

## MEOPAR Ship Time Support Under SSF

### A. Program Overview

With the recent [announcement of 5 years of funding from the Strategic Science Fund \(SSF\)](#), MEOPAR is launching a novel program to support Canadian leadership in ocean-going marine research. The need for this program was identified, in part, by the work of the [National Research Vessel Task Team](#), which conducted a survey showing that of 50+ marine researcher respondents, 86% did not have sufficient access to research vessels, and only 30% had a recent opportunity to propose and lead a research expedition as Chief Scientist. Although a lack of available vessels is a contributing factor ([and one MEOPAR is working on](#)), lack of ship time funding was also identified as a major gap. With limited funds currently available from the [NSERC Ship Time Program \(STP\)](#), MEOPAR proposed a focused ship time program in its SSF application. The total amount budgeted to this program over **5 years is \$6.25M**.

This program is designed to be fundamentally different in scope from the NSERC Ship Time program. Whereas the NSERC STP supports NSERC Discovery Grant holders and their individual research programs, the MEOPAR ship time program is intended to support multidisciplinary collaborations including Indigenous owned and operated research vessels in Canada. While we anticipate that some projects may leverage a complimentary proposal to the NSERC STP, eligibility for MEOPAR funding is greatly expanded under SSF (see section D), extending opportunities to researchers who may have had limited access to ship time funding in the past, and opportunities for Indigenous owned research vessels to connect with the ocean research sector. Specifically, the SSF proposal highlighted the following key components of a MEOPAR ship time program:

- Emphasis on Canadian leadership of multi-investigator cruises, and Indigenous owned research vessels where opportunities exist.
- Research that integrate multiple objectives, including ones that advance federal strategic priorities and responsibilities.
- Potential to support multi-year, multi-vessel, and rapid-response projects.
- Reserved funds for projects led by individuals from under-represented groups, or projects that show excellent commitment to inclusion.

Based on feedback collected from the community during a recent summit hosted by the NRVTT, we envision a program that supports ship-based research on three Horizons:

1. **Rapid Response:** Projects funded under this Horizon will typically use smaller vessels, for cruise durations on the order of several days. The purpose of this program is to respond quickly to an unexpected event (e.g. spill, unusual ice conditions, major storm, harmful algal bloom, etc.). Project awards are expected to be on the order of \$50K-\$100K. The planning horizon for this program will be on the order of weeks, and MEOPAR will need to build unique administrative structures to provide rapid review of proposals and distribution of funds.

2. **Strategic Support:** Projects funded under this Horizon will typically use larger vessels for cruise durations on the order of weeks. Projects will typically leverage funds from other programs or join existing cruises to augment MEOPAR support. The planning horizon for such projects will be on the order of months to one year, and the project award values are expected to be on the order of \$100K-\$500K. MEOPAR will aim to align the review of these awards with the STAC program schedule, but projects do not need to submit an accompanying NSERC Ship Time application.
3. **Major Expeditions:** Projects funded under this Horizon will use large purpose-built research vessels, or outfit non-specialized vessels for focused scientific research (e.g. using [Modular Ocean Research Infrastructure](#)). Typically, all berths on the vessel will be dedicated to a coordinated project with focused objectives. Projects may charter a ship for an extended period (weeks to months), might use more than one ship, and may be multi-year projects. Award values will be on the order of \$1-2M, and projects will be expected to include significant leveraged cash and/or in-kind support. The planning horizon for these projects would be multi-year, and MEOPAR will develop a structure to incubate projects through workshops, community discussions, and dialogue with operators of Indigenous owned research vessels.



## B. Potential Structure and Timing of Calls for Proposals (CFPs)

MEOPAR expects to award the first ocean-going projects under the Strategic Support Horizon for the 2025 research season. As there is significant administrative work required to launch our SSF programs, it will take some time to “lay the keel” and consult with the community for future projects under the



Major Expedition and Rapid Response Horizons. More information about those programs will be forthcoming.

<b>Program Element</b>	<b>Proposed Opening Date</b>	<b>Proposed Closing Date</b>
Instructions to register Notices of Interest (NOI) to notify MEOPAR of potential applications to the Strategic Support Horizon, or ideas for the Major Expeditions Horizon.	Oct. 1, 2024	Open indefinitely
Release inaugural Call for Proposals for the Strategic Support Horizon.	Oct. 15, 2024	Dec. 20, 2024
Project proposals reviewed by MEOPAR's Research Management Committee.	Jan. 15, 2025	mid-Feb., 2025
Initial workshop to discuss potential projects for the Major Expedition Horizon.		mid-Feb., 2025
RMC recommendations reviewed by MEOPAR Board of Directors, and official results communicated to applicants.		Late Mar., 2025
Funding award contracts negotiated with successful applicants; funding is transferred.	Apr. 1, 2025	Apr. 30, 2025

### C. Alignment With Strategic Science Fund Program

While MEOPAR's overall mission of a coordinated approach to marine sciences in Canada remains constant, our SSF program does introduce new priorities and requirements. Investigators requesting support from the Ship Time Horizons will need to show how their proposed research aligns with MEOPAR's priorities under the SSF. Recognizing that MEOPAR has not publicly released a new strategic vision, we present the following summary of the SSF program:

#### Strategic Value Aligned with Core Federal Responsibilities and Priorities

Under SSF, MEOPAR funded activities will add value to federal science, technology, and innovation investments. Activities should emphasize strategic value aligned with core federal responsibilities and priorities, to create demonstrable impact at the national level. The overall objectives of SSF emphasize research (in areas critical to the health, economic and social well-being of Canadians); talent development and attraction (in scientific areas aligned with Canada's priorities); knowledge mobilization (translation of knowledge into action); and culture (strengthening evidence-based decisions).

MEOPAR will support activities aligned with government ocean priorities outlined in key documents such as (but not limited to) the [Blue Economy](#), [Oceans Protection Plan](#), [Climate Science 2050](#), [National Adaptation Strategy](#), the [2030 Nature Strategy](#), and the [Truth and Reconciliation Report](#). To achieve success under SSF, MEOPAR will focus on two key Impact Areas, with broad objectives:

**Impact Area A – Advancing Ocean Scientific Capability and Broadening Access to Knowledge:** Using targeted funding and coordination structures at national scale, MEOPAR will generate and mobilize new knowledge and strategies, as well as diversify stakeholders' access to research capacity and information. This will address challenges of climate change and changing human activities related to the ocean. Activities will support decision making and operations by governments at all levels, public organizations, coastal communities (including Indigenous communities), and industry to guide adaptation, enhance sustainable use of our oceans, and advance Blue Economy opportunities.

- **Objective A1:** Strengthen the evidence base for decision making and adaptation by developing improved tools, techniques, and strategies for ocean and coastal observation, prediction, and information sharing.
- **Objective A2:** Increase economic opportunity, coastal community resilience, and marine ecosystem protection in the face of climate and technological change through end-user-driven science and novel collaborative structures.

**Impact Area B – Advancing Canada's Ocean-Related Research and Innovation Talent and Infrastructure:** Key underpinnings of Canada's ocean-related science, whether conducted by government, academia, or other sectors, include highly qualified personnel (HQP) and the physical and data infrastructures that support their investigations. MEOPAR will contribute to the strategic development of Canada's Science Technology and Innovation landscape, closing gaps and connecting activities in order to strengthen and broaden access to both human resources and research

infrastructures. MEOPAR will provide access to new career opportunities to attract, retain and broaden the impact of ocean experts in Canada.

- **Objective B1:** Improve access to and use of major ocean research infrastructure
- **Objective B2:** Diversify, develop, and broaden deployment of Canada's ocean-related research and innovation talent

***\*\*Note: MEOPAR's Ship Time program officially resides under Impact Area B, Objective B1. However, we anticipate that the research conducted with Ship Time program support will contribute to both Impact Areas, and potentially all objectives. Training (Objective B2) is expected to be a component of research, but the Ship Time program is not intended to fund cruises focused primarily on training.***

## D. Funding Eligibility

Eligible recipients of MEOPAR funds include post-secondary institutions, research hospitals, not-for-profit organizations, Indigenous organizations and governments, municipalities, research networks, public engagement networks, companies that deliver public engagement activities, or start-up companies (including those housed in Canadian post-secondary-linked incubators). In some cases, MEOPAR can transfer funds to individuals such as: Canadian and international students, postdoctoral fellows; or Canadian researchers. Eligible recipients do not include federal departments, agencies, or crown corporations of the Government of Canada.