Europe's Ecosystem Research Network

AHIA : the ALTER-Net High Impact Action activity

Call for proposals

Goals of the AHIA activity

In order to have maximum impact on international policy related to biodiversity, ecosystems and/or ecosystem services, and to have its institutional expertise and top scientists involved in the consortium recognised to the fullest possible extent, ALTER-Net initiated the ALTER-Net High Impact Action activity (AHIA).

Scope of AHIA projects

The first scope of an AHIA project is to prepare high impact papers on hot topics related to biodiversity, ecosystems and ecosystem services bringing together expertise and state-of-the-art knowledge from different partner institutes and creates a high impact paper.

Papers could take a range of forms, e.g. a review; a meta-analysis; a direct (and significant contribution to an) answer to one of the 100 fundamental ecological questions raised in the Journal of Ecology (Sutherland et al., 2013); a significant contribution to the ALTER-Net EU 2020 Biodiversity Strategy Recommendations; a significant contribution to the EPBRS-research questions on the same issue; or as a response in any format to any other fundamental question regarding policy-relevant issues in ecology and for socio-ecological systems.

The second scope of an AHIA project is to share and disseminate the results of AHIA among all ALTER-Net partners and towards other scientific institutes. This could take the form of video presentation of the AHIA project results, a webinar or a plenary lecture during an international scientific meeting.

The third scope of an AHIA project is to communicate toward policy makers and general public. A statement/pamphlet on the outcome aimed at a broader audience, i.e. policy makers, stakeholders and a clear jargon free text for the general public, should be produced.

Procedure of AHIA Project

Further details on the purpose and procedures of AHIA are elaborated in the appendix to this call. It includes financial arrangements and the maximum available budget per project. Please read the appendix carefully, it will clarify the possibilities offered within this ALTER-Net activity.

Appendix to the call for proposals for the AHIA-activity

AHIA: The ALTER-Net High Impact Action activity

Purpose and procedures

The ALTER-Net High Impact Action - AHIA was initiated in 2013. The goals and procedure for implementing the AHIA process were set out in an earlier paper and agreed by Council. Based on the high impact action that has since been funded and realised, the Management Board has reviewed the process for delivering the AHIA goals. The last revision of the procedure was accepted by Council at its meeting on 2-3 December 2019 in Antony, FR.

Purpose

In order to have maximum impact on international biodiversity policy making concerning hot topics in biodiversity, ecosystems and/or ecosystem services, and also to involve its top scientists in the consortium as much as possible, ALTER-Net initiated the ALTER-Net High Impact Action activity (AHIA).

In order to accomplish the AHIA goals, the consortium aims to bring together its top scientists, to:

1. Prepare high impact papers on hot and frontier topics related to biodiversity, ecosystem and ecosystem services to be published in leading scientific journals;
2. Support ALTER-Net partners' capacity building by sharing the results as a video presentation or vlog, a blog post, a webinar or an oral presentation during a plenary session on an important international scientific conference;
3. Produce a policy brief on the project outcome aimed at policy makers and stakeholders and proactively present this to policy makers or at policy events;
4. A short text for the general public proposing a simple and not using jargon presentation of the project results to be published on the ALTER-Net website.

Coordination of the AHIA call

The general AHIA call coordinator will be a member of the Management Board and his/her portfolio is to coordinate the 'AHIA activity'.

Procedure

1. Each year, an open call shall be sent to all ALTER-Net partner institutes with the request to submit proposals that address the above mentioned purposes (max 2 pages, see below) and that focus on important, policy-relevant, biodiversity, ecosystems and/or ecosystem services issues.
2. The ALTER-Net secretariat will send out this open call on behalf of the AHIA call coordinator. The announcement shall include the present document with an indication of the required content (see Annex 1), a submission deadline, and the financial reward rules (see 4) for each successful proposal.
3. The total requested funding shall not exceed **€15,000**.

4. The AHIA projects duration shall be of 12 months.
5. The ALTER-Net secretariat shall gather all proposals received and send a copy of them to the AHIA coordinator.
6. The AHIA coordinator will propose a motivated shortlist with a maximum of 6 proposals based on technical and topic issues that shall be validated by the Management Board.
7. The ALTER-Net secretariat shall, on behalf of the AHIA coordinator, communicate back to the ALTER-Net partner institutes and the initiating researcher(s) which proposals are on the shortlist and which are not.
8. A selection committee shall be appointed every year. This selection committee shall be composed of at least 4 members and chaired by the AHIA call coordinator. External reviewers could be appointed. This selection committee will review all the projects and provide scientific and societal impact arguments to support the selection or the rejection of each project.
9. In the event that several projects could be selected for funding, the AHIA call coordinator will propose a ranked list of these projects based on the selection committee reviews.
10. The ALTER-Net secretariat will transmit to the Council the ranked list of projects selected for funding.
11. The ALTER-Net secretariat shall, on behalf of the AHIA coordinator, communicate the Council decision and the project reviews to all project coordinators that are listed on the shortlist.
12. The project coordinator must be affiliated to an ALTER-Net institute, participants can also be recruited outside the ALTER-Net community.
13. A contract shall be made between ALTER-Net and the ALTER-Net partner institute responsible for coordinating the AHIA project, detailing procedures and deliverables.
14. The ALTER-Net secretariat shall follow up with regards to the deliverables and will communicate this to the AHIA coordinator.
15. The organisation(s) coordinating the selected project shall send an open call to the entire ALTER-Net community to join the project. This should include a clear description of the aim and work plan, i.e. what is expected from the different researchers. It also should include a clear description of how interested researchers can indicate their wish to join the activity.
16. The project coordinator may invite all interested researchers or select fairly a smaller team. (S)he shall provide at an early stage of the project a description of the selected team and the motivations for the selection of team members. ALTER-Net institutes' participants should at least reach 50% of the total participant numbers. The selected team is to be validated by the AHIA selection committee.
17. Project teams shall complete the project according to the elements set out in Annex 1.
18. The Project coordinator shall submit a brief report to ALTER-Net secretariat summarising the project working plan and advancements after 6 months. This report will be transmitted to the AHIA coordinator and the MB.
19. The Project coordinator should submit a brief report summarising the outputs and their impacts, the proof of submission of the AHIA paper to the selected journal OR an advanced draft and a detail of the costs and expenditures incurred by the project in relation to the activities and products in the last month of the project.
20. The Project coordinator should submit the project deliverables to the ALTER-Net secretariat according to the planned timetable.
21. The Project coordinator should inform the AHIA coordinator and ALTER-Net Secretariat of the status of the submitted paper.
22. Management Board shall review the AHIA process and recommend changes if/when necessary or appropriate.

23. A formal letter of thanks shall be sent by the chair of the ALTER-Net Council to the project coordinator of each successful AHIA Activity.

Themes

For the 2020 call, ALTER-Net will be accepting proposals on the following themes:

1. The dependence of human society on biodiversity and ecosystem services

2. Sustainable futures for European landscapes

3. Climate mitigation in European urban areas: the role of ecosystem services

Excellent proposals on other relevant themes (related to biodiversity and ecosystems) will also be considered.

Structure, content, deliverables of a proposal

Proposal structure and content
4. The proposed AHIA project will be led by the partner institute researcher(s) with expertise on the featured issue
5. The proposal should:
    a. be no more than 2 A4 pages in length
    b. include a clear description of the issue to be addressed and its policy relevance
    c. Include a clear work plan with estimated costs of individual activities and a timeline showing when the deliverables can be expected
    d. If possible, solicit editors/journals for their potential interest and give an indication of this interest.

Details of the Work
It is expected that projects will include the following activities (not all obligatory):
1. A 2 to 3-day meeting (in the most suitable format) to fine-tune the subject, the goals, the allocation of tasks among participants, identification of technical needs if analyses are to be made;
    a. If needed, an additional 2 to 3-day meeting on progress with the manuscript and data analyses;
    b. If needed, an additional meeting to finalize the end product, being a potentially high impact paper, to be submitted to a leading international journal;
2. Manuscript submission;
3. Production of an ALTER-Net science-policy brief to be delivered to relevant stakeholders including a short plan for proactive communication to policymakers;
4. Production of a project webpage
5. Regular, ongoing correspondence with the ALTER-Net Management Board

Mandatory Deliverables
1. **An ALTER-Net labelled manuscript** (H1 paper) submitted to a leading international journal. ALTER-Net should be acknowledged in the manuscript.

2. **An ALTER-Net labelled science-policy brief** and/or media brief to be presented to policy makers and focusing on implications for political decisions and implementation. Policy brief(s) will be delivered to the relevant receiving parties (i.e. a meeting with relevant policy makers at which the policy brief(s) to elaborate on its contents is initiated by the project leader).
3. **A project webpage** for the ALTER-Net website
4. **Progress reports to the Management Board**, and provision of information concerning scheduled and upcoming events

Resources, costs
1. The total financial ALTER-Net requested funding shall not exceed **€15 000**.

Guidelines for proposals for the 6th call

Publication of the call: 12 December 2019
Deadline for submitting proposals: 30 April 2020
Decision by ALTER-Net Council: May 2020
Earliest possible start: 15 May 2020
Period for project: 1 year

AHIA coordinator: philip.roche@irstea.fr
Please send your proposal to: tessa.vansanten@inbo.be

What should be in your proposal?

Please follow the template below when writing your proposal. The proposal content description, i.e. excluding this cover page and the fact sheet, must be no longer than two A4 pages (the number of words per item is indicative, the maximum number of pages is restricted to 2 pages).

Please replace the italic text in the template with your own input.
The project coordinator must be affiliated to an ALTER-Net institute, participants can also be recruited outside the ALTER-Net community.

In case you have any questions, please contact tessa.vansanten@inbo.be or tscottkulfan@gmail.com

Template AHIA project proposals 2020-2021 – fact sheet

Project code

To be filled in by the ALTER-Net secretariat

Title

Concise title of the proposed AHIA-project

Lead partner

Who is the lead partner of the project (institute and person in charge)? Please provide mail address, email and phone number.

Additional ALTER-Net partners

What additional partners from ALTER-Net institutes will be participating in this project (institute(s) and persons)? Please provide mail address, email and phone number.

Additional non-ALTER-Net partners

What additional partners that do not belong to ALTER-Net institutes will be participating in this project (institute(s) and persons)? Please provide mail address, email and phone number.

Why are you well-placed/best-placed to take this initiative?

Budget

What are the financial needs (please, do not exceed the maximum available budget of 15.000 €)?

Describe how the money will be spent.

> *Estimate the expected in-kind contributions of all participants together*

Work Plan

> *Describe the work plan, including estimated costs of individual activities and a timeline showing when, from the start of the project onwards, the deliverables can be expected*

Template AHIA project proposals 2020-2021 - content
(max. 2 pages !)

Title

> *Concise title of the project (max. 25 words)*

Scope and aims

> *What is the general scope of the project and what are the overall aims, including the type of output (review, meta-analysis, …)(max. 500 words)*

Research questions

> *What are the main research questions to be answered in the paper? (max. 600 words)*

Policy relevance

> *Describe the policy relevance of the project (max. 250 words)*

References

> *Propose a list of 10 key references linked to your AHIA project*