CALL FOR APPLICATIONS: ECO-SOLVE AMPLIFYING GRANTS

Environmental crime and the challenge of the forensic data deficit

Law enforcement units struggle to stay ahead of criminal networks in illegal environmental commodity markets. There are many reasons for this, but one missed opportunity is that many do not use technologies that could help to give their investigations an edge or have access to data that would make their actions more effective. Yet we live in a time where significant technological advancements have made it easier to arm the response with better tools. We call the gap between these potential resources and their actual use the forensic data deficit. 'Data' here means information needed to inform the response and the technology that allows us to gather it for operational or strategic use.

The data deficit has three components. Firstly, there is **an innovation challenge.** Although there is interest in funding technological solutions, there is often a lack of strategic investment in solutions that have the best impact on law enforcement effectiveness. Secondly, there is **an enforcement challenge**: solutions designed in academic and research settings are often hard to adapt to law enforcement practices, especially when they have been developed outside of practical piloting by law enforcement actors. Thirdly, there are **political and institutional challenges.** Inefficiencies in data sharing between scientific communities and law enforcement agencies often lead to fragmented efforts that fail to deliver the full potential of these technologies, while political and institutional barriers that inhibit cooperation stifle the dissemination and uptake of technological innovations and the data they are designed to produce.

Through its Data Cooperation and Governance Platform, the ECO-SOLVE project seeks to drive a transformative shift in disrupting illicit environmental activities by fostering greater cooperation among global stakeholders through strategic meetings and agreements, and by providing grants to fund projects that seek to address the challenges outlined above. By scaling up existing forensic data technologies and integrating them better into enforcement strategies, this grant aims to catalyze a more effective global response.

About the ECO-SOLVE amplifying grants

Our amplifying grants are designed to fund initiatives that combat the illicit wildlife trade and timber trafficking. Their aim is to address the critical challenges outlined above by supporting projects that reduce gaps in law enforcement integration, overcome institutional and political barriers to data sharing and identify innovative solutions.

The grant facility focuses on identifying and supporting existing technological and cooperative initiatives that have the potential to enhance responses to transnational illegal environmental commodity flows. These projects should be aimed at strengthening cross-border data production, exchange and collaboration. Examples of the kinds of initiatives we seek to fund include:

- The development of joint standards for the collection of data or application of technological processes, and their piloting or scaling for law enforcement use, including ensuring admissibility in judicial proceedings.
- The development of resources to be shared across borders, such as databases, repositories of training material or reference samples.
- The piloting of technologies to be used in the field to detect illegal goods or false paperwork, or assist in furthering investigations.
- Targeted capacity building of staff or other forms of professionalization of institutions, including labs and front-line users, to increase uptake of key new technologies by enforcement officers, which should have an impact on their application.
- Particular areas of innovation that of are interest include: AI image analysis for the illegal wildlife trade; isotope and DNA techniques for the illegal timber trade.

Scope and definitions

The primary focus of this grant is to support projects that advance the application of forensic data. This includes methods and practices that bring critical information to bear in the detection and prosecution of crimes. These are essential for designing effective responses to disrupt criminal environmental markets. ECO-SOLVE is particularly interested in expanding the use of existing initiatives at the forefront of innovation in combating environmental crime, rather than initiating wholly new approaches. The programme seeks to fund projects in their piloting or scaling-up phase.

The grant facility will award four grants of €250 000; the duration of the grant projects will be one year.

Target applicants

- Law enforcement agencies from the EU or other countries designated by ECO-SOLVE as priority areas(see below) or falling under the geography of EMPACT and its regional networks.
- Government-led laboratories engaging in research relevant to responses to the illegal wildlife trade, timber trade or related fields.
- Data scientists and researchers engaged in work aimed at enhancing responses to the illegal wildlife trade, timber trade or related fields.
- Technological innovators engaged in work aimed at enhancing responses to the illegal wildlife trade, timber trade or related fields.

- Non-governmental organizations with a track record of working to counter the illegal fauna trade, timber trade or related fields.

Geographic focus

The ECO-SOLVE project aligns with the findings of the 2023 Global Organized Crime Index, which highlights that countries rich in environmental resources are at greater risk of environmental crimes. These findings emphasize a strong link between weak governance, corruption, and the exploitation of natural resources by criminal actors.

Therefore, grant proposals should focus on interventions that target the countries listed below (see box), which have the highest scores for their combined environmental crime markets, as measured by the latest iteration of the Global Organized Crime Index. The initiatives can be managed by institutions based in other locations, but they must demonstrate measurable impact in these priority countries. The goal is to ensure that the funded projects contribute significantly to combating environmental crime in these high-priority geographies.

Priority countries
Angola, Brazil, Bolivia, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Cambodia, China, Colombia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ecuador, Ghana, India, Indonesia, Madagascar, Mexico, Mozambique, Nepal, Nigeria, Papua New Guinea, Panama, Peru, Philippines, Sierra Leone, South Africa, South Sudan, Tanzania, Thailand, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, Vietnam, Solomon Islands.

Deadline for applying: 18 October for submission of a concept note. Further details about the process for applying are provided below.

Eligibility criteria

To be eligible for this grant, your proposal must meet all the following criteria:

1. **Address key challenges:** The proposal should tackle the challenges outlined in this call for applications, aiming to introduce innovative solutions for front line use.
2. **Existing initiative:** Applicants' proposals should focus on an existing technology that is ready for scaling up. The technology should be at the stage where it is being piloted or is poised for broader implementation.
3. **Geographic impact:** Specify the anticipated impact of your project on the priority country or countries listed above. Identify which countries will be the primary focus of your efforts and how your initiative will contribute to combating environmental crime in those regions.
4. **Eligible entities:** Applicants must be a law enforcement agency, government laboratory, researcher, or organization with a proven track record in countering the illegal wildlife trade, timber trade or related fields.
5. **Funding eligibility**: Ensure that your organization is eligible to receive funding from a non-governmental organization, and can demonstrate the capacity to manage and utilize the funds effectively.
6. **Data sharing and sustainability:** Proposals should include a clear plan for sharing and collaborating across the project, demonstrating how you will work with other stakeholders to maximize impact and ensure sustainability in tackling environmental crime.

7. **International cooperation:** A component of international cooperation is essential. Your proposal should outline how you will engage with international partners to enhance cross-border efforts and/or develop standards to enhance cooperation.
8. **Implementation plan:** Provide a detailed plan on how the funding will be used and how the proposed activities will be implemented. This should include a timeline, milestones, and measurable outcomes to ensure accountability and effectiveness.

Application guidelines and timings

- Please carefully review this call for proposals. If you believe your organization is eligible for a grant, submit a concept note to **ecosolve@globalinitiative.net**. Use the subject line: "Concept Note for ECO-SOLVE Amplifying Grant." The concept note template is available on our website.
- After reviewing your concept note, if it is deemed to be a suitable application, our review panel will send you the proposal template and detailed requirements. You will then be required to submit a full proposal
- If your proposal progresses to the next phase, our review panel will provide feedback and initiate a background and risk assessment process.
- The final stage involves an assessment of the proposal by an internal grant committee review. Grants will be approved following this review process, which may take up to six months from the time you submit your concept note (please refer to the timeline below).
- Inquiries: If you have any questions related to this call for proposals, please email us at ecosolve@globalinitiative.net.

Timeline

	Deadline for submission
Deadline for receiving concept notes	18 October 2024
Selection of proposals for full application submission	October 2024
Review of full applications, with applicants invited to make revisions where necessary.	November 2024
Second revision by Advisory group	December 2024
Proposals are presented to Internal Committee Panel	January 2025
Completion of risk assessment and security checklist	January 2025
Grant agreement signed and funds disbursed.	February 2025
Regular reporting and evaluation of the project.	Throughout the grant implementation