A photograph of outdoor gear including a black GPS device, a white map, and a pink and black camera, resting on a topographic map. The map shows contour lines and grid lines, with labels like "JERAI", "HULU", "TEMBELING", and various grid numbers (515, 516, 517, 518, 519, 520, 521, 522, 523) visible.

THF Grants 2026 **APPLICANTS' GUIDEBOOK**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Content	Page
Foundation background	3
The Habitat Foundation Grants	5
• Grant process	6
• Grant requirements	7
THF Grant Pillars - Conservation	8
THF Grant Pillars - Research	9
THF Grant Pillars - Education	10
THF Grant Pillars - Sustainability	11
THF Grant Pillars - Training	12
THF Grants Theory of Change	13
Photography & Communication Requirements	15
• Photography Guidelines and Tips	17
Community Engagement Guidelines	22
Selection Criteria	27
Contact Information	28

About The Habitat Foundation

The Habitat Foundation (THF) is a charitable trust established in Penang, Malaysia, dedicated to nature conservation. As a practitioner-led organisation, we champion conservation in action through environmental education and outreach, grant programmes, community engagement, partnerships, and foundation-led initiatives.

Our work spans across Malaysia — from advancing rainforest research and strengthening protected area management to driving conservation innovation and restoring vital habitats in collaboration with strategic partners.



THF Pillars

Our work is guided by the following five pillars, inspiring our pillar-based grantmaking approach.



CONSERVATION

We support initiatives to safeguard biodiversity, reverse the loss and degradation of natural ecosystems, and advocate for the sustainable use of natural resources.



RESEARCH

We fund research to better understand our natural world and to identify actionable solutions to protect nature and the environment.



EDUCATION

We create and implement compelling environmental education programmes for all levels of society in order to nurture respect for nature and a commitment to reducing our environmental impact.



SUSTAINABILITY

We support technological innovation and the adoption of regenerative systems in order to usher in new standards and norms and shift our society towards sustainability.



TRAINING

We support efforts to build capacity among conservation practitioners, community organisers and other strategic frontliners to strengthen their impact and to build supportive networks.

The Habitat Foundation Grants

The Habitat Foundation Grants are awarded to individuals and organisations dedicated to biodiversity conservation and sustainability across these five pillars which form the focus of our programme: **Conservation, Research, Education, Sustainability, and Training.**

THF Grants provide an opportunity for academicians, students, researchers, community members, trainers and environmental practitioners to advance their work in the abovementioned areas. The goal is to strengthen species protection, enhance protected area management, and build capacity for sustainability and environmental education in all its forms.

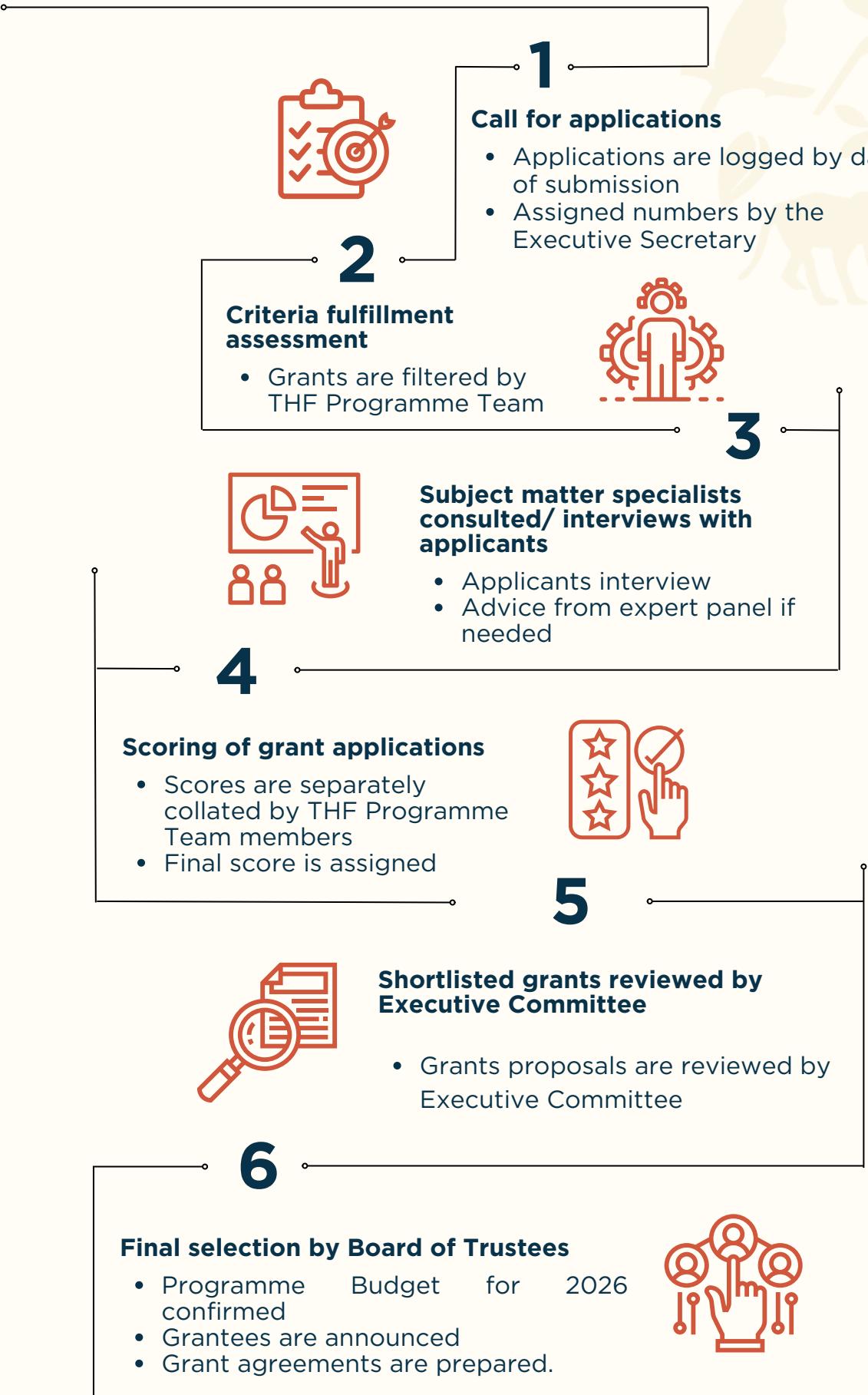
If you are striving to make an impact within the different pillars, we welcome your applications. We focus on supporting projects and initiatives that have the potential to make strategic and significant contributions for the betterment of our planet.

The Habitat Foundation recognises that change comes from different disciplines and perspectives. We embrace collaborative approaches to preserving our natural heritage and safeguarding a future for all life. Whether the work focuses on **conservation** initiatives, cutting-edge **research**, innovative **education** programmes, **sustainability**-driven projects, or **training** efforts, THF Grants are designed to facilitate and accelerate progress.

[APPLY NOW](#)

[Click here for THF Grants Application Platform](#)

Grant Process



Grant Requirements

Application criteria

- We only support projects that are carried out in Malaysia
- We do not support purely academic or theoretical studies with no clear pathway to practical application to conservation or community benefit.
- Special consideration is given to initiatives proposed within the Penang Hill Biosphere Reserve.
- The maximum permitted grant amount is RM50,000.

Application requirements

- Submission of application form via [The Habitat Foundation Grants Application Platform](#). Manual submissions may be accepted at the discretion of the Foundation.
- A profile picture of the applicant (refer to the [Photography & Communication Requirements](#) section of this guidebook)
- Photos of project site/project work (refer to the [Photography & Communication Requirements](#) section of this guidebook)
- A resume/CV of the lead researcher or practitioner (*optional*)
- Additional proposal (written only in Malay/English) (*optional*)

Application Deadline

September 15, 2025

THF Grants Pillars

- THF supports projects based on our 5 CREST pillars: Conservation, Research, Education, Sustainability, and Training.
- Our grant awards are guided by [THF Grants' Theory of Change](#), which outlines the kinds of projects we support to drive the outcomes we aim for. These outcomes contribute to our long-term goals across the 5 CREST pillars and are made possible through strong partnerships with grantees and meaningful community engagement.
- Read through the next sections to understand our funding priorities.

CONSERVATION

The Habitat Foundation is committed to supporting initiatives to conserve biodiversity and natural ecosystems by:

- partnering with government agencies, academic institutions, conservation practitioners, and community allies
- preserving areas of conservation significance and protecting threatened species
- implementing science-based, pragmatic, strategic, and timely interventions to ensure measurable impact in biodiversity conservation

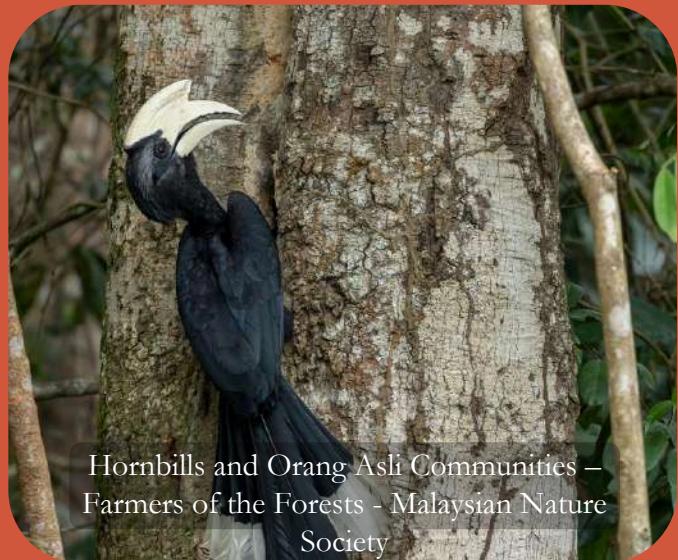
Who can apply

- Individuals, NGOs, community-based organisations, academicians, and government agencies engaged in environmental protection, conservation, protected areas, and natural resources management.

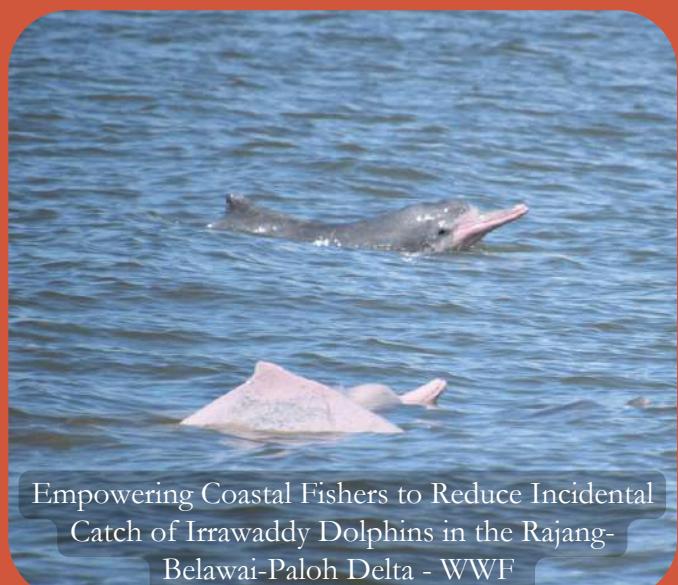
Priority is given to projects that:

- focus on species and habitats of conservation significance
- address urgent conservation issues
- demonstrate improved conservation practice and effective actions
- have strong elements of community engagement and stakeholder collaboration

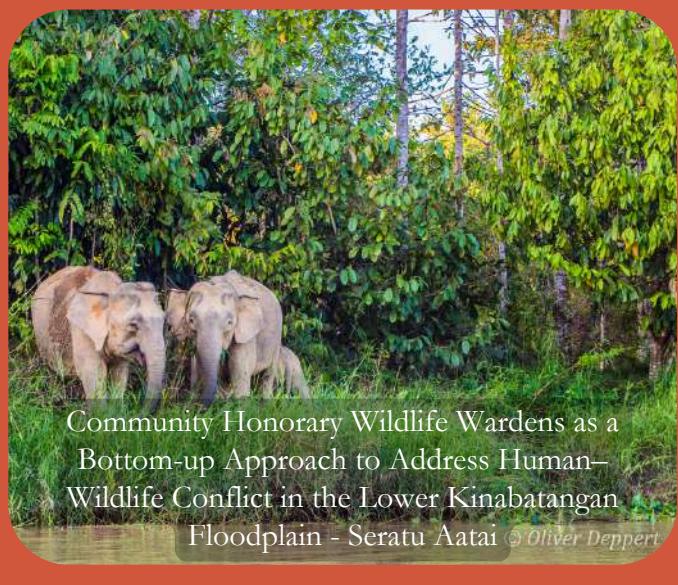
Refer to Page 13 for detailed priority list



Hornbills and Orang Asli Communities – Farmers of the Forests - Malaysian Nature Society



Empowering Coastal Fishers to Reduce Incidental Catch of Irrawaddy Dolphins in the Rajang-Belawai-Paloh Delta - WWF

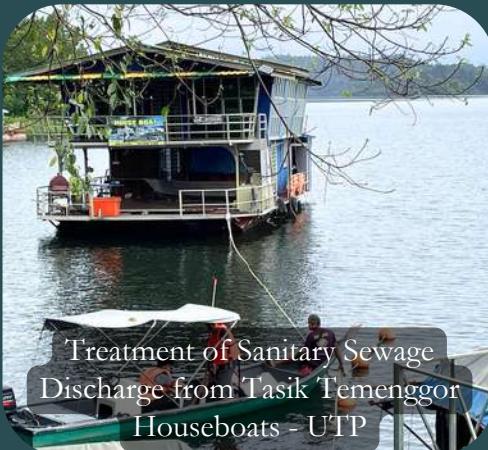


Community Honorary Wildlife Wardens as a Bottom-up Approach to Address Human-Wildlife Conflict in the Lower Kinabatangan Floodplain - Seratu Aatai © Oliver Deppe

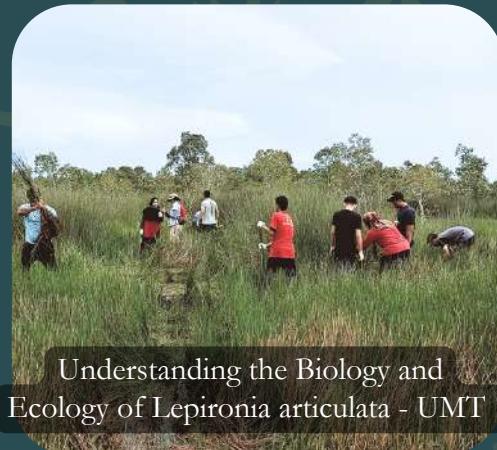
RESEARCH



Finding the Forgotten Biodiversity: Revisiting the Land Snails of Penang Hill After 153 Years - UMS



Treatment of Sanitary Sewage Discharge from Tasik Temenggor Houseboats - UTP



Understanding the Biology and Ecology of Lepironia articulata - UMT

The Habitat Foundation supports research that contributes to the advancement of biodiversity knowledge and sustainability by:

- supporting conservation biology research on species and natural ecosystems
- promoting field-based scientific knowledge to support evidence-based decision-making
- supporting collaborations with local communities and traditional knowledge holders
- advocating for new approaches in the policy and practice of conservation and natural resource management
- advancing innovations in sustainable technology to reduce environmental impact and encourage optimal use of natural resources.

Who can apply

- Individuals, Masters/PhD students seeking to fulfill their fieldwork component, Academicians and Government agencies responsible for environmental protection, conservation, protected areas and natural resources management.

Priority is given to projects that:

- focus on species and habitats of conservation significance
- address important contemporary conservation issues and challenges
- demonstrate improved conservation practice
- engage with local and indigenous communities in implementation

Refer to Page 13 for detailed priority list

EDUCATION

The Habitat Foundation supports and promotes environmental education by:

- partnering with government agencies, academic institutions, conservation practitioners, and community allies to advance environmental education initiatives
- preserving areas of conservation significance and protecting threatened species through educational programmes that raise awareness and foster a sense of responsibility
- sowing a sense of responsibility for caring for our living environment
- nurturing greater awareness and public engagement in conservation action at all levels of society

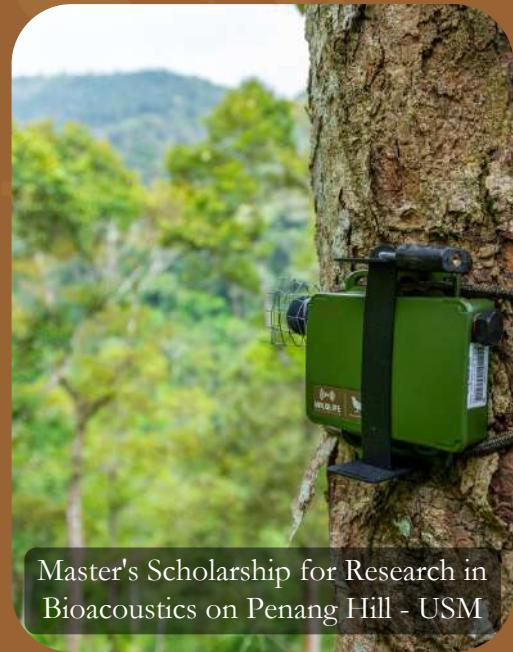
Who can apply

- Individuals, Researchers, Organisations and Government agencies keen to advance any aspect of environmental education for species and environmental conservation and promoting the adoption of sustainable lifestyles.

Priority is given to proposals that:

- clearly outline their approach and expected outcomes
- are built on a track record of working with a target audience or community
- are directly linked to an important conservation issue
- demonstrate potential for long-term sustainability and scalability.

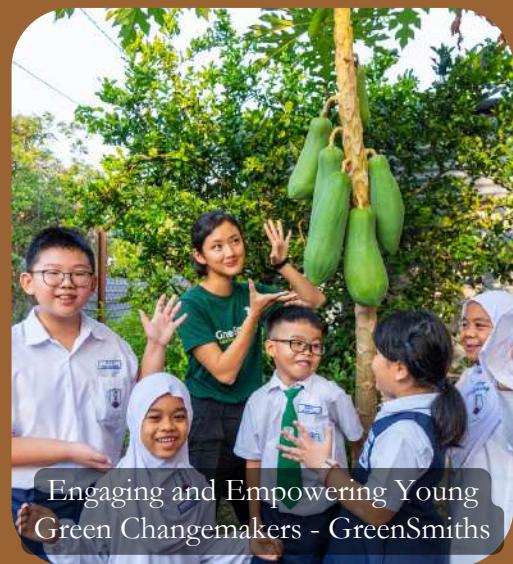
Refer to Page 13 for detailed priority list



Master's Scholarship for Research in Bioacoustics on Penang Hill - USM

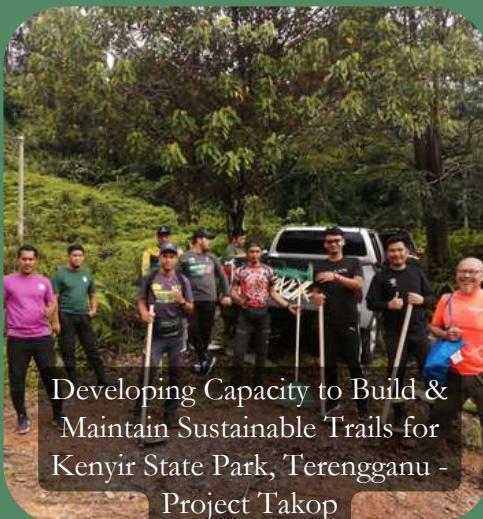
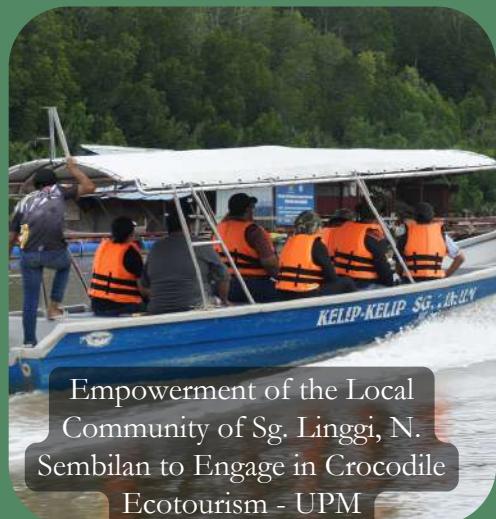


Whales On-The-Wheels - A Marine Education Mobile Event - MareCet



Engaging and Empowering Young Green Changemakers - GreenSmiths

SUSTAINABILITY



The Habitat Foundation seeks to advance sustainability by:

- advancing the development and implementation of technological innovations and systems to reduce impact on the natural environment
- advancing the adoption of innovations to reduce waste and overconsumption of natural resources and resource consumption
- encouraging public adoption of systems that support sustainable lifestyles, including regenerative agriculture systems
- supporting transitions towards more sustainable tourism
- promoting circular economy and the move towards more sustainable businesses

Who can apply

- Individuals, organisations and businesses working on aspects of sustainability and community engagement
- Innovators, researchers and institutions developing tools and projects for sustainable practices and circular economy.

Priority is given to proposals that:

- are coherent with current government policies, plans, and campaigns
- demonstrate strong collaboration and existing links with key stakeholders
- have the potential to introduce innovations that may be scaled up for greater impact.

Refer to Page 13 for detailed priority list

TRAINING

The Habitat Foundation is committed to building capacity among practitioners, and establishing a mutually-supportive conservation community by:

- supporting and implementing training programmes targeted at strengthening the effectiveness and impact of conservation professionals and community leaders
- creating a supportive network, fostering collaborations and connecting individuals and organisations in the environmental field and other changemakers
- empowering individuals and communities through professional development opportunities, promoting best practices and innovation

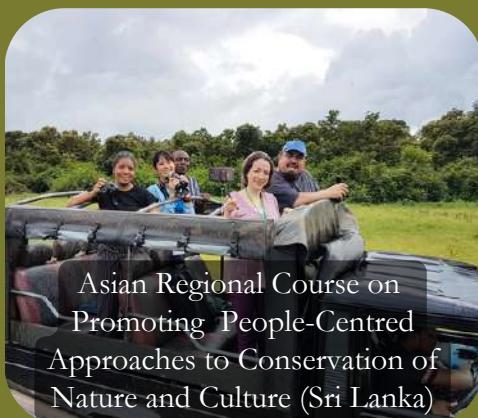
Who can apply

- Conservation and sustainability professionals seeking skills enhancement and training opportunities
- Postgraduate students in environmental studies seeking professional development and specialised training
- NGOs, communities and government agencies involved in conservation, sustainability and environmental management

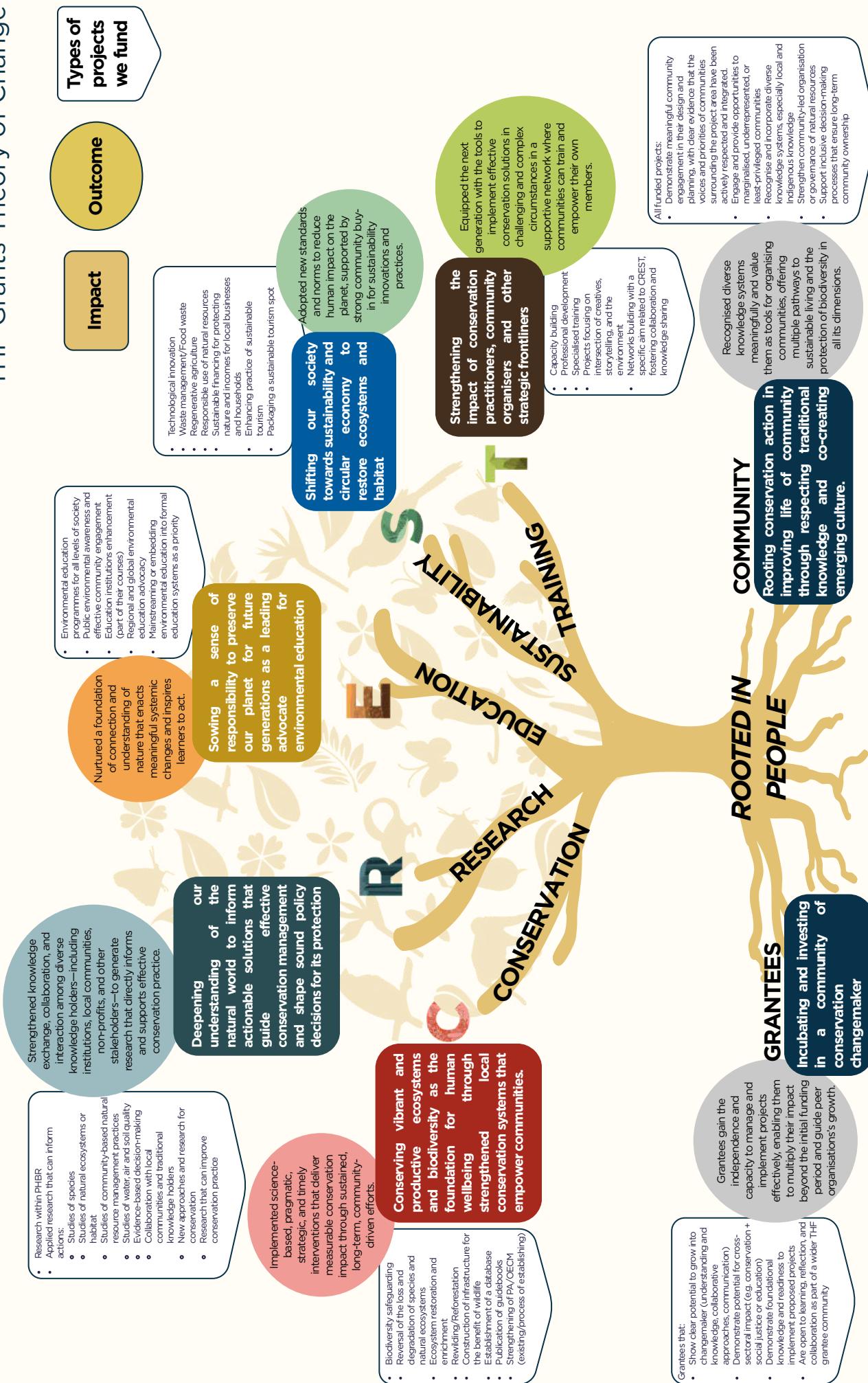
Priority is given to proposals that:

- demonstrate the value of the training to fulfilling an important need or skills to achieve important conservation outcomes
- enable the applicant's personal and professional growth through participation in training, courses, or international meetings, and demonstrate how this will lead to tangible conservation outcomes after completion
- clearly outline the potential for the training to contribute to any of the Foundation's pillars.

Refer to Page 13 for detailed priority list



THF Grants Theory of Change



The THF Grants Theory of Change here illustrates how our intended outcomes can be achieved through strategic grantmaking. It shows how projects aligned with the five CREST pillars contribute to systemic, lasting impact. Use this as a reference to align your proposed activities, outcomes, and indicators with THF's overarching goals.

Pillars/ Indicators	Conservation Research Education Sustainability Training Community engagement
<p>Project indicators (Tangible and measurable results)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of conservation interventions implemented (e.g. rewilding, ecosystem restoration, infrastructure built) Number of fieldwork activities completed Number of field assistants, volunteers, and staff involved Number of relevant stakeholders engaged (e.g. PA managers, local communities, NGOs) Number and type of publications produced (e.g. guidebooks, journal articles, posters) Number of species surveyed or monitored Changes in abundance or distribution of targeted species 	<p>Conservation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of field sites covered (area/distance) Number of samples collected Number of field trips and duration of sampling period (e.g. seasonal changes) Number of participants attended the workshop/field trip Number and type of collaborative publication Diversity and relevance of stakeholder entities engaged Robustness of research methodology, including replicability and appropriateness for conservation application <p>Research</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of students involved in education projects Change in awareness levels Change in behaviour <p>Education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of schools involved in education projects Number of partners involved in education projects Number of green jobs created Sustainable businesses supported/ created Number of tourism products developed and promoted Weight of waste/ recycling/ composting/ processed Improved quality of environment (e.g. air, water, soil, etc.) Number of sustainability innovations replicated in other communities or sectors Number of users or communities adopting regenerative practices or technologies <p>Sustainability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of green jobs created Sustainable businesses supported/ created Number of tourism products developed and promoted Weight of waste/ recycling/ composting/ processed Improved quality of environment (e.g. air, water, soil, etc.) Number of sustainability innovations replicated in other communities or sectors Number of users or communities adopting regenerative practices or technologies <p>Training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of training conducted Number of trained individuals Number of network members Number of certification courses established Testimonials from participant/ participant/ feedback Evidence of application of training skills in their work or community Evidence of recognition received by participants in the project as a result of the training (e.g. award, external funding, invited as speakers, etc.) <p>Community engagement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of engagement with the community Number of community members involved Success case study Documented change in perception Number of capacity building/knowledge transfer sessions to relevant stakeholders (i.e. local community) Extent of co-creation and community consultation throughout the project cycle Evidence of knowledge co-production with local or Indigenous communities

Photography & Communication Requirements

All applicants must submit **at least 3 photos** for each of the categories below. These photos will help the executive committee better understand the project, present shortlisted applications to the board of trustees, and make the final announcement across the Foundation's website and social media. By providing these photos and additional information, applicants can enhance their applications and ensure better visibility during the selection and announcement processes.



1. Profile Photo

- Upload a well-lit and clear front-face profile photo (preferably taken in the field)
- Show the person in charge of the project/organisation who is applying
- A bonus would be a photo of the applicant with the subject of interest
- If representing an NGO or a team, include a group photo



2. Subject and/or Site of Interest

- For applicants working on a specific species or group of organisms (plants, animals, cyanobacteria etc), submit photo(s) of the subject.
- For applicants working on a landscape level, a drone or wide-angle photo of the area is strongly encouraged



3. Work-in-Progress Shot

- For proposals requesting support for ongoing initiatives, please include action shots that showcase aspects of the proposed work.



4. Project or organisation logo

- Only required for organisations or project's that have a dedicated logo.
- Submit in .png format

Bonus: Social Media Handles & Website Address

Submit your social media handles using the "@" symbol (e.g., @thehabitatformation), especially if your account name and username name are different. This will allow us to tag and mention you in the final announcement post

Photography & Communication Requirements

Example of photos:

1. Profile photo
2. Subject and/or Site of Interest
3. Work-in-Progress Shot
4. Project or Organisation logo

DIVERSITY OF DAMSELFLY AND DRAGONFLY



ULU TAMPPIK JUNIOR RANGERS



Photography Guidelines and Tips

If you are SELECTED, these are some guidelines for you to follow.

1. Centre the Subject of Interest:

- Position the subject of interest at the centre of the frame
- This technique draws immediate attention to the subject and is effective for emphasising its importance
- Examples include photos of your research subject, group photos and portraits with the subject in action



2. Utilise the Rule of Thirds for Storytelling

- Apply the Rule of Thirds composition, dividing the image into thirds both horizontally and vertically
- Place the subject at the intersection of these dividing lines or along one of the lines
- The remaining intersection or line can convey an additional element of the intended story



A

Image A showcases Mr. Yong from MyChangkul, an instructor specialising in sustainable trail construction. The subject is positioned at the centre, drawing attention to him.



B

In **Image B**, the Rule of Thirds is applied, resulting in a more visually appealing composition. **Image B** effectively tells the story of a person building a trail, capturing the viewer's interest.

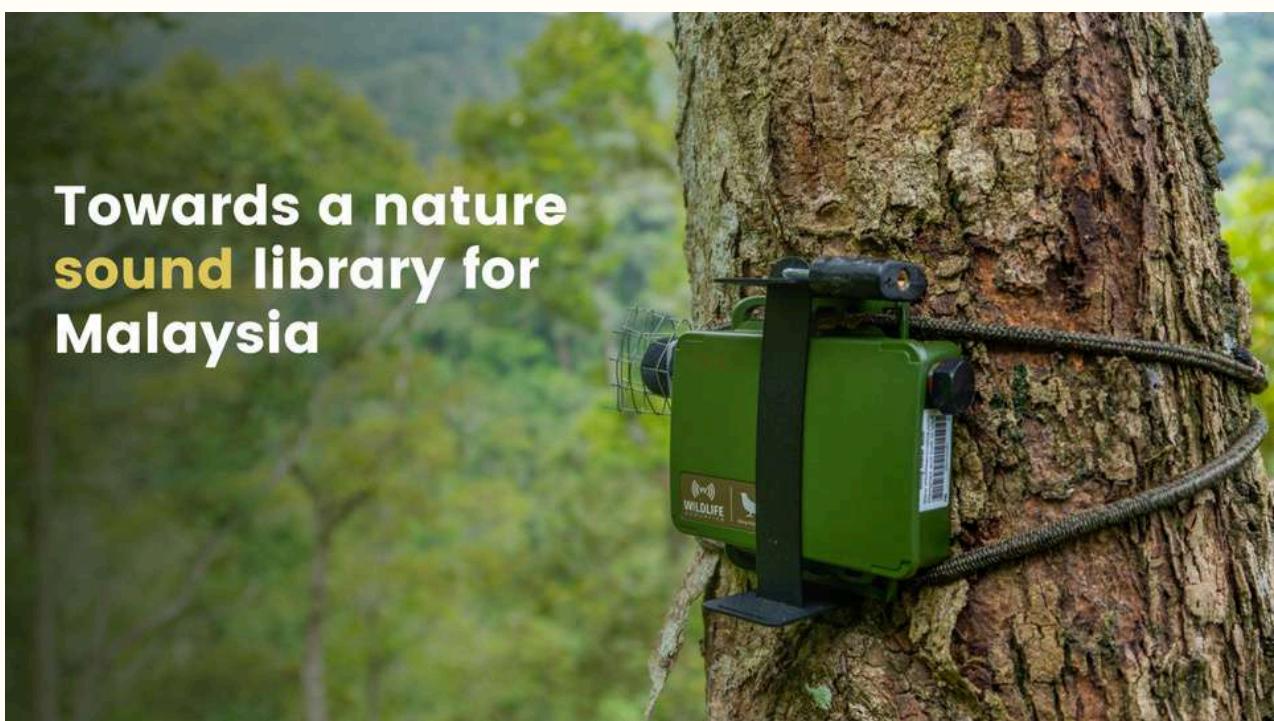


This photo exemplifies the Rule of Thirds, showcasing Dr. Faradina, a cyanobacteria researcher, performing procedures in the lab.

The composition effectively tells the story of Dr. Faradina's work and serves as a compelling profile photo.

3. Embrace Negative Space:

- Negative space refers to the empty area surrounding the focal point or subject
- Use negative space strategically to allow the viewer's eyes to rest on the subject while providing room for creative elements
- This is particularly useful for media presentations such as slides, posters and social media posts



4. Changing Your Angle and Position for Different Perspectives

When capturing a scene, consider changing your angle and position to add variety and enhance visual impact.



A

Image A effectively shows a group of children engaging in planting activities near a small stream, providing context and portraying the situation.



B

Image B showcases the advantages of capturing a lower and closer angle, resulting in a visually appealing photo that emphasises the children's actions and the planted plants.



C

Both photos of Dr. Shamsul measuring the tree's diameter at breast height showcases the procedure involved in his research.



D

Aim to capture different angles and positions of the same subject to help illustrate the work .

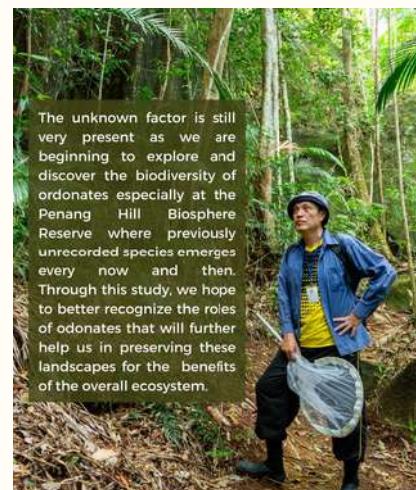
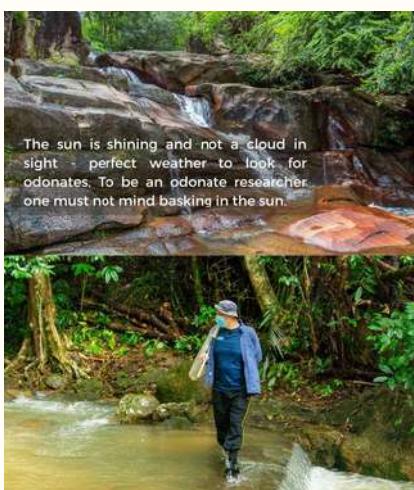
Examples of our Social Media Posts: Featuring our Grantees



<https://www.instagram.com/p/CgyzawIJy2G/>



<https://www.facebook.com/HabitatFoundation/photos/pb.2260019230820700/2260026827486607/>



Community Engagement Guidelines

THF believes that all different knowledge systems should be respected and that they are meaningful in offering pathways to sustainable living and safeguarding biodiversity. Community engagement thus constitutes a strong element within your application to THF Grants. By working with a community, you could design and implement an inclusive project that respects the local culture and norms. However, when community engagement is just a checkbox exercise, the respect for the community's perceptions takes a back seat. Within this section on Community Engagement Guidelines, several key lessons from our own work are highlighted to help you design a well-rounded proposal. Through reading and reflection, we hope that you will:

- Ensure the proposed project aligns with community interests and benefits the community
- Proactively reach out to the community for the co-creation of knowledge and collaboration
- Build trust through sharing project information and making the intention of engagement clear

The following guidelines consist of three main phases of engaging community. Each of these phases guides you through the cycle of your project and where community engagement can be more respectfully done. Of course, this is not an exhaustive guideline. We hope that you will take more proactive action to learn more about community engagement. We have included several further readings at the end of this section for your understanding.



Planning

Before you submit any proposals to THF or to any other donor, talk to the communities in and around your planned project areas. They should be consulted and give their free, prior, informed consent about project components or co-create your proposal (watch this [video](#) to learn more).

Ask yourself these questions as you are approaching the community:

- Why engage with this community?
- What role does my project play from the perspective of the community?
- What form of engagement am I taking? Just awareness-raising? A dialogue? Consultation? Active participation? Co-creation of knowledge?



Another aspect that you should consider is to understand who or which organisation is currently working or was involved in the project areas and what they did. This is to ensure that effort is not replicated but supplementary. The community might also face engagement fatigue if they are being approached repeatedly for the same issues without any resolution.

Implementation

As you start your project, put transparency as your priority when engaging with the community. Communicate the goal, steps or methodology, and potential benefits to the community. Be clear about the project timeline and when they can anticipate results—be it immediate or a longer-term commitment. Convey any decisions that need to be made or any external factors affecting the project's progress. Being transparent is crucial to building trust with the community.

While communicating with the community, there are a few aspects that you should consider:

- **Timing:** celebrations, ritual prohibitions, grieving period, farming season, etc.
- **Accessibility of language:** community's main spoken language, easily comprehensible phrases or wording, remove jargon, culturally sensitive tone and context, etc.
- **Aligning understanding of words and phrases:** use of visual cue cards to align the meaning of objects or wildlife, ask questions instead of assumptions, etc.
- **Representation within the community:** gender representation, youth representation, pay attention to powerful figures overshadowing underrepresented community members, etc.

THF's community roll-out posters in Malay informs local communities on the establishment and conservation of the tiger reserve and project details to maintain transparency of engagement in the process:

PROSES BEKERJASAMA DENGAN KOMUNITI



MANFAAT KOMUNITI



Ask yourself these questions as you work with the community:

- How can I build relationships with the community respectfully?
- What happens if I break the relationship with the community?
- Am I overpromising or setting high expectations to get quick agreement from the community?



reflect

Remember, community engagement is not about collecting data but about a deeper understanding of the local context for better shared outcomes. Make multiple visits to build relationships; it can be over a tea break and talking about life beyond the project scope. The key is to be genuine.

Completion

As you wrap up your project, do not leave community members hanging. Project outcomes and results should be communicated to the community in a form that is easily understood. If you will be based at the project site for the short term, talk about the future of the project and who will take ownership of the project results. If you will be there for the long term, discuss the next steps and realign goals with the community again.

Ask yourself these questions as you conclude the project:

- Does the project come with a solution for the community? Are the solutions practical for them?
- What can be done sustainably after this cycle of funding?
- Can we co-generate longer-term funding for this project?



reflect

Community Engagement Guidelines



The end of one project is usually not the end of a problem, especially when it comes to nature conservation. It is also definitely not the end of the involvement of the community in this issue. Planning your community engagement at the beginning ensures that conservation is not done in silos but built on collaboration.

We hope that this guideline will be useful for you, even beyond THF Grants.

Every project we support is a branch of a larger vision that is rooted in people, growing through action, and bearing the fruits of lasting change.

Further resources and readings:

Braus, J. (2011). Tools of engagement: A toolkit for engaging people in conservation. <https://conservationstandards.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2020/10/Audubon-toolkit.pdf>

Brittain, S., Ibbett, H., De Lange, E., Dorward, L., Hoyte, S., Marino, A., Milner-Gulland, E. J., Newth, J., Rakotonarivo, S., Veríssimo, D., & Lewis, J. (2020). Ethical considerations when conservation research involves people. *Conservation Biology*, 34(4), 925–933. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cobi.13464>

Chua, L., Schreer, V., & Thung, P. H. (2022). Using ethnographic research for social engagement: A toolkit for orangutan (and other) conservationists. <https://globallivesoftheorangutan.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/OrangutanReport-WEB-1.pdf>

Larsen, P. B., & Chanthavisouk, C. (2024). Free, prior, and informed consent, local officials, and changing biodiversity governance in Hin Nam No, Laos. *Conservation Biology*, 38(6). <https://doi.org/10.1111/cobi.14388>

Selection Criteria

Assessment of the application will be based on the following criteria:

1. Innovation & Significance

- How novel is the idea?
- Does it address a clear gap or challenge?

2. Impact & Community Engagement

- Beneficial community engagement
 - Are local voices meaningfully involved in project design and decision-making?
- Meaningful and sustainable impact
 - Will the project deliver lasting benefits?

3. Feasibility & Delivery Capacity

- Potential for effective and efficient delivery
 - Does the team have the skills, systems, and track record to execute?
- Communications & Visibility
 - Will the project deliver regular and quality engagement of publication/posts on project milestones?

4. Collaboration & Support

- Multi-stakeholder approach & institutional backing
 - Are key agencies or partners informed about the project?
 - Have necessary permissions, endorsements, and consent been secured?
 - Is there a clear plan for keeping stakeholders informed and involved?

5. Application Quality

- Is the application well-structured, realistic, and cost-effective?

Contact Information



+604 294 3755



<https://habitatfoundation.org.my/>



thfgrants@habitatfoundation.org.my



488A-20-02 & 03, Penas Tower,
One Stop Midlands Park Complex, Jalan Burma, 10350
Pulau Pinang, Malaysia.



The Habitat Foundation



@thehabitatfoundation



The Habitat Foundation



@TheHabitatFoundation





THF Grants 2026 Applicants' Guidebook

Prepared for applicants and grantees of The Habitat Foundation Grants

Disclaimer: The information in this guidebook is accurate as of the date of distribution and is subject to change without prior notice.