

Terms of Reference

Call for Proposals under the Sustainable Small Grants Programme

1. About IUCN

The IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) is a membership Union uniquely composed of both government and civil society organisations. It provides public, private and non-governmental organisations with the knowledge and tools that enable human progress, economic development and nature conservation to take place together.

Created in 1948, IUCN is now the world's largest and most diverse environmental network, harnessing the knowledge, resources and reach of more than 1,400 Member organisations and around 15,000 experts. It is a leading provider of conservation data, assessments and analysis. Its broad membership enables IUCN to fill the role of incubator and trusted repository of best practices, tools and international standards.

IUCN provides a neutral space in which diverse stakeholders including governments, NGOs, scientists, businesses, local communities, indigenous peoples organisations and others can work together to forge and implement solutions to environmental challenges and achieve sustainable development. Working with many partners and supporters, IUCN implements a large and diverse portfolio of conservation projects worldwide. Combining the latest science with the traditional knowledge of local communities, these projects work to reverse habitat loss, restore ecosystems and improve people's well-being.

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<https://twitter.com/IUCN/>

2. About the Closing the Caribbean Plastic Tap project

The Closing the Caribbean Plastic Tap (CCPT) project is a regional initiative supported by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MAECI), the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS) and implemented by the Regional Office for Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN ORMACC).

This initiative is intended to build on the recently concluded Plastic Waste Free Islands¹ (PWFI) project and works with five (5) Small Island

¹ <https://iucn.org/our-work/projects/plastic-waste-free-islands>

Developing Sates (SIDS) in the Caribbean, namely, St. Kitts and Nevis, Antigua and Barbuda, Saint Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines and Grenada. Closing the Caribbean Plastic Tap is part of the IUCN's global Close the Plastic Tap program.

The objective of "Closing the Caribbean Plastic Tap" is to reduce plastic waste leakage from target SIDS. More specifically, the project seeks to implement effective and social inclusive solutions to advance plastic circular economy. The project builds on the previous work of IUCN in the region and will ensure key stakeholders from governments, private sector, civil society and the general public unite in a learning and leadership network to co-generate and demonstrate demand responsive solutions to plastic waste.

To achieve its primary objective, the project is structured around 4 Outcomes:

- **Outcome 1:** Identified solutions for recyclable polymers in project countries implemented.
- **Outcome 2:** Non-Recyclable Polymer Solutions implemented for project countries.
- **Outcome 3:** Advance policy/legislative actions for effective management of plastics and plastic waste at national and regional levels.
- **Outcome 4:** Improved knowledge of plastic footprint among target islands.

3. About the Sustainable Small Grants Programme

This Terms of Reference (ToR) invites eligible applicants to submit proposals for the CCPT project's Sustainable Small Grants Programme (SSGP). The SSGP aims to support inclusive, impactful, and scalable solutions to prevent plastic waste leakage, advance the circular economy, and empower communities - particularly women, youth, and Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) - across Antigua and Barbuda, Grenada, Saint Lucia, St. Kitts and Nevis, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

Through the SSGP, financial support will be provided to community organisations, civil society organisations, small enterprises, and other local actors to pilot and implement innovative and locally driven solutions to address plastic waste challenges. Supported initiatives may include activities related to waste reduction, recycling and reuse solutions, circular economy business models, and community-based actions that contribute to reducing plastic waste leakage.

The program has a total allocation of EUR 400,000 across the five participating countries, with individual grants ranging from EUR 30,000 to EUR 80,000 under a single funding tier.

4. Objectives and Key Performance Indicators

The SSGP is guided by three core objectives, which define the programme's intended impact and results. These objectives are supported by a set of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) used to measure progress and performance:

1. Support effective, inclusive, and scalable solutions to reduce plastic waste leakage and advance the circular economy in five Caribbean SIDS, while empowering communities—especially women, youth, and Micro, Small, Medium Enterprises (MSMEs).
 - **KPI 1:** Volume (in tons) of plastic waste collected, diverted, or recycled as a direct result of funded projects.
 - **KPI 2:** Number of scalable solutions implemented to prevent plastic leakage.
2. Build a circular economy by fostering economically viable initiatives that prevent plastic waste, encourage recycling, and responsible plastic management.
 - **KPI 3:** Number of circular economy business models or initiatives established or expanded.
 - **KPI 4:** Number of new or improved products made from recycled plastics.
3. Empower local communities, with a focus on women, youth, and micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), to enhance economic opportunities through plastic waste solutions.
 - **KPI 5:** Number of women, youth, and MSMEs directly benefitting from grant-supported livelihood activities.
 - **KPI 6:** Percentage increase in income or employment opportunities for targeted beneficiaries.
 - **KPI 7:** Number of capacity-building workshops or trainings delivered, and participants reached (disaggregated by gender and age).

Projects must demonstrate measurable progress toward these KPIs. To effectively measure progress and assess the impact of funded projects, establishing a baseline is essential. At the inception of each grant, grantees are required to create a baseline that captures current conditions relevant to the program's KPIs, such as existing volumes of plastic waste generated, collected, or recycled; the number of circular economy initiatives; and current levels of community engagement and beneficiary livelihoods. Baselines can be created using publicly available data where primary data is not available at the outset. This baseline provides a reference point against which progress, changes, and project results can be measured throughout the project lifecycle.

To ensure that projects are contributing directly to the program's core objective of reducing plastic waste, all funded projects must achieve at least **KPI 1** (*Volume, in tons, of plastic waste collected, diverted, or recycled as a direct result of funded projects*) in addition to meeting at least one other KPI listed above. This requirement guarantees that every initiative addresses the fundamental challenge of plastic waste while also supporting broader programme goals such as advancing circular economy solutions or empowering targeted beneficiaries.

5. Focus Areas

The SSGP prioritises interventions that enhance the recyclability and actual recycling of plastics. To support this focus, the SSGP adopts a plastic waste prevention strategy centered on upstream and midstream interventions, including reuse, reduction, and circularity.

By shifting the emphasis from end-of-pipe waste management to upstream prevention and midstream circularity, the SSGP aims to support solutions that reduce plastic waste generation, extend material lifecycles, and strengthen local circular economy systems. In doing so, the programme seeks to empower Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) - particularly those led by women and youth - in island communities to develop and scale innovative solutions around recyclable plastics.

To address the diverse needs and opportunities in plastic waste prevention space, the SSGP offers a two-track approach. Each track is designed to address specific priorities and objectives related to plastic waste prevention and circular economy solutions.

Applicants should carefully review the criteria and eligible activities for each track, as proposals will be assessed separately according to the requirements and evaluation standards outlined for each. Selecting the most appropriate track for your project will help ensure your proposal is considered within the context most relevant to its aims and anticipated

impact. Proposals demonstrating strong leadership by women or youth are strongly encouraged.

- **Track A: Technical innovation & Plastic waste prevention**

- **Priority activities:**

- Scaling product redesign and reuse systems
- Scaling polymer-specific recycling activities
- Scaling waste collection and sorting infrastructure
- Development and testing of new materials that can serve as sustainable alternatives to conventional plastics
- Research, development, and innovation (R&D&I) projects based on the current situation of the informal sector with a circular approach to plastic
- Promote circular economy practices through reuse and/or refill solutions
- Initiatives that integrate the use of recycled plastics into supply chains, thereby reducing demand for virgin plastics

Evaluation criteria: Technical feasibility, innovation potential, scalability, environmental impact (measured plastic waste reduction), and inclusivity (engagement of women, youth, and local communities).

- **Track B: Community Inclusion & Livelihoods**

- **Priority activities:**

- Community-driven plastic waste prevention campaigns
- Livelihood creation linked to plastic recovery and recycling
- Education and behavioral change initiatives
- Capacity-building for women, youth, and marginalized groups
- Advocacy for local policies supporting plastic reduction and circular economy practices.
- Note: Whenever possible, incorporate non-skills-based awareness campaigns and educational activities into the above-mentioned initiatives, rather than funding them as standalone activities.

Evaluation Criteria: Community engagement, empowerment of priority groups (women, youth, MSMEs), measurable social and environmental impact, sustainability, and alignment with local needs.

How your project can reduce plastic waste

The SSPG recognises the following approaches:

- Reduce: Use less plastic from the start (for example, by using less packaging or switching to alternative materials).
- Reuse: Design products or packaging that can be used multiple times instead of being thrown away after one use.
- Refill: Allow customers to refill containers instead of buying new single-use packaging each time.
- Recycle: Collect and process plastic waste so it can be turned into new products.

Definition of recyclable plastics

Recyclable plastics are those that can realistically be collected, processed, and reused within the local or regional context.

This means they:

- Can be handled using existing or adaptable local systems; and
- Have a clear use or market after being recycled.

Applicants should consider local conditions when designing their solutions.

Key criteria for recyclability

Projects should aim to:

- Use commonly recyclable polymers such as: PET (e.g., beverage bottles), HDPE (e.g., detergent containers), PP (e.g., food containers).
- Avoid complex multi-layered or composite plastics unless a local solution exists.
- Being feasible within local processing systems, this means plastics can be sorted, cleaned, and processed using available technology.
- Have a local or regional market for recycled material or products.
- Include recycled plastics in crafts, construction, or manufacturing.
- Have economic viability: collection and recycling are cost-effective compared to disposal.

- Support livelihood opportunities or circular business models.
- Reduce leakage into marine and terrestrial environments.
- Avoid export for recycling unless a reliable and cost-effective pathway exists.
- Avoid burning or landfilling of plastic waste.

6. **Eligible grantees and eligibility criteria**

Eligible grantees

Priority will be given to Micro, Small, and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSMEs), especially community-based, women- and youth-led MSMEs.

Other interested parties are welcome to apply, such as:

- Community-based organisations
- Non-governmental organisations (NGOs)
- Cooperatives, associations
- Schools
- Informal groups with demonstrated community engagement

Partnerships

Applicants may apply individually or as part of a partnership. This is particularly encouraged for micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) or informal groups that may require additional administrative, financial, or technical capacity to successfully implement the project.

In such cases, one organisation must be designated as the lead applicant, which will be legally responsible for the overall project implementation, financial management, compliance, and reporting.

Partnerships between MSMEs and more established entities (such as NGOs, cooperatives, or other organisations with demonstrated financial and administrative capacity) are strongly encouraged to ensure effective project delivery and compliance with grant requirements.

Eligibility criteria

- Legal registration or status in one of the participating countries
- Demonstrated relevant experience and leadership diversity (women/youth in leadership roles encouraged)

- Demonstrated strong monitoring, evaluation, and reporting capabilities
- Commitment to inclusivity, targeting women, youth, and marginalised groups.
- Applicants may apply only once under this call.
- All entities applying must have a valid bank account in the name of the institution, association, or community group, with at least two authorised signatories. Individual bank accounts registered under a single person are not eligible.

7. Grant size and duration

The total programme budget of EUR 400,000 is allocated equally among the five participating countries - Antigua and Barbuda, Grenada, Saint Lucia, St. Kitts and Nevis, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines - with up to EUR 80,000 available per country.

Individual grant awards will range from EUR 30,000 to EUR 80,000, depending on the scope and ambition of the proposed project.

Projects will have a maximum duration of up to 12, all activities should be completed no later than August 1, 2027.

Applicants must ensure that their proposed activities, budget, and expected results are realistic and achievable within the specified timeframe and funding range.

8. Eligible and Non-Eligible expenses

Eligible expenses are those expenses which are allowed in the context of the project proposal, and ineligible costs are those which are not allowed.

Eligible expenses

Grant funds must be used strictly for approved activities under the project's workplan and budget, such as:

- Purchase of materials, tools and equipment related to reuse, collection, recycling or upcycling
- Community training or livelihood development sessions related to circular economy
- Labor, including technical, operational, administrative, and financial personnel costs that are directly linked to the implementation,

management, coordination, and reporting of the project, provided that these costs are reasonable, justified, and proportionate to the scope of activities

- Transport and logistics directly tied to project implementation
- Monitoring, documentation and reporting costs.

Non-eligible expenses

Funds must not be used for activities unrelated to the project scope, including personal expenses, debt repayment, purchase of office equipment, land or vehicles, political or religious activities, or any activity that violates local environmental or social laws.

Other non-eligible expenses also include:

- Debts and debt servicing (interest)
- Provisions for losses or potential future debts
- Costs declared by the beneficiary and financed by another action or work program benefiting from a grant from other agencies or other donor for the same budget line/project/proposal submitted in the country of application
- Purchase of land or buildings
- Construction, major renovations, or infrastructure development, including any works requiring permits, engineering design, or significant capital investment.
- Credits to third parties or sub-contractors
- Staff costs or salaries not directly linked to the implementation, management, or reporting of the approved project, or that are excessive, unjustified, or unrelated to project activities
- Actions consisting solely or primarily of sponsoring individuals' participation in workshops, seminars, conferences, and congresses
- Actions consisting solely or primarily of financing individual scholarships or training grants
- Actions consisting of helping the beneficiary increase their personal production or income
- Political party and lobbying activities.
- Expenses due to exchange rate difference

Matching requirement: It is not mandatory for applicants to provide matching funds or in-kind contributions in their applications. However, entities that demonstrate partial financial contribution, in-kind support will be viewed more favorably during the evaluation process.

9. Application Process

- **Proposal submission window:** Opens May 1st, 2026, announced on the SSGP website: [Sustainable Small Grants Programme - Closing the Caribbean Plastic Tap](#)
- **Deadline:** All proposals must be submitted by June 12th, 2026 at 23:59 AST. Late submissions will not be considered.
- **Two-stage application process:**
 - **Stage 1 – Concept Note:**
 - Prepare and submit a brief concept note outlining your project idea, objectives, key activities, anticipated outcomes, estimated budget, and timeline. Use the concept note template provided in the application materials: Annex 1. The concept note should clearly demonstrate alignment with the program’s eligibility criteria and focus areas.
 - In addition, applicants must complete and submit Annex 2: Due Diligence and Financial Capacity Questionnaire (and supporting documentation). This will be used to verify eligibility and conduct a preliminary assessment of the applicant’s institutional and financial capacity.
 - **Stage 2 – Full Proposal:**
 - If your concept note is shortlisted, you will be invited to develop and submit a Full Proposal. A template will be provided for the Full Proposal and supporting documents, which include:
 - Detailed budget
 - Work plan
 - Monitoring & Evaluation Framework
 - Risk Assessment and Mitigation
- **Expression of interest (mandatory):**
 - Applicants must submit Annex 3: Expression of Interest form to request access to the application submission folder.
 - The form must be submitted by email to plasticgrants@iucn.org no later than 11:59 PM (AST) on May 29th, 2026.
 - Upon receipt of the form, applicants will be provided with a personalised Google Drive link to a designated folder for their application submission.
 - Only applicants who have submitted the Expression of Interest form will receive access to the submission folder.
- **Submit application:**
 - Upload all required materials to the designated Google Drive folder. The applicant (or lead organisation) is responsible for

uploading all required materials to the Google Drive folder and ensuring that submissions are complete, accurate, and finalised.

- All documents must be submitted in PDF format.
- **Submission language:** Applications will be submitted in English.
- **Evaluation process:** Proposals will be assessed according to their alignment with program objectives, relevance to the selected grant track, feasibility, impact potential (including KPIs), compliance with legal and policy requirements, and clarity of the implementation plan and budget. In addition, an external Grants Review Committee (GRC) comprised of local experts and stakeholders will participate in the selection process. This committee will ensure that proposals are evaluated with a deep understanding of national priorities, local context, and regulatory requirements, enhancing the relevance and potential impact of the selected projects in each country.
- **Notification:** Shortlisted applicants may be contacted for further Due Diligence, clarification, or interviews as needed.

10. Application requirements

To apply, eligible community groups must prepare and submit the following additional requirements:

- A full list of staff / group members, including leadership and key contact persons.
- At least two (2) reference initiatives completed within the last three years, including contact details, demonstrating similar work previously undertaken by the applicant.

11. Evaluation criteria

Proposals are evaluated by the Grants Review Committee (GRC) using transparent, weighted criteria.

The following table presents the evaluation criteria and their respective weightings used to assess grant applications. Each criterion is assigned a percentage value that reflects its importance in the overall scoring process. The table also specifies which applicant tracks the criteria apply to and provides a brief description of each criterion.

Criteria	Track A: Technical Innovation &	Track B: Community Inclusion & Livelihoods
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	Plastic Leakage Reduction	
Alignment with program objectives	15%	15%
Environmental impact (plastic leakage reduction), and potential for upscaling	30%	15%
Social inclusion, community engagement, and behavioral change	15%	30%
Feasibility and applicant capacity	20%	20%
Monitoring, evaluation, and learning	10%	10%
Budget clarity and value for money	10%	10%

12. Due Diligence

Due diligence is conducted progressively throughout the application, evaluation, and award process through Annex 11 Due Diligence and Financial Capacity Questionnaire (and supporting documentation).

At the Concept Note stage, applicants are required to complete and submit Annex 11 Due Diligence and Financial Capacity Questionnaire, which is used to verify eligibility and conduct a preliminary assessment of institutional and financial capacity.

At the Full Proposal stage, shortlisted applicants may be requested to provide additional supporting documentation to validate the information submitted in the questionnaire. This information is assessed as part of the evaluation process and contributes to the appraisal of the applicant's capacity to manage grant funds and comply with reporting requirements.

Prior to award, IUCN will conduct a final Due Diligence verification with selected applicants. This may include verification of legal status and registration, financial management systems, technical capacity, and reference checks.

Where capacity gaps are identified, proposals may be conditionally approved subject to the implementation of appropriate mitigation measures, such as the establishment of partnerships or additional controls.

13. Oversight and reporting

The grants will be managed at the country level by the IUCN Closing the Caribbean Plastic Tap Regional Project Coordinator and supporting staff, who will oversee monitoring, reporting, and project visibility.

14. Call management and support

- Two guidance webinars will be held for applicants, scheduled for May 11th 2026 and June 3rd 2026.
- **Helpdesk:** Applicants may submit questions in writing to plasticgrants@iucn.org until Friday, May 29th, 2026, 11:59 PM (AST). Responses will be provided by email and may be consolidated and shared with all applicants during the dedicated webinar scheduled for June 3rd, 2026.

15. Contact information

For inquiries, please contact: plasticgrants@iucn.org

16. Annexes:

- Annex 1: Concept Note Application Form – attached separately (Word)
- Annex 2 Due Diligence and Financial Capacity Questionnaire – attached separately (Word)
- Annex 3 Expression of Interest Form - attached separately (Word)