



CALL FOR LETTERS OF INTENT

Expedition Fund – Major Expeditions Horizon

FALL 2025

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. MEOPAR is making it easier for Canadian ocean researchers to obtain funding for collecting observations at sea. With three different horizons (Rapid Response, Strategic Support, and Major Expeditions) the Expedition Fund addresses community needs on short to long timescales. Projects funded under the Major Expedition Horizon will typically have cruise durations on the order of many weeks. The purpose of this program is to enable Canadian researchers to prepare a complex research expedition, typically with multiple investigators and multiple coordinated objectives.

The planning horizon for this program will be on the order of 6-12 months and may require the use of more than one vessel or may occur over multiple years. Under this Horizon, it is expected that researchers will use purpose-built research vessels, or outfit non-specialized vessels for scientific purposes (e.g. using [Modular Ocean Research Infrastructure \(MORI\)](#)). Given the scope of these awards, projects will be expected to include significant matched funding and in-kind support for the expedition.

Following this letter of intent stage, MEOPAR expects to work with investigators to incubate these expeditions through workshops and discussions to improve the opportunity for the community.

B. Alignment with MEOPAR objectives

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

1. 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.
2. 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.
3. Improve access to and use of ocean research infrastructures.
4. Diversify, develop, and broaden deployment of Canada's ocean-related research and innovation talent.

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

C. Structure of the Call

MEOPAR expects to fund **1-3 major expeditions** during this cycle of funding from the strategic Science Fund with a total budget of **\$2M**. The expected time frame for expeditions to be carried out is in 2027-28 or 2028-29. Expeditions may be located in Canadian or international waters, but must support MEOPAR core priorities.

D. Funding Eligibility

Eligible recipients of MEOPAR funds include post-secondary institutions, 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). Eligible recipients do not include federal departments, agencies, or Crown Corporations of the Government of Canada.

E. Requirements of Funding

The institution of the principal investigator will enter into an agreement with MEOPAR (called an Ultimate Recipient Agreement [URA]), that will enable the institution to pay for eligible research expenses. The URA identifies the funding schedule, reporting timeline, project milestones and key performance indicators.

F. Budget

At the Letter of Intent stage, the budget does not need to be perfect, but MEOPAR would appreciate having a starting point so that we may understand the scale of the support needed while considering the request. To do this, please include a budget (**Appendix B**) with justification (an additional ≤ 1 page) along with the workplan. Funds requested under the Major Expeditions are to cover vessel operations only. In Appendix B, all vessel fees fall under the **"Operations of core research facilities"** expenses category.

In accordance with the SSF guide, MEOPAR can provide support for overhead (indirect costs) at a rate appropriate for the context of the project (recommend $\leq 5\%$) and not exceeding 15% of project costs. The rate must be established considering the administrative needs of the project (e.g. for vessel operations the organization may be expected to pay just one invoice for the vessel charter). 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 you require administration, but do not charge it to the project, it may be described as an in-kind contribution to assist with the matched funding requirement.

For non-MEOPAR contributions to the whole project, indicate in the attached template (**Appendix C**) whether partner contributions are cash or in-kind, matched or leveraged, and if the contribution is expected or secured. Matching funds for the project must be equal to or above the ratio of 1:1 from non-federal government partners for every dollar of MEOPAR funding requested for the expedition. Please see the [explanation of matched and leveraged partner contributions](#) for clarification.

A revised budget, justification, and accounting of partner contributions will be expected at the time of the full proposal.

G. Submission Procedure

To express interest in applying, draft a Letter of Intent (≤ 3 pages + ≤ 1 page budget justification) describing:

- Why this research is novel or necessary?
- What is the research plan and what scientific methods will be used?
- What knowledge is expected to be gained?
- How does this research align with federal priorities and the MEOPAR Science Strategy 2025-2030?
- Why is this expedition worthy of major support and cannot be accomplished under MEOPAR's [Strategic Support Horizon](#) or [NSERC Ship Time Program](#)?
- What is the proposed makeup of the scientific team, if known?

- How this project will address:
 - [Equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility](#) (EDIA)?
 - [Truth and Reconciliation objectives](#)?
 - Knowledge mobilization?
- A budget justification, which clearly explains the amounts, sources, and likelihood of securing matched partner contributions

Interested applicants are encouraged to contact [Jonathan Kellogg](#), Program Manager – Expeditions, at an early stage of LOI development to discuss their project idea and fit to the program. Completed LOIs and accompanying budget elements must **be submitted via email to the program manager no later than January 31, 2026 for consideration.**

If determined to be a good fit for this program and MEOPAR's strategic objectives, applicants will be asked to complete a full proposal that more thoroughly addresses the above points and demonstrates sources of financial support for the expedition. Based on a preliminary timeline for this program, we expect the deadline for Full Proposals to be **June 2026**. Full proposals will be reviewed by MEOPAR following an impartial and fair process in alignment with our SSF requirements.

H. Inquiries

For questions regarding this Call for Letters of Intent contact Jonathan Kellogg, Program Manager – Expeditions, at jonathan.kellogg@meopar.ca.

I. Proposal Evaluation

Initial consideration of Letters of Intent and full consideration of proposals will be evaluated by the following criteria:

Evaluation Criteria – Expedition Fund – Major Expeditions Horizon

	OUTSTANDING	VERY STRONG	STRONG	MODERATE	INSUFFICIENT
Expedition goals and quality (25%)	Project is very well described.	Project is well described .	Project is satisfactorily described .	Project is somewhat described .	Project is poorly described .
	Project is highly original/innovative	Project is original/innovative	Project is moderately original/innovative	Project is somewhat original/innovative	Project is not original/innovative
	Project will contribute to internationally competitive research, innovations, and advancements in the field.	Project will likely contribute to internationally competitive research, innovations, and advancements in the field.	Project may contribute to internationally competitive research, innovations, and advancements in the field.	Project is unlikely contribute to internationally competitive research, innovations, and advancements in the field.	Project will not contribute to internationally competitive research, innovations, and advancements in the field.
	Project alignment with federal objectives and strategies is explicit	Project alignment with federal objectives and strategies is clear	Project alignment with federal objectives and strategies is evident	Project alignment with federal objectives and strategies is unclear	Project alignment with federal objectives and strategies is undefined
	Expedition is clearly ambitious / complex and would not be possible without major support	Expedition is ambitious / complex and would be difficult without major support	Expedition has some ambition or complexity beyond Strategic Support, and would benefit from major support	Expedition aspires for complexity , but may or may not need major support	Expedition lacks ambition or complexity and should be submitted to another call.
Excellence of Research Team (25%)	Canadian leadership of an interdisciplinary research team	Canadian leadership of a multidisciplinary research team	Canadian leadership of a multidisciplinary research team	Canadian leadership of a single-discipline research team	International leadership of a single-discipline research team
	Team involves many partners	Team involves a few partners	Team involves a couple partners	Team has a partner	Team is without partners
	Team is clearly suited to address all the project objectives.	Team is well suited to address most of the project objectives.	Team is suited to address many of the project objectives.	Team may address some of the project objectives.	Team is not suited to address the project objectives.
	Highly attractive project that will develop and retain talent	Attractive project that will likely develop and retain talent.	Project that may develop and retain talent.	Project unlikely to develop and retain talent.	Project is will not develop and retain talent.
Plan, budget, matching contributions (25%)	Plan and budget elements are very clearly described .	Plan and budget elements are clearly described .	Plan and budget elements are adequately described .	Plan and budget elements are partially described .	Plan and budget elements are unclear .
	Plan and budget elements align with realistic and appropriate timelines.	Plan and budget elements align with realistic timelines.	Plan and budget elements are likely to support a realistic timeline	Plan and budget elements are weakly connected to a timeline that may not be realistic .	Plan and budget elements are unconnected to timelines that are unrealistic .
	Plan and budget elements strongly support outcomes.	Plan and budget elements support outcomes.	Plan and budget elements may support outcomes.	Plan and budget elements are unlikely to support outcomes.	Plan and budget elements are unable to support outcomes.
	The budget includes excellent matching contributions (cash or in-kind) from non-federal sources (ratio >> 1:1.5).	The budget includes very strong matching contributions (cash or in-kind) from non-federal sources (≈ 1:1.5 or higher).	The budget includes strong matching contributions (cash or in-kind) from non-federal sources (ratio 1:1.25 - <1.5).	The budget includes moderate matching contributions (cash or in-kind) from non-federal sources (ratio 1:1 - <1.25)	The budget includes poor matching contributions (cash or in-kind) from non-federal sources (ratio of 1:1).
	Administrative costs are very well justified and minimized .	Administrative costs are well justified and minimized .	Administrative costs are justified .	Administrative costs are poorly justified .	Administrative costs are not justified .

EDIA, Truth & Reconciliation, Knowledge Mobilization (25%)	Expedition crewing applies an EDIA lens to ensure diversity.	Expedition crewing is made with EDIA in mind .	Expedition crewing references EDIA policy.	Expedition crewing references EDIA policy.	No EDIA policy is referenced.
	Team is well-balanced between established and emerging leaders.	Team will have representation of both established and emerging leaders	Team may have representation of both established and emerging leaders	Team has unclear composition for leadership balance.	Team has unbalanced composition .
	Team includes equity deserving groups in the project leadership .	Team includes equity deserving groups in the project.	Team may include equity deserving groups.	Unclear if team will include equity deserving groups.	Team lacks equity deserving groups.
	The project will advance Truth & Reconciliation objectives by including Indigenous partners and businesses (e.g. Indigenous owned vessels) as well as priorities/perspectives.	The project has strong potential to advance Truth & Reconciliation objectives through inclusion of Indigenous priorities/perspectives.	The project may advance Truth & Reconciliation objectives through aspects of its design and implementation.	The project is unlikely to advance Truth & Reconciliation Objectives.	The project will not advance Truth & Reconciliation objectives.
	Knowledge mobilization strategy from the expedition and post-expedition has potential for mainstream media interest in addition to reaching diverse communities .	Knowledge mobilization strategy from the expedition and/or post-expedition will likely reach outside scientific community .	Knowledge mobilization strategy from the expedition and/or post-expedition is typical for scientific community .	Knowledge mobilization strategy from the expedition may reach select audiences . No plans for post-expedition .	No knowledge mobilization strategy is mentioned.