



Carbon Innovation Fund 3: Frequently Asked Questions

1. Why are you focusing on food and not looking wider into horticulture, bedding plants or pot plants?

We absolutely understand and recognise that the issue with peat is not isolated to within food growing and supply chains. However, the Carbon Innovation Fund has been, and is all about creating sustainable food systems. Our funding comes from Co-op Food business and the in-house expertise is within food, so it makes the most sense for this fund to continue its focus on food.

Also, we have found from last year, that having a more focused approach allows for better synergies and learning between partners, which we hope to recreate for this year, too.

2. My organisation is a PLC, can we apply?

No, the lead applicant must be a not-for-profit organisation. A PLC can be a partner in a project but cannot be listed as a lead applicant. If you are a PLC and would like to consider applying for the main Fund, please see the [Co-op Foundation website](#).

3. Can an organisation submit more than one application?

Yes, but please note it is unlikely that both/all will be funded from the same organisation, as we would like to spread out the opportunities for funding.

4. Can organisations that have been funded in round 1 or 2 of the Fund, apply again?

Yes they are welcome to apply with any eligible proposals, but won't be given any preference over other applicants.

5. Can the fund be stacked with an additional fund? For example, the Paludiculture Fund?

Yes, we would be more than happy to part fund a project. We would just ask that your budget clearly shows what the CIF 3 funding would pay for, and who your other funders are.

6. How many funding rounds are there? Will there be a fund in 2025 that will have similar criteria?

The Carbon Innovation Fund is a 3-year partnership with the Co-op Food business. This year is the final round of the partnership, so there will not be a similar round in 2025.

7. Is the amount allocated to learning and education limited at 5%?

This is our recommendation for engaging with the Co-op Foundation's learning and evaluation activities. We would advise a maximum allocation of 10% for these activities but please note that that we do not award additional funding for learning and evaluation activities - this needs to be considered within the grant funding that you are requesting. Please reflect learning and evaluation costs/time within your budget breakdown.

8. Can you describe a bit more about the trial / proof of concept needed?

We ask that a trial or proof of concept for your project has already been carried out before you apply for CIF funding. This work can be carried out by your organisation, or you can reference another organisation that has done the same or similar work. The pilot does not have to have been 100% "successful" at all - we understand that a lot of learning comes from unsuccessful work. We want to hear about how you might improve on the pilot work and what changes you will make.

9. Is there a maximum amount of partners that can work together?

No, we don't set maximum numbers for applicants' partners. We would remind the lead applicant that they are responsible for due diligence on all of their partners. If you would like support with this, please contact the team at foundation@coop.co.uk

10. I operate as a sole trader in upland restoration, and looking into peat-free compost production. Should I set up a CIC or other non-profit with a board? or can we apply as our small family business/sole trader?

We would only recommend that you set up a CIC or non-profit with a board if it feels right and comfortable for you to do so. This would make it easier for you to obtain grant funding from CIF and other funders in the future, but we understand that there are many reasons why you may not want, or be able to do this. If you have an eligible project but can only operate as a sole trader, please speak to the team (foundation@coop.co.uk) for a better understanding of whether we can fund you.

11. Can we use grants to fund internships or a KTP

Yes, grants can be used for core and capital costs. Examples of core costs include staff salaries, rent, travel, learning and evaluation, bills, training. We would see an intership as part of staff salaries. Examples of capital costs include physical goods such as machinery, tools, raw materials.

12. Would peat free compost production meet the guidelines - or would it need to link directly with food production?

Yes, if you can show that there is a market for this compost within food supply chains.

13. Are you looking to get a 'reasonably equal' geographical spread of projects - would you approach organisations if you don't get the distribution of projects across the UK?

We fund proportionately across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and each nation has a separate shortlist. We do not specifically focus on regions when making funding decisions. Over the past 2 years, we have had high quality applications from all nations that we have funded. We expect the same this year and therefore do not plan on approaching organisations to fund directly. The Carbon Innovation Fund has always operated on an open fund basis, which we feel allows for more unknown, innovative organisations to be heard and funded. In this partnership with Heart of Bucks Community Foundation, we are hoping to support one project in Buckinghamshire, with funding of up to £90,000 available.