Request for Proposals:
Climate & Forests - 2023
Questions and Answers

General	
1.Q	Is this a first-of-its-kind call for proposals for Lacuna Fund? If not, is there a list of previously funded topics?
1.A	This is Lacuna Fund's first call for proposals in the Climate & Forests domain, but Lacuna Fund has previously funded calls for proposals in several other domains, including agriculture, language, climate, and health. You can find our past topics and newly funded datasets on our website (https://lacunafund.org).
2.Q	Who will select which proposals receive funding?
2.A	A Technical Advisory Panel (TAP) consisting of eight domain experts is responsible for making the final decision on which projects to fund for this particular call. You can read each TAP member's bio on the Lacuna Fund website at https://lacunafund.org/2023-climate-forests-technical-advisory-panel/ .
3.Q	Are there resources available on the website to assist in preparing a proposal to support the creation of quality training and evaluation datasets?
3.A	Yes, the Lacuna Fund website provides General Resources available for all applicants as well as Climate & Forests Resources compiled by the TAP for your assistance.
4.Q	Who does Lacuna Fund see as the priority audience for any datasets created? Would financial institutions and corporations be a reasonable audience?
4.A	The priority audience for datasets will depend on the envisioned use case(s), and this may vary from project to project. Communities in the focus geographies are the priority audience, with the hope that datasets will be used to solve climate and forest-related challenges in their geography or region. Financial institutions, corporations, or other large or private sector institutions may be an appropriate target audience if local communities will primarily benefit from their use of the dataset. These entities could be a reasonable audience, if, for example, supply chain interventions were involved. It is important that the potential audience

	connects to the problem statement outlined in your proposal and aims to share project outputs and benefits with the community. One of the key principles of Lacuna Fund is accessibility, with licensing structures that allow datasets to be available for public use.
5.Q	Considering that the use of Machine Learning and Artificial Intelligence in general has sometimes been controversial, how can we give communities/users the choice to actually engage with ML, rather than present it as a fait accompli?
5.A	Thank you for thinking critically about these issues. It is very important for local communities to be involved in project design, data collection, and envisioned use cases for the data to make sure that any concerns are addressed. Lacuna Fund prioritizes projects with a Participatory Approach where in-country partners are involved in strategic elements of the project. Proposals must describe how teams will engage affected stakeholders, seek informed consent for data collection and use, and share project outputs and benefits with data providers and/or the community.

Please see p. 3-4 of the RFP for Evaluation Criteria that guide decisions about which Lacuna Fund projects will be selected for funding. |

Proposals

6.Q	Are proposals submitted through the Secretariat email address? Where are the application forms/templates?
6.A	Proposal submissions will only be accepted through the Survey Monkey Apply application portal available here. You can reach this applicant portal through the Lacuna Fund website at (https://lacunafund.org/apply/).
7.Q	Is there an official template for the Proposal narrative? Can we develop it based on the topics provided in the call?
7.A	See all information in the Request for Proposals (RFP) document (English, French, and Spanish). Specifically, see the section Proposal Information on pages 7-11 of the RFP. A budget template is provided within the application portal. There is no official template for the proposal narrative. Applicants can develop their proposal narrative based on guidance found in the RFP.
8.Q	How long should the proposed project be?
8.A	Please see pages 7-11 in the Request for Proposals (RFP) document for all details on the proposal submission, including maximum length.

	Proposals should be maximum 10 pages long not including references, with 2.5 cm margins and a minimum of 11-point font. Appendices or proposal narrative material beyond 10 pages will not be reviewed.
9.Q	Is there any duration limit for the proposed project?
9.A	You can plan for your project to start in January 2024 once awarded. Proposed projects must be completed, datasets published, and final reports submitted by 30 April 2025.
10.Q	Is it possible for an applicant to submit more than one proposal? Is there a limit on the number of submissions that can come from a single organization? Our organisation has three core programmes, each of which has a project that is relevant to this call -- is it possible for an organisation to submit multiple proposals (for different projects) for the same call as the lead organisation, or are we limited to one? If we are limited to one proposal as lead organisation, is it possible to submit one proposal as a lead organisation, and participate in other proposals as a partner or subcontractor?
10.A	Yes, an organization or team of organizations may submit more than one application. It would also be possible to submit one proposal as a lead organization and participate in other proposals as a partner or subcontractor, as long as the lead applicant meets the eligibility requirements.
11.Q	Can an association develop different proposals for different themes (i.e. both climate and health)?
11.A	Lacuna Fund currently has two different open calls for proposals, one in Climate & Forests, and one in Sexual, Reproductive, and Maternal Health and Rights (SRMHR). An applicant may submit proposals for both Climate & Forests and SRMHR. Please confirm your eligibility for each domain where you plan to apply, as each domain has separate eligibility requirements. Eligibility requirements for Climate & Forests as well as SRMHR are available on the Lacuna Fund website.
12.Q	Is the overall advice provided from the Climate & Forests webinar also applicable to the SRMHR RFP?
12.A	The Climate & Forests RFP and SRMHR RFP have a few key differences. For example, each call has special eligibility requirements, including different geographic regions of focus and key topical areas. Furthermore, timelines

	and proposal due dates are different for these different calls. Please see the [Lacuna Fund website](#) for more information about SRMHR. General guidance in terms of dataset hosting, sustainability, and quality requirements is similar for both calls. See the resources available through the [Lacuna Fund website](#).
13.Q	What are some examples of equity issues that this project aims to address through the dataset? Is there an expected framework through which we are expected to demonstrate the theory of change?
13.A	The Purpose and Need section of the RFP (p. 5-7) lists dataset gaps in the climate and forests domain that were identified by the TAP. The project team must describe how the dataset will fill gaps, how filling these gaps will make the dataset more representative and equitable and create greater access to the benefits of ML/AI for vulnerable and underserved communities. Equity issues could include representation issues such as gender or geographic gaps. Equity could also include ensuring that local communities and stakeholders have a voice in (and are compensated for) both training data and classifications, as well as access to resulting solutions. There is no specific theory of change framework that must be used.
14.Q	To what extent will the use-case(s) of the proposed dataset have to be demonstrated in the proposal stage, and later in the implementation?
14.A	The Proposal Narrative must outline potential current and future use cases for the proposed datasets and state how the proposed quality, collection methods, and other details make the data suitable for use in that particular context. Grantees must also submit midterm and final reports, describing proposed and actual use cases.
15.Q	Information about the affiliated institution(s) ethical review processes; Could you clarify what should be answered in this case? Is it related to Proposal Narrative's "Risks, Including Ethics and Privacy" item or do you need other information?
15.A	Yes, this is related to the Proposal Narrative's "Risks, Including Ethics and Privacy" section. Please describe the process your institution and any partners will use to identify and mitigate any potential ethical concerns. For example, research institutions typically have an Institutional Review Board. Non-governmental organizations may have a committee or Board of Directors that reviews and approves approaches to addressing ethical issues.
# Mentorship	

16.Q	Is the Deep Learning Indaba Mentorship Program only for applicants from African countries or can applicants from countries in other regions also apply for mentorship?
16.A	All applicants for the C&F call are eligible to apply for mentorship through the Indaba Mentorship Program, both applicants from African countries as well as applicants from countries in other regions outside of Africa. On a one-time basis for this Lacuna Fund call, the Deep Learning Indaba will offer applicants from around the world a special opportunity to join the Deep Learning Indaba community.
17.Q	Does mentoring pay?
17.A	Teams do not pay for mentorship nor are they getting paid for participating in the Indaba Mentorship Program. If you have specific questions about the mentorship program, please reach out to mentorship@deeplearningindaba.com.

Eligibility

Countries	
18.Q	The RFP states that applications from FAIR Forward partner countries (Ghana, Rwanda, Uganda, Kenya, South Africa, India, Indonesia) are of particular interest in the call. Are organizations based in other countries eligible to respond to this call? For example, are organizations based in Mauritius, Pakistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Zambia, and Bangladesh eligible to apply? Is a leading institution of an applicant(s) based in China for a worldwide proposed project eligible? Are Fiji, Samoa, Mauritius, and island nations in Oceania eligible for this call for proposals?
18.A	Lead applicants must be headquartered in or have a substantial partnership in Africa, Latin America, or South and Southeast Asia in nations that are on the BMZ Country List. Please check the BMZ Country List to see if your country of interest is eligible. While proposals originating from FAIR Forward partner countries are of particular interest, lead applicants who are headquartered in or have a substantial partnership in nations on the BMZ Country list are eligible to apply. Therefore, eligibility is not limited to the FAIR Forward partner countries (Ghana, Rwanda, Uganda, Kenya, South Africa, India, Indonesia). The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Zambia, Bangladesh, China, and Pakistan are on the BMZ Country List, so proposals from project teams originating in these countries would be eligible. Since Fiji, Samoa, Mauritius, and island nations in Oceania are not on the BMZ Country List,

	unfortunately they would not be eligible unless they partner with an organization which is on the BMZ country list and the data collected benefits this country on the BMZ list. BMZ countries must clearly benefit from proposed projects.
19.Q	Could the partner organization headquartered in the target region be located in a different country than the target region where the work will take place? We are an NGO with HQ in the UK and have regional offices in many locations in Africa, Southeast Asia, etc. Would we be able to have the main applicant as our regional office in Uganda for example and have the UK office be a partner in the project? In this case would both offices receive funding as we are part of the same organisation? Or would the UK office not be eligible for receiving part of the funding? How does Lacuna Fund define a 'substantial partnership' with an institution in a country? Would this need anything specific in place, like an MoU?
19.A	Lacuna Fund focuses on providing resources to teams that have traditionally been underserved and under resourced, based in low and middle-income settings (for this RFP, in Latin America, Africa, and South and Southeast Asia, specifically with nations on the BMZ Country List). Therefore, Lacuna Fund prefers that the lead applicant is based in the geography where the data will be collected/curated/aggregated, but it's possible for some members of the team to be located elsewhere as long as the primary institution is **headquartered** in the data collection geography or has a **substantial partner** in that geography. Only lead applicants will receive funding. An organization is **headquartered** in a geography when its headquarters (center of managerial and administrative functions) – not just a country or regional office - are located in the geography. In terms of "**substantial partnership**," Lacuna Fund does not have a numeric definition of what "substantial" means; however, the Secretariat and TAP will consider the budget distribution among partners, roles of team members, and types of tasks assigned, etc. In-country partners should be involved in strategic elements of the project to ensure sustained maintenance and usage of the dataset by the local community. Their involvement should go beyond the data collection role. A regional office of an international organization in one of the focus geographies could apply as a lead applicant as long as they had a substantial partnership with a local organization in the focus geography. In this case, the regional office and local organization would need to form a

	team to apply, but the lead applicant would need to do a procurement process for the partner organization as required by GIZ. (See more information in 25.Q and [Procurement Requirements](#).) Please refer to page 4 of the RFP for more information.
20.Q	Can data only be collected from a country on the BMZ Country List? Is it eligible to collect data from a country in the BMZ Country List and a country not in the list as part of the same proposal?
20.A	Grant money must clearly benefit a country on the BMZ country list. In general, grant monies from Lacuna Fund for the Climate & Forests call for proposals can only be used to collect data from a country on the BMZ country list, but if a team has funding from another source, the Lacuna Fund grant could support a portion of a larger project. If data is collected from a country on the BMZ country list but also collected from another country (for example, if a forest spreads over borders), it should be fine as long as the BMZ country is in focus and clearly benefits from the project and data collection.
21.Q	Can projects take place in more than one country? If so, will the Fund prioritize projects that focus on just one country, or projects that focus on multiple countries? What is preferred? Is the BMZ Country List referring to where lead applicants must either be headquartered and/or partnered? Must every single organization/partner organization who is applying be on the BMZ list (or just the lead applicant)?
21.A	Yes, projects can take place in more than one country, and partnerships are encouraged. Note that there is a required procurement process on anyone who is not directly employed by your organization. (See 25.Q for more information.) Lacuna Fund has funded projects in the past that were operating with or in multiple countries. Climate and forests do not simply affect isolated countries; they can at times impact entire regions, so project teams are encouraged to take regional patterns into consideration. The TAP will select projects based on the criteria listed in the RFP (see Selection Process & Evaluation Criteria on p. 3-4) and will assess project scope, feasibility, and anticipated impact. The lead applicant must either be headquartered in or have a substantial partnership with organization(s) that are in nations on the BMZ country list. Partners may be from a country not on the BMZ list.
Organizations	
22.Q	The RFP indicates that organizations must be either a non-profit entity, research institution, for-profit social enterprise, or a team of such

	organizations, but it isn't clear if an international organization is eligible for the call. Are international organizations eligible for funding? We are an international research organization. We do work with regional offices in all the geographies you mentioned, but we have the HQ in one of them, not necessarily the one in which we would have the proposal submitted. Would this count as eligible?
22.A	Please see p. 2-3 in the RFP for organization eligibility requirements. To be eligible for funding, organizations must be either a non-profit entity, research institution, for-profit social enterprise, or a team of such organizations. For this specific call, preference will be given to non-profit entities and research institutions. Individuals must apply through an institutional sponsor. Partnerships are strongly encouraged, but only the lead applicant will receive funds. Yes, international organizations could be eligible for funding, but there are special conditions for UN organizations (see 23.Q below). If an international organization is headquartered outside of the focus geographies and has a country office within the target regions, that does not automatically make the organization eligible. They must also have a substantial partnership with a local organization.
23.Q	Are United Nations organizations eligible to apply for funding?
23.A	For the Climate & Forests call, special conditions apply for UN organizations. We welcome UN country offices to share this opportunity with partners and encourage them to apply. If a UN country office is best positioned to apply as the lead institution or part of a team, please contact Lacuna Fund Secretariat at secretariat@lacunafund.org to discuss.
24.Q	Are government entities allowed to apply? Are public entities of a subnational government eligible to apply?
24.A	For this call for proposals, preference will be given to non-profit entities and research institutions. However, government entities and public entities of a subnational government are also eligible to apply. Subnational government entities should be eligible as long as they also have a public benefit status or at least the department of it that would take on the project has a legal public benefit status.
25.Q	The RFP states: "Quality -- The organization or team proposing the project includes qualified experts in a) the domain of interest; b) machine learning; and c) data management". We may not have all the expertise within the FFI regional offices. Could we sub-contract another organisation?

	Can the lead applicant who receives funding sub-contract a partner applicant of choice without a tendering process? Is a non-profit (government parastatal) that does forestry research eligible for this call if it sub-contracts some for profit companies for the implementation?
25.A	Yes, you may sub-contract with another organization. However, for all teams or partnerships for the Climate & Forests call for proposals, there is a required procurement process on anyone who is not directly employed by your organization. You do not have to have completed the procurement process by the time you submit your application, but you must have a record of it that you can provide during due diligence if your project is selected. Since the Climate & Forests call is made possible with generous support from GIZ's FAIR Forward Programme on behalf of the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), teams selected for funding will be required to follow specific record keeping, reporting, and procurement terms. For example, for subcontractors or consultants, teams will be required to obtain at least three offers for comparison for awards between EUR 1,000 and 200,000 and conduct a public tender for contracts over EUR 200,000. Detailed guidance is available here. Whether a lead applicant can sub-contract with a partner without a procurement process depends on the award amount and whether the sub-contractor is being paid. A procurement process would not be necessary for subcontracts for less than the amounts listed above and/or for partners who were not being paid. Yes, non-profit organizations are eligible to apply for this call as well as for-profit social enterprises and teams of such organizations. However, please keep in mind that for this specific call, preference will be given to non-profit entities and research institutions.
26.Q	What is the maximum number of partners that can be included in the application? Are there limits on how many organizations can build a team?
26.A	A maximum of 5 partner institutions may be listed in the application, but there is no maximum number of partners that can be included in the proposal narrative. However, lead applicants will need to follow a procurement process as described in 25.Q above. We encourage teams to consider what skills or expertise are needed for the project and how many and which partners would be most appropriate to create/expand/link the proposed dataset(s). We also encourage multi-disciplinary partnerships of more than one organization. It is critical that teams have both data science

	and domain expertise for Climate & Forests. Please note that only the lead applicant will receive funds.
27.Q	Is it possible for volunteer groups to be the local partners? Our organization can assemble teams of data scientists who are willing to work on impact-driven projects as volunteers.
27.A	Please see full details on Organizational Eligibility and Evaluation Criteria on pages 2-4 of the RFP.

Local partners can be volunteers as long as that is communicated clearly in the proposal. The lead applicant/organization receiving funds must be a legal entity and pass a due diligence process, but partners may include volunteer organizations without legal entities. |
28.Q	Can a section 8 company apply?
28.A	A section 8 company may apply. Please keep in mind that for this specific call, preference will be given to non-profit entities and research institutions.
29.Q	Should the organization be FCRA exempt/ compliant?
29.A	It is welcome but not necessary for applicants to be exempt/compliant with the Fair Credit Reporting Act.

Budget

30.Q	How much is the total pot for the Climate & Forests call for proposals from Lacuna Fund, and what is the grant floor and ceiling for each award you will give? Is the maximum value of the grants USD 200-300k?
30.A	The total pool available for Climate & Forests is 2 million USD. We are aiming to fund at least one project in each of the target regions: Africa, Latin America, and South and Southeast Asia. We anticipate supporting 4-6 smaller projects with budgets between $50,000 to $100,000, and 2-3 larger projects ranging $200,000 to $300,000.

However, there is not an official maximum value limit for grants. We anticipate the larger research projects' budgets will be in the 200-300K USD range, but if your research requires a higher budget, please include it in your application with justification for the higher cost. |
| 31.Q | Are there required or preferred minimum or maximum percentages for any budget categories?

Is there a preferred ratio for budget expenses for development of the data repository/system to expenses related to gathering data? |

	Are there any required or preferred minimum or maximum percentages for any budget categories (i.e. administrative, tech investment, data gathering, etc.)?
31.A	The only maximum percentage is for indirect costs, which are limited to 12% for Climate & Forests. Otherwise, there are no required or preferred minimum or maximum percentages for any budget categories. Costs for each category will be evaluated based on the needs of the proposed project. The Technical Advisory Panel will evaluate the budget for feasibility and consider the balance of proposed expenses.
32.Q	What kind of expenses can be covered under this funding? Would the following apply: Computer equipment or data collection devices, and allowances for expert hire? Can we include budget for buying devices such as GPS and GPS enabled smartphones for collecting data? Are staff costs/time an eligible expense within this call? Can staff salary cost be in-kind? If so, should an amount still be estimated and indicated on the application form? What are "indirect rates" (limited to 12% as per the RFP)? What are considered indirect costs?
32.A	Please see instructions in the budget template for more information about what may be included in the budget. The budget template is available in the application portal once a proposal has been started. The budget may include line items for data collection devices and technology, allowances for expert hire (under External Experts/ Consultants), and staff costs/time. Staff costs/time are an eligible expense within this call. Please note that the Staff Salary section should only include true employees of the lead organization that submit a timecard and are paid a salary. If the staff is paid by a contract, please list them under the "External Experts/Consultants" section. Staff salary cost may be provided in-kind. In-kind costs should not be included in the budget spreadsheet, but please describe them in the budget assumptions and proposal narrative . Research costs include costs outlined in the budget guidelines. The indirect rate (12% maximum) is to cover administrative costs not directly related to the research. Indirect cost items can only include: salaries and benefits of personnel which support and administer the project, such as secretaries, clerks, and accountants; stationery and other office supplies; telecommunication costs (unless the nature of the project has warranted a specific budget line item for that purpose); and computer equipment used for the administration or accounting of the grant disbursements. If not listed in the budget and therefore not directly project related: List of Administrative Expenses

	• Salaries and wages cost employees engaged in finance, accounts, human resources, information technology division, etc. • Office maintenance cost. • General Repairs and maintenance costs. • Finance and insurance cost. • Insurance Costs • IT Services Cost • Building Rent and Maintenance Costs
33.Q	How do you determine whether the budget proposed is "appropriate for the size of the dataset produced"?
33.A	The Technical Advisory Panel will evaluate whether the project is feasible given the size of the budget. We do not have set budget amounts for a dataset size. The budget will be evaluated based on the proposed project's needs. Consider the size of the data, the size of the team, the techniques used, the storage required, and the extent of the impact of the dataset resulting from the consequent use by innovators/researchers.
34.Q	It appears that the funding should mainly be used on data acquisition and post-processing, etc. If my proposal does machine learning on this data to produce an algorithm that is used to benefit the community in terms of forestry, is the cost of training allowed? Can we use part of the budget to train a Machine Learning (ML) model and use it for monitoring forests in addition to using the new datasets collected, labeled, quality-control and ready to use for a ML application?
34.A	The RFP lists costs that can be included in the budget (see p. 10-11). Budgets may include but are not limited to these items. Yes, proposals can include the cost of machine learning training and algorithm tool development, as long as the project team is also creating, expanding, or releasing a dataset. Make sure to provide reasoning as to the feasibility and sustainability of the budget in your proposal.
35.Q	Can we apply with a project that we receive additional funding?
35.A	Yes, a Lacuna Fund grant can support a portion of a larger project if the team has also received funding elsewhere. If the selected projects require additional funding, they can receive funding from additional sources besides Lacuna Fund. The Technical Advisory Panel (TAP) will assess the feasibility and suitability of the budget as well as the linkage between the budget and grant narrative as part of the selection criteria. The TAP will determine the

	allocation amount for the selected projects based on the submitted budget templates in the application form and overall amount in the pool of funds that is available for this call.
36.Q	Would it be feasible to establish the necessary legal entity after applying for the fund and/or receiving the funding?
36.A	A selected organization would need to be a legal entity to pass due diligence to receive any funding.
37.Q	The RFP indicates: "See the instructions sheet in the budget template for further information on budget guidelines, including information on allowable staff costs" (p. 11). Where is the budget template?

It seems that the budget template is in the application portal. Is it possible to access the template before applying? |
37.A	The budget template is available in the SurveyMonkey Apply [application portal](#). To access the budget template, project teams need to start an application in SurveyMonkey Apply. Once an application is created, the user can download the budget template. You do not need to complete the application to download the template.
38.Q	Should the organization be capable to receive foreign funds or can be routed in local currency through country offices of GIZ?
38.A	While GIZ is supporting this call for proposals, funds for selected project teams will be disbursed to teams directly from the Lacuna Fund bank account to project team bank accounts in USD. The project team's bank will convert the funds into local currency.
39.Q	As the funding will be transferred to the lead PI, can you please tell us whether Lacuna Fund has a mechanism to enforce that all partners of the consortium will receive their parts of the budget?
39.A	No, Lacuna Fund does not have a mechanism to enforce that all partners receive their parts of the budget. The lead organization is responsible for disbursing the funds. Partners should have contracts with the lead organization for an agreement of payment amounts and terms between themselves. The lead organization will be responsible for submitting interim, quarterly, and final financial reports.

Climate & Forests

40.Q	Which climate and forest related topics are eligible for this call for proposals? Are field actions for the restoration of agricultural land, sustainable crops affected by the effects of climate change, the restoration of forest and agroforestry ecosystems eligible?

40.A	Please see the Need section of the RFP (p. 6-7) for a list of potential dataset topics that illuminate the relationship between climate and forests. Datasets may include but are not limited to the following topics: • land cover/ land use change • afforestation and reforestation • non-extractive forest ecosystem services and products • contextualizing Indigenous knowledge of biodiversity • supply chain interventions • environmental/nature crimes • wildfires • carbon sequestration • invasive species • animal species movements • forest health This list is not exhaustive. We seek datasets identified by local experts designed to address locally identified needs, so these are illustrative examples only. If you find yourself questioning whether your proposal fits the scope of this call, weigh it against the overall climate and forests theme. Any proposed project must fit into the overarching theme of climate and forests.
41.Q	Would a proposal about the creation of a palm oil plantation be eligible? Would a project about the cacao chain value in agroforestry systems (including research about plantation regeneration) be eligible?
41.A	Yes, projects related to palm oil plantations and cacao chain values in agroforestry systems could fall within the identified need for datasets that correlate supply chain interventions with forest loss and climate change. See the Need section of the RFP (p. 6-7).
42.Q	Would the generation of climate change and biodiversity conservation data be eligible for this call?
42.A	There are biodiversity datasets relevant to climate and forest solutions. Make sure there is a clear connection on how biodiversity data is going to help solve the issue when writing up your problem statement. See the Need section of the RFP (p. 6-7)
43.Q	Would a national non-profit organization in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) be eligible to submit a project to restore the forest and agroforestry ecosystems around a natural reserve?
43.A	Yes, afforestation and reforestation datasets that inform strategic restoration efforts to mitigate climate change are eligible topics for this

	call, as well as agroforestry ecosystems and climate and forests issues related to conservation areas and natural reserves. Non-profit organizations from the DRC are eligible to apply for this call for proposals.
44.Q	Can we submit a proposal related to climate change related risks assessment?
44.A	Proposals should highlight the nexus between climate change and forestry. A climate change related risks assessment project related to machine learning and forestry could qualify.
45.Q	Are forests defined based on the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) forest definition?
45.A	Yes, for this call for proposals, Lacuna Fund will define forests based on the FAO definition, with the caveat that we are accepting agroforestry (not traditional agriculture).

According to the FAO (last updated 31.3.22), Forest is defined as: "land spanning more than 0.5 hectares with trees higher than 5 meters and a canopy cover of more than 10 percent, or trees able to reach these thresholds in situ. It does not include land that is predominantly under agricultural or urban land use." |
| 46.Q | Does Lacuna Fund differentiate terrestrial forests vs. mangrove forests? If yes, would mangrove forest data be eligible? |
| 46.A | Yes, mangrove forests are eligible for this call for proposals, especially given their relevance to climate solutions in the focus geographies. Mangrove forests can play an important role in carbon removals because they are among the most carbon-dense ecosystems in the world, and if kept undisturbed, mangrove forest soils act as long-term carbon sinks. (See this background article.) Make sure your proposal ties into your problem statement.

See the Need section of the RFP (p. 7), which mentions:
- Carbon sequestration datasets containing evidence regarding the extent to which blue carbon capture happens in mangroves.
- Datasets linking changes in forest health to climate change such as in coastal areas with mangrove reforestation or regions with lake erosion. |
| 47.Q | Does Lacuna Fund consider banana trees as trees since there is evidence that they contribute towards carbon dioxide sequestration, and if so, can they be studied as trees outside forests since these trees are very important in regulating climate change? |
| 47.A | Yes, banana tree could potentially be considered trees for the purposes of this call for proposals, but only if there is an adaptation component, given |

	that the increasing temperatures would actually limit the potential growth of the banana industry worldwide. See this background article.
48.Q	Is coffee considered a tree crop by Lacuna Fund?
48.A	Coffee is a crop that traditionally requires intensive land management, but if the proposed project includes agroforestry/shade grown practices for coffee, it could be considered a tree crop.
49.Q	Would data sets collected for a model development program under urban forestry, which also has applications in forestry, qualify for this fund? Can Trees outside Forests (TOF) be considered in the scope of the Climate and Forests theme, in the context of building carbon sequestration datasets, specifically in urban and peri-urban environments contributing to sustainable resilient cities?
49.A	Yes, datasets about urban forestry and trees outside of areas previously classified as forests would qualify. Make sure there is a clear connection on how urban forestry data is going to help solve the issue when writing up your problem statement. It is also important to consider not only the carbon aspect but also the cooling aspect of urban forestry in their surrounding communities as an adaptation strategy.
50.Q	Can wetland issues/management be eligible for this call under climate?
50.A	Yes, wetland issues are eligible given their carbon sequestration potential, particularly for forested wetlands as long as the link to climate is clearly articulated. The Ramsar Convention, Article 1.1 defines wetlands broadly as "areas of marsh, fen, peatland or water, whether natural or artificial, permanent or temporary, with water that is static or flowing, fresh, brackish or salt, including areas of marine water the depth of which at low tide does not exceed six meters." Within this definition are forested wetlands (often called swamps) which are forests where soils are saturated or flooded for at least a portion of the growing season, and vegetation is dominated by trees and adapted to tolerate flooded conditions. Examples include mangrove forests, swamps, and freshwater forested wetlands. "Blue carbon" captured by freshwater and marine wetland ecosystems and stored in biomass and sediments can play a dual role in providing both climate mitigation and adaptation. The mismanagement of wetlands can negatively impact the surrounding forests - both are important ecosystems for evapotranspiration, a process crucial to our sustaining freshwater resources as climate change impacts increase. For more information, see this background resource.

51.Q	Can we submit a proposal focused on developing a dataset of rangeland ecosystems is eligible for funding? Are savannas considered eligible for funding under this call?
51.A	Rangelands could be eligible only if the proposal focuses on how to better manage the sustainable stewardship of critical ecosystems by better managing drivers and/or impacts from unsustainable rangeland activities. These two fundamental shortcomings related to these ecosystems need to be concurrently addressed: 1. First, inappropriate understandings of the ecology of drylands and grassy biomes encourage afforestation, grazing restriction and fire suppression, with negative impacts on hydrology, carbon storage, biodiversity, livestock production and pastoral livelihoods. 2. Second, their target-driven approach requires large-scale afforestation and massive funding to achieve. See this background [article.](#) Savannas could be eligible as a subset of rangelands.
52.Q	Do projects around precision agriculture that integrate AI/ML as well as Collective Intelligence fall within this RFP or is it strictly Climate and Forests?
52.A	No, we will not be accepting proposals on traditional agriculture methods. Precision agriculture falls outside the scope of this RFP. However, the intersection of agricultural production and forest conservation and/or conversion would fall within the scope – as detailed in the RFP.
53.Q	Does SEEA for ecosystem accounting addressing data gaps be considered appropriate?
53.A	Yes, filling data gaps to help inform forest ecosystem service accounting (such as SEEA framework or methodologies) could qualify. However, it is less about *doing* the ecosystem service accounting as much as it is about filling data gaps that make it more do-able.

Technical Requirements

54.Q	Can we include modeling in our proposal? Would incorporating modeling processes into our proposal enhance its overall strength? Does the budget include open access publication of the methodology used to develop the baseline model and its use to monitor the region of interest, besides the information about the dataset?

54.A	Yes. While the focus of Lacuna Fund is focused primarily on dataset creation, annotation, augmentation, and maintenance, proposals may include the development of a baseline model(s) to ensure the quality of the funded dataset and/or to facilitate the use of the dataset for socially beneficial applications. Yes, the budget could include open access publication of the methodology used to develop the baseline model and its use to monitor the region of interest, provided that part of the budget is also used for dataset creation or expansion. See the Need section in the RFP (p. 5-7) for more information.
55.Q	Can pilot projects focusing on ground data collection be funded?
55.A	Yes, projects focused on ground data collection are eligible for funding. Project teams can determine what data collection method makes sense for the project as long as it is within the scope of the RFP.
56.Q	Does the ground data collected need to be necessarily matched to satellite imagery? If so, can the cost of purchasing satellite imagery be included in the Lacuna Fund budget?
56.A	No, the ground-truth data does not need to be matched to satellite imagery, although that is encouraged to promote use of the dataset. Ground data is an important way of ground-truthing satellite imagery. Yes, the budget may include the cost of purchasing satellite imagery or other data.
57.Q	Are applications that do not produce or engage with traditional forms of data submittable? For example, one team has a project about a documentary that looks at climate change and the effects it has had on poor communities in South Africa. Would this kind of project be eligible?
57.A	Qualitative datasets may be appropriate as long as this type of data will address a gap in representation in machine learning data. It is up to the teams to determine what type of data is fit for the problem and use case(s) a team wishes to address, and to ensure that these data can be used in Machine Learning (ML) models. However, the project must focus on datasets for machine learning, so it is unlikely that a documentary project would be eligible.
58.Q	What is the expectation for "annotation" of LiDAR data sets?

58.A	Expectations for "annotation" of LiDAR datasets include sufficient processing, interpretation, and/or labeling for the LiDAR data to help inform machine learning models on the physical structure of forests, such that they can be used to improve our understanding of forest carbon stocks and/or emissions and/or other biomass applications.
59.Q	The RFP mentions that partners Amazon Web Services (AWS) and Google Cloud (GCP) would provide compute and storage services for the data. If the final result of my proposal is a web portal used by forestry officers, can this portal be hosted on the services or are the services only for storage and compute (training, preprocessing, etc.)?
59.A	Currently, available in-kind services are for compute and storage. Selected teams will receive instructions for how to apply when they receive their award. It may be possible to work with Lacuna Fund partners to identify other in-kind services.

Licensing / Privacy

60.Q	Are there any constraints on the licensing of the dataset? Or is FAIR the only requirement for the dataset?
60.A	In addition to considering how your project will support FAIR data principles (Findability, Accessibility, Interoperability, and Reuse), licensing of datasets must be pursuant to Lacuna Fund's Intellectual Property Policy. Subgrantees will prioritize releasing the intellectual property under a permissive open-source licensing structure such as Apache 2.0 for any code or other inventions, or CC-BY 4.0 International for any other intellectual property (e.g. creative works that are not code, or patentable).

Projects must also incorporate plans to include a metadata file and datasheet as documentation for your dataset, as detailed in this Dataset Hosting and Documentation Guidance. |
| 61.Q | Will the datasets be open to the public to use freely? |
| 61.A | Please use licensing terms that will allow for public use. Any dataset(s) you create with this funding will need to be made publicly accessible. However, we recognize that certain circumstances require a licensing structure that provides protection and/or privacy when it comes to sensitive data or prevention of harm. If you believe you might fall under this category, you are welcome propose an alternative licensing structure along with an explanation in your proposal. Datasets will be made widely accessible under open-source licensing, or if this is not possible, a compelling case is made for more restrictive licensing in order to protect privacy or prevent harm. |

62.Q	After the dataset is produced, who owns the copyright? If we're using government data as our base spatial information (not our own data), would that also need to be licensed (for the end requirement of the project) or approval/permission letters are sufficient? (so that we only need to license and format datasets that are directly associated with the project). If we are dealing with the release of public data, is authorization required?
62.A	Lacuna Fund's Intellectual Property Policy states that datasets and related IP developed with grant funds will be owned by the subgrantee entity. If you intend to use an existing dataset for your project, please indicate that your team has received the necessary permissions from the dataset's owner that the dataset can be released in accordance with Lacuna Fund's IP Policy, or provide justification for another licensing structure. Proposals must address any anticipated issues related to copyright for source data and collaboration with the copyright holder, including copyright and licensing of secondary data.
63.Q	One of the requirements in the call is getting approvals for carrying out the research. Who will provide the approval? Is a letter of national approval required in all cases? What if data collection takes place in privately owned land or land under the control of an organization (i.e. land concession). In such cases, is it still necessary a letter of national approval or a letter of approval from the entity who controls/own the land is sufficient?
63.A	Please indicate in your application if you will require institutional and/or national approvals to conduct your project. This may include approval from a national agency, an institutional review board (IRB), or another entity. A letter of national approval is not necessarily required in all cases. Other types of approval or permission may be necessary depending on the situation, provided that it is communicated in the proposal. A letter of approval from the entity who controls/owns the land could qualify. Consider which jurisdictions require approvals and whether the proposed research meets the definition of research in that jurisdiction. If you determine that local, national, or regional approvals are not required, please explain why not.
64.Q	The RFP states: "The approval process may be conducted in parallel with the grant application, if necessary." Does this mean that would need to demonstrate that we have all the permits in our proposal submission? If not, at what stage would we need to provide evidence of national/other approvals?

64.A	In the Proposal Narrative, applicants must demonstrate that they understand which approvals they need to acquire, and they must state their plans for how to obtain them. However, a project team does not have to already have all of the permits before submitting a proposal. You will need to provide evidence of national/other approvals in the midterm report.
65.Q	To what extent does the proposal or the project have to take responsibility (apart from presenting the plan of action) for subsequent maintenance and usage of the dataset by the local community?
65.A	Please include a plan for the sustainability of your dataset and project in your proposal narrative. Depending on the project, the plan may include who will maintain the dataset in the future, a governance model for the dataset, possible use cases, potential funding sources to continue the project, proposed engagement strategies for impacted populations and data users, and/or measures to keep the data open and accessible. See Dataset Hosting and Documentation Guidance for more information.