

## **GRANT CALL**

### *Tropical Forest Ecology Research (TFER) Grants and Fellowships Scheme: 2026 Call*

#### **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)**

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Please note that the FAQs will be updated periodically. Please refer to [www.nparks.gov.sg/services/research-programmes/TFER-GFS](http://www.nparks.gov.sg/services/research-programmes/TFER-GFS) for the latest version of the FAQs.

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#### **1. GENERAL**

##### **1.1 Can the research team/Lead Applicant propose a research topic outside of the Call Topic?**

Project teams/applicants are welcome to propose additional research topics outside of the Call Topics, but with relevance to tropical forest ecology. Proposals that address the specified Call Topics will be favourably considered.

##### **1.2 Will NParks share the data required to carry out the research for the project?**

Applicants should clearly identify the source of any essential data required for the proposed project during proposal submission, such as under the “Methodology and Work Plan” section of the project proposal. Applicants may also indicate whether they already know that the required data exists.

NParks will help to facilitate data sharing, including between other agencies where appropriate and relevant. Please note that access to data is ultimately subject to permission from the respective data owners.

##### **1.3 Will NParks facilitate the application for permits and provide support for research to be undertaken at NParks-managed sites?**

NParks will facilitate discussion with the respective site managers of the NParks-managed sites. Research teams are ultimately responsible for applying for and ensuring the validity of the necessary permits, and the final decision for the granting of permits lies with the site managers responsible for each respective site, at their own discretion.

NParks, at its own discretion, may also provide on-site support to facilitate the project activities at its own managed sites.

**1.4 What is the mechanism for fund disbursement?**

Fund disbursement will be via reimbursement on an annual basis, and in accordance with identified payment milestones, as described in the payment schedule agreed upon between NParks and the institution of the Lead Applicant. For the short-term fellowship component, the payment schedule will be agreed upon between NParks and the Lead Applicant.

**1.5 How many projects will be awarded under the Grant Call?**

NParks may award 2–3 projects under the Grant Call. However, less or no projects may be awarded if there are insufficient proposals deemed suitable.

**1.6 When will successful applicants for the Grant Call be informed?**

We hope to identify and inform successful applicants from Q3 2026 onwards. Other applicants will also be individually informed on the outcome of their respective applications, once assessed and decided upon.

**1.7 Can applicants apply for both the small grants component and the short-term fellowship component?**

Yes, applicants may choose to apply for both components under the same project, provided they meet the eligibility criteria for each. If applying for both, the total fellowship stipend is included when considering the limit of funding support (but should be kept separate from the research budget).

**1.8 Is the fellowship stipend amount variable depending on the applicant?**

No, the fellowship stipend amount is fixed at SGD5,250 per month. The fellowship duration may vary based on the research proposal, with a recommended duration of 3 months.

**1.9 Can the short-term fellowship duration be more than/less than 3 months?**

The fellowship duration can be less than 3 months but is recommended to be no more than 3 months due to visa restrictions for overseas applicants. The full fellowship duration must be spent physically in Singapore. Local applicants (i.e., residents of Singapore) or applicants holding a visa that allows them to stay longer, will have to provide strong justifications in their proposal for fellowship durations of more than 3 months.

**1.10 Do applicants need to make their own visa arrangements for the short-term fellowship component?**

NParks will assist with visa applications. However, visa approval is determined by the Ministry of Manpower and Immigration & Checkpoints Authority, and cannot be guaranteed. Fellowship awards are contingent upon successful visa approval.

**1.11 Given the maximum project duration is 2 years, would more frequent fund reimbursements than annually be possible if tied to specific milestones? How does NParks handle reimbursement in accordance with payment milestones, as fund disbursement via reimbursement typically differs from milestone-based payments?**

Reimbursement is conducted upon acceptance of an Inception Report (to be submitted by Month 6, for projects lasting a year or longer), 1<sup>st</sup> year progress report (to be submitted by Month 12, for projects lasting 1.5 years or longer), and/or Final Report (to be submitted before project end date). Based on the Report(s), we will assess if the agreed-upon deliverables and milestones are met (or in the case of Inception/Progress Reports, whether delays are reasonably accounted for with appropriate mitigation measures taken). If accepted, the institution may proceed to submit the claim for reimbursement of expenses incurred for the period covered by the report.

Project duration	Schedule of reimbursements	Period of claim
< 12 months	1. After acceptance of the Final Report	1. Project start date to end date
12 months or longer (but <18 months)	1. After acceptance of the Inception Report 2. After acceptance of the Final Report	1. Project start date to end of period covered by Inception Report (e.g., end of Month 6) 2. Remaining period to project end date
18 – 24 months	1. After acceptance of the Inception Report 2. After acceptance of the 1 <sup>st</sup> year Progress Report 3. After acceptance of the Final Report	1. Project start date to end of period covered by Inception Report (e.g., end of Month 6) 2. Remaining period to project end date 3. Remaining period to project end date

**1.12 In relation to data security certification, our institution has the cyber trust mark (CTM) certification. Would this suffice?**

The cybersecurity and data protection certifications required will be determined after evaluating the project, as requirements depend on the nature of each specific project. There are different tiers within the CTM framework, and the required tier (if any) will be determined following project evaluation based on the specific research needs.

**1.13 Is the funding agency of this grant call from National Research Foundation (NRF) or NParks?**

The funding agency is NParks.

**1.14 Does this grant call follow the standard harmonised terms and conditions?**

The terms and conditions (T&Cs) are harmonised with NRF's T&Cs. The eligibility criteria, however, is different as this is meant to support early career researchers from Southeast Asia.

**1.15 Are there plans to continue the TFER GFS in the future?**

Yes, the TFER GFS is intended to have an annual grant call, although call topics may change based on emerging areas of concern or previously addressed topics.

**1.16 Are there specific requirements for co-funding?**

If your project has additional funding sources, this will need to be stated on the application form. The additional funding sources may play a part when evaluating the proposal.

**1.17 For the small grants component, if administrative restrictions require the Principal Investigator (PI) to be a faculty member rather than the early career researcher, is this acceptable?**

For NParks, we consider the Lead Applicant to be the early career researcher who is the primary recipient of the grant. However, we understand that some Singapore-based institutions may have administrative requirements where the PI listed on a Project Agreement and responsible for use of funds from the grant must be holding a particular position such as being a faculty member and not a student or research assistant/associate/fellow. This is acceptable to NParks, provided that the student or research staff remains the Lead Applicant who completes the application form, and the supervising faculty member provides the necessary endorsement on the TFER GFS application form. See also the answer to Question 4.2.

**1.18 Are we allowed to request technical feedback from NParks during the proposal writing process?**

No, we cannot give any technical feedback before the proposals are evaluated, to ensure fairness to other applicants. However, if there are any general questions about the TFER GFS, e.g. regarding the scheme mechanics, please feel free to email [momoka\\_ang@nparks.gov.sg](mailto:momoka_ang@nparks.gov.sg). Answers to all received queries will be reflected in the Grant Call FAQs document, which will be updated periodically to ensure all applicants have equal access to additional information.

**1.19 Is funding given directly to the Lead Applicant, or to the IHL?**

For the small grants component, the agreement is signed between the IHL and NParks, and payment is made via reimbursement to the IHL.

For the short-term fellowship component, the agreement is signed directly between the Lead Applicant and NParks, and the fellowship stipend is given directly to the Lead Applicant.

**1.20 Can requested data (e.g. TFER permanent research plots data) be accessed prior to proposal submission?**

No, access to the data can only be given after the grant is awarded. See also answer to Question 1.2.

**1.21 If a team member is unable to remain in Singapore for the full duration of the fellowship, provided the Lead Applicant can be based in Singapore throughout the fellowship period, is this acceptable?**

For both the fellowship and small grants component, there is no requirement for collaborators to be based in Singapore. Please note that for the fellowship component, only the Lead Applicant is provided with the fellowship stipend and accommodation allowance (if applicable). NParks will assist with visa applications for the Lead Applicant only.

**1.22 Is the TFER GFS open to research that employs artistic methods as well as plant research?**

The TFER GFS is targeted towards ecological research on tropical forests employing the scientific method, i.e., collecting of data for the testing of hypotheses (whether theoretical and applied) using methods that are replicable. Please refer to the Grant Call Info Sheet for further information on the evaluation criteria.

## **2 Eligibility**

### **2.1 Are individuals allowed to participate in multiple proposals for the Grant Call, as per the following scenarios?**

- (1) As a Lead Applicant in one proposal and a Collaborator in other proposal(s).**
- (2) As a Collaborator in multiple proposal(s).**

Individuals may participate as collaborators in multiple proposals but can only serve as the Lead Applicant for one proposal.

### **2.2 Can NParks staff be listed as Collaborators in a submitted proposal?**

The Grant Call has already been conceptualised in consultation with NParks staff, who will be involved in evaluating and refining submitted proposals and driving and participating in the awarded research project.

As such, NParks staff should not be listed as Collaborators in the initial submitted proposal, nor directly involved in the preparation of any proposal.

Please direct all enquiries on the Grant Call to [Momoka\\_Ang@nparks.gov.sg](mailto:Momoka_Ang@nparks.gov.sg).

### **2.3 Is the TFER GFS targeted mainly for postgraduate students and postdoctoral researchers?**

This call is targeted at early career researchers, including postgraduate students and postdoctoral researchers who are within 5 years of being conferred their postgraduate degree. Please refer to the Grant Call Info Sheet for the full eligibility criteria.

### **2.4 Are researchers holding visiting/adjunct positions considered affiliated to their respective institutions?**

Visiting and adjunct positions will be considered as being affiliated to their respective institutions as long as the relevant authorities at the host institutions can provide endorsement to confirm that they will be provided with the institutional support for administration of the grant upon award. The affiliation should be expected to last until the projected end of the project, and the supervising or host faculty member must provide support for the application.

### **2.5 Are researchers who are not Singapore citizens, Singapore Permanent Residents (PRs), or ASEAN citizens eligible to apply as Lead Applicants for the small grants component if they are affiliated with a Singapore-based Institute of Higher Learning (IHL)?**

No, researchers who are not Singapore citizens, Singapore PRs, or ASEAN citizens are not eligible to apply as Lead Applicants for the small grants component, regardless of their affiliation with a Singapore-based IHL. They are also not eligible for the short-term fellowship component. However, they may participate as collaborators under an eligible Lead Applicant in the small grants component.

**2.6 For the small grants component, can researchers who are not eligible to apply as a Lead Applicant be listed as co-investigators or research fellows under an eligible Lead Applicant?**

Under our TFER GFS, there are only two roles: Lead Applicants and Collaborators. Any names listed other than the Lead Applicant are treated as Collaborators in the application.

Please note that the Lead Applicant is responsible for executing and delivering on the work. The strength and future potential of the Lead Applicant, including relevance of a past track record or current research pursuits to the proposed project tasks, will also be considered when evaluating proposals. Additionally, each Lead Applicant may only submit one proposal.

**2.7 Is the TFER GFS open to faculty members?**

Yes, the TFER GFS is open to faculty members, provided they fulfil the eligibility criteria, including being within 5 years of being conferred a postgraduate research degree at the deadline of the grant call. See also the answer to Question 3.3.

**2.8 For the short-term fellowship component, if the fellow is based overseas, is a local IHL required to host the fellow for the fellowship duration?**

For the short-term fellowship component, the fellow is not required to be hosted or affiliated with a local IHL. The fellow will work directly with NParks and will sign an agreement directly with NParks.

**2.9 Are proposals with sites in other ASEAN countries eligible?**

The proposal needs to have a Singapore component, e.g. using the TFER permanent research plot data. As long as there is a Singapore component, we are able to support proposals with additional sites in other ASEAN countries.

**2.10 I am a recent graduate from a local IHL. Am I eligible to apply for the small grants component?**

The small grants component requires the Lead Applicant to have a current affiliation with a local Singapore-based IHL, and the affiliation should be expected to last until the projected end of the project. Recent graduates who hold current positions such as research staff (including visiting fellows or adjunct faculty) or are faculty members at these institutions are considered affiliated and therefore satisfy this criterion.

Lead Applicants without an affiliation with a local Singapore-based IHL could apply for the fellowship component instead.

Please refer to the Grant Call Info Sheet for complete eligibility criteria.

### **3 APPLICATION DOCUMENTS**

#### **3.1 For the short-term fellowship component, does an IHL need to endorse the application form?**

For the short-term fellowship component, signatures for section 18 (1) – (3) on the TFER GFS application form are optional; only the Lead Applicant's signature is required.

#### **3.2 Under the TFER GFS application form, is section 18 (3) mandatory to be endorsed by the IHL's Research Director or can this section be endorsed by the IHL's unit's higher authority based on their delegation of authority (DOA) (e.g. Associate Dean (Research)) from the respective IHL?**

For applications involving the small grants component, section 18 (3) in the TFER GFS application form can be endorsed by the IHL's higher authority based on their delegation of authority. (For applications for the short-term fellowship component only, signatures for section 18 (1) – (3) are optional; see answer to Question 3.1 above.)

#### **3.3 Under the TFER GFS application form, if the Lead Applicant is a faculty member, does section 18 (1) need to be endorsed?**

If the Lead Applicant is a faculty member who directly reports to a Head of Department or equivalent, they can skip section 18 (1) and proceed directly to obtaining endorsement for section 18 (2) onwards.

### **4 EVALUATION AND AWARD**

#### **4.1 What kind of agreement is required between institutions and NParks? Will there be an official Letter of Award (LOA) for a successful project?**

No, there will not be an official LOA for a successful project. For the small grants component, a Project Agreement (sometimes referred to as the Research Collaboration Agreement, or RCA), with terms and conditions, will be signed between the institution and NParks.

For the short-term fellowship component, awardees will sign agreements directly with NParks in their own personal capacity.

#### **4.2 Is the TFER GFS awarded to the supervisor or to the postdoc student?**

The TFER GFS is awarded to the Lead Applicant (the early career researcher). For the small grants component, if administrative requirements dictate that funds must be managed by a supervisor or faculty member, or if institutional agreements must be signed by the supervisor, NParks has no objections to this arrangement. See also the answer to Question 1.17.

## **5 GRANT CALL TOPICS**

**5.1 Is the focus for grant call topic 4, “Impacts of invasive species and improving the cost-effectiveness of control methods” only on plants? Are studies on invasive fauna favourable under this theme as well?**

Grant call topic 4 is open to any invasive species, including invasive fauna.

## **6 TFER PERMANENT RESEARCH PLOTS**

**6.1 Is there an overview of the TFER permanent research plot data that applicants may apply to use?**

[Er et al. \(2023\)](#) and references cited within give an overview of the plot set histories and plot design. Specifically the sets of plots maintained under NParks’ TFER programme are:

- a. 40 ‘Mandai storm forest’ (Mandai) plots; see [Lai et al. \(2022\)](#).
- b. 20 ‘Nature Parks’ (NatureParks) plots; see [Neo et al. \(2017\)](#) but note that only 20 of the 100 plots (in Bukit Batok Nature Park, Bukit Batok Town Park, Thomson Nature Park, and Windsor Nature Park) are maintained under the LTFEM project.
- c. 40 Nee Soon Swamp Forest (NSSF) plots; see [Chong et al. \(2021\)](#). Note that only 21 of the 40 plots are actually in freshwater swamp.
- d. 60 ‘Wong Yew Kwan’ (WYK) plots; see [Wong et al. \(1994\)](#) but note that only one plot in each of 60 of the original 62 clusters were re-established in 2022. Note that three of the 60 plots are in freshwater swamp.
- e. Two 2-ha plots in the Bukit Timah Nature Reserve that are part of ForestGEO network of large permanent forest dynamics plots. See [Lum & Ngo \(2021\)](#) and references cited within for an overview of insights from past research conducted within these plots. See also the [ForestGEO Bukit Timah site page](#) for more information.
- f. The Singapore Botanic Gardens Rain Forest, formerly called the ‘Gardens’ Jungle’; see [Turner et al. \(1996\)](#) for the background of the first census of all trees  $>= 5\text{-cm DBH}$ . Subsequent recensuses were conducted in 2009–2012 and 2019–2021.

**6.2 Are any of the TFER permanent research plot data suitable for studies on forest-associated fauna (such as birds), or can serve as ecological or environmental baselines for such work?**

Aside from data on trees collected as described in Question 6.1, the following data are also collected in a subset of the plots:

- a. One camera trap was deployed at ground-level in each of 60 WYK plots from 2022 to 2024 and 20 Nature Parks plots from 2024 to 2026. In selected plots with ground-level camera traps, arboreal camera traps were also installed.
- b. 10-min point counts of birds were conducted at 39 WYK plots in 2022, 2023, and 2024, and 6 Nature Parks plots in 2024 and 2025. In each year, two counts were conducted in each plot about 1 month apart. During the first count, an acoustic recorder was deployed in the plot to record for 10 min hourly from 7 to 10 am and 4 to 7 pm; during the second point count, the recorder was undeployed.
- c. Flowering (closed flowers; open flowers) and fruiting (unripe fruits; ripe fruits) of selected trees of selected (40+) species were monitored (yes/no) every two weeks in 21 WYK plots from April 2023 to March 2025 and six Nature Parks plots from April 2024 to March 2025.
- d. Litter was collected from four litter traps in each of 21 WYK plots from April 2023 to September 2025 and in each of six Nature Parks plots from October 2024 to September 2025. Collected litter was dried and weighed; lamina were sorted into 40+ major litter-contributing species (or species groups) following similar methodology as [Lam et al. \[2022\]](#) which was conducted in ten of the NSSF plots from July 2018 to July 2019; see [data](#).
- e. Sensors logging temperature, relative humidity, and light at 30-min intervals were installed at selected WYK and Nature Parks plots.

**6.3 Regarding the TFER permanent research plot data, could a brief description, metadata or example variables be shared?**

Sample data of trees can be accessed from the following:

- a. The Mandai plot set data for 2011–2015 can be accessed by installing the [Mandai R package from GitHub](#). Metadata can be accessed by running '?Mandai\_data' after calling the Mandai library.
- b. The Nature Parks plot set for 2011 can be accessed by installing the [novelforestSG R package from CRAN](#); see also the Readme on the [GitHub repository](#). Metadata can be accessed by running '?novelforest\_data' after calling the novelforestSG library.

The data available for trees in the permanent plots maintained under NParks' TFER programme will be similar to these examples. For other data collected in the plots, please see Question 6.2.

**6.4 Do the TFER permanent research plot data include information on disease occurrence?**

No, the TFER permanent research plot data do not have information on disease occurrence.