GROWTH & INNOVATION FUND

GIF Guidelines
Eligibility

Applicants must be endorsed Better Cotton Programme Partners. Programme Partners must be able to demonstrate that their project is in a location that is a recognised cotton growing area. Project locations must present opportunities for market uptake of Better Cotton produced, and farmers must be able to see the business case for participation. Programme Partners should make solid efforts to build partnerships at a local level that facilitate farmers’ access to the supply chain.

Geographical scope

Applicants must be operating in one of the GIF’s focus countries for the period 2023-26 (see annual RFP for country list).

Length of project

Proposals will be for a three-year period\(^1\)

Number of projects per applicant

A maximum of 4 projects per partner

Local partners

Programme Partners can subcontract a Local Partner to implement part of the project on their behalf. This type of subcontracting and funding must be permitted by local laws. Programme Partners must inform the GIF if they intend to use this approach in the application. The application should be jointly prepared by the Programme Partner and Local Partner with a clear explanation of each partner’s roles and responsibilities. If the application is approved, the Programme Partner must share a copy of the subcontracting agreement between itself and its Local Partner(s) before the funding agreement is shared.

Co-funding

Programme Partners are encouraged to provide a contribution to the project, either from their own sources\(^2\) or from other donors. In the case of corporate Programme Partners, we will expect a significant level of co-funding.\(^3\)

Please note: First-time applicants should submit an Expression of Interest (EoI) to the GIF Team. This can be submitted at any time. If successful, the applicant will be invited to submit a full application in the normal funding cycle.

Programme Partners whose application was rejected\(^2\) in the previous season cannot reapply the following season. After this time, Programme Partners must submit an EoI before responding to an RFP.

Process overview

The Better Cotton GIF year runs from 1st April to 31st March. Annual fund management processes and key milestones for the Small Farm Fund for Northern and Southern Hemisphere applicants are reflected in the diagrams overleaf.

Projects from Northern Hemisphere applicants that the GIF team recommends for rejection will be presented to the FIIC in December. If the FIIC approves the rejection, Partners will receive this decision before the end of the calendar year. This is to facilitate an exit roadmap before the start of the following season. If the FIIC does not reach a consensus decision the project will be discussed in the January FIIC. The FIIC has the final say on all funding decisions, a project recommended for funding by the GIF team and the relevant Better Cotton country team could be rejected in the January FIIC and vice versa.

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1. All applicants will be required to submit a three-year project plan, however, Programme Partners that received an “Approval with Conditions” in the previous season will only be eligible for a one-year grant. This also applies to projects that receive a “Warning Approval” rating that is being introduced in season 2023-24.
2. This can be an in-kind contribution.
3. This does not apply to newly endorsed partners or if a project was rejected purely because of inadequate funds or if multiple applications were received for projects in the same geographical area.
Application evaluation criteria

After the eligibility of the applicant is confirmed, proposals will be evaluated by the GIF Team and Better Cotton country teams according to the criteria below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Project design 40%</th>
<th>Partner capacity and track record 60%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Project relevance to 2030 strategy and country objectives</td>
<td>2. Quality of project design</td>
<td>1. Capacity of Programme Partner to implement and monitor the proposed activities, to report on them, and to account for funds. This will include having appropriately qualified &amp; sufficient staff, with adequate gender representation at all levels, and links or planned links with organisations to fill expertise gaps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Quality of project design</td>
<td>3. Potential impact on smallholder farmers and workers</td>
<td>2. Quality of support / satisfaction of local partners (where applicable)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Potential impact on smallholder farmers and workers</td>
<td>4. Inclusivity, particularly in relation to women who are involved in farming cotton as farmers, 'co-farmers' or workers</td>
<td>3. Positive performance trend over the last three seasons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Inclusivity, particularly in relation to women who are involved in farming cotton as farmers, 'co-farmers' or workers</td>
<td>5. Timeframe feasibility</td>
<td>4. Quality of project improvement action plans and follow up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Timeframe feasibility</td>
<td>6. Realistic budget which is reflective of project plan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Realistic budget which is reflective of project plan</td>
<td>7. Robust M&amp;E plan</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Robust M&amp;E plan</td>
<td>8. Sustainability: there is a plan in place to ensure project sustainability (e.g., to progress farmers to lead farmers, facilitate FPOs etc)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

FIIC decisions are:

**Approved**: The project application is approved. **Approved with condition(s)**: The project application is approved on the condition that certain adjustments are made to the application prior to contracting. If these adjustments are not incorporated within the given time, the project will be rejected. **Warning approval**: The project is approved for one season; any subsequent funding will be contingent on significant improvements being made (as indicated in Decision Letter). **Rejected**: The project is rejected.

**FIIC decisions are final and will not be discussed**
Knowledge Partner Fund

Eligibility
Organisations that can provide external support to Better Cotton Programme Partners. This may take the form of, for example, technical input on project design or training activities for partner staff or farmers and workers.

Organisations applying to this Fund need to be approved and invited by the relevant Better Cotton country team.

Geographical scope
Organisations applying must be operating in any of the Small Farm Fund countries listed in the RFP. In exceptional cases, where an organisation offers some expertise/a practice not currently found in Better Cotton’s countries of operation, we will consider organisations in other locations.

Length of project
The project length will be determined by the nature of the project. Applicants will define a project timeline in their proposal with the ideal project length.

Number of projects per applicant
There is no maximum, but all proposed projects should be agreed with the relevant country team.

Process overview
See Small Farm Fund Process Overview.

Application evaluation criteria
After the eligibility of the applicant is confirmed, proposals will be evaluated by the GIF Team and Better Cotton country teams according to the criteria below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relevance</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capacity</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Project relevance
Quality of project design
Partner has demonstrated experience in similar projects/support
Capacity of the partner: The applicant has proven capacity to implement, manage, communicate, and report on the activities proposed

FIIC decisions are:
Approved: The project application is approved. Rejected: The project is rejected.

FIIC decisions are final and will not be discussed.
Innovation and Learning Fund

Eligibility
The GIF will identify significant challenges or gaps within the implementation of Better Cotton projects and invite applicants to submit their solutions. The Innovation and Learning Fund will provide a space to test breakthrough approaches and cutting-edge field interventions. Focus areas will be identified on an annual basis.

Geographical scope
Applicants can be based anywhere but the project should be implemented in a country where Better Cotton is operating (smallholder/medium farm context).

Length of project
Project length will be determined by the nature of the project. Applicants will define a project timeline in their proposal with the ideal project length.

Process overview
See diagram overleaf.

Application evaluation criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Relevance 10%</th>
<th>Quality 20%</th>
<th>Adoption 20%</th>
<th>Scalability 20%</th>
<th>Sustainability 10%</th>
<th>Capacity 20%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Project relevance</td>
<td>Quality of project design</td>
<td>The solution is easily adopted by users and/or beneficiaries</td>
<td>The solution has the potential to be scaled up and to be replicated across regions and/or countries</td>
<td>The solution is financially sustainable and has a business model</td>
<td>Capacity of the partner: The applicant has proven capacity to implement, manage, communicate, and report on the activities proposed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

FIIC decisions are:
Approved: The project application is approved. Rejected: The project is rejected.

FIIC decisions are final and will not be discussed.
Process overview:
Innovation and Learning Fund

- **FIIC meeting**
  - Decision making:
    - Large Farm Fund
    - Innovation and Learning Fund

**Operations**
- GIF Secretariat
- Applicant

**Innovation and Learning Fund**

- **June–September**: Innovation and Learning RFP launch

- **October**: Application submission
- **November**: 1st shortlisting
- **December**: Detailed application
- **January**: 1:1 meeting with applicants
- **February**: GIF Secretariat and broader BC teams alignment on recommendation
- **March**: Funding decision shared with applicants
- **April**: Contracting grantees
Eligibility
Applicants must be current Partners of Better Cotton or organisations which have a profound understanding of cultivating cotton in a large farm context.

Geographical scope
The project should be implemented in a country (or countries) where Better Cotton has a large farm programme (direct programme or through benchmarked programme).

Length of project
The project length will be determined by the nature of the project. Applicants will define a project timeline in their proposal.

Number of projects per applicant
One project per applicant.

Co-funding
Applicants will need to provide a contribution to the project, either from their own sources or from other donors. In the case of corporate Programme Partners, we will expect a significant level of co-funding.

Process overview
First-time applicants should submit an Expression of Interest to the GIF Team. This can be submitted at any time. If successful, the Programme Partner will be invited to submit a full application.

Applications can be submitted at any time of the year. Applicants should indicate if their project timeline is linked to the cotton season. Though applications can be submitted at any time, their review and approval will be integrated into the normal GIF funding round and be presented to the FIIC in March. See diagram overleaf.

Application evaluation criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Relevance 10%</th>
<th>Quality 20%</th>
<th>Capacity 20%</th>
<th>Overall impact 30%</th>
<th>Scalability 20%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Project relevance to 2030 strategy</td>
<td>Project relevance to 2030 strategy</td>
<td>Quality of project design</td>
<td>Capacity of the partner: The applicant has proven capacity to implement, manage, communicate, and report on the activities proposed</td>
<td>Potential benefit</td>
<td>The solution can be scalable or replicable in similar production contexts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

FIIC decisions are:
Approved: The project application is approved. Rejected: The project is rejected.

FIIC decisions are final and will not be discussed.
Process overview:
Large Farm Fund

Applicants are invited to submit their proposals all year round. Review and decision making will be integrated with BCI GIF calendar.

Operations:
- GIF Secretariat
- Applicant

Decision making:
- FIIC meeting
  - Large Farm Fund
  - Innovation and Learning Fund

Jun–Jan:
1:1 meeting with applicants (latest by Feb)
GIF Secretariat and broader BC teams alignment on recommendation
Funding decision shared with applicants
Contracting grantees
Inclusivity
All Programme Partners should demonstrate a commitment to improve inclusion of women and other excluded groups in their own organisations and in their projects.

Sustainability
All Programme Partners should aim to reduce the project’s dependency (and their organisation's) on the GIF and should work on a plan to ensure project sustainability.

Code of conduct
GIF partners must commit to comply with the Better Cotton Code of Practice and Better Cotton safeguarding policies and procedures.

Suspension / termination of funding
The funding agreement details the circumstances that may a) cause the termination of funding or b) lead to a request to repay unspent funds.

These circumstances include but are not limited to poor performance; unauthorised deviations (activity or budget) from the project application; wrongdoing/misconduct or any act which causes harm to the project stakeholders and/or environment or risks the reputation of Better Cotton.

Policies & other documents for reference
1. Small Farm Fund budget guidelines
2. Knowledge Partner Fund budget guidelines
3. Innovation and Learning budget guidelines (under development)
4. Large Farm Fund budget guidelines (under development)
5. GIF Conflict of Interest policy (under development)
6. GIF Appointment of auditors (under development)
7. GIF Procurement policy and procedures for Programme Partners (under development)
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www.bettercotton.org

gif@bettercotton.org

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