

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for Community Grants for Eighth Operational Phase of the GEF Small Grants Programme in India

Ref No: FAQ/SGPOP8/IND-2026

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Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

1. About the Programme

Q: What is the GEF Small Grants Programme (SGP)?

A: SGP provides financial and technical support to non-government organizations (NGOs), civil society organizations (CSOs), and community-based organizations (CBOs) to take collective local action on global environmental challenges, while enhancing livelihoods and promoting inclusive, sustainable development.

Q: Who runs SGP-OP8 in India?

A: SGP-OP8 in India is executed by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC), Government of India, and implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) serves as the National Host Institution (NHI) and administers this Call for Proposals.

Q: What approach does OP8 follow?

A: OP8 follows a landscape-based approach, promoting integrated solutions to interrelated environmental and socio-economic issues in five ecologically sensitive and socio-economically vulnerable landscapes across India.

2. Priority Themes and Geographic Focus

Q: What themes can a proposal focus on?

A: Proposals should focus on one or more of the following five thematic areas:

- Community-Based Conservation of Threatened Ecosystems and Species
- Sustainable Agriculture and Fisheries, and Food Security
- Low-Carbon Energy Access and Co-Benefits
- Local to Global Coalitions for Chemicals and Waste Management
- Catalysing Sustainable Urban Solutions

Q: Which landscapes/states/districts are covered under this Call?

A: Five priority landscapes are covered:

- Aravallis – Rajasthan, Gujarat, Haryana, and South Delhi
- Western Ghats – Goa and Karnataka
- Coastal – Odisha and West Bengal (Sundarbans)
- North-East – Meghalaya, Assam, and Arunachal Pradesh
- Himalayas – Ladakh (Kargil) and Uttarakhand (Gangotri, Govind)

Refer to Annexure 4 (Geographic Focus) of the RFP for the complete state-wise and district-wise list.

Q: Can an organization propose a project outside these listed districts?

A: No. Applicant organizations must have an office in the specific focus landscape/state where the project is proposed, and the project should fall within the districts listed under the Geographic Focus section of the RFP.

3. Eligibility – Organization Type & Registration

Q: Who can apply for this grant?

A: Organizations registered as a Trust/Society/NGO in India, with at least 5 years of registration and operational experience, are eligible to apply.

Q: What are the key registration requirements?

- Registered as a Trust/Society in India for more than 5 years (registration documents required)
- Registered on the DARPAN portal of NITI Aayog with a valid, updated unique ID
- IT returns for FY 2023-24, 2024-25 and 2025-26 (mandatory), and FCRA registration (if applicable)
- Audited accounts (Balance Sheet, Income & Expenditure, Schedules, Notes of Accounts, Auditor's Report) for FY 2023-24, 2024-25 and 2025-26
- Latest Annual Report (FY 2025-26)

Q: Can universities apply?

A: Yes, provided the university is registered as a Society or Trust and meets the other eligibility criteria (registration period, DARPAN ID, financial and technical capacity, etc.).

Q: Our organization is registered under the Societies Act and is also a Government autonomous body – are we eligible?

A: Yes, if the organization is registered as a Society or Trust, holds a valid DARPAN ID and the other required documents, and is a not-for-profit entity, it is eligible to apply.

Q: We are a not-for-profit Section 8 company with 12A, 80G, and NITI Aayog registration – are we eligible?

A: No, Section 8 companies are not eligible under this Call. Only entities registered as a Society or Trust are considered.

Q: Our institution (a Government autonomous body) does not have a NITI Aayog DARPAN ID – can we still apply?

A: No, A valid DARPAN ID is required. Without it, the application cannot be processed.

Q: Is registration on the NITI Aayog DARPAN portal mandatory?

A: Yes, it is mandatory, and the organization must have a valid, updated unique ID on the DARPAN portal.

Q: Is FCRA registration mandatory to apply?

A: No, FCRA registration is not mandatory. If your organization holds FCRA registration, you may provide it, but it is not a required eligibility criterion.

4. Organizational Experience & Financial Capacity

Q: What organizational experience is required?

- Minimum 5 years of experience in community-based programmes in environment, climate change, biodiversity conservation, land degradation, waste management, or urban solutions in the focus landscape
- An office located in the selected intervention landscape/state (proof required)
- At least 3 completed projects (in the last 5 financial years: FY 2021-22 to 2025-26) in the relevant thematic areas, each valued at INR 15 lakh or more, preferably in the focus landscape
- At least 3 government/philanthropy/foundation-funded projects implemented in the focus landscape in the last 5 financial years

Q: Is there any relaxation in eligibility for the North-East Region (NER)?

A: Yes. For organizations applying under the relaxed criteria for the North-East landscape:

- Minimum project value requirement is reduced to INR 5 lakh each (instead of INR 15 lakh), for at least 3 projects in climate change, biodiversity conservation, and land degradation in the last 5 financial years
- Minimum number of government/foundation/philanthropy-funded projects required is reduced to 2 (instead of 3)
- Maximum grant amount for NER applicants is US\$30,000 (INR 27,00,000), instead of the standard US\$75,000

Q: What are the financial capacity requirements?

A: The applicant organization should have received an average annual turnover of INR 30,00,000 (Thirty Lakhs) from project grants over the last 3 financial years (2023-24, 2024-25 and 2025-26), supported by audited accounts and the Auditor's Report.

Q: What about key professionals/staff?

A: The organization must have professionals with adequate experience and expertise in the relevant thematic areas and project management, and must submit detailed, duly verified CVs of key professionals in the format prescribed in the RFP.

Q: Are there any disqualifying conditions?

A: Yes. The organization must not have been debarred by any Government or UN agency at any point in time. A self-declaration to this effect must be submitted with the proposal.

Q: Does prior participation in SGP help?

A: Yes. Preference will be given to organizations that have participated in earlier phases of the GEF Small Grants Programme in India.

Q: Clarify the difference between the two organizational-experience criteria should the second set of projects also be in the same thematic area, or can they be any project implemented in the focus landscape?

A: Both types of experience are assessed and are important: one relates to the organization's experience implementing projects specifically in the relevant thematic area (e.g., biodiversity,

climate change), and the other relates to the organization's general experience of working in that particular landscape. Experience in an unrelated area/theme, without landscape relevance, will not count.

Q: Do organizations need work experience specifically from a similar geography, in addition to thematic experience?

A: Yes, relevant landscape/geography experience is assessed alongside thematic experience, as covered in the organizational-experience criteria above.

5. Partnerships & Consortiums

Q: If our organization doesn't meet the eligibility criteria on its own, or doesn't have a local presence, what can we do?

A: You are encouraged to partner with another NGO/CSO/CBO that meets the eligibility criteria and submit a joint proposal in collaboration with them. The eligibility criteria have been set by the Ministry to ensure implementation capacity, so partnering with a qualifying organization is a valid route.

Q: If our organization does not have an office/operation in a particular area but is partnering with a local organization there, will that be considered?

A: Yes, provided the partner organization with the local presence meets the eligibility criteria.

Q: Can consortiums apply? Is there a cap on the number of organizations? Are only the lead organization's financials assessed?

A: Yes, consortiums can apply, and more than two organizations can be part of one. The lead organization must meet the eligibility criteria, and it is the lead organization's eligibility and financials that are assessed.

Q: If two organizations collaborate, does co-financing brought in by both organizations count together?

A: Yes, it counts. Both organizations' roles and activities should be clearly defined in the proposal, along with the amount of co-financing each is bringing and how it will be utilized. It is not necessary that both organizations individually meet the 1:1 ratio the combined co-financing needs to meet at least a 1:1 ratio for the project.

Q: Does a partnership require any formalities?

A: Yes, a written arrangement, such as an MOU, is required between partnering organizations and must be uploaded along with the proposal on the portal.

Q: If the lead organization meets the eligibility criteria but the partner organization does not, will the partner still be recognised by UNDP?

A: The core requirement is that the lead applicant organization must meet the eligibility criteria; the partnership arrangement and each partner's role should be clearly documented in the proposal and MOU.

Q: Can an NGO and a Government department collaborate on the grant?

A: Yes, co-financing or support coming from a government department can be highlighted in the proposal as convergence, provided the applicant NGO itself meets the eligibility criteria.

6. Grant Size, Duration & Co-Financing

Q: What is the maximum grant amount?

A: Up to US\$75,000 (approx. INR 67,00,000) per project. For eligible organizations in the North-Eastern Region applying under the relaxed criteria, the maximum grant amount is US\$30,000 (approx. INR 27,00,000).

Q: What is the project duration?

A: Projects should be designed for a duration of between 18 and 24 months.

Q: Is co-financing mandatory, and is the 1:1 ratio fixed or is there flexibility?

A: Yes, co-financing is mandatory. A 1:1 ratio is the minimum required co-financing relative to the SGP grant amount, and this must be mobilized in the form of cash and/or in-kind contributions. There is flexibility in how this is composed, though cash co-financing is preferred (see below).

Q: What percentage of co-financing needs to be in cash versus in-kind?

A: There is no fixed percentage prescribed for cash versus in-kind. However, since the process has been made competitive as per the Ministry's direction, organizations bringing in more cash co-financing — for example through convergence with government or private-sector schemes — will be preferred.

Q: Can co-financing be shown as staff salaries?

A: Yes, this would be counted as an in-kind contribution rather than cash and should be reflected accordingly under the in-kind co-financing component.

Q: Is there a formula to calculate the value of convergence when we take help from line departments like the Forest Department?

A: Yes. The applicable government rate chart may be used—for example, the Forest Department's approved rate chart for equipment, planting material, or other relevant inputs—to determine the value of the material, equipment, or other support contributed. This value may then be recorded as co-financing/convergence, with appropriate supporting documentation maintained as evidence.

Q: Can funds from an existing field-based research project (e.g., one running alongside MGNREGA in Haryana) be used as co-financing for this project?

A: This depends on whether the existing project/activity falls within the eligible landscape and is relevant to this proposal organizations in this situation are advised to describe the specific arrangement in their proposal and, if in doubt, confirm with the SGP team via email before submission.

Q: Can you share examples of how grassroots organizations have co-financed projects in the past?

A: Yes, past examples include convergence with government schemes such as PM-KUSUM, MGNREGA (through Gram Panchayats), and the Horticulture Mission, among others, depending on the type of project and activities planned.

Q: For in-kind contributions like technical expertise or volunteer time, how much weightage do they carry compared to other forms of in-kind contribution?

A: There is no fixed percentage or weightage prescribed between different forms of in-kind contribution. Organizations are encouraged to prioritize bringing in more cash co-financing, as this

creates larger impact and is viewed favourably in the competitive scoring.

Q: Can one organization apply for more than one grant, or for two states simultaneously with one concept?

A: No. Each organization is eligible to apply for only one community grant under this Call, and only one grant will be awarded per organization even if a project spans more than one landscape. Organizations are encouraged to focus their proposal on one particular geography/cluster of villages, as this brings more concentrated impact and better optimization of resources.

7. Budget & Financial Proposal Details

Q: What does the 5% "Miscellaneous Costs" component under the Financial Proposal (20%) cover, and how is it assessed?

A: Miscellaneous costs cover contingency-type expenditure. This should be capped at 5% of the total SGP grant amount requested.

Q: Can organizations include HR/personnel costs in the project budget?

A: Yes, personnel costs can and should be included in the project budget.

Q: What does "Principal Officer" refer to in the proposal format?

A: It refers to the contact person from the organization who will lead the project/intervention.

Q: Is there a minimum area-restoration target that individual projects must meet?

A: There is no fixed target for individual projects — targets mentioned in the RFP and Results Framework (e.g., hectares under improved practices) are overall SGP-OP8 programme targets, not per-project requirements. That said, proposals contributing a larger area of impact will generally be viewed favourably.

8. Landscape Approach & Project Design

Q: Are the clusters of villages already defined by SGP/TERI?

A: No, clusters of villages have not been pre-defined. Applicants are encouraged to identify villages where issues such as biodiversity loss, land degradation, climate change impacts, or chemical/waste management concerns are significant, and where communities are motivated to participate following a process of prioritization, community discussion, and stakeholder consultation.

Q: What does "cluster" mean, and how many villages should one cluster cover?

A: There is no fixed number of villages for a cluster. A cluster could, for example, be defined around a common watershed, or around villages surrounding a wildlife sanctuary essentially a set of contiguous villages facing similar environmental challenges. The size depends on the overall project budget and the activities identified.

Q: Can a proposal combine multiple themes for example, climate-resilient agriculture and renewable energy?

A: Yes. This is the essence of the landscape approach — addressing multiple, interrelated issues together within a cluster of villages, so that different interventions reinforce rather than undercut

one another (for example, water conservation efforts paired with reduced use of chemical fertilizers, so gains in one area are not undone by problems in another).

Q: If the timeline for a native-species cultivation/harvest activity extends beyond the 2-year project period, is that acceptable?

A: Yes. Proposals should clearly describe the activities planned within the project period and separately describe how the harvesting/continuation of activities and their sustainability will be managed after the project period ends. A clear sustainability mechanism must be included in the proposal, as required under the RFP.

Q: Can grassroots coastal projects integrating climate resilience, biodiversity conservation, women's SHGs, and traditional local practices directly access GEF funding, if the organization does not meet eligibility criteria or is outside the listed landscapes?

A: If an organization does not currently meet the eligibility criteria or work in a listed landscape, it is encouraged to partner with an eligible NGO/CSO/CBO working in the relevant landscape and submit a joint proposal.

Q: Can projects related to livestock and farmer livelihoods apply?

A: Yes, if the activity is linked to livelihood improvement or to the conservation of indigenous species, such projects are eligible to apply.

Q: Can municipal solid/plastic waste management be taken up under this call?

A: Yes, this falls under the Chemicals and Waste Management priority theme and can be proposed, subject to it being situated within the eligible landscape/district.

Q: If a project is disrupted or destroyed by a natural calamity during implementation, what happens?

A: This should be identified as a risk in the proposal itself, along with a risk-mitigation strategy (for example, relocating certain activities to another site). Guidance on this is already included in the RFP; applicants should build these considerations into their risk and sustainability sections.

Q: Is there a provision to appoint dedicated field staff for the project?

A: Yes, organizations can budget for and appoint dedicated field staff to implement the project.

9. Application Process, Documentation & Timeline

Q: How and where should the proposal be submitted?

A: Proposals must be submitted online at <https://sgp-india.org/> on or before the deadline. Hard copies should also be sent by courier to the Small Grants Programme Secretariat, TERI, New Delhi. Refer to the SGP India website for further submission details.

Q: What language should the proposal be in?

A: The proposal must be prepared in English.

Q: What is the submission deadline?

A: Proposals must be received on or before 31 August 2026, up to 1800 hours. Proposals submitted after the deadline will not be considered.

Q: Is there an orientation session for applicants?

A: Yes, an Online Orientation Meeting was held on 7 August 2026. The presentation from this session, along with details of further thematic sessions (on biodiversity, land degradation, marine/coastal issues, and climate change), is available on the SGP India website.

Q: Where can applicants send clarifications or queries?

A: Queries can be emailed to sgpindia@teri.res.in. The last date for seeking clarifications/queries is 10 August 2026.

Q: Is there a fee to apply?

A: No. This Call for Proposals is not for sale, and SGP does not charge any fee at any stage of the proposal development or submission process.

Q: Can one organization submit two proposals in the same district under different themes?

A: No. Each organization may submit only one proposal. If two proposals are submitted by the same organization, both will be rejected.

Q: Will SGP be floating further RFPs or calls for proposals?

A: The current RFP is already published on the website for this phase's intervention landscapes. Separately, for organizations that implemented projects under OP7 in other landscapes, a future call for upscaling grants may be floated if the Ministry approves such opportunities in those areas — this is a distinct, separate process from the current Call.

10. Evaluation and Selection

Q: How are proposals evaluated?

A: A two-step Quality and Cost Based Selection (QCBS) approach is used: 80% weight for the Technical Proposal and 20% weight for the Financial Proposal.

Q: What does the Technical Proposal assess?

- Total number of projects implemented in the thematic areas (Max. 20 marks)
- Total number of projects in the focus landscape (Max. 20 marks)
- Approach and methodology proposed (Max. 20 marks)
- Project Advocacy Parameters (Max. 20 marks)

Q: What does the Financial Proposal assess?

- Co-financing (Max. 10 marks)
- Manpower Cost (Max. 5 marks)
- Miscellaneous Costs (Max. 5 marks)

Q: What is the minimum qualifying score?

A: Applicants must score at least 70% in the Technical Proposal to be considered for contract award, in addition to meeting eligibility requirements and fully accepting TERI's General Terms and Conditions (GTC).

Q: Is acceptance of TERI's General Terms and Conditions mandatory?

A: Yes. Full acceptance of the TERI General Terms and Conditions (GTC) is a mandatory criterion. Non-acceptance may be grounds for rejection of the proposal.

Q: Who makes the final selection decision?

A: Eligible proposals go through SGP's three-tier review and selection mechanism, and the final approval of projects is made by the National Steering Committee (NSC). The decision of the NSC is final.

Q: Will unsuccessful applicants be notified?

A: Only successful applicants will be contacted. Shortlisted applicants may be asked to provide clarifications, additional information, or refine their proposals as needed.

11. Guidance for a Strong Proposal

Q: What kind of proposals will score well?

A: Three points were emphasised for all applicants:

- **Innovation:** After 7 phases and 3 decades of SGP implementation (500+ projects to date), proposals should bring something genuinely new rather than repeating standard restoration or plantation-type interventions. Proposals with a clear innovation element will have a stronger chance of selection.
- **Human-centred impact and Theory of Change:** Proposals should go beyond physical activities (e.g., plantation) to clearly show impact on grassroots people's lives and livelihoods and should articulate a clear Theory of Change- identifying the core challenge/barrier and explaining how the proposed intervention will lead to the intended impact.
- **Sustainability built in from the start:** Sustainability planning should not be an afterthought once the 2-year project period is ending — it should be built into the proposal from the design stage itself, alongside co-financing and convergence arrangements.

Q: Why are social and environmental safeguards important, and what should applicants keep in mind while designing proposals?

A: Safeguards ensure that project activities avoid or minimize unintended harm to people or the environment, maximize positive benefits, and are inclusive. This is also a requirement under UNDP and GCF/GEF frameworks. Applicants should address the following while designing proposals:

- **Inclusion & equity** identify who will directly benefit (women, tribal/local communities, youth, persons with disabilities, vulnerable groups) and how they will participate
- **Community consultation** meaningful engagement with communities starting at the design stage, not just during implementation
- **Biodiversity & environment** identify any potential unintended risks to the ecosystem from proposed activities
- **Climate & disaster risk** identify likely local climate hazards (floods, drought, heat waves, cyclones) that could delay implementation, and how this will be managed

- Cultural heritage how traditional knowledge, sacred sites, or culturally significant sites affected by the project will be protected
- Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) particularly for tribal communities: consent must be free (voluntary), given after being fully informed (of benefits and risks) prior to implementation, and reached through a genuine decision-making process involving the community
- Pollution & waste safe management of any fertilizers, pesticides, plastics, or waste (e.g., from solar/renewable energy equipment) generated by project activities

12. Other Important Points

Q: Does submitting a proposal guarantee a grant?

A: No. This Call for Proposals is not a grant agreement and does not confirm that a grant will be awarded. TERI is not bound to accept any proposal or award a contract and is not responsible for any costs incurred by applicants in preparing or submitting a proposal.

Q: How long is a submitted proposal binding on the applicant?

A: The terms and conditions of a submitted proposal remain binding on the applicant for a minimum period of 120 days from submission.

Q: Who do we contact for more information?

A: Email: sgpindia@teri.res.in | Website: <https://sgp-india.org/> | Small Grants Programme, Central Project Management Unit, TERI, India Habitat Centre, Lodhi Road, New Delhi – 110003.