

FAQ's – Aviva Temperate Rainforest Research Programme

Please consult this document first before contacting the Wildlife Trusts with queries about the Aviva rainforest research programme. Also please ensure that you have read the Information for Applicants document in full as many issues concerning the running of the programme are detailed in full there.

Q: I'm based in Scotland; you don't yet have any Aviva sites within the Scottish Wildlife Trust region. Can I work on other existing sites in Scotland instead?

Yes, Scotland is key to the temperate rainforest. The Scottish Wildlife Trust is exploring potential sites for the Aviva programme but would encourage you to consider one of the Scottish Wildlife Trust's 15 relevant existing sites that sit within the temperate rainforest zone. The Scottish Wildlife Trust is a member of the Alliance for Scotland's Rainforest, which brings together a wide range of organisations including the Woodland Trust, RSPB, National Trust for Scotland, NatureScot, Plantlife, and others. We are keen to see research collaboration across the sector and any eligible sites suitable for research may be considered.

Q: I work for a local wildlife trust, can we bid in for research funding?

If you have sufficiently evidenced research experience and permission from your local Wildlife Trust team, then yes. However, we would encourage you to partner with researchers from universities / research organisations. The overall quality of the research team is a material factor in scoring submissions.

Q: I am a social scientist. Do you welcome project applications that take qualitative approaches?

Yes absolutely, there are many socio-economic questions that are relevant to this programme. Please check the research themes and questions that interest us most – however, we would favour those applications that are place-based rather than purely theoretical. Economic modelling and / or business issues relating to green financing of rainforest restoration and their role in the wider rural economy are also welcomed.

Q: I have a good research idea which meets your criteria, but I do not have any existing contacts with sites or local wildlife trusts – what do you advise?

Please submit your idea as an EOI, if we short-list it, we can pair you with appropriate sites and help you to make contacts to develop your proposal.

Q: I meet the criteria for an ECR, but I want to apply to the main research programme for a full grant – can I do that?

Absolutely, the mainstream is open to anyone. If you are already a researcher working in this field and can evidence your research competence, then your application will be assessed in exactly the same way.

Q: Can I change my study site(s) after the award of a grant if necessary?

We would expect by the time the research contract for the grant has been drawn up and signed that this factor should be fixed. However, we recognise that in exceptional circumstances field locations may become unavailable or unsuitable. Such a major change would always need to be discussed with the Research Manager at the earliest opportunity and a variation to the agreed research contract negotiated before work switched from one site to another.

Q: How detailed does the EOI have to be? Can I add to it once submitted?

The EOI must be submitted on a standardised proforma through our online grant system. All information requested must be supplied. Full details of the information required for the EOI is listed in the 'Information for Applicants' document in Table 4. You can save the document as you work through it and edit it before submission, but once submitted it is fixed and you will not be able to change it or add to it.

Q: Can I change things from my EOI if I am invited to submit a full proposal?

No, substantive changes are not allowed (research idea, methods, overall budget, organisations etc). The full proposal requires you to elaborate on these sections. Minor differences in staffing / budget allocation which may be necessary to accommodate changes at the host institutions may be acceptable but please confirm this with the Research Manager before submission. Shortlisting has been based on the EOI submitted so it would not be acceptable for the proposal to be changed in substantive ways.

Q: Are all the deadlines fixed?

Yes, the submission deadlines are fixed. Depending on the volume of applications received at the EOI stage, we may need more time to review them fairly, than listed in the guidance. However, we will make every effort to keep to the published deadlines. Any variation or delay in announcing decisions will be clearly notified to applicants at the earliest opportunity.

Q: Can I propose a research project that is outside the scope of the given research themes?

No – Please read the information for applicants document carefully and only submit ideas that meet these requirements. One of the key criteria against which the applications will be scored relate to the “fit” to our research requirements.

Q: I'm not connected to any university or research institution- can I still apply?

No, not by yourself or as a lead PI. However, you can be part of a wider research team which led by a researcher at a recognised research organisation. Indeed, we encourage involvement from the technical and applied sector where expertise certainly sits. If this is your situation, we would encourage you to identify research partners with whom you could collaborate.

Q: I am not based in the UK; can I still apply?

No, this research opportunity is restricted to researchers based at UK-based organisations.

Q: I am already conducting a temperate rainforest research project- can I apply for this funding to extend my work?

We expect all applications to represent new work, the fund is not intended to plug funding gaps in other programmes. That said, we are keen to build on existing research and knowledge. Therefore, if you have a new and discrete component of work that answers directly some of our research needs then we will consider it, but you must ensure that it is a separate project.

Q: Can I submit more than one idea?

In theory yes, but it is highly unlikely that we would fund more than one project at an individual institution as the funding pot is limited. We would encourage you to develop your best idea and build a strong proposal.

Q: Are there any restrictions on a single institution submitting both a main grant and an Aviva Scholars grant application?

No, they are considered separately. However, the Aviva Scholars application must be the intellectual property of the ECR applying and be a discrete, stand-alone project. It is worth

noting that these awards are intended to widen the pool of applicants so it may be more appropriate to bring an ECR within the main grant award if you are submitting through that stream. Each application will always be considered on merit.

Q: I would like to use a site that isn't a Wildlife Trust reserve, is that still acceptable?

Yes, if you have appropriate permission from the landowners to work there. Many temperate rainforest sites are in private ownership or belong to other environmental organisations. The Aviva sites are important however, because they are completely new sites for establishment – but it depends on your research questions. You may need to use several sites depending on your research aims and methodology.

Q: My current expertise focuses on woodland ecology [or similar] in general, but I have a good idea for a rainforest research project- can I still apply?

Yes, temperate rainforests are woodlands, so your expertise is directly relevant. However, make sure that your project aligns closely with research themes, certainly the focus must be on temperate rainforests for this grant programme.

Q: If my application is unsuccessful, can I request feedback?

Unfortunately, we will not be able to provide feedback on unsuccessful applications at the EOI stage. We may be able to provide some feedback for unsuccessful applications which are invited to submit full bids, but it will depend on team capacity at that point. The decision of the Wildlife Trusts review team will be final at that stage.

Aviva Scholarship specific questions

Q: I was awarded my PhD 10 years ago, but had to take unavoidable career breaks in that time- can I still apply for the Aviva Scholars ECR grant?

The UKRI definition does include some flexibility for researchers who have needed to take career breaks (to have children for example) so check out their rules. Depending on your individual circumstances it may still be acceptable. However, we would encourage you to consider the main grant programme too as our minimum grant size in that stream is a modest £40,000.

Q: I do not qualify as an ECR, but I have not led on any of my own research projects so far- can I still apply for the main grant?

Yes. However, it may be wise for you to collaborate with other researchers with demonstrable experience. Although the overall competence of the proposed team is a factor we will use in assessing the submissions, it is the quality and relevance of the research idea which is significant.

Q: I'm interested in applying for the Aviva Scholars grant, but I don't have anyone available to be my research mentor and Co-PI can I get support to find someone?

We are unable to provide that kind of support at the application stage, we recommend that you approach your Head of Department to help you find appropriate research supervision. Your mentor does not necessarily need to have expertise in the topic of your research project if they are aligned with the general area. You may also find support through your university research office. Remember, it must be someone based at the same institution as the Aviva Scholar applicant.

Q: Can my Aviva Scholarship Grant be longer than 18 months?

No. Final submission is expected by that point. Extensions will only be offered in exceptional personal circumstances (due to ill health, pregnancy etc) and must be discussed and agreed

with the Research Manager with a revised research agreement. There will be no further payment made.

Q: I work for a local wildlife trust and meet the criteria for Early Career Research funding, can I apply for the Aviva Scholars Programme?

Yes, if you are sufficiently qualified and meet all the criteria outlined in the information document. You will need permission from your line manager to free up your time to work on the project so we suggest you discuss that in full before considering an application. You will need adequate research mentorship.

Q: If I am short-listed for an Aviva Scholarship, can I upgrade to a full grant bid instead?

No – the two schemes are separate; you need to decide which is appropriate. If your Scholarship goes well, you will be welcome to submit an expanded bid in the second round of funding.

If your question relates to your application and your answer cannot be found in the associated Information for Applicants document, nor in these FAQs then contact the Wildlife Trusts research team through our dedicated account at AvivaResearch@wildlifetrusts.org