

Balkan Green Ideas 15th edition

Open Call for
Applications
16 Sep 2026



Balkan Green Ideas 2026 — National Call

Apply for a grant of up to \$10,000 for your green business idea.

Balkan Green Ideas (BGI) is a regional program supporting innovative green business ideas and social enterprises across the Western Balkans. It identifies, supports, and scales initiatives that contribute to environmental sustainability, green entrepreneurship, and inclusive economic development, through a network of national partner organizations across the region.

In North Macedonia, the competition is organized by **ARNO**. The program is coordinated regionally by the **Balkan Green Foundation (BGF)**, and culminates in a Regional Competition bringing together the most promising initiatives from across the Western Balkans, held **03-05.11.2026 in Prizren, Kosovo**.

This year's grant fund:

Update: the total regional grant fund for 2026 is **\$20,000** — 1 Advanced Idea grant of **\$10,000**, and 2 Concept Idea grants of **\$5,000 each**.

Key Dates

- National Call opens: **04.09.2026**
- Application deadline: **16.09.2026, 23:59h**
- Confirmation of receipt: latest by **17.09.2026** (if you don't hear from us by then, contact us — see below)

- Notification to finalists: tbd (depends on the volume of applications)
- Demo Day: **05.10.2026** (online)
- Post-national prep with ARNO: ongoing after Demo Day, for the 3 winners
- Regional Competition: **3-5 November, Prizren, Kosovo**

Important 2026 Info

- The national competition will be run fully online.
- The process will be conducted entirely in English (see the updated 2026 application documents below).
- Due to limited resources, there will be no national-level prizes. The 3 national winners instead get the chance to present and compete at the Regional Competition in Prizren — shared transport will be organized, and accommodation and food are covered.
- After the national event, ARNO will work directly with the 3 winners to prepare for the Regional Competition. Please plan to set aside time for this collaboration in the weeks following the results.
- *Note: Due to changes in the competition, the website www.zeleniidei.mk will not be active this year. Please don't attempt to access it — all information and forms are provided here.*

How the Competition Works

- ARNO announces the National Call for applications.
- An independent jury is invited to evaluate all submitted applications.
- The jury shortlists **10 finalists**.
- The 10 finalists pitch live (in English) in front of the jury at Demo Day (online).
- The jury selects **3 national winners**.
- ARNO works with the 3 winners to prepare for the Regional Competition.
- At the Regional Competition, all 6 participating countries bring their 3 national winners each — **18 ideas in total** present before the regional jury.
- The regional jury awards grants from the **2026 fund of \$20,000**.
- Winners sign grant agreements and receive funding in tranches, based on agreed milestones and reporting schedules.
- Winners implement their ideas with ongoing monitoring and support from ARNO and BGF throughout the implementation period.

Who Can Apply

- Individuals, civil society organizations, or small private companies.

- Public entities (educational institutions, municipalities, or other public institutions) are not eligible.
- People or organizations that are family members or close relatives of BGF or ARNO staff, or of selection committee members, cannot compete.

Two Categories

Green Idea Concept Category — for ideas at an early stage.

- No registered legal entity required to apply.
- Instead of a revenue stream, describe your investment in human resources, research, materials, prototyping, or other in-kind/cash resources.
- Implementation period: **6 months (mandatory)** — build your activity plan and budget accordingly.
- Important: if selected as a Regional Winner and awarded funding, you must establish a legal entity before the grant agreement is signed and funds are disbursed.

Advanced Green Idea Category — for ideas already being implemented.

- Requires a registered legal entity (NGO or SME).
- Maximum annual profit: **10,000 EUR**.
- Implementation period: **10 months (mandatory)** — build your activity plan and budget accordingly.
- In your presentation, give an overview of your current proof of concept: sales plan, current revenue, number of clients, and scale-up strategy.

(Criteria) To Qualify, Your Idea/Business Must:

- Be in an early stage of development — not in operation for more than 3 years.
- Rely primarily on local resources, including employing local people and using traditional skills.
- Have a vision or action plan for environmental sustainability.
- Have a plan for economic viability and/or incremental growth.
- Take an innovative approach with valuable social impact.
- Reflect an understanding of the local market, its competitors, and your comparative advantage.
- Be innovative and unique compared to other businesses/projects in your community.
- Contribute to at least one of these SDGs: **7, 8, 11, 12, 13**.

How You'll Present

- **Format:** Prepare appealing visuals — PowerPoint, with or without video.
- **Length:** 20 minutes total — 10 minutes presenting, 10 minutes for jury questions. (Only the jury may ask questions at either event, and only 1 team member may present.)

- **Language:** English, at both events.

Cover These Topics in Your Presentation:

- Who you are — the team/entity, skills, achievements, portfolio.
- Your business idea and revenue model — a clear value proposition, realistic revenue model, potential market demand, and feasibility within the local context.
- Your social impact — job creation, community engagement, benefits to vulnerable groups, improved local livelihoods, contribution to sustainable local development.
- Your environmental contribution — reduced waste/emissions/pollution, efficient use of natural resources, contribution to renewable energy, circular economy, sustainable agriculture, or biodiversity, with measurable benefits.
- What makes your idea innovative — new technology, new use of existing technology, a new business model, or creative use of traditional knowledge — assessed relative to your local context.
- How you use local resources — employment of local people, use of local materials or traditional practices, and strengthening local supply chains.

Note: Projects combining environmental and social impact will be prioritized. Please make sure to mention concrete impact indicators. Following ARNO's Impact for Change project, ARNO now refers to green/social entrepreneurship as impact entrepreneurship.

At the Regional event, you'll present alongside your national foundation representative, who may step in to clarify or add information. Presentation order is alphabetical by last name. You may bring prototypes or sample products for the jury — this is optional, not required.

How to Apply

Documents you send to **arno.mkd@gmail.com**:

1. [Application Form 2026](#) (updated by BGF)
2. [Budget Form 2026](#) (updated by BGF)
3. [Business Model Canvas 2026](#) (updated by BGF)
4. Officially filed statement for the last complete fiscal year / Завршна сметка 2025 (for legal entities only)

What Each Part of the Application Covers:

- **Information about the idea holder:** your (or your organization's) history, portfolio or biography, contact details, the name of your idea, and confirmation of key participation rules.
- **Summary:** a short overview of your green idea.
- **Information about the idea:** answer each question clearly and briefly, within the stated word limits, following the sub-question prompts.

- **Activity plan:** list your planned activities and the month(s) you'll carry them out (add rows as needed).
- **Additional information (optional):** attach a business plan, charts, marketing studies, photos, videos, drawings, etc. Mind the 10MB email limit — if your files are larger, upload them online and share the link in the form. You can also add links to a YouTube video, Facebook page, or news articles.
- **Business Model Canvas** (attached separately): fill in the boxes clearly and briefly. The whole canvas must fit on a single page.
- **Budget** (attached separately, new Excel file): please fill it all out, reflecting your mandatory implementation period (6 months for Concept, 10 months for Advanced).
- **Declarations:** check the answers that apply to you, both the general declarations and the ones specific to companies or individuals. Instead of printing, signing, and scanning, you can simply type the name of the signature holder on the declarations document.

Before You Submit — Please Make Sure:

- All fields are filled out.
- You've respected the word limits on the questions that have them.
- You've used Calibri, size 12, 1.0 line spacing throughout.
- You send everything to arno.mkd@gmail.com. Once sent, applications cannot be changed.
- Your application must arrive by the deadline: **16.09.2026**. Late applications will not be reviewed.
- You will receive a confirmation email by **17.09.2026** — if you don't, contact us right away.
- Your personal data will be used solely for the purposes of this competition and will not be shared with third parties except for the regional coordination with the Balkan Green Foundation (BGF). By submitting your application, you consent to this limited use.

Important Notes Before You Apply

- The website www.zeleniidei.mk is **not active this year** — everything you need is in this call and the documents linked above.
- **Need inspiration?** Research the phrase Зелени идеи online, or check ARNO's YouTube channel, social media, and media presence.
- **Want more detail?** See our [FAQ document](#) (filtered content from zeleniidei.mk).
- **Need help with the Business Model Canvas?** [Two examples](#) from past preparation workshops are linked here — for illustration only.
- Previous years' documents and forms are not valid for this year's application; use only the 2026 Application Form, Budget Form, and Business Model Canvas linked above.

- Due to the high number of requests we receive, we're unable to answer individual questions by phone or message — please rely on the call and the official documents for guidance.
- All submitted application materials remain the intellectual property of the applicants. ARNO and BGF will not use, reproduce, or share your detailed business plans or proprietary information without your explicit written permission. Jury members sign confidentiality agreements to protect your ideas. However, we do promote the competition by publishing the names of finalists and brief descriptions of their ideas in press releases, social media, and promotional material for the work of ARNO — by applying, you consent to this promotional use.

Why You Should Apply

We're aware the fund isn't big this year — but this competition offers more than the grant itself.

- You'll gain recognition at both national and regional level.
- Local media consistently covers Macedonian green business stories, so there's a strong chance your idea gets featured.
- You'll meet our jury and regional experts.
- And you'll meet peers from across the region — we've seen past participants go on to start businesses/work together, or apply jointly to regional donor calls as a consortium.
- You'll also become part of the ARNO alumni network, with access to specific funding information through our channels and groups.
- You'll meet us, and we'll meet you. We're genuinely looking to work with and invest in good ideas and honest people.

If you're already passionate about your business and believe in your idea — consider this competition the wind in your wings.

Why You Shouldn't Apply

We believe in being transparent — this competition isn't for everyone. Here's when you might want to reconsider:

- **You need a large grant immediately:** The total regional fund is \$20,000 — with grants of \$10,000 and \$5,000. If your idea requires significant upfront capital to function, this likely isn't the right fit.
- **You don't trust the process:** If you have concerns about transparency or fairness, we respect that — but we won't be able to address individual doubts. The process follows clear rules and involves an independent jury.

- **You're not familiar with impact entrepreneurship and expect AI to do the work:** We're looking for genuine understanding and local knowledge. If you're relying on AI to write your application without real insight, it will be noticeable.
- **You're unsure about your capacity to implement:** If you have other work commitments, no team, or limited availability — especially within the mandatory 6- or 10-month implementation period — this may not be the right time for you.
- **You're a donor-hunter, not a business-builder:** If your focus is on securing grants without a solid business model or sustainability plan, this competition is not for you. We're looking for entrepreneurs, not applicants.
- **You're worried someone will steal your idea:** That's a legitimate concern, and we take it seriously. The jury is bound by confidentiality, but the competition itself is public by design — you'll be presenting and promoting your idea to gain support. If you haven't protected your idea (through patents, trademarks, or other IP tools), and you're not comfortable with the risk, this may not be the right platform for you — or you may want to protect it first and apply next year.
- **You don't believe business can be profitable and good for the environment or communities:** That's the foundation of impact entrepreneurship. If you see profit and positive impact as mutually exclusive, this program won't be a good match.

If any of these apply to you, we kindly suggest you sit this one out — and we genuinely wish you success in finding the right opportunity for your goals.

If none of these apply, we look forward to receiving your application :)