

# John Ellerman Foundation

## **UK Overseas Territories Fund**

The environments of the UK Overseas Territories (UKOTs) are of global significance: they hold 94% of our unique species, pristine rainforests, vast coral reefs, a quarter of the world's penguins and the fifth largest marine estate on the planet. These small islands are at the forefront of our nature and climate crises: three quarters of the world's known extinctions since the year 1500 have occurred on islands, while extreme weather events pose a potentially existential threat. In recognition of these extraordinary natural assets which far exceed those in the UK, we consider the biodiversity of the UKOTs to be of national and international importance. John Ellerman Foundation has been supporting land-based and marine-related work in the Territories since 2013, and are pleased to invest in environmental work via the UKOTs Fund, which is a funder collaboration that we lead.

## **Aim**

John Ellerman Foundation has been leading the multi-funder UKOTs Fund since 2021. We have run two rounds of the UKOTs Fund, and distributed circa £1.8m to support 17 organisations in ten of the UKOTs. You can read our report about what we have supported and achieved so far [by clicking here: The UK Overseas Territories Fund: An unparalleled opportunity for environmental philanthropy](#).

We want to support transformative and locally-led change in the UKOTs through responsive environmental grantmaking. This includes capacity-building, policy work and practical conservation efforts, with partnerships and community empowerment playing a critical role in achieving positive environmental outcomes.

We are delighted to now be launching a new round of the UKOTs Fund, with £750,000 available for funding. This is a collaboration between a group of committed environmental funders, comprising:

- Elgol Fund for Nature
- John Ellerman Foundation
- Lund Trust
- Simon Gibson Charitable Trust
- The Fishmongers' Company
- The Ma'at Environment Fund.

We have also received a donation from an individual donor.

## **What we will fund**

Our preference is to support core costs funding, but we can support project funding requests where an organisation has identified that this would be more beneficial for their environmental impact aims. We welcome funding applications for practical conservation activities in support of the protection and restoration of habitats and species on land and in the sea. We will also consider funding organisational capacity building, policy related work, acquisition of land with intrinsic conservation value, and advocacy for the creation and

implementation of legislative frameworks. We also provide grants for core costs, which can be used by a successful applicant to cover core costs, salaries, overheads etc. as is most needed. Regardless of the specific nature of the funded work, we are always keen to fund work which has a legacy beyond the life of the grant.

It is our intention that this special fund will support a variety of organisations and projects, through grants ranging in size between £10k and £150k, for a period of up to three years. We anticipate making no more than one grant per organisation. However, this does not apply to organisations acting as a conduit for Territory-based NGOs.

### **What we don't fund**

We will not fund:

- capital developments and individual items of equipment
- land acquisition for financial or speculative purposes
- one-off events, such as conferences, trips, or seminars
- environmental educational projects.

### **Who can apply**

We welcome applications from UK charities working in partnership with local Territory-based NGOs and from charities based in the UKOTs. UKOTs-based charities can apply either directly or through a conduit in the UK. We are prioritising supporting organisations with an annual income of between £100k and £10m. More detail about this is provided in the FAQs section for the UKOTs Fund, which is included at the end of this document. We are particularly interested in supporting organisations which:

- understand both the significance of habitats for human wellbeing and the impact of people on nature
- look for sustainable solutions by ensuring that the livelihoods and economic needs of local communities are integrated into their thinking and strategy
- work collaboratively with partners and other stakeholders in the Territories and/or the UK
- tackle causes as well as symptoms.

The organisation applying must also be able to demonstrate the following:

- commitment to impact and learning
- awareness of its role and legitimacy to operate in the Territories
- strong leadership and commitment from senior management, Board or governing body
- effective financial management
- the difference a grant would make, to the organisation and other relevant stakeholders, the natural environment and local community, and/or policy and legislative frameworks.

### **Applying to the Fund**

The [online application portal](#) for the UK Overseas Territories Fund will be open from Monday, 16 March 2026.

We are operating a one-stage written process. All applicants are expected to submit a three-page proposal with supporting financial documents. In some cases we will decide whether to award a grant based on the written application alone. However, for larger grants, or where we need further clarifying information, we will arrange a virtual follow-up meeting.

Written applications must be received by 11am (UK time) on Tuesday, 5 May 2026. We expect to make decisions in May 2026, and so you should plan for the work funded by a grant to start in June 2026 at earliest.

If you have any queries in the meantime about eligibility criteria or the application process, please refer to the FAQs at the end of this document in the first instance. You can also contact Sufina Ahmad, Director via [sufina@ellerman.org.uk](mailto:sufina@ellerman.org.uk) prior to applying. We will also hold virtual group question and answer sessions where the team will be on hand to answer questions from applicants. You can find out the details of these sessions on our website [by clicking here](#).

The application process is different from our main grantmaking process. You can apply to the UKOTs Fund if you have been rejected by the UKOTs Fund previously, or have been rejected by John Ellerman Foundation previously. We can also accept applications from existing John Ellerman Foundation grant-holders. However, in order to manage demand and competition for this UK Overseas Territories Fund, we may need to prioritise applications which are not from organisations that we are already funding. Finally, organisations with recently completed grants are welcome to apply and there is no required waiting period before submitting another application.

### **Stage 1**

Your written application should include:

1. A description of what you are seeking funding for, on no more than three sides of A4. Please include:
  - a brief description of your organisation, relevant track record, and your legitimacy to operate within the one or more Territories that the work relates to
  - background information about the nature and importance of the local environment
  - what you would like us to fund, including (where possible) a specific amount and number of years for which funding is sought
  - how your proposal matches what we fund and are looking for (see above).
2. Financial information:

If you are a charity, a copy of your most recent annual accounts. If you are part of a larger organisation (such as a university) please provide an income and expenditure statement for the running costs of your department or unit, and explain how its funds are kept distinct from those of the wider institution. If your accounts show a significant surplus or deficit, high or low reserves, please explain this briefly, including your policy on their future use/replenishment. If the year-end date of your accounts is more than 10 months old, please include your latest management accounts. If you are planning to apply through a conduit, please get in touch prior to applying so we can discuss the financial information required from both parties.

### **Stage 2 (for larger and/or grants where more information is required only)**

If we require a follow-up conversation to discuss the proposal in more detail, we will arrange to meet with you and, where relevant, the conduit organisation. This meeting will take place virtually and is intended to find out more about you and your work. It will include representatives from John Ellerman Foundation and other potential funders.

## **UK Overseas Territories Fund - frequently asked questions**

### **Will you support work that takes place in a single Territory?**

We will fund organisations working in a single Territory or whose work has impact across multiple Territories.

### **Do I have to be a registered charity to apply?**

We prefer to make grants to registered, excepted or exempt charities. However, we will sometimes make an exception, but your application will need to provide an explanation as to why you have chosen not to be a charity.

### **Do you only make grants to charities based in the UK?**

While we fund UK-based charities working in the UKOTs, we are also happy to accept direct applications from Territory-registered charities or through UK-based conduits. We aim to take a nuanced approach and distinguish between Territories based on their respective charity governance systems.

In practice this means the following:

- NGOs registered in Territories with UK-modelled charity governance systems (**Bermuda, Cayman Islands, Gibraltar, and St Helena**) will be able to apply directly.
- Charities registered in Territories which have non-profit oversight systems that are primarily finance-focussed (**Anguilla, British Virgin Islands, Montserrat, Turks & Caicos**) will also be considered for direct funding. However, to ensure an extra level of compliance, NGOs from these Territories will be required to show evidence that they have been successfully accepted as the lead organisation on a UK Government Darwin Plus project grant or an EU BEST grant.
- Given the minimal local charity governance we will not accept direct funding requests from NGOs which are registered solely in the **Falkland Islands**, and will require applications to be made via a UK-registered charity.

If your Territory is not listed, or if you have any queries regarding the most appropriate application mechanism, please feel free to contact a member of the team for advice.

### **Do you have any restrictions on the annual income of organisations applying?**

We are prioritising funding organisations that have an annual income of between £100,000 and £10,000,000 only. We have set this range due to the level of funds available and our desire to support organisations that would benefit from a multi-year grant at the levels we are offering. If you are applying for funding through a conduit, then it is fine for the conduit's income to be above £10,000,000.

### **How much can I apply for?**

It is our intention that this special fund will support a variety of organisations and projects, through grants ranging in size between £10k and £150k, for a period of up to three years. We anticipate making no more than one grant per organisation. However, this does not apply to organisations acting as a conduit for Territory-based NGOs.

### **Are there other funders involved in the UK Overseas Territories Fund?**

John Ellerman Foundation is leading on the design and implementation of this funding initiative, with support from a number of other mainly UK-based funders and the Environmental Funders Network.

**Do you have a preference for conservation or policy-related work?**

We do not have a preference. To-date, we have supported practical conservation activity, work that strengthens environmental policy, and work that ensures the implementation of existing legislative frameworks.

**Does the UKOTs Fund have particular focus areas?**

While we have an interest in terrestrial as well as marine-related environments, we do not focus on any particular Territories, habitats or species. We recognise the interdependence of communities, habitats and species and therefore seek to support organisations which apply this in their thinking and practice. As this is a pooled fund, and to reflect the funding interests of other funders, a small proportion of the fund may be reserved for work focussed on advancing marine community engagement and partnership-building, helping build local support to secure marine protections of marine and mangrove areas, as well improve the effective management of existing MPAs and protected mangrove forests.

**When do you fund core costs and when do you prefer to fund a project?**

As a responsive, discerning and flexible funder, we listen to what you judge is important. Our main interest is in supporting organisations whose work matches our funding priorities. We believe that core funding is often the most valuable contribution we can make, especially in a context such as the UKOTs where such funding that is towards an organisation's core operating costs is never normally available. Core funding is a direct contribution to the core costs of an organisation, and can be spent upon any expenses, from salaries to insurance, IT and HR support to marketing materials and vehicle maintenance. Applicants should demonstrate a funding need and that they do not hold excessive free reserves, i.e. unspent and unrestricted funds. A core funding need could be demonstrated by evidencing recent in-Territory impact and outlining upcoming priorities where the organisation's ongoing presence or inputs will seek to make a difference. Note that we are particularly keen to encourage more core cost applications in this round of funding, especially from Territory charities which have never received this type of financial support before.

If you think a project grant would be best, you can apply for that instead. We are aware that a modest core grant will have a limited impact on the finances of larger organisations, so if your income is close to or over £10m a year, it will likely be better to apply for a project grant.

**When will you fund research?**

We recognise that rigorous research and policy analysis can provide the evidence and arguments to advocate for important changes in practice. We prefer to fund this sort of work if it is grounded in real life experience, includes the voices of those affected and is likely to make a practical difference. When considering such proposals, your track record, expertise, knowledge of the context and understanding of how to effect such change will be important considerations.

**Do you fund universities?**

Not usually, and not for their core work. Exceptionally, we may consider an application from a specialist unit if you are a centre of excellence and a leader in your field. Your work should:

- be distinctive and likely to make a practical difference
- involve partnerships with charities or NGOs
- have a budget that includes no contribution to overheads
- strongly match our funding interests

- demonstrate mechanisms for openly sharing all data gathered with the relevant Territory/Territories
- evidence Territory-based demand for the work and, for inhabited Territories, long-term capacity-building.

**When is the best time for me to apply? Do you have any deadlines?**

Unlike the rest of our grantmaking, this funding stream has a defined application window. You can submit your application between Monday, 16 April 2026 and 11am (UK Time) on Tuesday, 5 May 2026.

**How quickly will I know your decision?**

We will acknowledge your application upon receipt of your proposal via our online portal. We expect to be making decisions in May 2026, including whether we require a virtual follow-up meeting to assess your application further, meaning you should hear back about your first stage application by the end of the month. Follow-up meetings will take place in June 2026.

**If our organisation has applied to John Ellerman Foundation's main grants programme or the 2021 and 2022 UKOTs Fund unsuccessfully in the past, can we apply to this fund?**

Yes – we are accepting applications from organisations that have been rejected from John Ellerman Foundation's main grantmaking programme or the 2021 and 2022 UKOTs Fund.

**If our organisation has a grant already with John Ellerman Foundation through the main grants programme or the 2021 or 2022 UKOTs Fund, can we apply to this Fund as well?**

Yes – we are open to accepting applications from existing John Ellerman Foundation grant-holders. However, in order to manage demand and competition for this UK Overseas Territories Fund, we may need to prioritise applications which are not from organisations that we are already funding.

**If our organisation has a grant from John Ellerman Foundation which has recently finished, can we apply to this fund?**

Yes – organisations with recently completed grants are welcome to apply and there is no required waiting period before submitting another application.

**Can I discuss my application with you before I apply?**

We are always happy to discuss potential applications. Before you get in touch, please read our guidance. We are also planning to hold virtual question and answer sessions during the application window; for further details, please consult our website [by clicking here](#).