High Reward Call for Proposals

Bold and Transformative ideas with the potential to change what is possible for coral reefs

Proposal Submission Form Completion Guidance

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1. Purpose and application requirements

This document assists applicants in completing the High Reward Proposal Submission Form. Read it alongside the High Reward Call for Proposals, particularly Sections 8–11, 14–15 and 17–18. The guiding questions are intended to help applicants prepare a focused proposal, not to introduce additional assessment criteria.

High Reward supports the disciplined testing of bold, unconventional or technically risky ideas with the potential to deliver an order-of-magnitude or otherwise transformative improvement for coral conservation, restoration or adaptation. The initial award is intended to resolve critical uncertainties, not necessarily to deliver the ultimate intervention.

Key parameter	Requirement
Maximum requested funding	USD 600,000
Project duration	12–18 months
Submission deadline	1 February 2027, 18:00 UTC
Submission process	Single-stage application via myCORDAP
Team composition	**High Income Country (HIC) lead**: at least one Low Middle Income Country (LMIC) co-applicant. **LMIC lead**: may apply alone through an eligible organization.

Dates are subject to change; consult the CORDAP website for the latest information.

2. Preparing the proposal and document format

Eligibility and application limits

An individual may lead one proposal and participate as co-applicant on up to two additional proposals. An organization may lead no more than **two** proposals as lead Organization.

Eligible organizations include not-for-profit and for-profit organizations, higher education institutions, research institutes and government organizations. For-profit applicants must not generate profit from CORDAP-funded activities.

Use the OECD list specified in the Call document to establish LMIC eligibility. Where activities take place in a third country, representation from that country is strongly encouraged.

Document format

Project Narrative: maximum 10 pages in total, addressing all ten headings in Section 3 of this guidance**. The title page is in addition to these 10 pages (10+1)**

Use the High Reward Proposal Submission Form and include the required biographical information for all applicants. Complete the separate High Reward Budget Template.

Recommended formatting: Arial or Calibri, 11 points or larger; margins of at least 1.5 cm; single line spacing or larger. Use readable figures and tables.

Keep evidence in the most relevant section and avoid repetition. Use concise references to substantiate claims. Follow the submission template and portal instructions for any separate fields, attachments and file formats.

Assessment criteria

Proposals will be assessed against Section 11 of the Call document:

Transformative potential and relevance; novelty and differentiation.
Plausibility and critical assumptions; quality and decision value of the critical test.
Deliverability and value of the initial investment; ecological, ethical and social responsibility.
Credibility of the development pathway; potential for practical use at scale.
High scientific and technical uncertainty is acceptable. Low ambition and unmanaged ecological, ethical or social risk are not. A well-designed test that disproves the central proposition can still produce a valuable outcome.

3. Project Narrative (10 pages maximum)

Use the following ten headings in the order shown. Address the guiding questions relevant to your proposition. The space allocated to each section may vary according to the nature of the project, within the overall page limit.

1. Proposition, need and transformative potential

What is the central idea, and what important problem or constraint for corals or reefs does it address? Who needs this capability?

What is the relevant current benchmark? Provide its source, units, operating conditions and limitations.

What performance target is proposed, and why would it represent an order-of-magnitude or otherwise transformative improvement in cost, scale, speed, capability or reef outcomes?

What would become possible if the proposition worked? Identify relevant species, reef environments, regions and delivery settings, including important limitations.

Where possible, compare like-for-like metrics (for example, cost per viable coral deployed, survival after severe heat stress, or area treated per unit of effort). Distinguish the ultimate target from the performance expected during the initial award.

2. Prior work, differentiation and why now

What comparable approaches have been attempted, are being developed or are already available? Support the discussion with relevant literature or other evidence.

Why have existing approaches not achieved the necessary performance, cost or scale? Identify the underlying bottleneck.

What is materially different about your approach? Explain why it is not simply an incremental improvement or repackaging of existing work.

What has changed in science, technology, cost, access or other conditions to make the proposition worth testing now?

3. Basis, evidence and critical assumptions

What scientific or technical reasoning, preliminary results or analogous experience supports the proposition?

Which elements are demonstrated, reasonably inferred or still uncertain? Clearly distinguish these categories.

What biological, ecological, environmental, operational and social assumptions must hold for the idea to work?

How have these assumptions been considered or tested? Identify those whose failure would undermine the proposition.

4. Critical test, measures and stage gates

What is the minimum sufficient work needed to test the central proposition? Explain why this test is preferable to broader development at this stage.

Describe the experimental or technical approach, appropriate comparisons or controls, measurement methods and analysis. Consider alternative explanations and failure modes.

What outcomes will be measured, and what quantitative thresholds, where practicable, will determine whether to stop, redirect or proceed?

When will each decision be made, and what evidence will inform it? What useful conclusion will be obtained if the proposition is not supported?

The following illustrative table may help structure stage gates. Adapt it to the project; it is not a separate mandatory attachment.

Decision gate / timing	Measure and threshold	Decision and next action
Gate 1 / Month X	Critical assumption; predefined threshold	Stop, redirect or proceed based on evidence
Gate 2 / Month Y	Performance against benchmark	Assess whether further investment is justified

5. Work plan, budget and deliverability

Describe the tasks, methods, milestones, deliverables, responsible team members and timing needed to complete the critical test.

Provide a schedule (a Gantt chart or concise equivalent is recommended) showing dependencies and stage gates.

Explain access to facilities, materials, sites, data, permits and specialist capabilities. Distinguish secured access from arrangements still to be made.

Explain why the proposed test is achievable within 12–18 months and the requested budget. Identify practical delivery risks and contingencies.

Justify the requested resources and ensure that the narrative, schedule and separate budget template are consistent. Request only what is needed for the critical test.

6. Ecological, ethical and social responsibility

Identify foreseeable ecological, ethical and social risks, stakeholder concerns and unacceptable outcomes.

Explain proportionate controls, monitoring, safeguards and criteria for stopping unsafe activities.

Identify applicable regulatory, permitting and ethical requirements, consultation and social-licence arrangements. Explain how Free, Prior and Informed Consent of affected communities will be secured, where applicable.

Explain how the proposed test will comply with relevant host-country laws and institutional requirements before research begins and throughout the award.

7. Development pathway and potential use at scale

If the critical test supports the proposition, what further R&D, validation, demonstration and investment would be needed? Outline a preliminary staged pathway with evidence-based decisions.

Who would use the capability, where and under what conditions? Explain how it could operate at meaningful scale.

Consider costs against current benchmarks, logistics, labour, energy, infrastructure, supply chains, regulation, specialist inputs, maintenance and local capability.

Identify context-specific limitations, transferability and major barriers to adoption. Provide indicative time and investment requirements where possible, acknowledging uncertainty.

Successful completion of the initial award does not guarantee follow-on funding. Any subsequent CORDAP investment is subject to separate assessment, available funding, due diligence and agreements.

8. Team, capabilities and connections

What scientific, technical, engineering, operational and reef-specific expertise is required for the critical test?

Identify team members, roles, relevant experience, facilities and partnerships. Explain how gaps will be addressed.

If the team lacks prior coral research experience, explain how assumptions have been tested with people familiar with coral biology, reef environments, field operations and relevant social and economic settings.

Ensure the required biographical information for all applicants is included in the submission form.

9. Intellectual property and freedom to operate

Identify relevant background IP and anticipated project IP, ownership arrangements, access rights and potential freedom-to-operate constraints.

Explain whether these could affect the critical test, subsequent development, collaboration or practical adoption.

Indicate how the project can comply with CORDAP's standard IP policy: CORDAP does not seek ownership; IP owners must provide a free licence for commercial and non-commercial coral conservation use, including necessary background IP. Developments should be affordable and accessible.

Applicants need not disclose confidential or protected IP in detail at the initial proposal stage. Specific ownership, licensing and background IP arrangements may be discussed and agreed at award stage. Follow-on funding is subject to separate arrangements.

10. Additional information

Provide only material information that could not reasonably be addressed elsewhere. Do not repeat or extend the main narrative. If there is no additional information, indicate that this section is not applicable.

4. Budget and budget justification

Complete the supplied High Reward Budget Template. The total requested funding must not exceed USD 600,000. All costs must be directly relevant to the critical test and clearly justified. Explain the allocation of funds between participating organizations and link expenditure to planned tasks and milestones.

Eligible cost category	Guidance
Research and development	Research, development, testing, validation and associated capacity-building activities.
Equipment	Essential project-specific equipment; maximum USD 50,000 per single unit. Use existing facilities where possible.
Materials and supplies	Essential consumables, laboratory and field supplies and software.
Services	Project-specific consulting, technical services, rental, computing, access and open-access publication fees.
Personnel	Justified salaries for staff directly involved, proportionate to their roles and responsibilities.
Travel and fieldwork	Reasonable and justified travel, accommodation and fieldwork directly related to implementation.

Ineligible costs

Administrative personnel, routine institutional or business operations, IP protection and management, and general professional development are not eligible.

Indirect costs (overheads)

LMIC organizations: maximum 20% of applicable direct research costs. HIC organizations: maximum 10%. Apply the actual institutional rate if lower.

Exclude capital equipment and expenditures exceeding USD 5,000, rental costs, student tuition fees, scholarships and fellowships, and external services from the calculation.

Refer to Section 15.3 of the Call document for the applicable OECD DAC classification and provisions for scientifically justified exceptions.

Budget justification

Explain personnel effort, equipment need, service costs and fieldwork requirements. Identify available resources or contributions that reduce the requested cost.

Ensure the budget reflects only the initial stage, not speculative future development. Check that totals and organization allocations are consistent throughout the application.

5. Supporting documentation and submission checklist

Required at submission

Document	Check before submitting
High Reward Proposal Submission Form	All ten narrative sections addressed within the 10-page limit; required biographical information included for all applicants.
High Reward Budget Template	Complete breakdown and justification; total within USD 600,000; consistent with the work plan.

Not required at submission

Statement of Intent to Collaborate: for projects involving multiple organizations, a signed statement from each participating organization is required upon award.

Consortium Agreement: successful applicant organizations with teams must execute a legally binding agreement among themselves before funds are disbursed. It must not conflict with CORDAP award conditions.

Post-award due diligence: additional institutional, financial or administrative documentation may be requested before the award is finalized.

Final checks

Confirm team eligibility, application limits, project duration and funding ceiling.

Confirm the benchmark, transformative target, critical assumptions, minimum sufficient test and stop/redirect/proceed thresholds are clearly stated.

Check that risks, safeguards, development pathway and IP considerations are addressed.

Review the open-access requirements in Section 14.2, including immediate open access to publications and underlying data and FAIR research data and software.

The Lead Applicant must register on myCORDAP, complete the online form and upload the required documents before **1 February 2027** at 18:00 UTC. No changes can be made after final submission.

Application assistance

The High Reward Call document, FAQ, submission templates and relevant policies are available through the following link https://cordap.org/our-work/high-reward-call/ and also on **myCORDAP.** Consult the webinar and FAQ for further assistance. For questions not addressed in these resources, contact pcn@kaust.edu.sa.

This guidance should be read together with the High Reward Call for Proposals. The Call document and applicable CORDAP policies govern eligibility and funding conditions.