

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

Applicants are invited to first refer to the BESTbelt Operational Manual and related documents published on the [BESTbelt 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 sent no later than 10 days before the closure of the call (24 February 2023), which are likely to be relevant to all applicants, can also be found in this regularly updated document.

Applicants' eligibility	
<b>Question:</b>	Who is eligible to apply for the BESTbelt project?
<b>Answer:</b>	Lead and co-applicants have to be registered as a private or public legal entity in one of the countries along the European Green Belt (EGB). They have to be directly responsible for the preparation and implementation of the grant project and have a bank account in the name of the organisation. For more details please see the Operational Manual.
<b>Question:</b>	Is there a maximum number of co-applicants?
<b>Answer:</b>	No, there is no maximum number of co-applicants. 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.
<b>Question:</b>	Is it possible to apply as lead partner and as co-applicant (in two different projects)? If there is an organisation applying as a lead applicant and as a co-partner applicant, is it going to be approved in both cases or is the project with the higher score going to win?
<b>Answer:</b>	Yes, this is possible. Please keep in mind, that organisations can act as Lead Applicant in two applications, but only one of these can receive funding. The projects are being evaluated individually. The scores will be relevant for the ranking list and the selection of project proposals.
<b>Question:</b>	Is it possible to apply as a single organisation, without additional partners?
<b>Answer:</b>	Yes, but keep in mind to foster the local potential on the ground. For this, a local organisation might be a good partner.

<b>Question:</b>	Is there a recommended number of people/organisations involved in the project?
<b>Answer:</b>	No, there is no recommendation. Please consider, the more organisations/people are involved the more complexity will be added to the project. Nevertheless, it is an asset to have partnerships within your project. What works well depends on the project concept.
<b>Question:</b>	Our organisation does not have full employed staff. Will that be a problem?
<b>Answer:</b>	This is no problem. Please consider if there is enough capacity to implement the project and if your approach has a long-lasting effect beyond the lifetime of the project.
<b>Question:</b>	Is it possible to involve national nature protection NGO / GO institutions, even if they are not located within the EGB?
<b>Answer:</b>	As lead or co-applicant, organisations need to be registered in one of the countries along the EGB (not necessarily within the spatial reference area of EGB). The BESTbelt aims to increase the local potential along the EGB.
<b>Question:</b>	Are universities eligible to apply?
<b>Answer:</b>	Universities are eligible provided they meet the "Eligible Activities" defined in the Operational Manual.
<b>Question:</b>	Can we include PhD students in our project proposal?
<b>Answer:</b>	Yes, you can include PhD students in your project proposal if it fits to the structure of your project. Please notice, that fundamental research projects will not be funded though.
<b>Question:</b>	Can you apply for BESTbelt funds if you are a current partner in other ongoing project with EU funds (ex. LIFE)?
<b>Answer:</b>	Yes, this is possible.

<b>Question:</b>	Can you apply for BESTbelt funds if you are a current lead partner in other ongoing BESTbelt projects?
<b>Answer:</b>	No, the lead partner is not allowed to be involved in an ongoing BESTbelt project at the same time.
<b>Question:</b>	Can we include institutions such as national parks and structures in municipalities in our project?
<b>Answer:</b>	Yes, this is possible. There are no restrictions for that but it has to be relevant for the project.
<b>Eligible Activities</b>	
<b>Question:</b>	Which activities are eligible?
<b>Answer:</b>	Eligible activities must contribute to the BESTbelt principles and objectives, be located in one or more areas of the <a href="#">indicative spatial reference area</a> of the EGB (or provide a written statement), comply with the EGB Vision, contribute to tangible and measurable impacts, encourage a partnership-based approach with local stakeholders, guarantee open access to data and results and not be fundamental research projects. For specific details please see the Operational Manual.
<b>Question:</b>	What is the scope of the European Green Belt? How many kilometres from the border to the inside of the countries?
<b>Answer:</b>	Please follow the available <a href="#">link</a> to visit the online version of the spatial reference area to see the relevant information: <a href="https://euronatur.maps.arcgis.com/apps/SimpleViewer/index.html?appid=15d1f23a9920421db93d8132908c405d">https://euronatur.maps.arcgis.com/apps/SimpleViewer/index.html?appid=15d1f23a9920421db93d8132908c405d</a>
<b>Question:</b>	The spatial reference area border cuts through municipalities: how to deal with that?
<b>Answer:</b>	Eligible actions have to be located in the spatial reference area or a written statement how the activities contribute to the achievement of the BESTbelt principles and objectives has to be provided.
<b>Question:</b>	Is it possible to have a project that will essentially include a youth camp?

<b>Answer:</b>	If a youth camp is the essential activity to fulfil the BESTbelt objectives in your potential project this is possible.
<b>Costs and budget</b>	
<b>Question:</b>	How should the budget be presented if the project involves co-applicants?
<b>Answer:</b>	Preselected applicants will need to present separately the costs of each organisation involved through different budget lines at the full proposal stage
<b>Question:</b>	Are there any restrictions how the budget is distributed / shared amongst co-applicants?
<b>Answer:</b>	No, there are no restrictions. It has to be consistent with your project. Please, keep in mind the roles of applicant and co-applicant.
<b>Question:</b>	Can transboundary cooperation merge together and receive a double funding?
<b>Answer:</b>	No, a double funding is not possible. For intensive transboundary cooperation a maximum budget of up to 60 000 EUR is possible. Applicants must clearly demonstrate if and how a cross-border focus of their project enhances their impact and explain the role of transboundary cooperation. For specific details please see the Operational Manual.
<b>Question:</b>	How to design the budget? Is it necessary to request the maximum amount allowed?
<b>Answer:</b>	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 may therefore not be necessary to request the maximum amount allowed.
<b>Question:</b>	Is there a recommended allocation for the cost distribution? How many percent of the budget should be considered for personal costs?
<b>Answer:</b>	No, there are no recommendations. It depends on the project concept and should be reflected in its structure. The personal costs have to be consistent with the project structure and workload.

<b>Question:</b>	Is it an asset to have a higher or lower budget?
<b>Answer:</b>	No, the height of the budget is not a criterion for itself. During evaluation it will be assessed whether the budget fits to the planned project. It is not necessary to request the maximum of funding.
<b>Question:</b>	The budget in the concept form seems extremely generalized, how should it be structured?
<b>Answer:</b>	The budget should be reasonable, justified and reflect the proposed actions. For the concept note a rough structure is sufficient. It is helpful to state your thoughts behind your distribution.
<b>Question:</b>	If members of the project team (manager, financial assistant...) are already employed and payed from other project budgets, is it necessary to list these positions in the budget? How can it be included in the project proposal?
<b>Answer:</b>	Please list all people who are involved in your BESTbelt proposal and explain how the BESTbelt budget is distributed. It will help evaluators if you explain the situation shortly in the proposal.
<b>Question:</b>	How should we apply for a project if we have own funding that can be utilized?
<b>Answer:</b>	List people who are involved in your project and explain how the BESTbelt budget is distributed. It will help evaluators if you explain the situation in the proposal. Co-funding is not allowed.
<b>Question:</b>	We have an idea, which requires a bigger budget than the small grant. Is it possible to apply for the BESTbelt grant and fund other activities via another grant/sponsorship?
<b>Answer:</b>	BESTbelt aims at empowering local stakeholders to unlock the potential along the European Green Belt. Co-funding is not allowed for the BESTbelt grant. The project has to be an independent project and has to work for itself. If this precondition is fulfilled the project might be able contribute to a bigger concept.
<b>Question:</b>	Is it possible to subcontract a consultant company, e.g. for organising events? Should they be contracted or become co-applicant?

<b>Answer:</b>	Both ways are possible and thinkable. For subcontracting, please respect the procurement regulations. For details contact to the BESTbelt Office and Focal Point is advised.
<b>Question:</b>	Is there a maximum amount allowed on subcontracting?
<b>Answer:</b>	There is no maximum percentage regarding the share of the budget allocated to subcontracting. However, only activities, which are not essential to the project can be subcontracted. In all cases, subcontracting must be duly justified and be in line with the BESTbelt procurement rules.
<b>Question:</b>	What are the procurement rules applicable?
<b>Answer:</b>	National and/or public sector procurement rules and regulations must be followed. Furthermore, applicants have to reconcile any purchases of goods or services with Grant funds with the BESTbelt Procurement Policy. Purchases with a total contractual value of less than EUR 5,000 (excluding VAT) may be made through "single sourcing", otherwise it must be based on written quotations received from <u>at least three</u> potential suppliers.
<b>Question:</b>	Are the costs incurred during the preparation of the proposal eligible?
<b>Answer:</b>	No, only the costs incurred during the implementation of the project are eligible costs.
<b>Question:</b>	Will there be pre-financing (payment in advance) during grant implementation?
<b>Answer:</b>	Yes, the grant will be paid in several rates during project implementation. A first rate will be transferred after signing the contract to finance the start of the project. It is foreseen to link the following rates to the reporting scheme.
<b>Question:</b>	How to include import taxes?
<b>Answer:</b>	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.
<b>Additional information</b>	

<b>Question:</b>	Is it possible to apply crossover with other countries?
<b>Answer:</b>	Yes, it is possible and even welcomed. Please consider different regulations and laws depending on the countries involved. The maximum budget for intensive transboundary projects is up to 60 000 EUR, as the personnel and logistical effort is higher. For specific details please see the Operational Manual.
<b>Question:</b>	Will it be disadvantageous to apply without international partners on a solely national basis?
<b>Answer:</b>	It is an asset, if your project promotes trans-boundary interaction. If this is difficult in the current situation or it does not fit in your project proposal or the geographic conditions, you can explain your considerations and the decision in your proposal.
<b>Question:</b>	Is Romania part of the Balkan Green Belt or the Central European Green Belt?
<b>Answer:</b>	Romania is part of the Balkan Green Belt, see <a href="https://europeangreenbelt.org/initiative/structure/">https://europeangreenbelt.org/initiative/structure/</a> .
<b>Question:</b>	Is the funding amount in the 2 <sup>nd</sup> Call (880,000 €) foreseen for each region or for the entire EGB?
<b>Answer:</b>	880.000 € are foreseen for the entire EGB in the 2 <sup>nd</sup> Call. There will be a 3 <sup>rd</sup> Call which is expected to be launched in 2024.
<b>Question:</b>	Is it acceptable to have more words than it is requested in the description?
<b>Answer:</b>	It is helpful for the evaluation process if you stay within the word limit but it is not totally strict.
<b>Question:</b>	Is there a manual for reporting?
<b>Answer:</b>	There will be guidelines for reporting, but they are not online yet.
<b>Question:</b>	What are the criteria to be elected? How are the “points” managed?

<b>Answer:</b>	The Evaluation Grid which you can find in the Operational Manual points this out. The Evaluation of the concept note will be undertaken by the members of the Project Team.
<b>Question:</b>	Which kind of equipment is eligible?
<b>Answer:</b>	There are no restrictions to that. Please see the operational manual for more details about eligible costs.
<b>Question:</b>	The time until the submission deadline is short and challenging for thorough project preparation – is there a way out?
<b>Answer:</b>	The deadline for the concept notes of the 2 <sup>nd</sup> Call for proposals is 06 March 2023. There will be no prolongation. Please keep in mind that the call for proposals is a two-stage approach and that there will be more time in the full proposal phase. There will be another call for proposals which is expected to be launched in 2024.
<b>Question:</b>	If we have questions regarding the operational manual what can we do?
<b>Answer:</b>	Please reach out to the Regional Focal Point or the BESTbelt Office.
<b>Question:</b>	Will there be support by the Regional Focal Point after the concept note phase?
<b>Answer:</b>	Yes, there will be another webinar/workshop to give support during the elaboration of the full proposal. And you can always forward your questions to your Regional Focal Point or the BESTbelt Office.
<b>Question:</b>	Who is the responsible contact for advice and administration during project implementation?
<b>Answer:</b>	During project implementation you can always ask for help at your Regional Focal Point or contact the BESTbelt Office.
<b>Question:</b>	Whom to contact in case of questions?
<b>Answer:</b>	Please contact the BESTbelt Office via email: <a href="mailto:bestbelt@europeangreenbelt.org">bestbelt@europeangreenbelt.org</a>
<b>Questions from the webinar</b>	
<b>Question:</b>	We are SME with 54 employes and less than EUR 10 million annual turnover, with local office and proven experience in Bestbelt area. Are we eligible as a project partner, or can be subcontracted for implementation of specific project activity?



<b>Answer:</b>	Unfortunately, your SME does not fulfil the criteria of the European Commission for micro and small sized enterprises and is therefore not eligible.
<b>Question:</b>	Is there a preference on: i) new initiative vs. ii) continuation of activities/projects?
<b>Answer:</b>	The objective of BESTbelt, to unlock the local potential, is favouring new initiatives. However, this is not a criterion within the evaluation scheme for the project application.
<b>Question:</b>	Are there any constraints for lead partners or co-applicants from ongoing BESTbelt projects regarding the application to the current call?
<b>Answer:</b>	The only constraint to keep in mind is that an ongoing lead applicant from the former call is not allowed to apply again as lead applicant within this call. But a lead-applicant in the former call may apply as co-applicant. In addition, an organisation can submit a maximum of two concept notes/proposals per call as lead applicant and/or co-applicant.  This is not a criterion within the evaluation scheme for the project application.
<b>Question:</b>	Can I apply again as Lead applicant if my Full Proposal was not accepted in the last Call?
<b>Answer:</b>	Yes, this is possible.
<b>Question:</b>	Is it possible to implement measures on private land?
<b>Answer:</b>	Yes, if you have the permission from the landowner this is possible.
<b>Question:</b>	Is a digital signature accepted?
<b>Answer:</b>	Yes, if you have the permission from the landowner this is possible.
<b>Question:</b>	Where does the Central European Green Belt end and where does the Balkan Green Belt start?
<b>Answer:</b>	There are no strictly defined borders between the regions, so depending on the region the transitions are fluent. If in any specific case it has any importance for your application, please contact the BESTbelt office ( <a href="mailto:bestbelt@europeangreenbelt.org">bestbelt@europeangreenbelt.org</a> ) for further clarification.
<b>Question:</b>	Is it possible that in a transboundary project an NGO from one country of the European Green Belt cooperates with an NGO from another country of the European Green Belt?

<b>Answer:</b>	Yes, this is possible.
<b>Question:</b>	Please explain a bit more benefits or downside of co-application?
<b>Answer:</b>	Co-application with other partners can bring the benefit to be able to integrate different perspectives, experiences within your field of work. So there is the possibility of a wider range of activities that can be done, the different project activities can be disposed to the different partners. The exchange between the partners can have a very generative effect for further future activities. Possible administrative burden can be that for the application as well as for the reporting it is necessary to gather the necessary information from the co-applicant and synchronize the common output. This could be more extensive as when working without a co-applicant.
<b>Question:</b>	To implement measures on private land, is it mandatory that the land owner is co-applicant?
<b>Answer:</b>	No, this is not mandatory. But you need the permission from the landowner for the implementation of the measures.
<b>Question:</b>	Is it possible to involve Russian organisations as co-applicant or project partner?
<b>Answer:</b>	Due to the current political situation, Russia is excluded from the 2 <sup>nd</sup> BESTbelt Call for proposals.
<b>Question:</b>	How extensive is the administrative burden for the reporting during the project?
<b>Answer:</b>	Grantees are asked to send bi-annual progress reports, including an financial and technical report of the taken activities within the reporting period.
<b>Question:</b>	Is it possible to apply for the BESTbelt grants to combine it with another ongoing project?
<b>Answer:</b>	No, generally that is not possible. The planned activities described in your project application should cover a complete stand-alone project idea. Nonetheless this project idea may have a connection to an ongoing project as soon as it can be realized as a stand-alone project.
<b>Question:</b>	Is it possible to indicate the main headquarter of an organization as applicant even if it is not located within the European Green Belt area?
<b>Answer:</b>	The applicant's office must be registered in one of the countries along the European Green Belt. And important is, that the planned activities are taking place within the European Green Belt area.