CORDAP Decision Support System for Corals 2026 Call (CDSS-C) - FAQ

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What is the Decision Support System for Corals call (CDSS-C)

CORDAP is launching a Call for Tenders to develop an AI-powered Decision Support System (DSS) for coral reef conservation and restoration planning. The goal is to create a single, high-impact, end-to-end tool that integrates scientific knowledge, environmental data, and advanced analytics to support informed decision-making by reef managers, practitioners, and policymakers. Unlike the Coral Accelerator Program (CAP), this is not a research grant call and does not follow a staged concept note process; only one full proposal will be selected for funding. The resulting platform will be owned by CORDAP and made freely available for global coral conservation and management.

Key information: **Total funding USD 1.5 million**; Only one project will be funded from the list of received applications

1. Application Process
1.1 What is the application submission process?

Applicants must submit a one-time application in accordance with the guidelines outlined in the call document. The process includes completing an online application form and uploading the required documents, such as the proposal submission form providing a detailed description of the project, its potential impact and pathway to impact, the resources required as well as uploading budget sheet, and any other relevant materials specified in the call document.

The application must also include a Statement of Intent to collaborate. Additionally, participating organizations are required to sign off on and approve the proposal and agree to comply with CORDAP's Funding Terms and Conditions if the project is funded.

2. Who can apply?

2.1 Who can apply for CDSS-C Funding?

All applicants and/or researchers who have the authority to independently run funded projects within their organizations are eligible to apply. The mission of CORDAP is to bring together the best minds

worldwide, in a transdisciplinary approach, to accelerate and scale up the development of new technologies that support international coral conservation efforts needed to secure a future for tropical corals and reefs, as well as cold and deep-water corals.

2.2 What organization types are eligible for consideration by CORDAP?

The following organization types are eligible: research organizations, universities, higher education institutes, non-governmental organizations, cooperatives, non-profit organizations, community-based organizations, privately held companies, for-profit organizations, and government institutes/agencies.

2.3 Can an individual apply for funding?

CORDAP is unable to make funding available directly to individuals. Awards are made to the host Organization of the Lead Applicant of the team applying.

2.4 How many PIs or co-PIs can a project have?

Each application must consist of a minimum of three Applicants per proposal: one Lead Applicant and two Co-Applicants and Organizations from at least 2 different countries. There is no upper cap on the number of participants in an application. However, one applicant must be based in a low or middle-income country, as defined by the OECD.

2.5 Can an Applicant based in the private sector be part of the team?

Individuals from for–profit organizations, with their expertise and capabilities, can submit an application, be part of an application, or be engaged in a project. For-profit organizations who are applicants in a proposal (as opposed to a contracted entity within a proposal) should be prepared to demonstrate how they are also co-investing in the project and not making a profit from the project itself. Organizations and/or Individuals contracted to do work as part of a proposed project are not considered applicants.

Although the for-profit company cannot profit from the project funds as an applicant, they can use the project outputs to develop solutions that can be commercialized. However, it is important to note that these solutions must remain affordable for coral restoration purposes. The company can fully commercialize these solutions in other fields outside of coral conservation and restoration. Additionally, for-profit companies can also be involved in the project as service providers.

2.6 Can a PI submit multiple applications in a funding round?

An individual can only be the Lead Applicant on one proposal, and participate in up to a maximum of two additional proposals as a Co-Applicant requesting funding.

2.7 Can one apply for funding if the Award will be used in conjunction with another fund?

The award funds provided are only for the proposed project. However, cost sharing and leveraging of other funding sources for greater efficiency and economy is encouraged. Demonstrated additional benefits outlined in the proposal accruing to CORDAP, coral and reef stakeholders will be taken into account during proposal review.

2.8 Does the Co-Applicant from a low- or middle-income country have to be a scientist or researcher?

The Co-Applicant is not required to be a researcher or scientist/engineer. He/she can be a person with the knowledge, skills, experience and/or expertise to address a challenge or opportunity towards coral conservation and restoration. However, it must be demonstrated that the Co-Applicant, regardless of their position, is an active participant and brings necessary expertise and knowledge to the project. It must be shown that the added value the collaboration brings will lead to advances that would otherwise not be possible without this collaboration.

2.9 For the OECD income designations, are both lower-middle and upper-middle income countries considered as middle-income countries?

Yes, both the lower-middle and upper-middle income countries are included in the same designation as middle-income countries.

2.10 I am on a short-term contract with my organization, am I eligible to apply for funding?

The Lead Applicant, Co-Applicants, or applicant level collaborators should have a contract of employment that extends beyond the expected end date of the proposed project.

2.11 I am a post-doctoral fellow. Am I eligible to apply to the Coral Accelerator Program 2025?

Postdoctoral researchers are not eligible to apply as Lead Applicant or as a Co-Applicant requesting funding, but they may serve as other personnel/staff in the application. Applicants requesting funding must have the authority within their organization to independently manage the project, and its funding. Being an independent researcher means that the researcher is not tied to a particular award or funding agency and has the freedom and capacity to carry out their own research.

2.12 Can two of the Applicants be from the same Organization?

Yes, two Applicants can be from the same organization. However, given the international collaborative remit of the program, a very strong case should be made as to why two applicants from a single organization are the only, or best, choice of team members to deliver the project, and subsequent impact.

2.13 How many applications can be submitted from a single Organization?

Any Organization can be the Lead Organization on a maximum of two proposals in a given call, but can be a participating Organization on multiple proposals. Applicants should consult with their Organization's research administration office, or equivalent, before submitting a proposal to ensure that the Applicants are in compliance with this criteria, and that their organization is aware of their submission.

2.14 The minimum requirement is three Applicants, one Lead-Applicant and two Co-Applicants. Do all Applicants have to request funding or can any be unfunded?

All the Applicants participating in an application do not necessarily need to request funding. A participant on an application can also have a role as an unfunded collaborator. However, it should be noted that the three Applicants (i.e. team members at co-investigator level), funded or not, must all be deemed to be necessary to the project, and contribute significantly to the project's success.

2.15 Are regional and/or intra-governmental groups eligible to apply for funding?

Yes. All such groups, and sub-agencies of inter- and intra-governmental groups, are eligible to apply, as are not-for-profit entities. Use the name of the regional entity as the organization applying and use the country where the applicant is based and will do the work as the applicant country (for cases where the overarching organization is registered in a different country).

2.16 Are non-academic researchers, engineers, natural and social scientists, coral reef conservation groups, and local communities eligible to apply for funding?

Yes, very much so. A diverse team of multidisciplinary researchers and experts is necessary to deal with the complex problems and solutions coral reefs are facing. The engagement and input of a wide range of stakeholders in coral restoration is also encouraged. Where any field work is proposed, the work must be undertaken with the free, prior, and informed consent of all those affected by the proposed activities.

2.17 Is it necessary to have the entire research team in place when submitting the proposal, or can we submit our idea now and build our team later?

Yes, it is necessary to have your core team in place, which conforms to the application criteria for team members and country involvement.

2.18 Do all named individuals (both from lead and co-lead organisations) have to work 100% of their time on the project?

It is understood that, for most lead or co-applicants, this project may be one of several they are engaged in and would not be expected to allocate 100% of their time to the project. However, any personnel who are salaried through the project (including summer salary) must commit 100% of their time to it.

2.19 Can a proposal have consultant contributors? How should applicants handle/include consultants?

Yes, they can be engaged in projects, and listed under External Services in the budget.

3. What kinds of projects are funded?

This call is strictly limited to proposals focused on the development of a Decision Support System for corals.

4. Budgetary Questions

4.1 How much does CORDAP allow in indirect costs (overheads)?

 The total cost for indirect costs should not be more than:

● 20% of the eligible direct research costs if the Applicant is based in a low- or middle-income country (including upper-middle income countries as currently defined by the OECD).

● 10% of the eligible direct research costs if the Applicant is based anywhere else.

See the call document and our budget requirements for more information.

4.2. How are the overall project indirect costs calculated?

The overall project in-direct costs are calculated automatically in the budget sheet by adding up the indirect costs due to each Applicant Organization. These costs are based on the amounts requested in their budget categories, and host country.

4.3 Does CORDAP fund proposals for the purpose of purchasing equipment?

It is generally assumed that Applicant Organizations will be equipped to undertake the proposed research. However, equipment required for the purpose of meeting the aims and objectives of a proposed project can be requested as a part of the overall budget. Capital equipment funding (equipment with a unit cost over USD $5,000 and a useful life of more than one year) that is requested should be well-justified and necessary (purchasing this equipment is the only, or most cost-effective, way to enable the project.

4.4 What is the policy regarding project cost-sharing?

Cost-sharing, or contributions to the project, by the Applicant Organization is encouraged and should be described briefly in the proposal text or budget justification. Applicants are requested not to put monetary values on in-kind contributions.

4.5 Can the Applicant hold funding awards/grants from other funding organizations?

Yes, Applicants may hold grants and run projects from other funding organizations.

4.6 For personnel, can we include graduate student salaries in the budget?

Yes, graduate student tuition is an eligible cost. Consideration should be given to the type of project being submitted, its duration, and suitability for a student.

4.7 Will CORDAP pay necessary and reasonable open-access fees?

CORDAP will pay open-access fee as necessary, it is an eligible expense that should be included in the submitted budget.

4.8 Can equipment purchased in a developed country be gifted to a developed country partner to optimize how funds are spent?

Yes, CORDAP encourages optimum use of funding, and a developed country partner can purchase equipment to support their developing country partner(s); in certain cases, this will be viewed favorably, especially is it is clearly outlined in the budget justification that doing so a more financially efficient way of getting the equipment to them. The team should explain allocation of resources and should include knowledge and access to the developing country partner wherever required.

4.9 Does CORDAP stipulate how the budget is allocated across the applicant team?

No, the team should make the allocations to best achieve the aims and objectives of the proposal. However, CORDAP expects that the funding allocated to LMIC partner countries reflects their role as full partners in the project.

4.10 Would an organization with its head office in a non-LMIC but applying from its office in a LMIC, where the project will be undertaken, be able to request an indirect cost of 20% or 10% only?

This will depend on where the funds are being administered and spent, if funds are being administered and spent in the LMIC, then the 20% cap will apply.

4.11 Is the Indirect Cost (IDC) cap determined by the Lead institution or by each individual collaborating institute? For example, if the Lead institution is in a developed country, is the IDC budget for the entire project capped at 10%, or can the budgets for low- and middle-income country partners have a separate cap of 20%?**?**

These are separate caps for each applicant based on their country, the budget sheet will calculate the total project IDC based on each individuals IDC.

4.12 Can funds be used for the capacity development of the applicants' teams?

Yes, R&D capacity development of LMIC partners is an important aspect of our projects, and travel to enable this is eligible. Travel by LMIC partners to their developed country project partners labs and facilities is particularly encouraged.

4.13 How should travel expenses be allocated in a project proposal??

Ensure Fair Distribution: The project should demonstrate a clear commitment to equitable resource distribution, ensuring that a substantial portion of the travel budget is used to facilitate participation from LMICs.

5. Proposal Review Timeline

5.1 What is the typical duration for a particular cycle from the time of launch to the funding decision?

We anticipate the time from the call deadline to the funding notifications will be approximately six months.

6. Operational Aspects

6.1 What is an Authorized Institutional Representative (AIR)?

An AIR is an individual at an organization with the authority to sign contracts for, and make commitments on behalf of, that organization.

6.2 What is a "statement of intent to collaborate" (SOI), and does an SOI need to be submitted at the proposal submission stage?

This is a document signed by the participating organizations' authorized representatives confirming that they understand the commitments, project requirements, and CORDAP's terms and conditions. An SOI is required at the proposal submission stage (The signature of the individuals listed in the form can be a digital one).

6.3 What is a Consortium Agreement?

The Consortium Agreement is a Research Collaboration Agreement between the project partners and sets the framework for successful project implementation and is a private agreement between the participants (investigators) to set out the rights, obligations, and how they will work together. (It does NOT involve CORDAP itself.) It should complement the award agreement and must NOT contain any provision contrary to it, or to CORDAP's terms and conditions.

The Consortium Agreement supplements the Award Agreement. While the Award Agreement establishes the binding legal contract between CORDAP and the Lead Applicant Organization, the Consortium Agreement establishes and governs the relations between the applicants/partners themselves. Unlike the Award Agreement (which is fixed and cannot be modified), the Consortium Agreement is essentially an agreement between the partners. As such, it can be modified and adjusted to the specific needs of the project and its partners.

6.4 Is a completed and signed Consortium Agreement required at the time of proposal submission?

No, a Consortium Agreement is not required at the time of Proposal submission stage. A Consortium Agreement will be required only for funded projects. At the time of submitting a Full Proposal, each participating institution will be required to complete and submit a 'Statement of Intent to Collaborate' in which they acknowledge and agree to abide by CORDAP's Award Terms and Conditions.

6.5 How can we ensure the confidentiality of our submitted proposal, especially when it contains novel ideas, to safeguard our intellectual concepts?

All submitted proposals are considered confidential and shared externally to CORDAP only for the purposes of review. External reviewers sign a confidently and conflict of interest agreement in advance of review. Applicants should not submit commercially sensitive information unless protected first.

6.6 Do all named individuals (both from lead and co-lead organizations) have to work 100% of their time in the project, or is there flexibility on that? Can that % change over the duration of the project?

No, it is not necessary for applicants to give 100% of their time to the project, it is understood that for most lead or co-applicants, this project can be one of a number they are involved in. Any salaried personnel on the project should give 100% of their time to the project.

6.7 Do permits have to be obtained prior to applying or can we request them once we know we can go ahead?

Permits do not have to be obtained in advance, however this aspect should be acknowledged in the proposal and any risks highlighted.

7 .Intellectual Property (IP)

The Decision Support System developed under this call will be owned by CORDAP, while the team developing the system retains the right to publish it,in part or whole, in the peer-reviewed scientific literature, which CORDAP encourages.

All foreground IP generated will vest with CORDAP.

More details are available in the call document and the will be also mentioned in the final award agreement

8. Encouraging CARE and FAIR Principles in Research Data Management

8.1 What are CARE Principles?

The CARE Principles for Indigenous Data Governance focus on **Collective Benefit**, **Authority to Control**, **Responsibility**, and **Ethics**. These principles are centered on Indigenous Peoples' rights to data governance, emphasizing the need for data to be used in ways that benefit Indigenous communities, respect their authority over their own data, and are managed ethically and responsibly.

8.2 What are FAIR Principles?

The FAIR Principles are guidelines that aim to make data **Findable, Accessible, Interoperable**, and **Reusable**. These principles are widely accepted in the research community to ensure that research data is well-managed and can be easily shared and reused by others in the future.

8.3 Why is it important to implement the CARE and FAIR principles in research data?

Implementing these principles is vital to promote ethical research practices and ensure that data serves the broader community, including Indigenous Peoples. It helps to build trust, ensures compliance with ethical standards, and enhances the overall value and impact of the research.

8.4 How does implementing these principles affect data sharing?

By implementing both CARE and FAIR principles, data sharing practices become more ethical and transparent. Researchers can share data that is accessible and usable by others while ensuring that Indigenous data sovereignty is respected.

8.5 Are there resources available to help researchers implement these principles?

Yes, there are several resources available:

- **CARE Resources:** Various Indigenous Data Sovereignty networks and organizations provide guidelines and tools. (CARE Principles for Indigenous Data Governance GIDA - The Global Indigenous Data Alliance)

- **FAIR Resources:** Many institutions offer training, tools, and platforms to help make data FAIR-compliant. Provided here are some resources (Guidelines on FAIR Data Management in Horizon 2020 , Force11), European Commission: Turning FAIR into Reality (2018)