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Capacity development roadmap

Concept (2026)



Coordinator



Regional hubs



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1. Why this roadmap matters

BESTLIFE2030 is not only funding biodiversity projects but also strengthening the capacity of organisations across the EU Overseas to deliver lasting environmental and socio-economic impact.

As the programme enters its second half, it is scaling rapidly. With over 130 projects already selected and many more to come, the diversity of organisations involved, in terms of experience, technical expertise, and financial capacity, is both a strength and a challenge.

Without targeted support, this diversity can lead to:

- uneven proposal quality
- delays in contracting
- inconsistencies in reporting
- and limited opportunities to scale and connect results

The Capacity Development Roadmap responds directly to this reality. It positions capacity development as a **core delivery mechanism** of BESTLIFE2030, embedded throughout the full project lifecycle.

It ensures that applicants and grantees receive the right support at the right time, at each stage of the project cycle: from proposal design, to contracting, to implementation, to reporting.

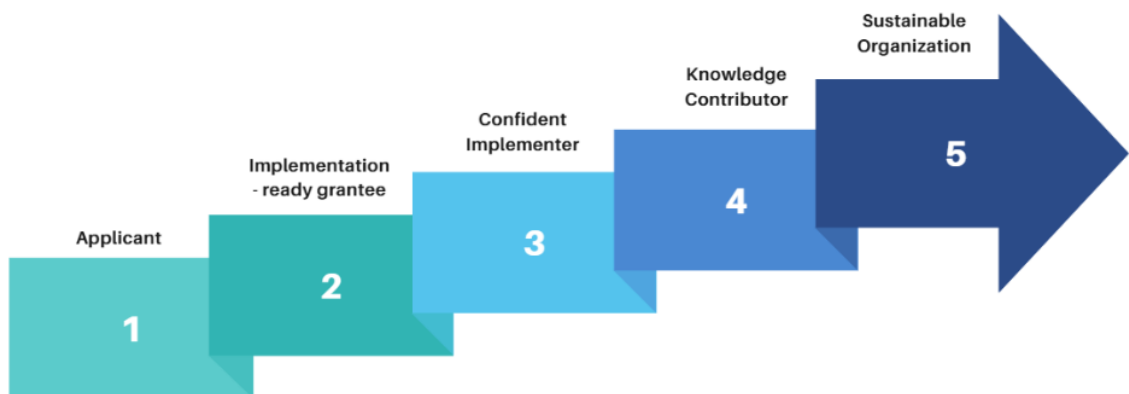
At the same time, it goes beyond operational support. The roadmap is designed to progressively build a **community of capable, connected organisations**, able not only to deliver strong individual projects, but to contribute to a broader, shared impact across regions, strengthening the overall effectiveness and coherence of the programme.

2. What this means for you

As a BESTLIFE2030 applicant or grantee, this roadmap is designed to support you in practical ways, including:

- clearer guidance when preparing your proposal
- stronger support to navigate contracting requirements
- improved tools and advice for implementation and reporting
- opportunities to learn from and exchange with other grantees
- increased visibility and communication of your project results
- support to access future funding and sustain your impact

The roadmap is designed to support organisations along a progressive capacity development journey:



3. Mission

To strengthen the technical, financial and organisational capacities of BESTLIFE2030 applicants and grantees throughout the full project lifecycle by providing timely, practical and context-adapted support, fostering peer learning and knowledge exchange, and enabling organisations to sustain their results beyond the programme.

4. Vision

A community of capable and resilient organisations across the EU Overseas, able to design, implement and sustain high-quality biodiversity projects that deliver lasting environmental and socio-economic impact.

5. What the roadmap aims to achieve

The roadmap focuses on delivering the following outcomes:

- higher-quality, compliant, and implementation-ready project proposals
- more effective project delivery, with stronger technical and financial management
- improved consistency and usefulness of planning and reporting
- structured opportunities for peer learning and cross-regional exchange
- stronger visibility and communication of project results
- increased capacity of organisations to sustain impacts beyond the programme

6. How the roadmap is structured

The roadmap is organised around two complementary and mutually reinforcing tiers:

Tier 1 - Core, call-linked capacity development

These are the programme's essential activities. They are designed to ensure that all applicants and grantees meet shared standards at each critical stage of the

project lifecycle, reducing technical, financial, and compliance risks.

Tier 2 - Complementary and targeted support

These activities strengthen longer-term capacity, learning, and visibility. They are flexible and evolve based on identified needs; the examples presented here are indicative rather than exhaustive, helping to build a connected community of organisations rather than a collection of individual projects.

6.1 Tier 1 - Core, call-linked capacity development

Tier 1 is delivered across three key phases aligned with the project lifecycle:

a) Phase 1: Concept Note and Full Proposal preparation

Objective: Ensure that applications are technically sound, financially realistic and implementation ready and aligned with programme requirements.

Approach: Targeted technical support on eligibility requirements, intervention logic and results frameworks. Financial guidance on budget structure, procurement rules and cost eligibility.

Timeline: Aligned with concept note and full proposal submission windows (Reach out to Regional Hubs to develop a timeline for all sessions).

Host: Regional Hubs (supported by IUCN)

Format: Online and in-person

Expected outcome: Higher-quality proposals, a reduced need for clarification during contracting and reduced non-submissions due to lack of capacity.

b) Phase 2: Grant Agreement preparation

Objective: Ensure that selected grantees are operationally ready to contract and implement.

Approach: Briefings on financial and contractual compliance. Introduction to reporting templates and tools. Clarification of roles and responsibilities.

Timeline: Aligned with grant agreement preparation

Host: IUCN

Format: Online

Expected outcome: Smoother contracting processes and fewer

administrative and budget errors during implementation.

c) Phase 3: Reporting

Objective: Strengthen accountability, learning and results-based delivery.

Approach: Financial reporting check-ins and sessions. MEL and results reporting sessions.

Timeline: Aligned with projects reporting period

Host: IUCN and Regional Hubs

Format: Online and in person during field visits

Expected outcome: Improved quality, consistency and compliance of technical and financial reports.

6.2 Tier 2 – Support, complementary activities

Tier 2 is delivered through a range of complementary activities, including thematic workshops. These activities are indicative and evolve based on identified needs, and reflect a continuously adapting support offer.

a) Pillar 1: Inter-regional knowledge exchange

Objective: Promote thematic learning and coherence across regions on priority topics at programme level.

Approach: Thematic webinars led by grantees. Regional priority topic sessions, Cross-regional experience sharing.

Timeline: When most relevant to programme priorities. (aimed implementation in 2026).

Expected outcome: Stronger thematic coherence and cross-regional learning

b) Pillar 2: Peer learning and mentorship

Objective: Accelerate onboarding, learning and support to new grantees through structured peer exchange (In some regions, occurring without proactive intervention)

Approach: Mentorship pairing across calls.

Timeline: Aligned with call activities

Expected outcome: Faster onboarding and improved early-stage implementation for new grantees.

c) Pillar 3: Communication and Knowledge Dissemination

Objective: Strengthen grantee capacity for project-level communication and visibility.

Approach: Identification of communication focal points. Knowledge exchange on storytelling and dissemination of project results. Targeted support.

Timeline: To be defined

Expected outcome: Improved visibility of results, outreach and knowledge sharing.

d) Pillar 4: GIS and STAR Metrics Development

Objective: Strengthen use of spatial tools and biodiversity metrics for planning and reporting.

Approach: Training on GIS application. Step-by-step guidance on STAR metrics, Presentation of BESTLIFE2030 project interactive map.

Timeline: To be defined

Expected outcome: Improved demonstration of biodiversity impact.

e) Pillar 5: Post BESTLIFE2030 Sustainability

Objective: Strengthen grantee capacity to mobilise follow-up funding and sustain impacts beyond programme support.

Approach: Targeted guidance on funding pathways, donor mapping and proposal positioning.

Timeline: Aligned with call activities.

Expected outcome: Increased readiness of grantees to secure additional resources and sustain project results.

7. Monitoring

Monitoring focuses on how capacity development contributes to improved delivery performance, learning, and sustainability across the portfolio.

BESTLIFE2030 will regularly review its capacity development approach and assess progress in achieving them. Performance will be monitored through a combination of quantitative and qualitative measures.

Quantitative monitoring will track the number of capacity development activities delivered under the roadmap, participation rates of applicants and grantees, and the distribution of activities across the different tiers and pillars.

Qualitative monitoring will draw on feedback from activities, post-event surveys, and targeted consultations with participants to assess relevance, usefulness, and added value.

In parallel, BESTLIFE2030 will systematically capture lessons learnt through structured debriefings and periodic reviews, enabling the continuous refinement of the capacity development offer and ensuring it remains responsive, practical, and fit for purpose.

8. Looking ahead

BESTLIFE2030 is not only supporting projects, it is investing in the long-term capacity of organisations to deliver, learn, and lead. This roadmap ensures that capacity development remains embedded, responsive, and impactful, enabling results to extend beyond individual grants and contribute to a stronger, more connected biodiversity community across the EU Overseas, capable of sustaining impact over the long term.

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