



Call for Proposals

Guidelines

Community Grants for Circular Economy Solutions to Reduce Plastic Pollution

IslandPlas Project

**Eligible countries/locations for this call: Cabo Verde and São Tomé
& Príncipe**

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1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Plastic pollution is a global environmental concern, and its impacts are particularly felt in island contexts and Small Island Developing States (SIDS). In many African islands, this challenge is even more pronounced due to the high importation characteristics of their economies, limited waste management infrastructure, insufficient funding, and a lack of reliable data on this issue. With constrained land availability for waste disposal and fragmented waste systems, much of the plastic generated ends up being landfilled, burned, dumped or leaked into the environment, especially the ocean. This contributes to the degradation of coastal ecosystems, loss of tourism revenue and increased health risks for local communities.

The IslandPlas project, funded by The Coca-Cola Foundation and implemented by IUCN under the Great Blue Wall initiative, targets seven African Islands; Cabo Verde, Comoros, Madagascar, Mauritius, São Tomé and Príncipe, Seychelles, and Zanzibar. Based on recent estimates, these Islands cumulatively generate an estimated two million tonnes of municipal waste annually. Plastic material constitutes an average 11% of the waste material, equivalent to 200,000 tons per year. Approximately 40% of the plastic waste is recovered through collection, leaving 118 thousand tonnes uncollected or mismanaged; posing the single largest source of plastic pollution in the marine environment. Once in the ocean, mismanaged waste negatively impacts the tourism sector, fisheries and aquaculture, shipping, and overstretches the budgets of municipal and national authorities responsible for waste management.

The IslandPlas project, running until end of 2027, envisions African Islands that are free from plastic waste in the environment, and that circular measures are in place to ensure zero plastics to the ocean. The project actions are designed to reduce and prevent plastic waste leakage into the environment through demonstrating effective, quantifiable solutions to addressing plastic leakage.

IslandPlas supports several regional commitments, including contributing to the objectives outlined in the Declaration adopted at the Ministerial Conference on the Blue and Circular Economy in the Island States of Africa and the Indian Ocean (September 2023). The Declaration calls for a strengthened blue and circular economy, driven by circular entrepreneurship, skills development, increased investment in science, research and innovation, and supportive legal and policy reforms.

The project is structured around three main objectives:

1. **Improved and sustainable livelihoods** of informal waste sector actors in the plastics economy;
2. **Reduced plastic waste pollution** through enhanced collection, recycling and upcycling systems;

3. **Catalysed sector innovation and enterprise development** through direct capital investments and enterprise support for locally appropriate solutions.

This Call for Proposals falls under **Objective 3: Strengthened sector innovation and enterprise development**, specifically under the **Community Grants component**, which seeks to support **community-led circular economy initiatives** that provide tangible environmental and livelihood benefits.

2. PURPOSE OF THE CALL

The purpose of this call is to identify and support community-based organisations, including women and youth groups, cooperatives, and informal sector entities, that are leading, or aim to develop, innovative and practical solutions to reduce plastic pollution in their local environments

The IslandPlas Community Grants aim to enable grassroots actors to design, pilot and implement small-scale initiatives that enhance plastic recovery, logistics, upcycling, reuse and sustainable livelihoods through circular economy approaches.

Each selected initiative will receive a **grant ranging from USD 3,000 to USD 5,000** to implement activities over a **6–9-month period**.

This Call for Proposals applies specifically to initiatives implemented in **Cabo Verde and São Tomé and Príncipe**, in line with the IslandPlas project scope and regional implementation arrangements.

3. FOCUS AREAS

Proposals should align with one or more of the following thematic focus areas:

- **Community-led waste collection and sorting models:** Initiatives that establish or strengthen systems for collection, segregation, or aggregation of plastic waste at the community level. Example might include models that could be supporting/improving the current collections/sorting models.
- **Upcycling and repurposing:** Transforming plastic waste into new or value-added products (e.g. crafts, construction materials, eco-products).
- **Refill and reuse models:** Local innovations that reduce single-use plastics through refill stations, reusable packaging systems, or similar community-led models.
- **Circular livelihoods:** Training and skills development for women, youth, or informal waste pickers linked to circular economy activities.
- **Recycling (indirect) community models** – initiatives that do not perform recycling directly but support the recycling chain, for example:
 - community aggregation points,
 - sorting improvements,

- logistics support,
- pre-processing,
- partnerships with recyclers.
- **Locally appropriate technologies and innovation:** simple tools, prototypes or innovations that improve waste handling, sorting, tracking, upcycling or reduce plastic leakage.
- **Digital or smart community solutions:** Basic digital tools that support coordination, tracking, monitoring, or community engagement in waste recovery.

Note:

- a. *Projects should demonstrate both **environmental benefits** (such as reduced plastic leakage) and **social impact** (including improved livelihoods, participation of women and youth, or engagement of informal waste actors).*
- b. *Proposals should also **clearly indicate the intended scale of the initiative**, for example, whether it targets a community, village, town, or a specific area, ensuring that the proposed activities, resources and budget are realistic and proportionate to the expected reach and local context.*
- c. *Projects that demonstrate potential for **scalability or replication in similar context**, as well as clear pathways **for long-term sustainability** beyond the grant period, are strongly encouraged.*

4. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

The organisation must be a **non-state actor** and should be **not-for-profit**. It must be based in the country of application. Cross-country applications (e.g. a group in Madagascar applying to implement an activity in Seychelles) are not allowed.

The organisation must show that it understands the local situation; the people, communities and systems that will benefit from the project.

The organisation must also demonstrate its ability to deliver the proposed activities, including having appropriate technical skills, basic administrative and financial management arrangements, and the capacity to manage grant funds responsibly. If possible, it should share examples of similar projects it has done before. In case of doubt, the IslandPlas team can provide further guidance.

Eligible applicants

- Registered Community-Based Organisations (CBOs)
- Cooperatives and Associations
- Small social enterprises
- Women’s or Youth Groups
- Informal-sector entities organised under a recognised local structure (e.g. municipal, district or community-level recognition)

- Indirect and independent faith-based groups (excluding formal religious institutions), such as youth groups, environmental associations and similar community groups, are eligible to apply.

Ineligible applicants

- Individuals (single persons) or consultants cannot apply.
- For-profit organisations.
- Consortium or groups of associations.
- Political organisations or groups promoting political agendas
- Lobbying groups.
- Applicants who are already receiving funding **from the IslandPlas project**

Mandatory conditions:

- a. Applicants may **apply only once** under this call.
- b. 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**. Where applicable, equivalent community-level financial arrangements recognised by local authorities may be considered, subject to IUCN verification. Individual bank accounts registered under a single person are not eligible.
- c. Applicants must demonstrate **a minimum of one year of experience** in community work, environmental activities, waste management, circular economy initiatives, or other relevant areas aligned with the proposed project.

5. GRANT SIZE AND DURATION

- Grant size: grant allocation will range between **USD 3,000 to USD 5,000**.
- Duration: **6–9 months**.
- Disbursements: **Funds will be released in tranches linked to milestones and deliverables**.

5.1 Project Duration

- Each selected initiative will be implemented and completed over a period of 6 to 9 months, beginning from the date of grant signing.
- While the IslandPlas grant provides short-term catalytic support, applicants are expected to demonstrate how their initiatives will remain sustainable beyond the grant period. This may include mechanisms for revenue generation, community ownership, partnerships, and continued engagement.

5.2 Financial Allocation and Use of Proceeds

This community grant represents a contribution from IUCN to support local solutions to plastic pollution and promote circular economy practices within participating islands. The grants are non-repayable and are intended solely for the implementation of eligible project activities that generate environmental, social, and livelihood benefits.

5.3 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 Ceiling: Up to USD 5,000 per initiative

Eligible Use of Proceeds: Grant funds must be used strictly for approved activities under the project's workplan and budget, with costs clearly justified and directly linked to the implementation of the proposed initiative such as:

- Purchase of materials, tools and equipment related to collection, recycling or upcycling;
- Community training or livelihood development sessions related to circular economy;
- Labour, transport, or logistics directly and strictly tied to the project's implementation;
- Monitoring, documentation and reporting costs.

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 favourably during the evaluation process.

Non-Eligible Expenses

Funds **must not** be used for activities unrelated to the project scope, including awareness raising, 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
- Credits to third parties or sub-contractors

- Any form of staff costs/ salaries of national/international administration, other than those linked to the proposal submitted and with justifications.
- 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.

5.4 Budget

Each grantee must prepare a realistic budget for the project duration that details expected activities and their costs, key milestones and deliverables. Grant funding will be disbursed in instalments linked to the satisfactory achievement of agreed milestones, deliverables and reporting requirements. Disbursements will be made in three instalments based on performance and milestone achievement:

| Tranche | Percentage | Conditions for Release |
|-----------------------------------|------------|---|
| First Instalment | 30% | Upon signing of grant agreement, submission of approved workplan and budget. |
| Second Instalment | 60% | Upon satisfactory progress report, financial accountability of first tranche and completion of agreed milestones. |
| Third and final instalment | 10% | A final instalment equal to no less than ten percent (10%) of the budget shall be withheld until the Grantee's delivery and IUCN's written acceptance of the Final Financial Report and the Final Technical Report. |

6. COMPONENTS OF THE APPLICATION

Applicants must submit proposals by filling out an **Application Form template** and the **Budget Form template**. The application must be as straightforward as possible in the answers that you provide. We recommend allocating sufficient time for the submission of proposals and estimate that the process of finalising the answers could take between 1 – 3 days (excluding preparation and gathering of data).

- Application form templates will be made available to interested community groups **including through national or local sensitisation sessions and official communication channels** on the IslandPlas Community Grants. To simplify the process and ensure consistency, applicants will be required to

complete and submit an **Application Form (Annex 1)**, attach a **Budget Form (Annex 2)** and sign a **Declaration of Understanding (Annex 3)**.

- Applicants will then submit their completed applications (in PDF) through the provided email address.
- Applications can be submitted in **English or Portuguese**, and the templates and guidelines will be made available in these languages to ensure consistency in review.
- Each application must clearly outline how the grant funds will be managed, governed, and implemented to ensure transparency, community ownership, and sustainability beyond the project period.

Online Q&A (Ask-Us-Anything) session

An **online Q&A (Ask-Us-Anything) session** will be organised for all participating islands to provide additional information and address any questions applicants may have while preparing their proposals. **The online session will not provide direct support or guidance on drafting individual proposals. Registration to the online session here: <https://forms.office.com/e/kckMjtTxSg>**

7. GEOGRAPHICAL SCOPE

This Call for Proposals is open to applicants based in and operating within the following target sites:

| Countries/Locations | Target sites/islands |
|---------------------|---|
| Cabo Verde | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Santiago ○ Sal ○ Boa Vista ○ São Vicente ○ and potentially the nearby uninhabited island of Santa Luzia |
| São Tomé & Príncipe | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ São Tomé ○ Príncipe |

8. APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

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

- An electronic scan of the group’s **registration document, constitution, by laws, or governance or recognition documents, as applicable.**
- **Financial records or statements** from the past 12 months, or a brief and clear record of income and expenditure).

- A **full list of 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 group.
- An **endorsement letter** from a recognised local authority or community leadership structure (e.g. local council, municipal authority, village or community leader, or community development officer) confirming the group’s existence and community relevance.

9. EVALUATION CRITERIA

Proposals will be reviewed by an **Evaluation Committee, guided by the following criteria:**

| Criteria | Description | Weight |
|--|---|--------|
| Relevance and Innovation | The project addresses local plastic pollution challenges using practical and context-appropriate circular approaches. | 30% |
| Feasibility, Budget and Implementation Plan | Clear objectives and realistic activities achievable within 6–9 months. | 20% |
| Co-funding | Financial or in-kind contributions | 5% |
| Impact and Inclusiveness | Potential to improve community livelihoods, with strong participation of women, youth, and informal waste actors. | 25% |
| Sustainability and Replicability | Demonstrates potential for continuation, replication or adaptation beyond the project period. | 10% |
| Capacity and Experience | Applicant’s ability to manage funds and deliver project outputs. | 10% |

10. DUE DILIGENCE

A due diligence exercise will be carried out with the **final shortlisted grantees** to assess their eligibility and organisational capacity. This process could include, verification of legal status or local recognition, financial management capacity, technical capacity, reference checks, and site visits (if necessary and feasible).

11. OVERSIGHT AND REPORTING

The grants will be managed at the country level by the IUCN IslandPlas Project Manager in the country of application, who will oversee monitoring, reporting, and project visibility in line with IUCN procedures.

12. QUESTIONS, APPLICATION PROCESS AND SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS

1. Kindly submit any questions and completed application by the application deadline, sent to islandplas@iucn.org
2. Email subject line: CFP - ISLANDPLAS COMMUNITY GRANT – [Name of Organisation] – [Country]
3. Deadline for applications: Friday 15 February 2026, 23:59, local time in country of application.
4. Late submissions will not be considered.

13. TIMELINE

| Activity | Date |
|----------------------------------|---|
| Publication of Call for Proposal | 20 January 2026 |
| Online Q&A session | Online session (Portuguese): Thursday 29 January 2026 |
| Deadline for Questions | 08 February 2026 |
| Deadline to share responses | 09 February 2026 |
| Application Deadline | 15 February 2026 |
| Evaluation and Selection | 23 February 2026 |
| Notification of Awardees | 02 March 2026 |
| Grant Signing and Launch | 17 March 2026 |

14. ANNEXES

- Annex 1: Application Form
- Annex 2: Budget Form
- Annex 3: Declaration of Undertaking

[Annex 1: Application Form](#)

[Annex 2: Budget Form](#)

[Annex 3: Declaration of Undertaking](#)