



# Darwin Plus Local FAQs

October 2024

**Please note: The UK Government has committed to make £10 million available for Darwin Plus each year until March 2025. Future funding for Darwin Plus will be requested via the next Spending Review. Therefore, funding for new applications is not guaranteed, and results or start dates may also be delayed. Applicants must note and accept this risk before sending their proposals to Defra and manage any commitments associated with the proposal, accordingly.**



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**JNCC**

These FAQs provide information that should be read alongside the Guidance for Applicants for Darwin Plus Local R5 and Darwin Plus Local Finance Guidance.

Please read all the available guidance. If you require additional assistance, please email [DarwinPlusLocal@jncc.gov.uk](mailto:DarwinPlusLocal@jncc.gov.uk).

For queries specific to using the Flexi-Grant system, email: [BCF-flexigrant@niras.com](mailto:BCF-flexigrant@niras.com)  
<https://darwinplus.org.uk/>



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## Timings for Darwin Plus Local

### What is the timeframe for Darwin Plus Local Projects?

Round 5 of Darwin Plus Local opens for applications on 11 October 2024 and closes for applications on 25 November 2024 23:59 GMT.

Subject to outcomes of the Spending Review, the proposed timeframe for feedback and start dates under Round 5 is:

- Notification if application was successful/unsuccessful: **by mid-February 2025.**
- Payment of Grant: **from April 2025.**
- Project start date: from 1 April 2025 onwards, with completion of all projects by **31 March 2026. This is a maximum twelve-month implementation period.**

Please plan your projects to be delivered within this timeframe.

### When will subsequent rounds of Darwin Plus Local be launched?

There are normally two application windows for Darwin Plus Local per calendar year. Round 5 opens 11 October 2024. We cannot confirm the timing of Round 6 at this point.

### I would like to apply for Darwin Plus Local Round 5. When should I plan to implement my Darwin Plus Local project by?

Applicants for Round 5 of Darwin Plus Local should plan to start their project from 1 April 2025 and to complete their project by 31 March 2026. Round 5 is a twelve-month implementation window for projects which can be delivered by the end of the 2025-26 financial year. Applicants should submit realistic project proposals having accounted for potential delays in procurement and activity so that all work can be delivered by 31 March 2026.

## Funding, Costs and Charges

### How much can I apply for?

The maximum grant amount for any one Darwin Plus Local project is £50,000 for organisations. If you are applying as an individual, the maximum amount you can apply for is £20,000.

### Why is there a difference in amounts that individuals and organisations can apply for?

We need to be sure applicants have the capacity to deliver their projects and can demonstrate the financial management of funds allocated. The caps for both individuals and organisations will be reviewed for future rounds.

### **How should I plan my application around potential delays, such as procurement and/or shipping delays?**

When applying for Darwin Plus Local, applicants should submit realistic project proposals having accounted for potential delays in procurement and activity. Please note that the award will be paid in two instalments: an upfront payment of up to 85% of the grant and a final payment of either 15% or £3,000, whichever is the greater amount after acceptance of the final report. Applicants will need to manage their budgets according to the payment schedule and will be asked to demonstrate actual spend at the end of the project.

### **Can Darwin Plus Local applications include salaries or stipends for project staff and overhead charges?**

Yes, staff costs and overhead costs are eligible for named individual members of staff working on the proposed Darwin Plus Local project. Please see the Darwin Plus Local Finance Guidance for more information on what should be listed as staff costs and what should be listed as consultancy costs in your application.

### **Can Darwin Plus Local be used for capital purchases (vessel, vehicle, land)?**

Yes. Capital expenditure may be awarded for funding up to the maximum available amount, where you demonstrate that this capital expenditure is essential and ensure it is clearly justified/explained in the application. Please see the Darwin Plus Local Finance Guidance for more information.

### **Is there a capital purchase limit for Darwin Plus Local?**

No (within the maximum amounts available and as outlined in the guidance). Capital funding may be awarded for projects where the purchase of an item or equipment has a clear environmental benefit, regardless of resource.

### **Can I apply for additional funding to account for potential exchange rate fluctuations?**

Applicants should build in enough flex across project costs to allow for exchange rate fluctuations. We would encourage you not to overbudget as we do not want projects to surrender funds as far as possible.

### **Will my project receive funds in future rounds of Darwin Plus Local if it proves successful in its first year?**

Darwin Plus Local is intended to support discrete projects contributing to measurable outcome(s) in at least one of the Darwin Plus themes. It is not intended to support funding for projects in the long-term, and as such, there is no guarantee that future funding will be allocated to projects – even if successful in their first year. However, a well-run, successful project would evidence your capacity to run future projects.

### **I want to apply for funding to address a problem or threat that is caused beyond the boundaries of a UK Overseas Territories (UKOTs). What should I do?**

We recognise there may be circumstances where it is necessary to address a threat in a country bordering a UKOT, in order to protect the environment and biodiversity of that OT. Where this is the case, applicants should clearly detail in their application form how their project will be of benefit to the UKOT and how they will work with partners across the border to address the problems or threats.

### **Why does the application form ask what percentage of the project budget will be spent within the OT?**

Darwin Plus Local has been created to build capacity and contribute to local economies in-territory. If less than 80% of the total award is to be spent within the OT(s), please explain why, as requested in the application form. We recognise that some services and equipment may only be available outside some OTs. In these cases, applicants should use their application form to explain why they will be unable to spend the majority (80% or more) of their funds in-territory and how external contractors or purchased equipment will continue to have legacy impact in-territory beyond the project end. For example, if a key activity of the project involves subcontracting foreign experts, please identify how the expertise of those subcontractors will be shared with local practitioners through training or capacity building activities.

### **What about equipment not available in territories that has to be bought from overseas?**

The 80% limit does not apply to equipment or training purchases, where these are not already available in the territory. Again, applicants should use their application form to explain why they will be unable to spend the majority (80% or more) of their funds in-territory.

### **Lengthy procurement processes (which can take months) are a concern. Can an external partner assist with larger purchases?**

If the partner is based in an OT and most of the budget (i.e. 80% or more) will be spent in the OT, then this is potentially possible. If the partner is based outside the territory and less than 80% will be spent in the territory, you will need to clearly justify why in your application form.

### **I want to apply for funding to lead a project in a UK Overseas Territory (UKOT), but there is limited opportunity to spend my money in-territory. What should I do?**

We recognise that some UKOTs have only a very small resident human population, whilst some OTs have none. This may make it difficult to spend Darwin Plus Local funding in-territory. In these circumstances, applicants should use their application form to explain why they will be unable to spend the majority (80% or more) of their funds in-territory and the local impacts project activities will have beyond the project end.

## Can an external agency apply and spend over 80% in-territory?

Darwin Plus Local is designed to build capability and capacity within the OTs. It is a competitive grant scheme available only to individuals and organisations based in an OT (or where there is no permanent population, with a meaningful, long-term connection to an OT). An external agency (if based outside an OT) could participate only as a partner in the project if the Lead Organisation is based in an OT.

## Eligibility

### What does 'needs to be based in a UKOT' mean?

The Lead Organisation (main applicant – either an organisation or a person) must be based in one of the UK Overseas Territories (UKOTs). This means living and working (i.e. being resident) or being registered as in organisation in one of the UKOTs. Where a UKOT has no permanent population, the applicant must demonstrate a long-term, meaningful connection to that territory.

Please note: Applications for projects in the British Indian Ocean Territory remain welcome, will be processed as normal, and successful applications honoured.

### Am I limited to how many applications I can submit?

There is no limit on the number of applications from any one territory, organisation and/or individual per Round, but we encourage applicants to consider coordinating applications where appropriate.

Darwin Plus Local is a competitive grant scheme and as such, funding will be awarded to the applications which score most highly under the assessment criteria. Please note that Darwin Plus Local is not intended to fund multiple applications that together could be considered one big project, and all applications will be evaluated and screened with this in mind. **If you are submitting several project applications instead of one big project application (which may be better suited for Darwin Plus Main or other bigger funds) you risk that all applications are deemed ineligible.** Proposed projects can be part of an existing larger programme of activity, if it is made clear in the application how this project will be a distinct project, with results attributable to Darwin Plus Local funding.

### Some of the individuals who have shown interest in applying are Government employees. How does this impact eligibility if at all?

Governments along with other public, private, or non-governmental organisations are eligible to apply for Darwin Plus Local, as are individuals. It will be for applicants to decide which is more appropriate to apply as an individual or as a part of an organisation and to be sure their government will allow it.

### **Is cross territory working supported? If an applicant is living and working in one UKOT but is applying for funding for a project in a different UKOT, would that project be eligible?**

Yes possibly. Projects working across several territories (such as regional projects based on shared objectives) are welcomed where they are well justified in the application form.

### **I would like to deliver my project working with others. Can I apply to work with a project partner?**

Yes, if the Lead Partner (main applicant) is based in one of the UKOTs. If a non-lead partner is based elsewhere and you expect to spend less than 80% in the territory, then you need to justify this clearly in your application. For example, if you require training or equipment which you cannot acquire in-territory.

### **What needs to be included within a Letter of Support and when are they required?**

If the project takes place on public land or water, is addressing invasive alien species or includes activities requiring a Government-issued permit, a Letter of support from the relevant OT Government is required. Applications which propose work that application reviewers believe includes any of these elements may be deemed ineligible if no Letter of Support is provided.

Letters of Support from the OT Government and/or other partners should be written entirely by the signatory and include:

- Application title and number;
- Statement of support – including reasons for support (*e.g. alignment with priority policy areas*), an outline of any commitment on their part (*e.g. for match funding or undertaking activities in support of the project delivery*) and/or an explanation of any collaboration during the application process;
- Signature from a suitably authorised individual and Government Department stamp.

## **Assessment**

### **How will Darwin Plus Local be assessed? Will certain applications be favoured?**

Funding will be awarded to applications which score most highly against the criteria set out in Section 6 of the application guidance. There will be no preferential treatment or discrimination based on an applicant's affiliation with certain bodies including, for example, in-territory governments and/or NGOs. Defra is keen to fund strong projects and, as far as possible, to support each of the UKOTs.

### **What is the application assessment process?**

Applications will be assessed by JNCC in two parts:

- 1) Initial review: to progress applications which meet the essential eligibility criteria.



2) Expert review: to score eligible applications against the assessment criteria in section 6 of the guidance.

As a minimum an application needs to meet all essential criteria and at least one of the desirable criteria under each heading in order to be considered for funding.

Final decisions will be taken by Defra, on consideration of the advice received from JNCC. Defra has the right to consult the relevant OT Government for feedback on prospective projects to assist the JNCC experts in their overall assessment and recommendations. Arrangements are in place to ensure there are no potential conflicts of interest. JNCC, NIRAS and Defra may also conduct due diligence checks on individuals and organisations applying as part of the evaluation and confirmation of eligibility process.

### **How will you support people applying to Darwin Plus Local?**

JNCC has a dedicated mailbox ([DarwinPlusLocal@jncc.gov.uk](mailto:DarwinPlusLocal@jncc.gov.uk)) and are happy to discuss individual applications and provide feedback if appropriate. We encourage applicants to be proactive in asking any questions they have on their applications as early as possible.

A recording of a pre-application training session held in May 2024 is also available on our [website](#), but please be aware that this was designed for a previous funding round and may have some slight differences to the current round.

## **Monitoring and Auditing**

### **Will there be project change requests like there are in the Darwin Plus Main grant scheme?**

Darwin Plus Local will fund small, short-term projects which need to be completed within the UK financial year. For Round 5, this means that all projects will need to be completed before or by 31 March 2026. If your originally proposed completion date was before 31 March 2026, but you encounter delays, your project may be extended until 31 March 2026. Any extension past that date, particularly if it involves a request to move funds into a new financial year, can only be considered in extraordinary circumstances, with clear justification provided. Please contact JNCC at [DarwinPlusLocal@jncc.gov.uk](mailto:DarwinPlusLocal@jncc.gov.uk) and NIRAS at [BCF-Finance@niras.com](mailto:BCF-Finance@niras.com) as early as possible if you have concerns about being able to deliver your project by the end date you originally agreed. If you are wanting to make any other changes to your project during delivery that may require a change request (such as moving more than 10% of funds between budget lines), please contact us at the email addresses above regarding this.

### **How will Darwin Plus Local projects be audited?**

Successful applicants to Darwin Plus Local will be asked to produce a short report upon completion of their project, along with any supplementary materials such as photos or

videos of the project. A template will be provided on the Darwin Plus website, and returns reviewed. There is currently no requirement for a financial audit as in other Darwin Plus funds.

**If I apply as an individual, what financial evidence do I need to supply?**

If your project application has been successful, you will have to provide proof of identity and solvency, plus a police check and will be required to have a separate bank account for the project. The Fund Administrator will request these documents during the due diligence checks.

**Darwin Plus Main and Darwin Plus Local**

**Will I be able to transition a successful project from Darwin Plus Local to Darwin Plus Main or Darwin Strategic?**

One of the aims of Darwin Plus Local is to build capacity in-territory, so that more people feel confident applying for Darwin Plus Main and bigger projects. However, applicants interested in Darwin Plus Main would still be required to go through the application process in full for Darwin Plus Main, even if successful in applying for funds through Darwin Plus Local.