

## Call of SIBECOL Projects for Early Career Researchers - 2024

### 1. Background

The Iberian Society of Ecology (SIBECOL) brings together scientists and professionals from all areas of Ecology with the aim of placing Ecology at the centre of our society.

The aim of this project call is to support early postdoc career ecologists by: (i) providing them funding opportunities, and (ii) promoting multi- and interdisciplinary research in Ecology. Proposals can be led by one or two PIs and must be related to experimental or theoretical ecology of aquatic or terrestrial ecosystems. To promote multidisciplinary, those proposals that integrate the study of more than one ecosystem (terrestrial, freshwater, marine) or that have a theoretical or methodological orientation, which transcends the borders of these types of ecosystems will be positively valued.

To do so, SIBECOL opens a call for original projects in Ecology, divided into two categories:

- A. Starting early career researchers project grant (Starting ECR) (One grant of 3000 €).
- B. Advanced early career researchers project grant (Advanced ECR) (One grant of 4000 €).

### 2. Requirements of candidates and participants

#### Candidates:

In order to apply for this call, all candidates, regardless of the category, must meet the following requirements:

1. They must be members of SIBECOL or any of its associated societies before submitting the project.
2. They must not be recipients of any previous project funded by SIBECOL or any of the associated societies.

Further, the specific requirements to apply for each category are:

- A. **Starting ECR** - Be a postdoctoral researcher (less than 3 years after PhD defence) before the publication of this call.
- B. **Advanced ECR** - Be a postdoctoral or a non-permanent researcher (more than 3 and less than 8 years after PhD defence) before the publication of this call.

Following European Commission recommendations, the periods set out above can be extended for maternity leave up to 18 months per child. For paternity, the extension will match the total time taken as parental leave by the applicant. Other circumstances that may justify extensions in the abovementioned periods are: (i) to be or have been responsible for children or any person in a situation of dependency; (ii) to have or have had a long-term illness (sick leave longer than 6 months); (iii) to be recognized as refugee under the 1951 Refugee Convention. All the above-mentioned circumstances have to be properly

documented during the application procedure. Applicants can contact the SIBECOL secretary in case of doubts about how to proceed.

### 3. Project requirements, duration and team assembly

All projects, independently of the category, must meet the following requirements:

1. They must address a subject related to Ecology.
2. They can be led by one or two PIs. In the case of more than one PI, they may or may not be from the same institution and they should have complementary background or skills, yet this requirement is not mandatory. In the case of more than one PI, one of them should be designated as the coordinator of the project. This person will be in charge of communicating with SIBECOL and managing the project funds.
3. The official time framework for the development of the project is 2 years. An additional year can be granted if any of the PIs meets during the project any of the conditions considered in the extension clauses in Section 2, or if any other major cause affects the normal development of the project. The time framework includes field and lab work (in case of empirical projects), data analysis and dissemination of results of the project.
4. Projects must be carried out during the official time framework. SIBECOL will fund theoretical or empirical projects whose data are gathered during the project. However, the use of already collected data (samples, data available in public databases) will be accepted if the research questions and the treatment of the data have a clear new focus and is independent of other uses and of previous project aims.
5. Projects must not be funded by any other entity, nor be related to the research program of other funded projects.

### 4. Budget

This SIBECOL call for ECR projects has a total available budget of 7,000 €, which is divided as follows:

- A. **Starting ECR** - One project with a total budget of 3,000 €.
- B. **Advanced ECR** - One project with a total budget of 4,000 €.

The budget may cover consumables and non-consumables, travel expenses required exclusively for the development of the project, and publication costs in journals associated with scientific societies. Conference registration fees to present results of the project are also allowed. In that case, SIBECOL meetings are preferable. Salaries cannot be paid by the budget. Eligible costs should be specified in the proposal according to the objectives of the project.

The coordinator of each awarded project will receive 100% of the total budget at the beginning of the project. SIBECOL will pay the corresponding IRPF taxes without detriment of the subsidized amount. The coordinator of each project must declare the income in the corresponding annual income tax declaration.

### 5. Application procedure

Candidates interested in submitting a project proposal should complete the application form

available in [http://www.sibecol.org/en/proyectos\\_ecr.html](http://www.sibecol.org/en/proyectos_ecr.html) and send it by e-mail to the Secretary of SIBECOL (Isabel Ferrera, [secretariat@sibecol.org](mailto:secretariat@sibecol.org)) indicating "SIBECOL ECR-Projects" in the subject of the email. The project proposal should be submitted in English as a single file. It should contain information about the novelty of the project, the research objectives, if required, the need for collaboration to achieve those goals, the methodology and work plan, the expected results and the justification of the budget (see project application form for detailed information about the sections and all necessary documents). The project proposal should not exceed 5 pages (not including bibliography or annexes) with Times New Roman font and 11-point size. The application must be accompanied by the curriculum vitae of the PI(s). All annexes should be merged at the end of the project application form. The period for submitting applications for the 2024 call is open from March 15<sup>th</sup> to May 31<sup>st</sup> 2024 (23:59 UTC + 1).

The CV format is free, but it should contain: academic path, list of publications (both published and in preparation) and projects (indicate whether the applicant was the coordinator or not). The existence of the necessary expertise to lead and perform the proposed project by PIs should be clearly justified. CVs should not be longer than four pages each.

The fact of applying for the present call for SIBECOL Projects for ECRs (2024) implies (i) the acceptance by the applicants of its bases and its resolution, which could not be appealed, and (ii) the resignation of any type of claim. All principal investigators must sign a responsibility statement (at the end of the project application form), stating that all the abovementioned requirements are fulfilled.

## 6. Project Evaluation

After the deadline of the project submission, the proposals will be collated and sent to an Evaluation Panel. The panel will be constituted by three members. SIBECOL Committee Board will nominate evaluators among ecologists from different disciplines covered by each project. The selection of the Evaluation Panel will seek for gender balance and ensure no conflict of interest with any of the project proposals, nor candidates. The SIBECOL Committee Board will nominate an expert to supervise the evaluation process and ensure no incompatibilities between evaluators and projects.

The evaluation of proposals will follow the guidelines marked by the *San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment* (DORA; read guidelines <https://sfdora.org/read/>). The projects submitted will be reviewed by the panel and evaluated based on the following general and specific criteria.

### General criteria (yes or no query):

1. The scientific quality of the project (reasoning, objectives and hypotheses) and its development will certainly contribute to improve the current understanding of Ecology.
2. The project is feasible considering methodology, working plan, timeline and requested budget.

### Specific criteria (score-based criteria)

1. Project multi- or interdisciplinarity. Proposals that integrate the study of more than one ecosystem (terrestrial, freshwater, marine) or that have a theoretical or methodological orientation to solve a common objective will be positively valued (Max. 20 points).
2. Scientific merit, innovative nature, relevance and originality of the project (Max. 50

points).

3. The project is totally feasible considering: (i) the expertise of the PIs (based on their CVs); the experimental design and methodology; and (ii) the organization of the project in terms of time, material and human resources. The likely availability of all necessary materials to carry out the different parts of the project (field work, laboratory analyses, etc.) will be considered (Max. 10 points).
4. CV evaluation of the PIs based only on scientific trajectory, considering all together publications, databases, software development, coordination and involvement in previous research projects, mentoring, etc.. (Max. 20 points).

### **Evaluation process:**

General and specific criteria will be used to evaluate the projects in three stages:

- Phase 1: Projects will be evaluated based on the general criteria. To pass to the second phase, projects must get a positive evaluation in all items.
- Phase 2: Pre-selected projects will be evaluated based on the specific criteria. Evaluators will grade every criterion according to the abovementioned scores. Finally, the total score assigned to each project by all evaluators will be averaged.
- Phase 3: The project with the highest score of each modality will be selected and granted.

The decision of the panel will be announced in November. An email will be sent to the PI or coordinator of the project and the resolution will be published on SIBECOL's website and its official social media. Applicants can request an evaluation report of their project to SIBECOL Secretary.

## **7. Project development, outputs and commitments**

The Committee Board of SIBECOL will review the progress of the projects and will ensure the projects are carried out following the proposals and the rules established in this call.

The deliverables of the projects are:

- A. A scientific report indicating the activities carried out and the results obtained (no longer than 5 pages). This report must be sent to SIBECOL by the end of the official time framework.
- B. PIs should commit to publish one publication in a peer-review journal. This publication is not subjected to the official time framework of 2 years. It can occur anytime afterwards.

All participants in the research will be considered as potential co-authors in the project outputs.

Besides, the PI or the coordinator of each awarded project must:

- Sign a letter of acceptance of the funding and associated responsibilities.
- Acknowledge SIBECOL funding in any deliverable, publication or outreach activity.
- Ensure project funds are used in accordance to what is specified in the proposal.
- Submit a final report about all expenses based on the awarded funding. The report must contain supporting documents for the payments (tickets, receipts or invoices).

Both the scientific and expenses report must be sent to the secretary of SIBECOL by January 31<sup>st</sup>, 2027.

## **8. Other regulations**

1. SIBECOL reserves the right to not grant any of the project categories, if: (i) there are no proposals for any of them; (ii) the submitted proposals do not reach the minimum level established by the evaluation criteria.
2. For a period of 48 months since projects are granted, SIBECOL reserves the right to (i) revoke any of them and (ii) to claim the reimbursement of the whole funding, if the infraction of any of the call rules is proved.

