CALL FOR PROPOSALS

Community-led Research Seed Fund

July 2025

MEOPAR

Community-led Research - Seed Funding Grant

A. Program Overview

[MEOPAR (Marine Environmental Observation, Prediction and Response Network)](#) is a Canadian not-for-profit organization that supports research, training, and communication related to the ocean through funding programs.

The Community-led Research Seed Fund is designed to support the development of research and capacities addressing community needs and priorities related to the ocean-related domain.

The specific objectives of this seed fund are to support communities to:
- Identify ocean sector research priorities or develop research capacity.
- Build activities to support research projects, capacity or infrastructure in communities.
- Develop community-led research proposals.
- Co-design community-led research proposals with academics, students, other community partners, non-profits, and/or industry.
- Identify research capacity in terms of human resources and/or infrastructure.

Alignment with MEOPAR Objectives and Science Strategy

MEOPAR has identified the following objectives for which targeted funding will be provided:

- Strengthen the evidence base for decision making and adaptation through development of improved tools, techniques, and strategies for ocean and coastal observation, prediction, and information sharing.
- 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.
- Improve access to and use of ocean research infrastructures.
- Diversify, develop, and broaden deployment of Canada's ocean-related research and innovation talent.

Applicants are also encouraged to consult the MEOPAR [Science Strategy 2025-2030](#) for further context and to ensure alignment with MEOPAR's long-term vision and core priorities.

MEOPAR is committed to actively moving forward on the path of Truth and Reconciliation and advancing Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (EDIA) initiatives in all its activities. Thus, MEOPAR requires that the proposed projects engage in practices that apply an EDIA lens to all its activities. Project activities should involve a diversity of members that includes Indigenous Peoples and those from equity deserving groups in its leadership and overall organizational composition. Priority in awarding funding will be given to successful applications from diverse teams and to those that effectively demonstrate a commitment to EDIA and Truth and Reconciliation principles.

B. Structure of the Call

These grants are specifically aimed at 1) support the development or reinforce relationships to co-develop research activities, 2) supporting the design of Community-led research projects, and to 3) develop new community-based research capacity.

The term 'Research' is defined here as research projects from any discipline related to the ocean (it encompasses Indigenous, natural, health, social sciences humanities and engineering), and/or Indigenous research and methodologies[1] that engage with ocean experts and knowledge holders in communities.

Terms and funding level
- 1-year project: $25,000 – One-year projects are for communities and research teams who need resources to co-design and develop full research projects.

Types of eligible activities:
The proposed community-led projects can include relationship-building, co-design activities, capacity building, or proposal development, such as:

Relationship-building Activities:
- Community engagement activities, meetings, gatherings or circles to discuss local priorities, values and concerns related to the ocean or coastal environment;
- Travel support for community members or researchers to meet in person (in-community or in other agreed strategic locations);
- Honoraria for Elders, youth, knowledge holders, community partners or other invited guests to participate in listening sessions or advisory roles;
- Time for informal engagement (sharing meals, being on the land/water) to establish trust and cultural grounding.

Co-design and Planning Activities
- Facilitated co-design workshops where community members and researcher partners including local partners, managers, research assistants, etc. (if applicable) collaboratively define project goals, methods, and desired outcomes;
- Community mapping or visioning sessions to identify local research questions and spatial knowledge (marine use, coastal change);
- Development of protocols for ethical research engagement, data stewardship, or knowledge sharing;
- Pilot studies or trial runs of participatory tools (photovoice, community monitoring, storytelling platforms) to test fit and interest.

Research capacity development
- Skill-building workshops, activities, trainings or mentorships for community members on research tools, technology, or proposal development;
- Collaborative literature or knowledge reviews to connect local knowledge with existing research or policy;

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[1] Research that is conducted by, grounded in or engaged with First Nations, Inuit, Métis or other Indigenous nations, communities, societies or individuals, and their wisdom, cultures, experiences or knowledge systems, as expressed in their dynamic forms, past and present. See definitions Appendix A.

- Translation or language support to ensure accessibility across community languages.

Preparation for Project applications
- Writing support or time for proposal development (MEOPAR proposals or other project proposals) that's grounded in community priorities;
- Creation of a steering committee or advisory group to guide project framing and future governance (including honoraria for community members);
- Community research needs assessment to identify and better understand gaps, strengths, and opportunities.

D. Funding Eligibility

Eligible recipients of MEOPAR funds include not-for-profit organizations, Indigenous organizations and governments, municipalities, post-secondary institutions, and private sector companies that are new or start-up companies. Eligible recipients <u>do not</u> include federal departments, agencies, or crown corporations of the Government of Canada. A number of grants will be reserved to Indigenous-<u>led</u> applications <u>(See definitions Appendix A).</u> A researcher may apply to the seed funding but must show confirmation of interest of a community partner, through a letter of support, email communications, audio or voice recording, or other confirmation of support.

E. Requirements of Funding

Each applicant (and co-applicant) receiving MEOPAR funding will enter into Ultimate Recipient Agreement with MEOPAR, which will identify funding schedules as well as the reporting timeline. Project milestones and key performance indicators will be listed in this agreement. The applicant will be required to submit an annual report which includes information such as cash and in-kind funding from partners, a progress report, project outcomes, explanation of any delays to the project's timeline, etc.

It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that all necessary certifications, permits, licenses and other approvals have been obtained before any research is carried out in whole or in part (e.g. research involving human subjects, or research with effects on the environment, Indigenous peoples, and animals). If an environmental or ethics assessment is required for the proposal, MEOPAR will need a copy of the appropriate institutional certification committee approval before full funding is released.

F. Budget

Detailed budgets (i.e., project and partner contribution), with accompanying justification, is required (Appendix B).

MEOPAR can provide support for overhead (indirect costs) at a rate appropriate for the context of the project. The rate must be established considering the scale of the project (i.e., not simply using a general flat-rate percentage charge [such as 15%] that does not consider project context). Justification is required for use of this category in the form of a narrative description that explains how the funds will be used under this category, how each expense is calculated, and why it is required. If these costs are not being requested, this should also be justified and clear, so MEOPAR understands your organization's administrative capacity. If you require administration but do not charge it to the project, it may also be described as an in-kind contribution to assist with the matched funding requirement.

For non-MEOPAR contributions indicate whether partner contributions are cash or in-kind and if the contribution is expected or secured (Appendix C). Matching funds are strongly recommended from non-

federal government partners (see evaluation criteria). If matching contributions are secured, a support letter should be provided in the application.

See the SSF Program Guideline for more details on eligible and ineligible costs and Appendix C - Guidelines for calculating the value of in-kind contributions).

G. Procedure and deadline

Your application must be submitted using the MEOPAR submission platform **by 11:59p.m. (Eastern Time) on October 4th, 2025** available at: https://meopar.smapply.io/. If not received by MEOPAR by that time and date, the platform will not be available anymore and your application will be rejected.

Direct any questions to: maeva.gauthier@meopar.ca

MEOPAR will be arranging webinars shortly after launching the call and project proponents are encouraged to attend these to help with proposal development. MEOPAR will support a peer learning exchange for all the successful recipients and participation in this group is expected.

MEOPAR will receive proposals and provide an initial compliance screening. *Proposals that do not follow these requirements explicitly will be returned to the applicant(s) and given one 1-week period to comply and resubmit. Proposals that still do not comply with these criteria will be removed from the competition and will not be considered.*

I. Evaluation Criteria

MEOPAR will form a special purpose Research Management Committee including diverse members with relevant community-led and Indigenous-led research experience to review the proposed project applications and evaluate them based on the following criteria:

1. Community leadership, engagement, and potential impact (25%)
   a. Is the initiative clearly community- or Indigenous-led? Has the community identified the need or expressed interest in this initiative?
   b. What is the potential for positive community impact related to coastal resilience, research capacity or blue economy through this funding?

   Note: This can be demonstrated through letters of support, email communications, quotes, team composition, or leadership structure.

2. Relationship-building, Research Capacity Development and Future Collaboration (25%)
   a. Does the activity plan create time and space for building trust, mutual learning, meaningful engagement, or research capacity development? Does the project reflect an openness to co-learning and/or working across knowledge systems and skills/competencies transfer (writing grants, drone license training, etc.)?
   b. Is there intent for future collaboration or research co-design, including shared decision-making or governance? Are there mechanisms identified? For example, community-to-community knowledge sharing and showcase (inspiring models).

3. Budget, Timeline and Use of Funds (25%)
   a. Is the proposed activity contextually appropriate within the scope and timeframe of the seed funding?

b. Is the budget appropriate, including fair compensation and justified use of resources?
c. Does the proposal align with MEOPAR Science Strategy 2025-2030 and SSF guidelines (including eligibility, priorities)?

4. Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Accessibility, and Reconciliation Considerations (25%)
   a. Are EDIA principles prioritized in the project to increase representation, inclusiveness, accessibility and diversity in the ocean sector? Do leadership and participation reflect equity-deserving representation? Are practices are informed by lived experience and community feedback?
   b. Do the activities consider the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action, especially with Indigenous voices centered in leadership and decision-making, with cultural safety prioritized in Indigenous-led projects?
   Note: Considerations might include language, compensation, travel, leadership positions, etc.

   For projects that are not Indigenous-led, is there an effort to engage Indigenous communities who may be connected to the land/water the project is taking place?

Optional bonus points (up to 5%):
- Applications from equity-deserving groups or remote regions (see Appendix A) . These applications must demonstrate that they originate from these groups or regions, which can be the applicant, co-applicant or communities directly involved in the proposed community-led research project.

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Evaluation Criteria – Community-Led Research Seed Fund

	OUTSTANDING	VERY STRONG	STRONG	MODERATE	INSUFFICIENT
Community Leadership, Engagement, and Potential Impact 25%	Initiative clearly Indigenous- or community-led and strong support and involvement. Needs are clearly identified and explained.	Demonstrated community leadership and engagement. Needs are clearly identified.	Some evidence of community involvement or stated interest. Needs are mentioned.	Limited or indirect community leadership; Needs are touched on.	Community role unclear or absent. Needs are not mentioned
	Potential for positive impact and benefits for local communities are clearly described.	Expected positive impacts and benefits for local communities are mentioned.	There is a potential for moderate positive impacts and benefits for local communities.	Unclear impacts and benefits for local communities.	Low or speculative impacts for local communities.
Relationship-building and Future Collaboration 25%	Well-defined plans for respectful community engagement, trust-building, and co-learning are strong.	Strong relationship-building plans and approach.	Relationship-building methods evident;	Limited engagement strategy;	Engagement plans absent or inappropriate.
	Future collaboration clearly outlined. Mechanisms for collaboration are identified.	Intent to co-develop future research. Potential mechanisms mentioned.	Some mention of future collaboration. No mechanisms identified yet.	Future collaboration is vague. No mechanisms identified.	Collaboration plans absent or inappropriate. No mechanisms identified.
Budget, Timeline, and Use of Funds 25%	Timeline and budget are feasible and well justified; aligns closely with MEOPAR/SSF goals.	Budget and plan are clear, with realistic scope and strong justification.	Generally sound approach, though some elements may lack detail.	Budget or feasibility unclear in areas. (3 pts)	Budget unreasonable or non-aligned with scope or guidelines. (0 pt)
	Strong cash or in-kind community resources or matching contributions are provided, over 50% of the budget.	Strong in-kind or cash community resources, potential for matching contributions	Some in-kind community resources or contributions, no matching contributions	Very few in-kind contributions or community resources, no matching contributions	No in-kind and no matching contributions.

EDIA and Truth and Reconciliation Considerations 25%					
	EDIA principles are prioritized in all aspects of the project. Leadership and participation reflect equity-deserving representation, and practices are informed by lived experience and community feedback.	EDIA practices are consistently applied across activities and decision-making in the project. The project demonstrates inclusive leadership and ongoing reflection to improve equity outcomes.	EDIA practices are evident in some aspects of the project's activities, with growing attention to inclusive engagement and representation.	EDIA practices are emerging but inconsistently applied. There is some awareness, but limited action or accountability.	EDIA is not reflected in the planned project's activities. There is little to no evidence of inclusive engagement or equity-informed decision-making.
	The planned project meaningfully integrates the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action, especially with Indigenous voices centered in leadership and decision-making, and cultural safety being prioritized. For projects that are not Indigenous-led, there are meaningful efforts to engage Indigenous communities who may be connected to the land/water the project is taking place.	The planned activities demonstrate strong engagement with Truth and Reconciliation principles. Indigenous perspectives are actively included, and there is evidence of respectful collaboration and learning. For projects that are not Indigenous-led, there are mentions of ways to engage Indigenous communities who may be connected to the land/water the project is taking place.	The project acknowledges the importance of Truth and Reconciliation and has taken steps to include Indigenous perspectives, though efforts may still be developing or limited in scope. For projects that are not Indigenous-led, there are limited mentions engaging with Indigenous communities who may be connected to the land/water the project is taking place.	There is some awareness of Truth and Reconciliation, but limited action or engagement. Indigenous inclusion may be symbolic rather than substantive. For projects that are not Indigenous-led, there are limited inclusion of Indigenous communities who may be connected to the land/water the project is taking place.	Truth and Reconciliation is not addressed in the proposed project. There is no evidence of Indigenous engagement or awareness of related responsibilities. (0 pt)

* Some minor changes could potentially be made on the evaluation grid. In that case, updated version will be available on our website.

** We recognize that Indigenous-led projects may express EDIA and Truth and Reconciliation commitments through community-based approaches, oral traditions, and relational accountability. This matrix is intended to support reflection and recognition of diverse approaches to equity and reconciliation.

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Appendix A - Definitions

Equity-deserving groups: Under the SSF guidelines, equity-deserving groups mean racialized persons (including Black Canadians), persons living with disabilities (including invisible and episodic disabilities), Canadians who identify as 2SLGBTQI+, and First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples as founding peoples of Canada **who** are under-represented in positions of economic influence and leadership.

Indigenous-led Research: Research that is conducted by, grounded in or engaged with First Nations, Inuit, Métis or other Indigenous nations, communities, societies or individuals, and their wisdom, cultures, experiences or knowledge systems, as expressed in their dynamic forms, past and present. Indigenous research can embrace the intellectual, physical, emotional and/or spiritual dimensions of knowledge in creative and interconnected relationships with people, places and the natural environment. (SSHRC definition)

Indigenous Methodologies: Here are some examples of Indigenous methodologies. Shawn Wilson asserts, "Indigenous research methodology means talking about **relational accountability.** As a researcher you are answering to all your relations when you are doing research." (From What is an Indigenous Research Methodology? p. 177). Linda Tuhiwai Smith is concerned "not so much with the actual technique of selecting a method but much more with the context in which research problems are conceptualized and designed, and with the implications of research for its participants and their communities." (From Decolonizing methodologies: research and Indigenous peoples. 2nd edition, 2012). (Source: UBC Indigenous Research Methodologies)

Leveraged Funds means existing investments being leveraged to further the objectives of the project. Includes cash or in-kind from federally-funded entities (e.g., organizations primarily funded by the federal government) and from federal departments and agencies.

Examples of leveraged funds (see infographic on our website):

- *Existing NSERC, SSHRC or CIHR projects with work that are complimentary to your activities.*
- *The rental value of CFI-funded equipment that is essential to the delivery of your activities.*
- *Projects funded in collaboration with other federally funded organizations.*

Matched Funds means new, incremental contributions (of cash or in-kind) for your activities that would not be available without MEOPAR's funding support. Eligible sources include non-federal partners or revenues (including donations). Ineligible to be considered matched funds:

- Leveraged Funds (see definition)
- funding from federally-funded entities (e.g., organizations primarily funded by the federal government) and from federal departments and agencies.
- funding already used to meet a matching requirement for a federal program.

Examples of matched funds (see infographic on our website):

- *Private-sector contributions earmarked to advance your specific activities*
- *Provincial awards to support the advancement of your activities or projects in that province*

Partner Funding, depending on the nature, can be considered either:

- Leveraged Funds (see definition)
- Matched Funds (see definition)

Remote and Isolated communities, including First Nation and Métis Communities (source: National Collaborating Centre for Indigenous Health **(NCCIH):**

- **Remote** describes a geographical area where a community is located over 350 km from the nearest service centre[2] having year-round access by land and/or water routes normally used in all weather conditions[3].
- **Isolated** means a geographical area that has scheduled flights and good telephone service but is without year-round access by land and/or water normally used in all weather conditions.
- **Remote-Isolated** means a geographic area that has neither scheduled flights nor year-round access by land and/or water routes normally that can be used in all weather conditions, irrespective of the level of telephone and radio service available.

For Inuit Communities:

- **Inuit Nunangat:** Inuit Communities to be referred to as Inuit Nunangat, not remote and isolated communities to respect the unique language and culture of Inuit regions, as well as the common challenges in social determinants of health, access to care, and infrastructure found across all Inuit communities.

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[2] Within the health context, service centre refers to physician and primary care services, hospital and pre-hospital care, and other health services required to address the health needs of the community.

[3] Taking into account weather conditions throughout the year, including its impact on the accessibility to reliable communication (cell, radio and satellite phones) and modes of transportation (road, water taxi, boat, ferry, seaplane or plane), and routes normally used to go in and out of the community.