

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Contents

Geographic scope & eligibility.....	page 1
Intervention eligibility.....	page 2
Methodology.....	page 3
Data access, governance & stakeholder engagement.....	page 6
Applicant eligibility.....	page 7
GOapply process and submission.....	page 8
Eligible costs & budget.....	page 9

Geographic scope & eligibility

Could you please elaborate on the geographic scope of the call and provide a definition for inhabited cryosphere (cold climate) regions?

For this call, we define an eligible cold-climate setting as an inhabited setting in an LMIC with proximity and clear connection to significant cryosphere, by which we mean permanent glaciers, ice caps or extensive permafrost. Please refer to the UN's Decade of Action for Cryospheric Sciences (2025-2034) website for a list of countries with significant cryosphere: <https://www.un-cryosphere.org/en/resources/data/country-profiles>.

The intervention site should therefore be located within, or have a clear and direct connection to, an inhabited high-altitude or cold-climate setting in an LMIC with proximity to significant cryosphere. Lower-elevation industrial sources may be considered where applicants can demonstrate a strong and specific link between the intervention site, the affected cryosphere, and resulting impact on local communities or ecosystems. Applications should clearly explain this connection, including the relevant geography, emissions pathway, seasonal transport or deposition evidence, and the expected relevance to health and climate outcomes in the cryosphere setting as part of their application. For example, Kathmandu valley, with an average altitude of 1400m asl and surrounded by glacier, would fall within the scope of this call.

We do not have a specific threshold of altitude or temperature. However, lower-elevation sites without a clear, direct and well-evidenced connection to the cryosphere are unlikely to be prioritised. **Please monitor Clean Air Fund's webpage for future calls targeting non-cryosphere settings:** <https://www.cleanairfund.org/what-we-do/research-funding-opportunities/>

Is there a comprehensive list of countries that Clean Air Fund defines as low-and middle-income (LMIC)?

Please refer to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) for a consolidated list of countries that are currently classified as low- or middle-income economies:

<https://www.oecd.org/en/topics/sub-issues/oda-eligibility-and-conditions/dac-list-of-oda-recipients.html>

For multi-country studies, must all study sites independently qualify as cryosphere, or can a non-cryosphere be included as an ancillary or comparison site within a primarily eligible study?

All of the proposed intervention sites must independently meet the geographic eligibility criteria in order for the study to be within scope.

Will applications for studies based in countries that are subject to international sanctions be eligible to receive funding under this call?

Please note that we may not be able to fund organisations that are based in:

- Countries that are subject to international sanctions. Please refer to: <https://wellcome.org/research-funding/guidance/prepare-to-apply/international-sanctions-how-they-affect-grants>
- Territories that are not legally recognised by the UK government.

Are studies located in areas where the UK FCDO advises against all travel eligible for funding?

Studies located in areas where the UK FCDO advises against all travel are eligible for funding providing that they meet the wider eligibility criteria for the call.

Intervention eligibility

May an Expression of Interest select both sectors, for example a primary industrial focus with a secondary characterisation of space heating emissions?

Yes, provided that both of the interventions are within the scope of the call, that the project remains within the budget ceiling, and the results will be available within the timeframe of the project. When applying through the GOapply portal, please select the primary sector of focus when prompted.

Would a study be eligible if it evaluates a technology deployment or solution where procurement, financing and implementation of the technology/solution are independently undertaken by a separate programme or third party?

Clean Air Fund's funding can only be used for research and evaluation. We are not able to finance procurement of technologies or solutions. Technologies deployed during the research period that are financed by another programme or third party will be considered eligible, providing that the proposed research is additional and non-duplicative. Please provide details of how the technologies are being financed as part of the application. The results of the study must be available within the timeframe of the project (i.e. within 3 years).

What level of intervention maturity or implementation is required for a study to be eligible?

We do not have any firm requirements on level of intervention maturity or implementation. Interventions that are already operational or that are being introduced will be considered eligible, provided that baseline and follow up data are available and that the results will be available within the timeframe of the project.

How will studies of efficiency improvements to fossil-fuel-fired industrial processes be weighed against studies of zero-emission alternatives? What evidence of constraints on immediate transition does the Fund expect?

Studies of zero-emission alternatives will be prioritised where such alternatives are technically, financially and operationally feasible, given their greater potential to deliver sustained reductions in black carbon and reduce dependence on fossil-fuel combustion. However, we recognise that in some settings an immediate transition to zero-emission alternatives may not yet be feasible. For example, studies of efficiency improvements to fossil-fuel-fired industrial processes may therefore be considered where applicants provide a clear rationale for why a zero-emission alternative cannot currently be implemented. Switching to a cleaner fossil fuel or a renewable energy source, from fossil fuels are considered black carbon-reducing interventions.

Would maritime shipping be considered within the scope of “industry” for this opportunity? If not, could you specify which kind of industries qualify?

No. Maritime shipping would not fall within the scope of “industry” for this call as the intervention settings we are prioritising are inhabited cryosphere (cold-climate) settings in LMICs. Within industry, our focus is on energy-intensive formal, informal or unregulated industries and industrial processes that constitute significant sources of black carbon emissions. (Please note future calls will cover non-cryosphere settings)

Are institutional settings such as schools, hospitals and residential dormitories eligible under the space-heating stream? Would interventions involving insulation, passive heating, electric heating, heat pumps or renewable thermal systems fall within scope?

Yes. Studies may consider residential buildings, commercial and institutional (e.g. schools, hospitals, hotels, etc) settings. We will prioritise studies targeting zero emission technologies and interventions that support the phase out of fossil fuels. We will also consider energy efficiency measures, including interventions such as insulation and passive heating, regardless of the underlying energy source. Applications should clearly explain the rationale for the proposed intervention and its expected impact on black carbon emissions, health and climate outcomes

Methodology

Please note that for applications that advance to the next stage, our Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) will review proposed methodologies and make recommendations based on scientific merit.

May a study combine retrospective evaluation of transitions completed before the study begins with prospective measurement of transitions occurring during it?

Yes, this type of mixed retrospective and prospective study design would be considered eligible, provided that the intervention itself meets the requirements of the call and that Clean Air Fund funding is used only for research and evaluation, not for technology deployment. Applicants should clearly describe which transitions have already taken place and which are expected to occur during the project period, and explain how baseline, follow-up and/or comparison data will be used to assess real-world reductions in black carbon exposure and associated benefits.

Would a systematic review and meta-analysis of observational studies be eligible under this call? If a stand-alone review is not eligible, would it be acceptable as a component of a primary study?

A systematic review and meta-analysis of observational studies would not be eligible under this call. We would consider an initial literature review an eligible sub-component of a primary study in order to guide the analysis, and providing that this remains within the overall budget ceiling.

Must both health and climate impacts be quantified in every study, or may one constitute the primary empirical outcome while the other is estimated through an accepted modelling approach?

Empirical health outcomes should be prioritised. We will give preference to studies with health as the primary empirical outcome. All studies should include some assessment of both health and climate impacts, and modelling approached may be used where appropriate.

Are modelling-based health impact assessments derived from established exposure-response functions considered sufficient, or is the collection of primary health outcome data expected or preferred?

The collection of primary health outcome data is preferred, but we will also consider study designs that use previously published health data/published exposure-response functions to estimate health outcomes attributable to the intervention.

As part of the application, we expect applicants to demonstrate awareness of available health and population data sources in the target country/region and explain their approach to ensuring timely access.

If primary health data such as symptom questionnaires or lung function are collected, would this be regarded as within scope? Does the toxicology exclusion extend to biomarkers of exposure?

Proposals focused primarily on toxicological mechanisms, biomarker discovery, or mechanistic investigations of biological pathways are considered out of scope.

Primary health outcome measurements are within scope where used to evaluate the impacts of an exposure-reduction intervention. Biomarkers of exposure may also be included where they support the evaluation of changes in exposure.

Does the requirement to demonstrate “real-world reductions” imply that new field measurements are expected, or can robust assessments based primarily on existing monitoring data, emission inventories, emission factors, and modelling approaches be considered sufficient?

New field measurements are not a firm requirement. Study designs may include previously published health data to estimate health outcomes attributable to the change in intervention. Black carbon emissions may be simulated using existing emission inventories, or any other ex-situ or in-situ data.

Is direct black carbon monitoring at intervention sites expected, or would hybrid approaches combining targeted measurements, emission inventories, emission factors, and modelling be considered acceptable for estimating black carbon reductions and associated impacts?

Direct black carbon monitoring at intervention sites would be considered an added value, but we will also consider study designs that model or simulate black carbon emission reductions using existing emission inventories or any other ex-situ or in-situ data.

What climate metrics and methods do Clean Air Fund expect applicants to use when assessing climate impacts?

In terms of climate metrics, we do not expect or require emission-based radiative forcing estimates. We are more interested in CO₂-equivalent reduction (GWP20 and GWP100) in scope through this process. We expect that applicants use UNFCCC methodology for the calculation of CO₂- equivalent reductions. The study does not need to extend to snow and glacier deposition modelling.

Can a regional study use a harmonised evaluation protocol across two countries where the local technologies differ slightly?

We are open to receiving applications for regional studies that use a harmonised evaluation protocol across more than one country. The application should include details of the local technology(ies) and how they differ.

Does the Clean Air Fund expect study protocols to be pre-registered?

Depending on the type of study proposed, we recommend submitting study protocols on global research databases during the project timelines.

Does the exclusion of randomised controlled trials extend to random selection of monitoring sites or participants, where assignment of the intervention itself is not randomised?

We will prioritise studies with natural and quasi experimental methodologies, where the intervention is already / imminently in place. As such, this would not include a component of randomisation, but a comparator group would need to be selected and demonstrated as part of the study.

We are open to a range of methodologies and study designs that can credibly assess real-world reductions in black carbon exposure and associated health and climate outcomes. Applicants should clearly explain their sampling strategy, comparison approach and how the design supports valid evaluation under actual-use conditions.

Is there a minimum number of operational seasons? Would a design covering three seasons be favoured over one covering two?

We do not have a fixed minimum number of operational seasons. The proposed study period should be appropriate to the intervention, setting, seasonal pattern of emissions or exposure, and the outcomes being measured. Designs covering more than one relevant season may be stronger where seasonality is important, for example for space heating or seasonal industrial activity, but a longer study will not automatically be favoured over a shorter one.

What type of measurement is being referred to in the EOI Research Methodology section where it states “whether measurement will continue after implementation ends”?

We are interested to hear about any long-term plans for how research findings may be used beyond the project timeframe. However, this is not something that will influence our decision regarding the project.

Would a matched-control design comparing such intervention sites with comparable households or institutions continuing to use conventional combustion-based space heating satisfy the requirement to evaluate the intervention under actual-use conditions?

Yes, this study design would satisfy the call requirements to evaluate the intervention under actual-use conditions.

Could the expected scope and objectives of the participatory component be further clarified?

We have deliberately left the scope of the participatory component open as we would like applicants to define respective approaches. Real world engagement (as opposed to virtual) will be preferred where feasible as we consider this more likely to yield research outcomes.

Data access, governance & stakeholder engagement

Are applicants expected to secure access to local emissions, activity, exposure, and health datasets independently, or can CAF facilitate access to relevant local initiatives, programmes, stakeholders, or data sources where appropriate?

Yes. Applicants are required to secure access to relevant datasets independently of Clean Air Fund.

Does CAF expect applicants to independently establish relationships with local authorities, implementing organisations, and communities, or can CAF facilitate connections with relevant stakeholders and existing programmes where appropriate?

Yes. We expect that applicants already have or are capable of establishing relevant relationships independently of Clean Air Fund.

Is an award conditional on national research or ethics clearances being in place before the start date?

If the study requires ethics clearance, we will require that successful applicants have this in place before the start date of the study. We appreciate that these processes can take some time and so we will retain some flexibility for the start date in discussion with the awardee.

Who owns the data and intellectual property generated, and does the Fund require approval of, or an embargo on, publications?

All outputs produced as a result of or arising out of the project funded by Clean Air Fund and any intellectual property generated will be owned by the grantee/s. Clean Air Fund does not need to approve publications.

Original, published research that arises from this funding must be open and accessible to everyone in line with Wellcome's Open Access policy: <https://wellcome.org/research-funding/guidance/ending-a-grant/open-access-guidance/open-access-policy>. This will be detailed in the grant agreement that we sign with successful applicants.

What safeguarding policies are required for studies involving children and vulnerable adults?

Organisations will be required to comply with Clean Air Fund's Safeguarding and Child Protection Agreement for Grantees, which will be signed at the same time as signing a grant agreement. This includes the requirement that you have a safeguarding and child protection policy that is

appropriately tailored to the nature and character of your organisation (your Policy). You will also ensure that all Third Parties who work with children have their own safeguarding and child protection policy and comply with Clean Air Fund's policy. Copies of this policy can be made available upon request.

Applicant eligibility

May an organisation submit more than one Expression of Interest, or be a partner in another applicant's submission?

Yes, the same organisation may submit or participate in more than one EOI for this call.

May partner organisations be added or changed between Expression of Interest and full proposal?

The consortiums partners should already be identified at the EOI stage. Partner organisations should not be changed between the Expression of Interest and full proposal stage, but new partners may be added in discussion with Clean Air Fund. We do not require confirmation or letters of support at the EOI stage.

Must the principal investigator and all personnel be named at EOI stage? Are CVs required?

This is not required at EOI stage but will be required at full proposal stage. Full CVs are also not required at EOI stage.

Can international universities, private technology providers and government agencies participate as partners or subgrantees?

Research institutes, higher education institutions, not-for-profit or non-governmental research organisations are all eligible types of organisations. Commercial organisations may also be eligible, although we would prefer that they participate as co-applicants or collaborators as opposed to the lead applicant on an application. Government agencies are not eligible for funding but can be unfunded partners.

Is participation of an organization based on the target LMIC required, strongly preferred, or considered an added value?

While this is not a requirement, we will have a strong preference for applications that are led by or include partners based in the target LMIC to ensure that local knowledge is embedded in the research design and as part of our organisational commitment to equity.

Do the eligibility declarations apply only to the lead organisation, or also to each partner organisation and each named individual? Where a partner is a large institution such as a university, does a grant held by an unrelated department or researcher affect eligibility?

The eligibility requirements apply to each partner organisation and named individual participating in the application. Grants held by an unrelated department or researcher within the same university will not affect eligibility.

Please refer to the eligibility criteria detailed on our webpage for further details on eligibility requirements: <https://www.cleanairfund.org/what-we-do/research-funding-opportunities/>

What consortium structures are allowed?

We will have a preference for a consortium structure that involves one lead applicant who serves as the administering organisation and signs up to our grant conditions, with other partners involved as co-applicants or collaborators where sub-granting is overseen by the lead applicant. We may be able to consider alternative arrangements and this can be discussed with applicants who are invited to submit full proposals.

GOapply process and submission

I am experiencing issues with submitting my application via Clean Air Fund's GOapply portal. What should I do?

As a first step, please ensure that you have reviewed the GOapply portal guidance which is available on our website at the following link: <https://s40026.pcdn.co/wp-content/uploads/GOapply-Guidance-for-External-Applicants.pdf>. If this does not resolve the issue, you are welcome to contact us at superpollutants@cleanairfund.org and we will do our best to support you.

Do character limits include spaces and line breaks, and does the portal preserve paragraph formatting?

Character limits are comprehensive, including all spaces and line breaks. Paragraph formatting may not be preserved in all cases.

May references be included, and do they count towards character limits? May attachments such as maps or letters of support be uploaded?

References will be included in any character limits. We do not require references at the Expression of Interest stage, but they should be included at full proposal stage. Attachments cannot be uploaded at the EOI stage.

Can drafts be saved in the portal, and can a submitted Expression of Interest be edited before the deadline?

Please refer to the GOapply guidance: <https://s40026.pcdn.co/wp-content/uploads/GOapply-Guidance-for-External-Applicants.pdf>. Drafts can be saved in the portal. EOIs cannot be edited once submitted.

What is the deadline for full proposals?

The deadline for full proposals will be communicated to selected applicants.

What language should applications be submitted in?

Applications must be submitted in English. AI usage to assist with translation of applications from other languages to English is permitted in line with Wellcome's policy on the use of generative AI tools in grant application processes. Please see here for further details: <https://wellcome.org/research-funding/guidance/policies-grant-conditions/use-of-generative-ai>

Eligible costs & budget

Please could you confirm whether overheads/indirect costs and taxes are eligible to be included in the budget, and if so, is there a cap?

The total budget ceiling must be inclusive of all costs, including overheads/indirect costs and any applicable taxes and charges. Overheads are capped at 15% for lead organisations and 10% for subgrantees.

Considering applicants are allowed to include partners in their proposal, is each individual organization eligible for GBP 220,000 on its own?

The budget ceiling of GBP 220,000 is for the entire project and must therefore be inclusive of any sub-grant costs to other implementing partners.

Are sub-grants to partners permitted, including to public universities and government bodies?

Sub-grants are permitted if they are within the total budget ceiling, including to public universities. Government bodies cannot be included as sub-grantees, but they can be included as unfunded partners.

Are salary costs for permanent staff or Principal and Co-Investigators eligible?

Relevant staff costs, including those for Principal Investigators and Co-Investigators, should be included within the overall budget ceiling and must accurately reflect the time spent on the project. Applicants should clearly justify the level of effort and associated costs proposed. Proposed staff allocations and costs will be considered as part of the selection process.

Will equipment for research and measurement be considered as an eligible cost? Who owns the equipment after the project end?

Research and measuring equipment and any associated costs (e.g. import costs) can be considered as eligible costs, provided that this is appropriately justified and that the project remains within the overall budget ceiling. If you plan to include this equipment in your budget, please highlight this in your application and provide a justification for this as part of the methodology section. We will assess whether the equipment is appropriately justified as part of our review. Equipment purchased with the grant funding does not need to be returned to Clean Air Fund at the end of the project. Clean Air Fund would be interested to learn about any plans for use or transfer of equipment after the end of the project.

Are laboratory analysis, open-access publication charges, data-hosting and translation of outputs all eligible costs?

Laboratory analysis, open-access publication charges, data-hosting costs, and translation of outputs into local languages are all eligible costs, provided they are appropriately justified, represent good value for money, and are included within the overall budget ceiling.

Are the costs of obtaining ethics approvals and national research clearances eligible, and may costs incurred between award and the start date be charged?

Yes, ethics approvals and national research clearances costs are eligible. Costs cannot be charged before the project start date.

Are compensation payments to study participants eligible?

Clean Air Fund cannot fund compensation payments or incentives associated with the implementation or uptake of the intervention itself. However, reasonable and appropriately justified costs to support community participation in the research, including participant reimbursement for travel and subsistence, may be included where necessary and in line with local ethical requirements.

Can funding cover fuel costs during the intervention period?

Clean Air Fund will not be able to cover the development or deployment of intervention technology or fuel costs associated with the intervention technology.

Will awards be structured as grants or as service contracts?

Awards will generally be structured as grants and will follow Clean Air Fund's grant agreement terms. In circumstances, where legal, regulatory or operational context requires alternative contracting arrangements this will be discussed directly with the successful applicant.

Will awards be made and paid in GBP? May budgets be prepared in local currency, and who bears exchange-rate risk?

Awards will be made and paid in GBP. Clean Air Fund's budget templates allow budgets to be prepared and reported in local currency. Applicants should be aware that exchange-rate fluctuations may affect the value of funds received in local currency. In exceptional circumstances, where exchange-rate risks are disproportionately high, we may be able to consider alternative arrangements on a case-by-case basis.

Will payments be made in advance tranches or on reimbursement, and when is the first tranche released relative to the start date?

Awards will generally be paid through advance grant payments rather than on a reimbursement basis. The payment schedule will be discussed with applicants who are invited to the second stage of the application process. Payments will typically be made in three tranches per project year, with the first tranche paid within 30 days of contract signature and subsequent tranches released subject to reporting requirements.

Is there any requirement for, or restriction on, the share of the budget allocated to institutions in high-income countries?

No. However, we are particularly keen to support research consortia and studies led by applicants based in LMICs as part of this call.

What variation is permitted between the budget estimate at Expression of Interest and the final budget at full proposal?

Some minor variation in the budget estimate from EOI to full proposal stage is acceptable as long as the budget does not exceed the budget cap including overheads.

What are the audit and financial reporting requirements, and how often is reporting required?

These requirements will be detailed in the grant agreement that Clean Air Fund signs with the successful applicant(s) and can be discussed with applicants who advance to the second stage.

What organisational due diligence will Clean Air Fund undertake on the lead organisation?

Successful applicants will be required to complete Clean Air Fund's due diligence process before a grant agreement is signed. This process assesses the organisation's legal status,

governance, financial management, operational capacity and relevant risk management systems to ensure that grant funds can be managed appropriately and that the proposed project can be delivered successfully. Our due diligence questionnaire can be made available to applicants who progress to the second stage.