High Reward Call for Proposals

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Version 1.1 | November 2026

Guidance for applicants

This FAQ accompanies the CORDAP High Reward Call for Proposals. The High Reward Call Document, application templates, and applicable CORDAP policies and Award Terms and Conditions take precedence in the event of inconsistency. Applicants should consult the current call documents and website for updates.

1. Application Process

1.1 What is the application process for the High Reward Call?

The High Reward Call uses a single-stage application process. Applicants must submit a complete proposal and all mandatory supporting documents by the published deadline. There is no separate Concept Note and invited Full Proposal stage.

1.2 Where and how should I apply?

The Lead Applicant registers and submits the application through the myCORDAP online portal. The High Reward Proposal Submission Form and Budget Template are available through the CORDAP funding pages and portal. Only the Lead Applicant is required to register to submit.

1.3 Which documents must be submitted?

Submit the completed High Reward Proposal Submission Form, including required biographical information for applicants, and the completed High Reward Budget Template with the detailed requested costs and justifications. Follow all mandatory portal fields and instructions.

1.4 Can I revise my application after final submission?

No changes can be made after final submission. Check the narrative, budget figures, applicant details, supporting documents and portal entries carefully before submitting.

1.5 What are the key dates?

The call is scheduled to open on 30 November 2026. The application deadline is 1 February 2027 at 18:00 UTC, with anticipated notification in August 2027. The webinar date is to be confirmed. These dates are subject to change; check the CORDAP website for updates.

1.6 Where can applicants obtain assistance?

Consult the Call Document, this FAQ and the Submission Assistance guidance first available on the website (www.cordap.org) CORDAP also plans an applicant webinar, with a recording made available afterwards. Remaining questions may be sent to pcn@kaust.edu.sa.

2. Eligibility and Applicant Teams

2.1 Who is eligible to apply?

Eligible host organizations include universities and higher education institutions, research institutes, not-for-profit and for-profit organizations, and government organizations. Applicants must be able to carry out the project through an eligible organization that can administer an award.

2.2 Can an applicant from a low- or middle-income country (LMIC) apply alone?

Yes. An LMIC-based Lead Applicant may apply as a single applicant, without a Co-Applicant or international partner, provided they are affiliated with an eligible organization capable of administering the grant. Additional partners are optional.

2.3 What if the Lead Applicant is based in a high-income country?

A Lead Applicant based in a High-Income Country (HIC) must include at least one Co-Applicant from a Low- or Middle-Income Country (LMIC), forming a team of at least two applicants. The LMIC Co-Applicant must actively participate in the project and receive an appropriate allocation of project funding that reflects their role and responsibilities. Country eligibility will be determined using the relevant OECD classification, which includes both lower-middle- and upper-middle-income countries.

2.4 Can individuals receive grants directly?

No. CORDAP awards are made through eligible organizations, not directly to individuals. The single-applicant option for LMIC applicants does not waive this requirement.

2.5 How many applications may one person join?

An individual may lead one High Reward proposal and participate as a Co-Applicant on up to two additional proposals.

2.6 How many proposals can an organization lead?

An organization may be the Lead Organization on no more than two proposals, but may participate in multiple proposals as a partner. If more than two are submitted with the same Lead Organization, CORDAP reserves the right to decide which two will be considered eligible. Coordinate with your institutional Research Office.

2.7 Can private-sector and non-academic innovators apply?

Yes. CORDAP welcomes innovators from industry and disciplines outside coral research. For-profit organizations requesting funding must not generate profit from CORDAP-funded activities. Applicants without coral experience should demonstrate that they have tested relevant assumptions with people familiar with reef biology, field operations and local contexts.

2.8 Do projects need partners from the country where fieldwork occurs?

If research takes place in a third country, representation from that country is strongly encouraged. All applicable local regulatory, ethical, permitting and consultation obligations must be met.

2.9 Is there an upper limit on participating organizations in a proposal?

No. There is no upper limit, but the team and its roles should be appropriate for the focused critical test and the proposed budget.

3. Scope and High Reward Proposition

3.1 What is meant by “High Reward”?

It means a credible prospect of an order-of-magnitude improvement in a meaningful measure, or another comparably transformative change that enables a capability or reef outcome not currently practicable. Applicants should identify the current benchmark, the target improvement and the conditions under which it could work.

3.2 Does the idea need to be likely to succeed?

No. Scientific and technical uncertainty,is acceptable. The proposal must nevertheless present a credible basis and a disciplined test capable of producing a useful answer. Unmanaged ecological, ethical or social risks are not acceptable.

3.3 Are incremental improvements or routine research eligible?

Routine research, modest incremental improvement and repackaging established work are normally outside the purpose of this call. A technically sound proposal must still demonstrate transformative potential.

3.4 Must applicants already be coral scientists?

No. Applications from engineering, biotechnology, AI, robotics, materials, medicine and other fields are encouraged. Applicants must account for reef-specific biological, environmental, operational and social realities, including by engaging relevant expertise.

3.5 Are the examples of eligible technologies exhaustive?

No. Illustrative areas include heat resilience, area-based treatments, low-cost restoration, automation, affordable cooling or shading, remote operation and actionable prediction. A novel idea outside those examples can be considered if it meets the call's transformative and responsible-R&D aims.

3.6 Can a monitoring or forecasting project qualify?

Yes, if it enables a major change in intervention decisions, cost, scale, speed, capability or outcomes. Descriptive monitoring alone, without such a transformative pathway, is normally outside scope.

3.7 Can a project focus on deep-water or non-tropical corals?

Yes. The call addresses tropical and deep-water corals and coral reefs, provided the proposition is relevant to their protection, preservation, restoration or adaptation.

4. Funding, Budget and Eligible Costs

4.1 What is the maximum award and project duration?

Each project may request up to USD 600,000 for a study lasting 12–18 months. The initial funding should cover the minimum sufficient test of the central proposition, rather than a full deployment programme.

4.2 How much funding is available across CAP and High Reward?

The call states a combined allocation of USD 3.2 million for CAP 2026 and High Reward. The Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) may recommend a portfolio of CAP projects, High Reward projects, or both, subject to funding decisions.

4.3 What costs are eligible?

Directly relevant R&D, testing, validation and associated capacity-building costs may be requested, including justified project personnel, essential equipment, materials, supplies, software, external technical services, fieldwork, travel and reasonable open-access publication fees.

4.4 Is there a maximum cost for an individual equipment item?

Yes. The call specifies USD 50,000 as the maximum allowable cost for a single equipment unit, with CORDAP retaining discretion to approve scientifically justified exceptions. Equipment must be essential and appropriately justified; use existing facilities wherever feasible.

4.5 Are salary and travel costs eligible?

Yes, where directly linked to project activities, proportionate, reasonable and justified. Applicants should clearly describe roles, effort, purpose and the basis of requested costs.

4.6 Which costs are not eligible?

The call excludes administrative personnel, routine institutional or business operations, intellectual-property protection and management, and general professional development. Applicants should consult the full budget guidance for exclusions.

4.7 What indirect-cost rates apply?

The maximum is 20% of applicable direct research costs for eligible LMIC-based organizations and 10% for HIC-based organizations. Organizations whose established rates are lower must use their actual rates. The OECD DAC List of ODA Recipients is used for the higher rate.

4.8 Are all direct costs included when calculating overheads?

No. The call excludes capital equipment and expenditures exceeding USD 5,000, rental costs, student tuition fees, scholarships and fellowships, and external services from the indirect-cost base. Use the official budget template and its instructions.

4.9 Can we request the full USD 600,000 even if a smaller test would suffice?

The request should be limited to the resources necessary to resolve the central uncertainty. Assessors will consider value for money and whether a narrower, less costly test could provide the required decision evidence.

5. Project Design, Assessment and Stage Gates

5.1 What is a stage gate?

A stage gate is a planned decision point based on evidence and defined measures, at which the team can decide to stop, redirect or proceed. Where practicable, state quantitative thresholds and what each outcome would mean.

5.2 What should the proposal narrative address?

The submission structure covers: transformative proposition and benchmark; prior work and differentiation; evidence and critical assumptions; critical test and stage gates; work plan and budget; ecological, ethical and social responsibility; development pathway and use at scale; team and capabilities; IP and freedom to operate; and genuinely additional information. Follow the prescribed submission form and limits.

5.3 What if the proposed critical test fails?

A well-designed negative result may still be valuable if it resolves a consequential assumption and produces a clear, useful conclusion. The proposal should describe failure modes and the evidence that would support stopping or redirecting.

5.4 How are applications reviewed?

CORDAP PCN conducts administrative screening. Eligible proposals undergo SAC expert review; selected proposals then undergo external subject-matter peer review, followed by final SAC panel assessment and funding consideration under CORDAP governance.

5.5 What matters most to assessors?

Assessment emphasizes transformative potential, novelty, plausible scientific or technical basis, quality and decision value of the critical test, deliverability and value, ecological/ethical/social responsibility, credible development pathway and realistic potential use at scale. Likelihood of success alone is not the primary criterion.

5.6 Does a successful first stage guarantee further funding?

No. A successful initial award creates no entitlement to further CORDAP funding. Any follow-on stage depends on evidence, priorities, available resources, due diligence, approvals and separate arrangements.

6. Award Administration, Reporting and Ethics

6.1 Are consortium agreements required when applying?

No. For awarded projects involving multiple organizations, a legally binding Consortium Agreement among the partners is required before funds are disbursed. It governs partner relationships and must be consistent with CORDAP's Award Agreement and terms. A single-organization project would not require a multi-party consortium agreement.

6.2 Is a Statement of Intent to Collaborate required at submission?

No. Where multiple organizations are involved, participating organizations must provide signed Statements of Intent as part of the award-stage requirements. Successful applicants must also complete financial, administrative and institutional due diligence before the Award Agreement is finalized and funds are released.

6.3 What is the indicative payment schedule?

The call anticipates disbursement of 90% of approved funding after agreement execution and administrative/financial checks. The remaining 10% is released after approval of final technical and financial reports and financial reconciliation, subject to the Award Agreement.

6.4 What reports are required?

Quarterly progress reports are required every three months. A 12-month project submits final technical and financial reports at Month 12. An 18-month project submits annual technical and financial reports at Month 12 and final reports at Month 18. Final contractual dates are set by the Award Agreement.

6.5 Do permits and ethical approvals need to be in place before submission?

The proposal should identify applicable permits, consultations, risks and dependencies. Before research starts, and throughout the award, all necessary legal, regulatory and ethical approvals must be obtained and maintained. Projects affecting communities must respect Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC).

7. Intellectual Property (IP) and Confidentiality

7.1 Does CORDAP claim ownership of IP generated by funded projects?

No. Under the standard CORDAP policy also used for CAP, CORDAP does not seek ownership of project IP. Ownership arrangements are to be agreed among the collaborating organizations and documented as appropriate.

7.2 What is the standard CORDAP policy on project IP and background IP?

As a general policy, owners of IP arising from CORDAP-funded activities must provide free licences for commercial and non-commercial use in coral conservation and restoration, including access to background IP on which use of the project IP depends. Resulting products and technologies should be accessible for coral conservation at an affordable price. IP may be commercially exploited in other fields of use, subject to applicable agreements.

7.3 Is CORDAP open to discussing or negotiating IP arrangements?

Yes. CORDAP recognizes that High Reward proposals may involve proprietary technologies, pre-existing rights, third-party licences and different development pathways. Applicants should identify material IP and freedom-to-operate issues in the proposal. Specific arrangements concerning ownership, background IP, access, licensing and commercialization may be discussed and negotiated with CORDAP at the award stage, on a case-by-case basis, before an Award Agreement is finalized. This does not constitute an automatic waiver of the standard policy; any agreed variation must be expressly documented and approved.

7.4 Must confidential inventions or trade secrets be disclosed in full in the proposal?

No. Applicants should provide sufficient non-confidential information for reviewers to assess the idea, its differentiation, plausibility and critical test, without disclosing unnecessary proprietary details. Applicants are responsible for identifying and securing confidential, commercially sensitive or patentable information before submission, including taking appropriate advice on protection and disclosure.

7.5 How will confidential proposal information be handled?

Submitted proposals are treated confidentially and shared only to the extent necessary for administrative processing, expert assessment and funding consideration, consistent with the call's data privacy provisions. Reviewers are provided confidentiality, conflict-of-interest and data-protection guidance, including instructions to use proposal materials only for authorized review purposes and to safeguard them against unauthorized access or disclosure.

7.6 Can an applicant use an existing patented technology or third-party background IP?

Yes, provided the team explains ownership, access and freedom-to-operate constraints and how these could affect testing and future use. Third-party rights must not be overlooked. Where a proposed arrangement raises difficulties under standard CORDAP IP requirements, applicants should flag it for discussion at the award stage.

7.7 Can the project budget pay for patent filing or IP protection?

No. As in the CAP FAQ, CORDAP funding is not available for IP protection and management costs, including patent filing and maintenance. Such costs should be borne from other sources.

7.8 What does "affordable price" mean for project-derived products?

CORDAP defines it as the lowest sustainable, competitive price in a particular country, covering materials, manufacturing or development, distribution, operational overheads and a reasonable margin to sustain production and distribution. High Reward applicants should describe a credible pathway to affordable access where relevant.

7.9 Can research results be published openly if they contain IP?

CORDAP supports open dissemination and requires compliance with its Open Access Policy. Applicants should coordinate publication and IP protection appropriately so that confidential or patentable information is secured before public disclosure, without assuming an exemption from applicable open-access obligations.

8. Data Privacy, Open Access and Research Data

8.1 How does CORDAP protect personal information submitted with an application?

CORDAP processes applicant information in accordance with its Privacy Policy. Proposal information is treated in confidence and disclosed for consideration and evaluation only as necessary. Applicants should consult the CORDA P Privacy Policy for details on collection, use, storage and applicable rights.

8.2 Do reviewers receive data-protection instructions?

Yes. Reviewers are given instructions on confidentiality, conflicts of interest, secure handling and appropriate use of applicant information. Proposal materials are provided for evaluation purposes, and reviewers are expected not to share, reuse or disclose them outside the authorized review process.

8.3 Will unsuccessful proposals be shared with other funding partners?

The call states that applicants will be asked during submission whether they consent to their proposal being shared with other potential funding partners if it is not funded in this call. Such sharing is subject to the applicant's permission and the stated process.

8.4 What open-access obligations apply to publications?

CORDAP-funded publications must be immediately and freely accessible from final publication without an embargo, using CC BY or an equivalent licence. Reasonable publication charges can be included in the proposed budget. Underlying data should be made available in accordance with the call's open-access requirements and applicable ethical and legal constraints.

8.5 What data-management principles are encouraged?

Research data and software should follow FAIR principles—Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Reusable. The CAP FAQ also encourages CARE principles—Collective Benefit, Authority to Control, Responsibility and Ethics—particularly where Indigenous Peoples' data and community interests are involved. Appropriate repositories and ethical governance should be planned from the outset.

Important note

This FAQ is explanatory guidance. Any award-specific IP terms, exceptional budget treatment or reporting arrangements require appropriate CORDAP review and formal written agreement. Nothing in this FAQ should be read as an advance approval or amendment of the published call or standard funding conditions.