



CALL FOR PROPOSALS

Early Career Researcher (ECR) Award

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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 goal of the Early Career Researcher (ECR) Awards is to provide individual research grants to support early career investigators in establishing independent research programs. The research project must align with MEOPAR's Science Strategy 2025-2030 and must have a clear impact for communities, environment, science, etc. The ECR Awards are a unique opportunity for early career researchers to contribute to and participate in MEOPAR's broad interdisciplinary, multi-sectoral research effort, thereby growing and extending their network of collaborators and partner interactions. MEOPAR recognizes the need for support of early career researchers (researcher within ten years of receiving their highest academic diploma and within five years of the date of their first independent research-related appointment) to maximize their considerable potential.

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 activities. Priority in awarding funding will be given to applications that effectively demonstrate a commitment to EDIA and Truth and Reconciliation principles.

B. Alignment with MEOPAR's Science Strategy

Refer to MEOPAR's [Science Strategy 2025-2030](#) to ensure alignment of your ECR Award project with MEOPAR's long-term vision and core priorities.

C. Structure of the Call

The ECR Award program provides individual research grants; therefore, the only investigator to receive funds on the project will be the Principal Investigator (PI). Only one application per PI will be considered. The **maximum** funding level available is **\$75,000 per year for up to two and half (2.5) years for a total of \$187,500 per award**. MEOPAR will support research projects that are two (2) to two and half (2.5) years in length, **beginning before 31 March 2026** (*project must be completed by 31 October 2028*).

D. Funding Eligibility

For the duration of their MEOPAR ECR Award, an ECR not eligible to hold two individual multi-year awards from MEOPAR on the same research topic and is not eligible to receive two different awards for the same research topic. Therefore, applicants who are already a PI or co-PI on such a project are not eligible to apply to the ECR award unless they expect their role of PI/co-PI to end before the beginning of the ECR award project. The eligibility conditions are as follows:

1. Eligible recipients include individuals who:
 - a. Are affiliated to post-secondary institutions, not-for-profit organizations, Indigenous organizations and governments, municipalities, research networks, public engagement networks, organizations and companies that deliver public engagement activities, or start-up companies (including those housed in Canadian post-secondary-linked incubators).
 - b. Are eligible to hold a grant in their name, per their institution/organization's requirements.
 - c. Eligible recipients do not include federal departments, agencies, or crown corporations of the Government of Canada.
2. Moreover:

- a. The applicant must demonstrate a firm appointment with a Canadian organization that supports research and will be in place by the time the award would be accepted:
 - For the duration of the award, the applicant must hold such a position with that organization.
- b. The Canadian research organization:
 - must have a clear mandate to do research in Canada
 - needs to demonstrate its support for the research project (e.g. cash, in-kind, material, etc.)
 - needs to support the applicant (e.g. cash, in-kind)
- c. The applicant's position must allow them to engage in research that is not under the direction of another individual and should authorize them to supervise or co-supervise the training of Highly Qualified Personnel¹ (HQP).
- d. The appointment must be ratified by the person(s) or body responsible for approving appointments or their delegate(s) and must be in accordance with organization statutes.
- e. The source of salary funding for the appointment must be guaranteed for the period of the contract:
 - ECR holding a position in a post-secondary institution:
 - The MEOPAR award is for research only.
 - ECR in other organizations than post-secondary institutions:
 - The MEOPAR award can be used to fund part of their salary, but in those cases, the applicant and their organization must demonstrate that:
 - ☞ the organization can support the costs of the research project OR that sources of funding have been secured to support the research project for its duration
 - ☞ the organization can support the part of the applicant's salary not covered by the award.
3. Initial funding of the project must commence before 31 March 2026, and project and associated funding must be completed by 31 October 2028.
4. Postdoctoral Fellowship positions **ARE NOT ELIGIBLE** for this funding opportunity.
5. Applicants must be within ten years of receiving their highest academic diploma.
6. The ECR is a researcher within five (5) years of the date of their first independent research-related appointment. This may include new appointments and researcher positions created in non-academic settings. Given that career progress for an ECR is particularly vulnerable to normal life circumstances, the eligibility window may be adjusted as follows:
 - a. Eligible leaves (e.g., maternity, parental, medical, family medical, bereavement) will extend ECR status (i.e., will not be counted towards the maximum) and credited as twice the amount of time taken;
 - For example, a researcher beginning to receive funding on 1 March 2026 and who took a seven-month parental leave within the past five (5) years must have been hired on or after 1 January 2020 in order to be considered eligible.
 - b. No adjustments are provided for professional leaves (e.g., training, sabbatical, administrative)
 - c. No adjustments are provided for time spent on non-research related duties or for the pursuit of non-research related career activities.

Before any funds can be released on a MEOPAR grant, the applicant must have taken up their position.

E. Requirements of Funding

Organizations employing each principal investigator (PI) receiving MEOPAR funding will enter into an agreement with MEOPAR (called an Ultimate Recipient Agreement [URA], in which the PI is the Ultimate Recipient). The URA identifies the funding schedule, reporting timeline, project milestones, and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).

¹ Highly Qualified Personnel - includes specialized staff, research staff, technicians, interns involved in research and other projects and trainees (undergraduate and graduate students, postdoctoral fellows, research associates, research assistants, researchers).

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, are required in addition to the work plan. The budget must be submitted in the format of the attached template ([Appendix B](#)).

In accordance with the SSF guide, MEOPAR can provide support for overhead (indirect costs) at a rate appropriate for the context of the project, up to a maximum of 15%. 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 you require administrative support 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 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. **Proposals should show matching funds equal to or above the ratio of 1:0.3 from non-federal government partners** (see evaluation criteria). If matching contributions are secured, a support letter should be provided in the application. See the [explanation of matched and leveraged partner contributions](#), the SSF Program Guideline for details on [eligible and ineligible costs](#), and [Appendix C - Guidelines for calculating the value of in-kind contributions](#).

G. Submission Procedure

Submit your proposal via our online portal: <https://meopar.smapply.io/>. The portal will open in late November 2025. The submission deadline is **January 6th, 2026 23:59 EST**.

H. Inquiries

MEOPAR is hosting an online information session about the ECR Award and prospective applicants are encouraged to attend (or watch the recording) to help with proposal development.

- **English - 4 December 2025 at 1:00pm EST – [Register here](#)**
- **French – 11 December 2025 at 1:00pm EST – [Register here](#)**

For questions regarding this Call for Proposals contact Isabelle Tremblay, Senior Program Manager, at Isabelle.tremblay@meopar.ca.

I. Proposal Evaluation

MEOPAR's Research Management Committee will review and evaluate proposals based on the following criteria:

Merit Indicators – ECR Award

		OUTSTANDING	VERY STRONG	STRONG	MODERATE	INSUFFICIENT
Excellence of the candidate 25%	12.5%	Research excellence, accomplishments, and service significantly exceed others at similar career stage.	Research excellence, accomplishments, and service exceed others at similar career stage.	Research excellence, accomplishments, and service compare favourably with others at similar career stage.	Research excellence, accomplishments, and service are typical relative to others at similar career stage.	Research excellence, accomplishments, and service are below others at similar career stage.
	6.25%	Project alignment with candidate expertise and career path is clearly evident and influential for long term career.	Project alignment with candidate expertise and career path is clearly evident for long term career.	Project alignment with candidate expertise and career path is evident .	Project alignment with candidate expertise and career path is somewhat evident .	Project alignment with candidate expertise and career path is not clearly evident .
	6.25%	Capacities to carry out research projects and lead project teams are clearly stated and far exceed others at similar career stage. These capacities are clearly evident based on the past experience of the candidate.	Capacities to carry out research projects and lead project teams are stated and exceed others at similar career stage. These capacities are clearly evident based on the past experience of the candidate.	Capacities to carry out research projects and lead project teams are stated and compare favourably with others at similar career stage. These capacities are evident based on the past experience of the candidate.	Capacities to carry out research projects and lead project teams are mentioned and typical relative to others at similar career stage. These capacities are somewhat evident based on the past experience of the candidate.	Capacities to carry out research projects and lead project teams are not clearly mentioned and are not clearly evident based on the past experience of the candidate.
Project goals, quality and impact 25%	6.25%	Project is very well described.	Project is well described.	Project is satisfactorily described .	Project is somewhat described.	Project is poorly described.
	6.25%	Project is highly original/innovative.	Project is original/innovative.	Project is moderately original/innovative.	Project is somewhat original/innovative.	Project is not original/innovative.
	6.25%	Project will likely lead to groundbreaking advances, and/or lead to a technology or policy that addresses socio-economic or environmental needs.	Project will likely lead to advancements , and/or addressing socio-economic or environmental needs.	Project is likely to have impact , and/or address socio-economic or environmental needs.	Project may have impact , and/or address socio-economic or environmental needs.	Project is unlikely to address socio-economic or environmental needs.
	6.25%	Goals, objectives, activities, and expected benefits are explicitly and comprehensively aligned with MEOPAR's Objectives and Science Strategy.	Goals, objectives, activities and expected benefits are clearly aligned with MEOPAR's Objectives and Science Strategy.	Goals, objectives, activities and expected benefits show general alignment with MEOPAR's Objectives and Science Strategy.	Goals, objectives, activities and expected benefits are only partially aligned with MEOPAR's Objectives and Science Strategy.	Goals, objectives activities and expected benefits do not align with MEOPAR's Objectives and Science Strategy, or no effort is made to demonstrate alignment.
Plan, budget, support 25%	5%	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 .

	5%	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 unclear .
	2.5%	Data management plan comprehensively addresses expected data, metadata, near- and long-term storage, and legal and ethical considerations.	Data management plan provides details of expected data, metadata, near- and long-term storage, and legal and ethical considerations.	Data management plan describes expected data, metadata, near- and long-term storage, and legal and ethical considerations.	Data management plan lacks clarity of expected data, metadata, near- and long-term storage, and legal and ethical considerations.	Data management plan is unclear and/or missing one or more of: expected data, metadata, near- and long-term storage, and legal and ethical considerations.
	10%	The budget includes excellent matching contributions (cash or in-kind) from non-federal sources (ratio 1:1 or higher).	The budget includes strong matching contributions (cash or in-kind) from non-federal sources (ratio 1:0.7 - <1).	The budget includes some matching contributions (cash or in-kind) from non-federal sources (ratio 1:0.5 - <0.7).	The budget includes very few matching contributions (cash or in-kind) from non-federal sources (ratio 1:0.3 - <0.5).	The budget has minimal or no (ratio <1:0.3) matching contributions (cash or in-kind) from non-federal sources.
	2.5%	Support of the host organization for the ECR and the project is very clearly described and appropriate .	Support of the host organization for the ECR and the project is clearly described and appropriate .	Support of the host organization for the ECR and the project is described and appropriate .	Support of the host organization for the ECR and the project is partially described &/or appropriate .	Support of the host organization for the ECR and the project is not clearly described &/or appropriate .
EDIA and Truth & Reconciliation Considerations 25%	12.5%	The project's approach to EDIA is shaped in collaboration with equity-deserving communities and is woven into everyday project activities . These principles guide decision-making, engagement, and the project's evolution. Accountability is embedded through ongoing reflection, shared responsibility, and transparent practices.	The project demonstrates a clear commitment to EDIA, with meaningful engagement of equity-deserving groups in shaping practices. EDIA principles are integrated into core activities , with mechanisms for accountability and continuous improvement .	The project incorporates EDIA principles in its structure and activities, with some engagement of equity-deserving groups. There is a stated commitment to accountability , though mechanisms may be emerging or inconsistently applied .	The project acknowledges the importance of EDIA and shows some initial steps toward inclusion . Engagement with equity-deserving groups is limited , and accountability measures are minimal or unclear .	The project lacks evidence of EDIA integration . There is no meaningful engagement with equity-deserving groups, and no mechanisms for accountability are in place.
	12.5%	The project meaningfully integrates the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action, particularly those related to education, knowledge sharing, and relationship-building. Commitments are explicit and embedded in project design and delivery.	The project demonstrates strong engagement with Truth and Reconciliation principles, with evidence of respect, collaboration, and learning .	The project acknowledges the importance of Truth and Reconciliation and includes some steps to integrate Indigenous perspectives, though efforts are limited or developing .	The project shows some awareness of Truth and Reconciliation, but actions are minimal, symbolic, or inconsistent .	Truth and Reconciliation is not addressed . There is no evidence of Indigenous engagement or awareness of related responsibilities.