

# CALL FOR APPLICATIONS: ECO-SOLVE AMPLIFYING GRANTS FOR AI INNOVATION

## Establishing the problem: the forensic data deficit in tackling environmental crime

Law enforcement agencies struggle to stay ahead of criminal network adaptation in illegal environmental commodity markets. One reason for this is the current under-utilisation and inaccessibility of data and technologies that would make enforcement more effective. The gap between these potential resources and practical use is a “forensic data deficit”. Where ‘Data’ refers to all information required for responses, including the technologies that enable data to be gathered for operational or strategic use. Owing to recent significant technological advancements we have an opportunity to improve responses and equip law enforcement with better tools.

Through its Data Cooperation and Governance Platform, the ECO-SOLVE project seeks to drive a transformative shift in disrupting illicit environmental activities and foster greater cooperation among global stakeholders. A core component of this is the award of grant funding to innovative AI driven initiatives which directly address the key challenges outlined below. We are therefore pleased to launch a call for proposals on AI Innovation.

### Background

We argue the forensic data deficit has three core challenges. Firstly, there is **an innovation challenge** – despite a range of existing solutions and the often high funding interest in technological solutions, there is a lack of strategic investment in solutions that are specifically designed to maximise law enforcement effectiveness. Secondly, there is **an enforcement challenge** – solutions designed in academic and research settings are rarely adopted into law enforcement practices on the ground, particularly when they are developed without piloting or incorporating feedback from law enforcement actors. Thirdly, and perhaps most significantly, there are **political and institutional challenges** – inefficiencies in data sharing between stakeholders often result in fragmented efforts that fail to harness the full potential of these technologies. While political and institutional barriers inhibit international cooperation and stifle the dissemination of data and adoption of crucial technological innovations.

Recent advancements in computer processing power bring opportunities to address many of these challenges, specifically by harnessing the latest developments in AI. By scaling up existing technologies and promoting their integration into enforcement strategies, this grant aims to catalyze a more effective global response.

## The ECO-SOLVE Amplifying Grants for AI innovation

Our amplifying grant facility aims to support projects that are harnessing the latest developments in AI technologies to improve responses to environmental crimes. It specifically targets projects that are focused on closing the gap between development and law enforcement adoption, overcoming institutional and political barriers to data sharing, and that employ innovative solutions. We will fund initiatives that target all kinds of environmental crime, which includes illicit activities involving wildlife species (both flora and fauna), fisheries and other natural resources (minerals, timber etc.).

The grant focuses on identifying and supporting existing technological and cooperative initiatives that have the potential to enhance and amplify responses to transnational illegal environmental commodity flows. These projects should be implemented to strengthen cross-border data production, exchange, and collaboration.

Grants will be awarded to projects lasting between 3 and 9 months, with values of between 50,000 - 125,000 EUR.

Illustrative examples of the types of initiatives that will be funded include:

- The development of joint standards for the collection of data or application of AI-driven technologies, and their piloting or scaling for law enforcement use including ensuring admissibility in judicial proceedings.
- The development of resources to be shared across borders and/or repositories of training material for AI development.
- The piloting of technologies to be used in the field to detect illegal goods or false paperwork or assist in furthering investigations.

### Scope and definitions:

The primary focus of this grant is to support projects that promote the advance of what we term "**forensic data**". This refers to methods and approaches that bring critical information to those at the forefront of investigating and prosecuting crimes. Such insights are essential for designing effective responses to disrupt criminal markets.

ECO-SOLVE is particularly interested in **expanding the use of existing initiatives** in combating environmental crime, e.g. those that are ready for amplification or that have been previously applied to other crimes or topics areas. However, projects in the early stages of development or that encompass novel approaches are also eligible.

### Available funding:

An Innovation Amplifying Grant Facility will award several grants of between €50,000-125, 000 in value to projects lasting between 3 and 9 months.

## Target applicants for grants:

Please note that this grant is specifically for applicants based in and operating within our priority countries (see list below). Projects must be led by local agencies or organizations, and while collaborations with international organizations will be considered they should support local leadership and prioritise local spend.

Eligible applicants include:

- **Law enforcement agencies** operating in priority countries \*
- **Government-led laboratories** conducting research relevant to responses to environmental crime.
- **Data scientists and researchers** engaged in work that enhances responses to environmental crime.
- **Technological innovators** developing solutions to strengthen responses to environmental crime.
- **Non-governmental institutions** with a proven track record of countering environmental crime.

## Geographical focus\*:

The ECO-SOLVE project prioritizes impact in alignment with the [2023 Global Organized Crime Index](#). Therefore, grantees must **be local institutions** based in one of the listed countries, and their interventions should specifically target one or more of the shortlisted countries.

The shortlisted countries were identified as having the highest combined scores for environmental crime markets. The objective is to ensure that funded projects make a meaningful and lasting contribution to combating environmental crime in these critical regions.

The priority countries are: 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, Solomon Islands, South Africa, South Sudan, Tanzania, Thailand, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, and Vietnam.

**Deadline for applying:** 14th of April 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 the following criteria:

1. Address key challenges: Your proposal should tackle the challenges outlined in the project brief, aiming to introduce AI-driven innovative solutions for frontline use.
2. Geographical impact: The anticipated impact of your project should be in the priority countries listed earlier. It must clearly identify which countries will be the primary focus and how the initiative will contribute to combating environmental crime in those regions.
3. Eligible entities: You must be a law enforcement agency, government laboratory, researcher, or local organization with a proven track record in countering environmental crime and be located in one of the priority countries.
4. 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.
5. Data sharing and sustainability: Your proposal 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.
6. Collaboration and cooperation: Proposals should include a strategy for engaging with national and regional partners to enhance impact and sustainability. Proposals may highlight how cross-border collaboration could strengthen efforts beyond the project's lifecycle.
7. Implementation plan: Provide a detailed plan on how the funding will be utilized and how the proposed activities will be implemented. This should include a clear timeline, milestones, and measurable outcomes to ensure accountability and effectiveness.

## Application guidelines and timings:

- Please visit our website to view the full details of the call for proposals.
- If you believe your organization is eligible for a grant, please send a concept note to [ecosolve@globalinitiative.net](mailto:ecosolve@globalinitiative.net). Use the subject line “Concept Note for ECO-SOLVE Amplifying Grant for AI innovation” **Please find the concept note template attached.**
- After reviewing your concept note, if deemed suitable, our review panel will send you a proposal template and detailed requirements. You will then be required to submit a full proposal
- If your proposal is shortlisted, our review panel will provide feedback and initiate a background and risk assessment process.
- The final stage involves an internal Grant Committee review. Grants will be approved following this review process. (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](mailto:ecosolve@globalinitiative.net)

## Timeline:

	Deadline
Launch Call for Applications requesting concept notes	10 March
Deadline for concept notes	14 April
Review panel selects proposals to submit full application	25 April
Review of full applications with applicants invited to make revisions where necessary.	16 May
Discussion by Internal Board	First week of June
Decision by Grants Committee	Second week of June
Risk assessment and security checklist completed where necessary.	End of June
Grant agreement signed and grant disbursed.	July
Regular reporting and evaluation	Throughout the grant implementation

