

Assessment criteria

The Panel of experts will apply the criteria below to assess the quality of proposals.

I. **Criteria for step 2**

Proposals will be evaluated by the Panel of experts and external reviewers according to the following criteria:

1. **Scientific excellence (1-5; threshold: 3.5)**

Fit to thematic priorities: Panel of experts members will assess the relevance of the proposed research against the thematic priorities set forth in the scientific text of the call. Any project that does not fit within the thematic priorities described will not be recommended for funding, regardless of its scientific quality.

Scientific excellence aspects, including international added value, will be assessed by means of the following criteria:

- a) Scientific quality of the proposed research goals and objectives: how well does the activity advance knowledge and understanding within its own field and across different fields? Does the proposal contribute to scientific excellence and significant progress toward the state of the art?
- b) Novelty / Originality and innovation of the research goals and objectives: to what extent does the proposed activity suggest and explore creative, original concepts?
- c) Clarity of the hypothesis, theories and/or research questions
- d) Level of inter/multi/trans-disciplinarity
- e) International added value to be expected from the collaboration (cf. below for more information)

Relation to other projects

Considering that a given project fits within the thematic priorities of the call, its scientific quality is considered before all other criteria and is a prerequisite for funding.

2. **Quality and efficiency of the implementation (1-5; threshold: 3)**

- a) Quality and efficiency of the management structure and procedures, its organisation and coordination,: how well conceived and organised is the proposed activity? Is there an operational plan with well-defined milestones in place?
- b) Competence and expertise of the consortium (including complementarity, balance): how well qualified are the applicants in terms of science knowledge, expertise and experience to

conduct the project? What is the quality of previous work in terms of past or potential contributions to, and impact on the proposed and other areas of research? Is the Leading Principal Investigator team (including any identified Co-Principal Investigators) able to lead the project, e.g. having strong management and leadership skills, or having complementarity of expertise and synergy of the members of the team?

- c) Level of integration and collaboration
- d) Appropriateness of resources and funding requested, with justification (budget, staff, equipment): are the requested investments well justified and relevant?
- e) Project feasibility and risk management
- f) Data management plan overview and data sharing

3. Impact (1-5; threshold: 3)

The Impact of the proposed research to stakeholders, including policy makers, and engagement with stakeholders will be assessed by means of the 3 following criteria:

1. Approach to stakeholder engagement:

The criteria used to evaluate stakeholder engagement - which applicants and members of the Panel of experts are invited to consider – are the following:

- a. Reasons for undertaking stakeholder engagement
- b. Identification of appropriate stakeholders and why they are relevant to the project (what role they could play), and the desired outcomes of engaging with specific stakeholders
- c. Evidence of support from appropriate stakeholders towards the research, and commitment to engage
- d. Methods/activities proposed for engagement and collaborative learning, planning and resources
- e. Evidence that the necessary skills to engage are available in the project team or will be obtained (e.g. through relevant training, or the use of external sources)
- f. Knowledge transfer methods and plans

BiodivERsA produced a stakeholder engagement handbook for researchers to help them to engage with stakeholders all along their research projects.

This handbook is accessible online (<http://biodiversa.org/stakeholderengagement>) and we recommend you to use it when designing your project and preparing your proposal.

2. Policy relevance and importance of the research for solving pressing issues

The criteria used to evaluate policy relevance - which applicants and members of the Panel of experts are invited to consider – are the following:

- a. Clear statement of the policy application. Any proposal must contain details which cite the relevance of the research to policy instruments and current legislation. It should also highlight the importance of this work for solving pressing societal issues related to the details of the joint call.
- b. Clearly identified policy makers who are end users of the research results and ways to engage them. The proposal will be expected to identify specific end-user organisations, and, if possible, to name individuals within these organisations.
- c. Arrangements for knowledge transfer.

The **criteria of policy relevance** are explained and detailed in the paper from Gardner, Stott and Vindimian (2013)¹, available on the BiodivERsA website (<http://www.biodiversa.org/254>).

3. International added value

International added value is the value resulting from the international research project, which is additional to the value that would have resulted from research projects funded at national level. The added value may vary, depending on the type of project, and there can be various answers to this question.

However, there should be clear evidence of added value either directly within the countries involved in the research, or indirect value accrued as a result of, e.g. learning from models applied to countries outside of the countries involved.

International added value may include: relevance to international policy statements including IPBES, legislative framework or management plans; clear added value to national research projects across the world by linking expertise and efforts across national teams and across studied areas and research models; bringing about comparisons at the local level between researchers and stakeholders who are not used to work together; standardization of methods, general increase of common knowledge in biodiversity relative to the themes of the call, etc.

No additional criteria will be used for evaluation and selection.

II. Scoring system

The overall aim of the ranking system is to allow a transparent ranking that still allow for some flexibility, and to fund as many high level projects as possible.

The two first criteria (scientific excellence and quality and efficiency of the implementation) will be assessed by the scientific experts of the PoE and scientific external reviewers, while the impact criteria will be assessed by the policy/management experts of the PoE and external reviewers.

For each criterion, a score out of a scale of five will be assigned to each proposal.

Threshold:

There is no shared interest for proposals with a score lower than 3.5 for scientific excellence; and lower than 3 for quality/efficiency of the implementation and impact. These proposals will not be ranked, and not be considered for funding.

Weighting system:

The following weighting system will apply for the different criteria:

Criteria	Weight
Scientific excellence	7
Quality/efficiency of the implementation	3
Impact	6

¹ Gardner S., Stott A. & Vindimian E. 2013. How to assess policy relevance in research projects. BiodivERsA report, available at <http://www.biodiversa.org/254/download>.

The final score given to a proposal will correspond to an aggregation of the scores given to the three criteria, taking into account their respective weights. The overall mark will be transformed into a score out of 15 points (using half scores).

The PoE ranks as many projects as possible. However, around the threshold, the PoE can use ex-aequo for proposals with a same final score that it considers of equal quality.

Example:

If a proposal receives a score of 4.5 for scientific excellence, 4 for quality and efficiency of the implementation and 5 for impact, the aggregation of the scores taking into account their respective weight will give a score of 73.5. This score will be transformed into a score out of 15 points, i.e. 13.8, which would be rounded to 14.