

IUCN NL Land Acquisition Fund - Criteria & Guidelines 2026

The main objective of the IUCN NL Land Acquisition Fund (LAF) is to provide funds for local NGOs and CSOs to acquire threatened nature, create safe reserves and connect habitats for endangered species. The fund supports land purchase, long-term lease of land, and other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs). Since its foundation in 2001, LAF has enabled the purchase / lease of over 320,000 hectares. This document describes the criteria, practical details, and workflow for applications. The deadline for applications is the 1st of May, 2026.

Criteria for application

I. Project objective

The general objective of a proposed project must be in line with the main objective of the land acquisition fund. Projects should contribute directly to tangible conservation outcomes.

II. Implementing organisation

In order to be eligible for LAF grants the applicant must:

- be locally registered non-profit organisations, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) or civil society organisations (CSOs)
- be directly responsible for the preparation and implementation of the grant project
- have a bank account in the name of the organisation and in the place where the organisation is established or where the project is carried out
- have proven experience and capacity in managing conservation areas, including project management, financial management, and financial control.

LAF cannot grant financial assistance to:

- Private individuals
- Commercial (for profit) organisations
- Governmental institutions
- Projects /organisations with a primary focus on sustainable agricultural systems, education-, rescue- or rehabilitation centres.

Applicants may submit multiple proposals, but organisations are generally awarded a maximum of one project per call, amounting to maximum 100,000 euros per grantee.

III. Project area

High priority will be given to land acquisition (through purchase or lease) and to the implementation of OECMs to:

- Secure areas that host species listed as Critically Endangered (CR), Endangered (EN), or Vulnerable (VU) on the IUCN Red List;
- Secure areas of high biodiversity value, including sites located within Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs), Important Bird Areas (IBAs), or Alliance for Zero Extinction (AZE) sites;
- Secure areas that play a critical role in maintaining landscape-level connectivity in high-biodiversity regions (e.g. corridors or stepping-stone habitats), or in safeguarding ecosystem services;
- Secure ecosystems that are underrepresented within the public protected-areas system;
- Secure significant populations of threatened plant and tree species. Proposals should preferably focus on the protection of range-restricted tree species, Alliance for Zero Extinction sites, or unique portions of a species' range.

IV. Geographical range

Local conservation NGOs and CSOs operating in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Pacific are eligible for this programme and are invited to submit proposals.

V. Local participation

The project should seek to harmonise with the needs, views, expertise, and experience of local stakeholders, including attention to the role of women, youth, and marginalised groups. Local participation in conservation and management of the area should be central to the proposal.

VI. Amount & spending of the grant

LAF grants amount to a maximum of 100,000 euro per project. Co-funding is permitted where the impact of the IUCN NL grant is clearly demonstrated and represents a substantial portion of the total project budget, or where the IUCN NL contribution is expected to leverage additional funding from other donors.

In addition to land acquisition, LAF grants may also support initial investments required to ensure the sustainability and conservation impact of the purchase (e.g. fencing, signage, guards' salaries, and accommodation). Please note that such investments may not exceed 30% of the requested budget.

Application process

A schematic flow chart of the application process can be found in figure 1.

I. Pre-proposal

Applications must be submitted using the LAF pre-proposal format available [on this web page](#). Only pre-proposals prepared according to this format, and not exceeding 4 pages (excluding annexes), will be considered. Pre-proposals can be submitted in English, which is the preferred language, or in Spanish.

NGOs are advised to read our publication '[Sustainable Nature Reserves: Guidelines for privately protected areas](#)' before submitting a pre-proposal (available in English, Spanish and Portuguese).

Important: The availability of good maps is a very important selection criterion. Pre-proposals lacking good maps will be rejected immediately!!

II. Deadline & submission

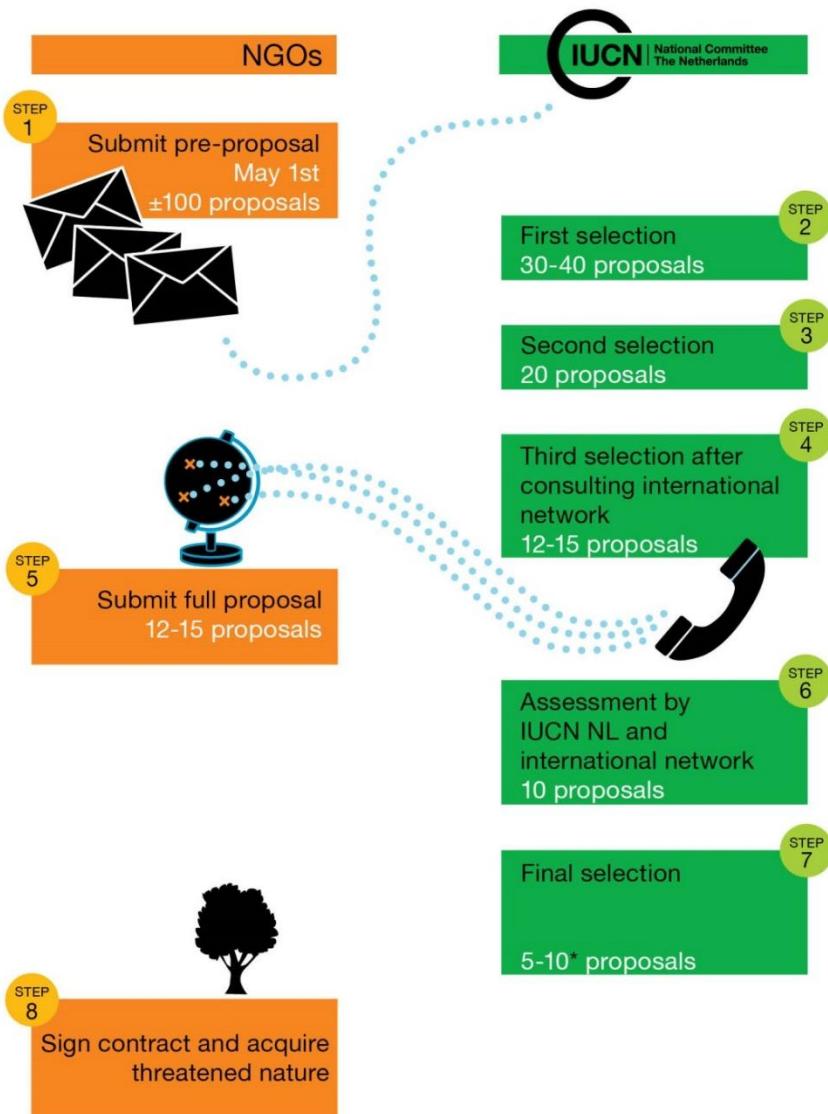
The deadline for applications (pre-proposals) is the **1st of May, 2026**. All applications must be submitted in a .docx format and must be sent to landacquisitionfund@iucn.nl before the deadline. Questions about the procedure and content of proposals can be sent to the LAF team (landacquisitionfund@iucn.nl) and/or directly to the coordinator (marc.hoogeslag@iucn.nl).

III. Assessment & selection

All pre-proposals will be screened by IUCN NL, with support from a global network of experts. Following a positive assessment, a limited number of applicants will be invited to submit a full proposal.

Full proposals will be evaluated by IUCN NL in consultation with international and regional experts. A selection of proposals will be awarded grants, with final funding decisions expected in October 2026.

Please note that an invitation to develop a full project proposal does not constitute a guarantee of funding. The Land Acquisition Fund does not use Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the review process and expects applicants to develop their proposals without AI assistance. If you do choose to use AI, please disclose how and why it was used in your proposal.



* Depending on available budget

Figure 1. Flow chart of application process for the IUCN NL Land Acquisition Fund. The numbers of proposals mentioned are indicative.