Can the budget change between the concept note and the full proposal?

**Answer:** A margin of 25% will be possible between the concept note and the complete proposal.

**Question 44:** On a previous BEST project, a small amount was paid following validation of the concept note to help finance the writing of the full proposal, is this still the case? If not, can this assistance be included in the indirect costs of projects?

**Answer:** This support is not planned within the framework of BESTLIFE2030. Applicants are invited to contact regional hubs. Furthermore, any expenses incurred before signing the agreement grant are ineligible. It will therefore not be possible to include such a service in the budget of successful projects.

**Question 45:** Is the 100,000 EUR threshold for multiple applications understood as an 'effective' threshold (= grants obtained) or a 'theoretical' threshold (= grants requested)?

**Answer:** The maximum 100,000 EUR is a threshold per project and not per structure.

**Question 46:** In the case of a project with a forecast budget larger than 100,000 EUR, can we present part of the project or is it better to present it overall and use the BEST funds for co-financing?

**Answer:** Both are possible, it depends on the project schedule. Co-financing is possible but more complex. It will be necessary to be closely supported by the BESTLIFE2030 consortium.



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<b>Question 47:</b> Can an entity submit 2 project proposals at 100,000 EUR each?
<b>Answer:</b> The same structure can submit two projects worth 100,000 EUR provided that this configuration is respected: - 1 proposal as lead applicant and 1 proposal as co-applicant Or - 2 proposals as co-applicant.
<b>Question 48:</b> Is it possible to segment a project into two and have each part carried out by a different organization? Could each organization receive 100,000 EUR?
<b>Answer:</b> A priori yes, but that does not ensure that both projects are successful.
<b>Question 49:</b> For companies, is the grant subject to the de minimis rule?
<b>Answer:</b> As the BEST carries out a competitive selection, the grant is not considered as aid in the de minimis category.
<b>Question 50:</b> Can a co-applicant receive a higher grant amount than the lead applicant? For example, the co-applicant receives 70% of the grant and the lead applicant 30%.
<b>Answer:</b> There is no specific rule on the distribution of funds between the principal applicant and the co-applicant. It is therefore possible that the co-applicant receives a higher amount than the main applicant (justification required).
<b>Question 51:</b> Can equipment provided as an in-kind contribution be considered co-financing?
<b>Answer:</b> No, in-kind contributions cannot be considered co-financing.
<b>Question 52:</b> For job creation, is it possible to proceed with the recruitment process before the start date of the project for an effective position taking up on the day the project starts?
<b>Answer:</b> Recruitment for personnel can happen before the project before the project start. Only costs incurred during project implementation period are eligible.
<b>Question 53:</b> The 13th month and the Christmas bonus are among the eligible components of employee costs, while bonuses are ineligible. What is the difference between these 3 elements? How to know which type of bonus is eligible or not? For example, TAAF employees receive a “distance bonus” during their missions – is this bonus eligible for BEST?
<b>Answer:</b> Staff costs are eligible if they are statutory, contractual, and applicable equally to all employees.
<b>Question 54:</b> Is the use of volunteering (for the 5% co-financing) possible for any type of candidate structure or is it reserved for associations? Can an SME use volunteering?
<b>Answer:</b> Yes.
<b>Question 55:</b> “Accounting services” are listed in other costs and services: does this mean that the use of an accountant or auditor can be attributed to/covered by the project?
<b>Answer:</b> External accounting services are eligible for the costs related to and specific to the management of the project (not for all the organisation’s accounting purposes).





**Question 56:** In the case where an employee is only involved for a few months in the implementation of a 24-month project, will it be necessary to provide proof of expenses (pay slips and/or time sheets depending on the option chosen) only over the months of his involvement or over the entire duration of the project?

**Answer:** In each reporting period you need to provide supporting documents for all the employees who charge any amount to the project in the period being reported. If you are reporting for 24 months and someone has charged only 3 months to the project, you will still have to provide supporting documents for the other 21 months.

**Question 57:** Volunteers: Some projects will have a lot of volunteers and probably not same persons each year. It might be difficult for them to have a separate budget line per volunteer. We advised to put Volunteer 1, Volunteer 2 etc, keeping in mind that in Year 2 they might report for different persons than in Y1, for example. Would you please kindly advise if it is correct?

**Answer:** Where names are known, they should be budgeted for separately. Where that is not the case, it is OK to indicate the number of volunteers expected to be engaged and include a strong justification as to how that number is arrived at, and what roles they are foreseen to play. Volunteers valorisation is explained in the [info session powerpoint](#). Commission Decision C(2019)2646, daily rate.

**Question 58:** Interns: Since interns count as staff, will they have to fill out timesheets?

**Answer:** Yes.

**Question 59:** If organisations have teams working on field (hunters, workers) who are not official staff of the organisations. We advise them to budget their costs under “staff cost” considering they are “Natural persons beneficiaries without salary” (otherwise, they would fall over 30 % in category 4). Would you please kindly advise if SCO works in this case? If yes, what documents will be required for verification ex-ante?

**Answer:** To answer this question we need to know the relation between the person and the organization (Are project resources being used to pay for hunters? What contractual engagements exist between the organisations and these persons?). For “SME owners” or “natural persons beneficiaries without salary”, SCO is compulsory. See commission decision C(2020)7115 attached. Explanations are also provided in the [info session powerpoint](#).

**Question 60:** Official rates for subsistence / official rates for fuel. Most of organisations do not have policies on subsistence or fuel and would like to be advised with a rate to use for SCO. We have found some official policies on-line. Would you please kindly advise if these rates might work: e.g. for New Caledonia: [fuel](#) and [subsistence](#), for French Polynesia [fuel](#) and [subsistence](#), OR should we take URSSAF rates same for both territories?

**Answer:** Yes. URSAFF rates (for French ORs and OCTs) are the most recommendable. For others, equivalent official rates per country are acceptable and advisable. SCO rates will be agreed/discussed before signing Grant Agreements.

**Question 61:** “Note that VAT refundable or deductible is not an eligible cost for cost category 4.” Does this mean that in this section alone (Costs and other services) I have to use net price, without VAT? Meaning if a service is 100 euro, I have to list 81,96 € and exclude the 22% VAT? Is this exclusive to this category, or also for all other categories? Is the value of VAT we pay considered as a financial contribution for the project?

**Answer:** One needs to use the total price of the service, unless one has the right to recover this VAT, as is the case with some NGOs.



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**Question 62:** Budget allocation: since in the platform there is no division of budget by partner, the methodology for allocating funds is not clear. Should applicants divide in the whole table every category cost and add a line for each partner integrating the proposal? As that is the case for personnel costs, should they do the same in the rest of the costs categories?

**Answer:** We recommend that applicants split the budget for staff costs into as many budget lines as necessary. For travel and the other cost categories, we are not requesting such detailed budget lines. However, if applicants want to detail and it is useful for them, they can do so. Also note that SCO is not allowed for travel (flights, train,..).

Additional information
<b>Question 63:</b> Whom to contact in case of additional questions?
<b>Answer:</b> Should you have any questions or encounter any difficulties, please contact your Regional Hub or the programme coordinator IUCN (see Contact section on the <a href="#">BESTLIFE2030 website</a> ).
<b>Question 64:</b> Do I need to register on the grant platform?
<b>Answer:</b> Yes, you must create an account to access the form, fill it in directly online (saving drafts is possible) and submit it. You must select English as your preferred language before creating the account so that the entire form appears in English. Access link to the platform: <a href="https://speciesgrants.iucn.org/dashboard">https://speciesgrants.iucn.org/dashboard</a> .
<b>Question 65:</b> When will the 4 calls for projects be launched?
<b>Answer:</b> Approximately every 16-18 months. The 2nd call will probably be launched at the end of 2024.
<b>Question 66:</b> Concerning the next 3 calls, will the eligibility criteria be exactly the same as the current call?
<b>Answer:</b> It is not planned to change the eligibility criteria. The priority will remain the implementation of concrete and measurable actions on the ground.
<b>Question 67:</b> How long can projects be?
<b>Answer:</b> From 18 to 36 months (including amendments). It is therefore recommended to submit projects shorter than 36 months in anticipation of possible delays which would require an amendment for the finalization of activities.
<b>Question 68:</b> What is the deadline for submitting the concept note?
<b>Answer:</b> Concept notes must be submitted no later than January 8, 2024 at 2 p.m. CET.
<b>Question 69:</b> What is a co-financier?
<b>Answer:</b> A co-financier is an entity that provides funds to carry out the project in addition to the BEST grant.



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**Question 70:** Are small associations, which rely partly on volunteers, in competition with large structures such as research organizations, protected areas, reserves, etc.?

**Answer:** It is the quality of the project and the conservation issues concerned which will be evaluated in relation to the entity that applies. There are no fixed proportions in terms of type of structure to be financed. Small associations have already been beneficiaries of BEST subsidies.

**Question 71:** A service provider linked to the project cannot have more than 30% of the budget. Does service provider mean subcontractor?

**Answer:** Yes, that is correct.

**Question 72:** If the project calls on several service providers for different activities, is the 30% max for all service providers combined?

**Answer:** Yes, that is correct.

**Question 73:** For service providers, which procurement conditions apply?

**Answer:** These conditions will be explained during the second phase of project selection; the concept note does not require details of this type. However, the following rules must apply:

- (a) ensure sufficient transparency, fair competition and adequate ex ante publicity;
- (b) guarantee equal treatment, proportionality and non-discrimination;
- (c) avoid conflicts of interest throughout the procurement process.

With the following procurement rules:

- Cost of goods or services ≤ €20,000 = unrestricted purchase, but the purchasing decision must guarantee the best quality-price ratio.
- Cost of goods or services from €20,000 to €40,000 = written offers from at least 3 potential suppliers/service providers.

**Question 74:** If a service provider is a co-applicant, does the 30% limit still apply?

**Answer:** No, because they are a co-applicant. The co-applicant must meet the eligibility rules listed in the guidelines.

**Question 75:** Can a project be refused on the first call and reconsidered during one of the following calls for projects (if the actions are eligible)?

**Answer:** Yes, the same project can be resubmitted to a following call for projects as long as it takes into account the recommendations that will have been provided to the candidate by the evaluators.

**Question 76:** Where can I find the call specifications?

**Answer:** <https://bestlife2030.org/for-applicants/>.

**Question 77:** How to integrate volunteer time into the project?

**Answer:** Volunteer time is eligible and can be considered for the 5% co-financing.

**Question 78:** Are there are no priority themes?

**Answer:** Not for the first call for proposals.



**Question 79:** Application portal: We have filled in some of the sections in their entirety, and the percentage that appears as filled in is not 100%, and we do not know what is missing? It happens in the 'Narrative', 'Logical Framework and Monitoring Plan' and 'Safeguards'. Is it necessary that everything be 100% filled in order to submit the application?

**Answer:** The portal looks at all the sections (text boxes/lines and buttons) when computing percentages. So, for instance, in the Safeguards section, which has a text box and a button, if an applicant simply writes "Not applicable" in the text box, they will still get 50% because they didn't use the button. This is not a problem. The application can be submitted as long as all relevant sections are filled in.