Research Policy
and the role of the Research Advisory Committee

1 Fund4Trees Board and Mission Statement

1. Fund4Trees is managed by Board of Trustees (the Board). The Research Advisory Committee (RAC) reports to the Board.
2. The activities of the Fund4Trees are directed by its charitable objects:

   i. promoting for the benefit of the public the conservation, protection and improvement of the physical and natural environment by promoting sustainable treescapes.
   ii. advancing the education of the public in the conservation, protection and improvement of trees in the physical and natural environment.
   iii. advancing research for the public benefit in all aspects of trees and to publish the useful results.

3. The RAC is responsible for directing all research and technology transfer.
4. The objectives of this document are to describe policy and operational procedures for the RAC of Fund4Trees.

2 Research Advisory Committee

1. The RAC is responsible for directing all research activities on behalf of the Board. Principally vetting all research grant applications and advising the Board in regard to the awarding of grants.
2. The RAC is composed of a minimum of six members including one representative from the Board.
3. RAC members will comprise a mix research/education specialists and practitioners and should be able to evaluate the scientific merit of the research proposals submitted to Fund4Trees.
4. Committee members are limited to two full consecutive three year terms, except under special conditions as approved by the Board. Members whose terms expire are eligible to serve on the RAC again after a three year hiatus.
5. The RAC Committee chair must be appointed by the Board.
6. The RAC responsibilities include:
   a. Identifying research and technology areas of greatest need/interest/value to the arboricultural profession
   b. Developing requests for proposals for Fund4Trees' grant programmes
   c. Evaluating proposals submitted to Fund4Trees' for scientific soundness and applicability to research priorities and Fund4Trees' Charitable Objects.
   d. Recommending action to the Board
7. In conjunction with the Board, oversee records of active and completed projects funded by Fund4Trees.
8. Conflict of Interest:

a.   Any member of the RAC who submits a proposal for funding consideration will not participate in the review of any proposals to that programme during the granting cycle during which his/her grant is submitted.

b.   Any member of the Board who has any interest, monetary or otherwise, in the proposed project must also excuse themselves from the discussion and voting within that the granting cycle for that programme.

3   Research Priorities

1.   The RAC will survey stakeholder groups on a regular (10 year) basis to identify research priorities.

2.   The RAC may elect to revise the priorities at any time in between survey cycles.

3.   Once ratified by the RAC and the Board, the research priorities will be advertised through the trade press and will be listed on the Fund4Trees' website.

4   Grant Programme Descriptions

All grant proposals will be evaluated by the RAC and approved by the Board.

Types of grants and bursaries

1.   Research Grants

a.   The goal of this programme is to provide seed money or partial support for research and technology transfer projects that meet Fund4Trees' Charitable Objects.

b.   Projects are expected to be completed within one to three years.

c.   Funding is derived from the income of Fund4Trees. A maximum funding level is determined, and revised periodically, by the Board.

d.   Grants may support expenses over multiple years, but no more than one grant will be awarded to any project.

e.   Projects requesting partial funding must show that requests for the balance of funding have been submitted to (an)other grant programme(s), or have evidence of finance secured from other sources, within twelve months of submission to Fund4Trees.

f.   The Grant programme will be overseen by the RAC.

2.   Directed Grants

a.   The RAC, with approval by the Board, may select an area for focused funding, and solicit proposals from specific researchers for a directed grant project.

b.   An open and objective process for identifying special needs will be developed by the RAC.

c.   The amount of the grants may vary, depending on the nature of the work and funding available.

3.   Sponsored Grants

a.   Sponsored grants are funded by a sponsor or donor for a specific project or topic. The purpose of the grant must meet the charitable objects of Fund4Trees.

4.   Bursaries

a.   Bursary funds are provided to individuals to assist with subsistence and travel costs for trips home or abroad specifically designed to enhance their arboricultural knowledge. The Fund4Trees bursaries exclude group expeditions or participation in tours or courses organised by other bodies or commercial enterprises.

b.   Eligible applications will be assessed by members of the Fund4Trees RAC and on the merits of the proposed project potential to the arboricultural and forestry profession and the ability to deliver against the F4T objectives.

c.   Successful candidates must submit a comprehensive written report of no less than 2,000 words to F4T within three months of the agreed completion date. This could be used by Fund4Trees for publication in a range or arboricultural trade magazines. Candidates may be invited to present their findings at future arboricultural events.

d.   Candidates will be advised within 4-6 weeks of the submission deadline and the Fund4Trees RAC decision is final.

e.   Fund4Trees is unable to assist in seeking any remaining funds required for the project. If a candidate is unable to obtain the total funds required to carry out their project then Fund4Trees reserves the right to withdraw the Bursary offer. There is some flexibility on project timings to ensure that the bursaries are used.

5   Submission of Proposals

Research proposals should consist of no more than two-sides of A4 although the RAC reserve the right to request more information.

1.   Proposals are required for all projects considered by Fund4Trees.
2.   Proposals must clearly describe the project and research team.
3.   Information to be provided includes:
     a.   Project title
     b.   Investigator (name, title, address, phone)
     c.   Executive Summary
     d.   Statement of problem and objective of project
     e.   Brief description of what is currently known about proposed project area, including reference to other relevant research
4.   Project plan
5.   Itemised budget (minimum funding requested, funds received and pending from other sources)
6.   Project schedule (starting and completion dates)
7.   Relevant citations by the investigator
8.   Significance of the proposed project to the Charitable Objects of Fund4Trees.
9.   Completed research proposal forms should be emailed to *gabriel@fund4trees.org.uk*

Deadlines for receiving proposals will be June 1 and November 1. Proposals received after these dates will be reserved and considered at the next deadline i.e. a proposal received on June 3 will be reserved for consideration in November.

6   Criteria for Selection

All projects funded through Fund4Trees must be scientifically sound, meet the Charitable Objects of Fund4Trees, and provide accurate and unbiased information. Fund4Trees and its RAC will consider a wide range of research and technology transfer project types.

Projects will be evaluated using the criteria listed below. To ensure that the selection process is objective and transparent each of the criteria will be marked with a score of 1-5 (where 1 is the lowest and 5 the highest).

1. Potential impact of the project
   a. Is the need clearly stated?
   b. Does the project address a problem/issue within the Fund4Trees Charitable Objects and priority areas?
   c. Is the potential impact immediate or long-term?
2. Approach
   a. Is the project feasible and scientifically sound?
   b. Are the proposed methods and existing resources appropriate for successful completion of the project?
   c. Is the project creative in its approach to the problem?
   d. Is the technology transfer appropriate for the target audience?
3. Performance
   a. Do investigators have necessary qualifications and experience to accomplish the project?
   b. Is the project time frame realistic?
   c. How will the information be disseminated?
4. Funding
   a. Are requested funds sufficient to complete the project?
   b. Is an adequate explanation of funding use provided (including project budget in excess of grant requested)?
   c. Are benefits proportional and appropriate to the costs of the project?
   d. Are the funds leveraged or matched?
5. Partnerships
   a. Fund4Trees encourages research partnerships to enhance industry involvement, increase interdisciplinary interaction and provide broader funding potential.

7   Operational procedures

1. Proposals will be received, reviewed and rated by the members of the RAC that are the most qualified and/or experienced to do so.
2. The RAC will recommend which projects should be funded, and the amount of the grant to the Board. Funding levels of individual grants may be adjusted by the RAC.
3. Grant funds may not be used to pay overhead expenses.
4. Grantees are expected to provide progress reports as stated in the Grant Agreement.
5. On completion of the project grantees must report use of funds, whether objectives of proposal were met, and the impact the research has had on the approved research subject.
6. Grantees must provide a financial report based upon the original budget submitted.
7. Grantees who receive partial project funding from Fund4Trees must report on the whole project.

8. Grantees are expected to publish research results, in relevant research journals and send notice of publication to Fund4Trees. A copy of any published article(s) must be provided to Fund4Trees.

9. Recognition of the funding provided by Fund4Trees should be cited in published articles.

8   General Conditions

A Grant Agreement must be written between the grantee and Fund4Trees which delineates the scope of the project, schedule for progress reports, deliverables, review period, completion date, phased payment schedule (if any) and total project costs.

If the RAC determines that an insufficient number of high quality proposals have been submitted, the RAC is not required to award any of the funds available.

The RAC will recommend to the Board how the remaining funds should be directed.

Fund4Trees will negotiate with the Principal Investigator (PI), parent organisation or agency regarding copyright ownership and patents resulting from funded projects.

Agreed and issued by the Board on: July 2013