



THE IRIS PRIZE 2026

Application Guidelines

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What are the criteria for applying?

- 1** Your project or organisation is **led by young people aged 14 to 24**. To be eligible for an Iris Prize, most of your leadership must be young people with project autonomy and decision-making power. Please do not apply if you are not within this age category.
- 2** You support the principle of protecting and restoring nature and the rights of those working to defend it.
- 3** We welcome projects that are either fiscally sponsored or associated with larger organisations, charities, or NGOs. However, it is essential that the young person leading the project **retains complete autonomy and decision-making authority**.

- 4** We prioritise ensuring the **safety and well-being of our prize participants**. If you are a minor in your country, please know that we require collaboration with a local organisation or NGO to serve as a **fiscal sponsor**. This partner organisation will be responsible for managing the financial grant, holding the funds, and providing financial support to you throughout the process.



Project requirements



Youth and locally-led initiatives operating in areas identified as significant by their local communities.

Eligibility for consideration includes ideas, small-scale projects, or existing initiatives with growth potential and replicability.



Commitment to diversity and inclusion.

Geographical and thematic diversity is key to our mission. We prioritise initiatives in the Global South, which disproportionately needs our support and where our support can have a more significant impact while still considering exceptional projects from the Global North.



Prize categories

To foster growth, creativity and sustainability in the youth environmental movement, we prioritise supporting projects at different stages of development. It's important you apply for the **correct prize category**. Please email prize@theirisproject.org if you have any questions about which prize to apply for.



Prize Amount
\$5000

Awarded to a young person or team with a groundbreaking idea to protect and/or restore nature in their local community. The age category for this prize is 14-24.



Prize Amount
\$10 000

Awarded to an existing project established recently and on a small scale. The age category for this prize is 16-24.



Prize Amount
\$15 000

Awarded to an established project with the potential to replicate and scale. The age category for this prize is 16-24.



The Iris Prize 2026 timeline

4 MARCH

Prize opens



APRIL

Application review



JUNE

Judging panel review shortlist



SEPTEMBER

Winners & runners up announced



8 APRIL

Prize closes



MAY

Shortlist interviews



JULY & AUGUST

Winners films in production



OCTOBER & NOVEMBER

Capacity building & mentorship programmes start



Applying for The Iris Prize 2026

About the application form

Remember, **you can apply in any language**, and if you have any questions, reach out to [**prize@theirisproject.org**](mailto:prize@theirisproject.org).

We'll ask you to **choose which prize** you will apply for out of the Seed, Stem and Iris Prize.

Then, you'll need to tell us whether you are **applying as an individual, on behalf of a team and as an organisation.**

We will ask

- Your **date of birth** to ensure you are in the right age category. Please do not apply if you are older than 24 or younger than 14 on the date you apply (if you turn 25 after applying, that is fine!)
- Which **country are you applying from**, and the primary location of your organisation's work?
- **If your project is affiliated** with another organisation or individual.
- Four key questions to better understand your project or idea.



To understand more about your project or idea, we'll ask five key questions:

Describe the problem that your proposed/existing project is hoping to address.

200 WORDS

Summarise what the solution is and how it addresses the problem that you have outlined.

200 WORDS

Who is your **community**, and how is your project connected to them?

200 WORDS

What **risks or hurdles** are you navigating right now (social, environmental, financial, safety, or political)?

200 WORDS

Tell us how your project is managed. Please describe your **leadership structure** and how key **decisions are made**.

200 WORDS



IRIS PRIZE

As an Iris Prize applicant your project is ready for a new phase. Please outline how you plan to scale or replicate your project. Please mention any partnerships or collaborations you have built.

STEM PRIZE

As a new project leader you understand the challenges of getting a project off the ground. How would winning a Stem Prize improve your project capability/increase your project sustainability?

SEED PRIZE

Winning the Seed Prize would turn your idea into a reality. What would be your first steps in doing this?

Answer this question **based on the Prize Category** you are applying for.

200 WORDS



Frequently asked questions

These are questions that might help you in your application, if your question is not answered, please email us at prize@theirisproject.org

How does the due diligence process work?

Due diligence is an important aspect of our approach, enabling a trust-based and flexible collaboration with our grantees. Beyond fostering this relationship, it plays a critical role in ensuring the safety and safeguarding of youth, recognising that winning the prize and receiving the associated funds can potentially expose young individuals to risks. To uphold the integrity of our selection process, shortlisted applicants are requested to provide two nominated referees. These referees, while not directly involved in the project, serve as credible endorsers. Subsequently, our dedicated team and Advisory Panel engage in brief, 30-minute one-on-one interviews with all shortlisted applicants to gain deeper insights into their projects. For the prize winners and runners-up, the grants team at Global Fund for Children UK Trust conducts additional due diligence, verifying the identity and authenticity of the individual, team, or organisation to ensure they align with the values and objectives we champion.

Do you only support projects that already exist?

We will consider any project for the Iris Prize which supports our core principles, namely championing the protection and restoration of nature and the rights of those working to defend it. We recognise that nature restoration takes various forms - from traditional land stewardship to innovative technological solutions. As such, the Iris Prize will look to reward new ideas and established projects, hoping to overcome the circumstantial barriers that too often prevent young people from being able to advocate for nature-related change.

How can I apply

Provided you fulfil our awards criteria, you are eligible to apply for an Iris Prize. You can either fill out an application yourself or ask a nominating partner to support you to do so. Go to our website's [‘How to Apply’](#) section to learn more.



Are groups eligible to apply?

Teams and organisations are eligible to apply as long as the majority of the leadership team is youth-led, with the nominated individual applying for the prize between the ages of 14-24. This individual must have decision-making powers.

Why young people?

Young people are at the centre of a global movement calling for urgent action to address the climate and ecological emergency. While this movement has brought hope to many, we recognise that young people must be more effectively compensated for their efforts, with less than 1% of institutional climate funding being directed towards youth-led projects. They are being given all the responsibility for "saving the world" but reap none of the rewards. The Iris Project hopes to address this through the provision of grant funding and mentorship that can harness young people's potential whilst rewarding them financially for their work.

Why nature?

We believe that the protection and restoration of nature should form a central part of any strategy seeking to mitigate the impacts of climate change. Whilst this should not be treated as an alternative solution to the rapid and urgent decarbonisation of the global economy, we recognise the many benefits that locally-led nature restoration can bring, especially when approaches are grounded in justice, equity and inclusion.

What do you mean by "capacity building"?

Building someone's ability to deliver on the objectives of their project. All prize winners will receive individualised capacity-building support, helping them maximise their project impact; this could take the form of anything from media training to financial support for our prize winners' families to enable them to spend more time on their projects. All winners and runners-up are invited to join the youth-led CoalitionWILD 6-month Leadership Development accelerator programme.



Do applications have to be in English?

We do not want language to become a barrier to prize funding. We accept applications in any language and have translated the application form into Spanish, French, Arabic and Portuguese. We also accept both audio and written submissions.

How are you reviewing applications?

Our thorough selection process involves meticulous reviews of applications against our eligibility and scoring criteria. The Advisory Panel and The Iris Project team collaborate in small groups to ensure a comprehensive and unbiased assessment for each prize category. They nominate five to seven outstanding projects, creating a shortlist of twenty initiatives for evaluation by our expert Judging Panel. After the Judging Panel's verdict, the Advisory Panel and The Iris Project collaborate for final decisions, prioritising thematic and geographical diversity among award-winning projects. Shortlisted candidates must provide two references for added validation to enhance transparency and credibility.

AI sensitivity

While we value the use of technology, we're particularly interested in hearing your voice. While it's okay to use AI for spelling and grammar, **please avoid relying on AI-generated ideas**. We want to learn about your story, what inspires your work, and your goals. We are not looking for perfect applications and understand everyone has their own writing style.

Feedback

Unfortunately, due to the number of applications we receive, we can only provide **shortlisted candidates** with feedback.

Youth Funding Toolit

Want to improve your application? The Youth Funding Toolkit is our open-access resource that aims to support young project leaders to begin their fundraising journey. Start your journey [here](#).



READY TO APPLY?

If you need any support with your application, please reach out to prize@theirisproject.org

[Get started on your application!](#)

STAY CONNECTED

