

Coral Accelerator Program (CAP) 2023 - Call for Proposals

Call Timeline

Call Opens	11 th September 2023
Concept Note Webinars (Register here)	28 th September 2023 06:00 UTC
	28 th September 2023 15:00 UTC
Concept Note Submission Deadline	10th November 2023 17:00 UTC
Anticipated Concept Note Notification Date	22 nd December 2023
Anticipated Full Proposal Submission Deadline	22 nd February 2024
Anticipated Notification Date	July 2024
Call Documentation	CORDAP website
Proposal Submission Portal Link	myCORDAP

Note: Dates of activities are subject to change; please check the CORDAP website for the most up-to-date timeline and information.

Overview

The Coral Accelerator Program (CAP) will fund international collaborative research teams with impactful ideas in coral conservation and restoration. Awards will span across the full range of novel, early-phase projects through final, proof-of-concept development and testing. CORDAP expects to have approximately USD \$18M available for funding in this call, funding projects between one and three years in length and up to a maximum of \$1.5M per project.

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1. Overview and objectives

CORDAP's overarching mission is to bring together the best minds worldwide, in a transdisciplinary approach, to accelerate international research and development (R&D) for supplying the technologies and innovations required to secure a future for corals and coral reefs. This call will invest in novel, early-phase ideas through final, proof-of-concept development and testing.

CORDAP is committed to creating impact, and innovation is especially crucial to filling the significant gap between current and required capabilities. Projects funded under this program are expected to lead to significant discoveries, innovations, and improvements over the current state-of-the-art. Proposals transcending different disciplines and fields are strongly encouraged and should include end-users and other stakeholders in the research, as well as the design and development of projects.

CORDAP will deliver technologies, methods, and processes that can be applied in coral conservation and restoration efforts across the world through existing national and international efforts. CORDAP is committed to the principles of co-design and will include end-users and stakeholders in the design as well as the research and development of our solutions. A key criterion in our R&D proposal assessments will be whether suitable partners and groups that can deploy the proposed technologies have been identified and engaged.

CORDAP will draw together a multidisciplinary group of scientists, engineers, technologists, and practitioners to collaboratively identify, develop, and deliver innovative, practical, and sustainable solutions to enhance corals and reef survival, conservation, resilience, adaptation, restoration, and rehabilitation.

Our main priorities are to:

- a. Develop and enhance R&D solutions currently being explored for coral and reef conservation, including protection, restoration, and adaptation.
- b. Develop new R&D conservation solutions for coral and reef preservation, restoration, and adaptation.
- c. Move potential solutions from concept to proof-of-concept, and from pilot scale to ready-for-deployment.
- d. Develop protection, restoration, and adaptation solutions that can be deployed across the full socioeconomic spectrum, with associated stakeholders aided by a decision-support system.
- e. Partner with local stakeholders to adapt and deploy existing R&D conservation tools and approaches to protect, restore, and/or foster the environmental resilience and stress tolerance of corals and coral reefs.

2. Eligibility and Application Limits

Each applicant team must consist of:

- a. A minimum of 3 Applicants, one Lead Applicant and a minimum of two Co-Applicants, and
- b. Organizations from at least 2 different countries, one of which must be a low or middle-income country.

The [OECD List](#) of low and middle-income countries should be used to determine eligibility (includes both lower-middle and upper-middle income countries)

An individual can only be Lead applicant on one proposal and participate in up to a maximum of two additional proposals as Co-Applciant.

Any organization can be the Lead Organization on a maximum of two proposals, but can be a participating organization on multiple proposals.

Eligible organizations include not-for-profit organization, for-profit organizations, higher education institutions, research institutes, and government organizations in any country.

If a for-profit organization wishes to submit as an Applicant Organization requesting funding, then they must be willing to co-invest to the point that they are not making a profit.

If the research activities are to take place in a third country (a country different to that of any of the applicants), it is strongly encouraged to have that country represented in the application.

CORDAP is unable to make grants directly to individuals. There is no upper limit to the number of organizations in an application.

3. Projects Supported in this Call

3.1 Types of Projects considered in this call

Eligible projects will span across the full range of novel early-phase projects through to final proof-of-concept development and testing. Full end-to-end conservation and restoration solutions require many different challenges be solved; proposals can focus on solving a specific challenge within such a system, articulating how their project fits into the overall system, and delivering impact through its successful contribution. Overly ambitious proposals review unfavorably if unrealistic goals or expectations are put forward.

Project Type	Description
Novel R&D projects	<p>These include the development and implementation of tools, technologies, methods, or whole new interventions designed to better protect, manage, adapt, or restore corals and coral reefs (innovations in coral and reef monitoring, threat reduction, assisted evolution, or restoration).</p> <p>Given the objective of step changes, the program will require that new and innovative interventions be developed.</p>
Improving or scaling up existing interventions	<p>This R&D will make a “significant” improvement to an existing intervention, technology, or method, including scaling up. These investments should be designed to create an immediate impact, with the possibility that the improvement can be implemented by existing restoration and adaptation projects.</p> <p>“Significant” is not fixed, but the expectation is that these investments will at least double current productivity or coral survival levels. This criterion is based on the fact</p>

	that current methods make impacts at orders of magnitude below our requirements—and that CORDAP wants to focus on major improvements.
Translation R&D	This R&D adapts an existing technology or intervention to a different labor or capacity context. Technologies and interventions are developed based on local costs, technologies, and labor structures, and will need to be adapted to other socioeconomic conditions. This type supports the translation of R&D methods developed or in development from one location to another to assess their wider transferability.
Foundation science to support implementation of interventions	<p>As a mission-driven program, CORDAP typically does not invest in R&D outside of our mission. Nevertheless, there are critical gaps in fundamental knowledge that, if left unaddressed, could limit the impact or increase the risk of restoration and adaptation programs.</p> <p>This investment type accepts proposals to address these shortfalls, and may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quantifying/understanding natural adaptation, coral demographics, and advanced taxonomy to aid intervention designs. • Novel ecosystem design for application where restoring corals and reefs to their former state is no longer feasible. • Models, decision systems, and monitoring technologies to assess risk and to guide deployments and improve effectiveness of deployment investments. • Cryopreservation (biobanking as an R&D or invention production tool) <p>Proposals of this type must articulate how the research will directly inform the implementation of conservation tools, technologies, methods, or new interventions that better protect, manage, adapt, or restore corals and reefs.</p>
R&D Capacity building and local implementation	<p>This project type is for managers and practitioners to apply novel or scaled-up R&D technologies or to build local capacity to implement conservation approaches that improve coral and reef protection, reduce threats, or enhance restoration.</p> <p>Because capacity to take on R&D in these areas is often limited to large-scale research facilities and some practitioner groups, this type supports implementation by local NGOs, research organizations, and community groups of technologies that can improve or scale up their ongoing efforts. This may also include funding for technology training or support for its application in new locations.</p>

3.2 Program Priority Areas

The following are areas CORDAP considers ‘high need’ at this point. They are applicable to the full spectrum of Project Types outlined above. Proposals that either fall outside of or only indirectly address these priority areas are still eligible for funding but may be considered lower priority for funding than

those with a direct impact on the priority areas. Innovative ideas for restoration and adaptation interventions capturing the best “outside-the-box” ideas are encouraged.

1. **Assisted Evolution.** Climate change related stress is forecast to grow and if we are to avoid restored corals/reefs subsequently bleaching, then we need to incorporate assisted evolution methods into our restoration activities. Assisted evolution is intervening to help species adapt to a changing environment more quickly than they would via natural selection. The CORDAP R&D Technology Roadmap for Understanding Natural Adaptation & Assisted Evolution of Corals to Climate Change is an outcome of a scoping study undertaken in this field to assess the current understanding of natural adaptation, existing activities and subsequent R&D priorities to increase the rate of knowledge generation. The study highlighted the need for studies that seek to improve areas such as our understanding of trade-offs, effect durations across generations and genetic correlations with key tolerance and fitness traits. Proposals submitted to the call in this priority area must reference this roadmap ([available here](#)), and how their proposed work will address identified needs and significantly advance the state of the art. The roadmap indicates assisted evolution areas that are suitable for projects in this call. Consideration should also be given to experimental design and expanded use of any data generated.
2. **Aquaculture / Automation.** In situ and ex situ coral aquaculture production and deployment (out planting) is a primary mechanism to restore sites and to deploy enhanced corals for assisted evolution interventions. Current methods and systems are both resource and time expensive, with several orders of magnitude improvements required if goals are to be achieved. This extends across developed and developing countries, where we need to make every person more effective. Five broad areas for investment have been identified, each with multiple specific priorities. The five broad areas being; infrastructure for coral production, management and workflows, integrating resilience, efficient out planting and monitoring. Please refer to the CAP 2023 Aquaculture-Automation Priority Area – Topic Guidance ([available here](#)) if considering submitting in this category.
3. **Cold-Water Corals (CWC)*.** Cold-water corals are far less understood than warm water corals, from where they exist to how they are being impacted and the best methods to protect and restore. The goal of the priorities identified in this area is to address the most pressing knowledge gaps at this time, with three focus areas in particular identified; Cold-water coral status and distribution (including rescue of data on CWC occurrence from academic institutions and industry to improve knowledge of CWC ecosystem distribution). Cold-water coral biology, ecology, and physiology for restoration, particularly larval ecology and early life history bottlenecks e.g. periodicity, settlement cues etc. Factors affecting CWC growth (physical oceanography, food, intra-colony effects. Improved knowledge on the drivers of recruitment and growth of CWC, including the balance between bioerosion and accretion).

* For the purposes of this call, ‘**Cold-Water Corals**’ describes all corals that do not harvest light (azooxanthellate), indicating the absence of symbiotic dinoflagellates commonly found in "shallow" and "warm" water corals. This definition would typically include deep/cold water corals and exclude the majority of corals found shallower than 30 m depth, while acknowledging the possibility of exceptions to this general classification in biology.

4. **Preserve and conserve existing corals.** Most existing deployments and R&D focus on replacing corals, however, saving and retaining existing corals is preferable to replacing them. We urgently need innovative new ideas—for example, treatments that can be applied to existing corals, innovative ways to improve local water quality, biomarkers for resilient corals, and the like.
5. **Limit early life mortality.** Corals commonly have high mortality during their early-life phases, which limits the efficiency of existing restoration methods. We need new methods that promote coral settlement and reduce early life mortality. These could include substrates and treatments that mimic natural substratum, competitor inhibitors or survival and growth supplements. These could be applied as part of a mariculture process or in the field to improve natural recruitment.
6. **Intervention planning and monitoring** (e.g. decision-making, modelling). Achieving restoration and adaptation goals will require effective decision making, we need to guide our limited resources to the areas of highest impact. This ranges from broad regional planning decisions to site selection for a specific restoration activity. The decisions range from determining if the best action is to further reduce a stress on a coral reef to investing in a coral reef adaptation intervention. Making these decisions and tracking their impact requires monitoring programs and the data/knowledge they generate. Investment proposals from across the decision support and monitoring domain are welcomed.
7. **Blended artificial and natural reefs.** Many islands and coasts will be submerged unless they are defended by artificial structures, including hybrid reefs. Research in this field would identify ways to create such structures that can integrate with minimal damage into existing reefs, creating a rapid change in surge protection and actively enhancing the restoration and recovery of adjacent coral communities. Stronger proposals will look to blend between the artificial structure and corals to create living structures.
8. **R&D Capacity building.** Current methods of restoration and adaptation alone will not conserve reefs to the end of the century, and will require rapid growth in R&D capability to generate the required knowledge, methods and systems. Likewise, as new methods are developed we also need to build the capacity of marine managers and practitioners to understand these novel methods and plan for their use.
9. **Developing country R&D methods.** R&D in developing countries is often hampered by limited capacity, including supporting infrastructure. We must support development of R&D from low to middle income countries while considering these limitations. These projects can be practitioner-oriented, possibly low- or high-tech, novel or translational, meant to improve or scale up existing techniques, or a combination. These projects should enhance the scaling up of restoration efforts in communities and can include reducing drivers, enhancing ecological functions, improving the survival of coral colonies, or a combination of these goals, and can be site-specific.

4. Funding Terms and Conditions

CORDAP policies and Terms and Conditions govern all award personnel and activities, and can be found in the CORDAP Award Terms and Conditions Manual, available on our website [Funding Awards](#) page.

4.1 Intellectual property

- CORDAP does not seek to own any of the IP resulting from its funded activities. Ownership vests as agreed by the organizations collaborating on the research.
- Owners of IP resulting from CORDAP-funded activities must provide a free license for all commercial and non-commercial coral conservation use, including free license to any background IP the project relies on.
- CORDAP-funded developments and technologies should be made available and accessible at an affordable price to all coral conservation projects.
- Publications and underlying data generated by CORDAP-funded activities must be made openly accessible, allowing others to build upon and re-use this knowledge and information.

At Concept Note submission, Applicants are asked to briefly outline the IP situation with their proposal, indicating that the Project IP and Background IP can adhere to the [CORDAP IP Policy](#).

At the Full Proposal submission stage, participating applicants and their organizations are required to submit a 'Statement of Intent'. 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.

4.2 Open Access Policy

CORDAP expects that publications, knowledge and data, arising from CORDAP funded projects will be made freely available as soon as possible and licensed in ways which allow others to build upon and re-use this content.

- **Publications, and underlying data, will be immediately, freely and openly accessible to all**
Publications must be made freely available from the final publication date, without any embargo period. It should be available to anyone, anywhere for free. This includes access to any underlying data sets. Preprints of submitted manuscripts are encouraged to facilitate prompt dissemination of research findings.
- **There should be no barriers to the re-use and dissemination of CORDAP funded publications**
Publications must be published under the Creative Commons attribution license (CC BY) or an equivalent license. This will permit all users to copy, redistribute, transform, and build on the material in any medium or format for any purpose (including commercial) without further permission or fees being required
- **CORDAP will pay necessary reasonable fees.**
Reasonable fees required by a publisher or repository to enable immediate, open access to the accepted articles is considered an eligible cost in an Award. This includes article processing charges and other publisher fees.
- **Research data and software should be Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Reusable (FAIR).**
All publications must be long-term archived and freely discoverable through commonly available free digital open access repositories to those that may wish to read, share and reuse the outputs of CORDAP funded research.

Authors should submit datasets to an appropriate public data repository. Data should be submitted to discipline-specific, community-recognized repositories where possible. Where a suitable discipline-specific resource does not exist, data should be submitted to a generalist repository (such as Zenodo, Dryad, Science Data Bank, Open Science Framework, Figshare etc.).

4.3 Consortium Agreement

Successful Applicant Organizations will be required to sign a legally binding Consortium Agreement among themselves before project funds are disbursed. This is not required for Concept Note nor Full Proposal submission.

The Consortium Agreement sets the framework for a successful project implementation and is a private agreement between the participants to set out the rights and obligations amongst themselves. (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 details project implementation and division of tasks, internal organization and management of the consortium, project budget and distribution of funding, additional rules on rights and obligations related to background and results, and liability. In addition, indemnification and confidentiality arrangements between the participants, intellectual property management, future exploitation and dissemination of results, boilerplate provisions: duration, termination, communication, applicable law and settlement of internal disputes etc. must be addressed in the agreement.

A CORDAP model Consortium Agreement for applicants to adapt to their project is available for on our webpages [here](#).

Applicants can contract commercial/non-commercial organizations as required by the project.

4.4 Ethics

The Applicant and Applicant's Organization must ensure that, before the research commences and for the full award duration, all the necessary ethical, legal and regulatory requirements in order to conduct the research are met, and all the necessary licences and approvals have been obtained.

If any research is to be carried out in a third country, the Organization must ensure that all activities are carried out in the spirit of their own Organization and national regulations, and complies at all times with the relevant laws and regulations in the host country. In addition, any projects must be carried out with the Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) of any communities affected by the project activities.

4.5 Data Privacy

All responses to this Call for Proposals will be treated in confidence and no information contained therein will be communicated to any third party without the permission of the Applicant except insofar as what is specifically required for the consideration and evaluation of the proposal. Applicants will be

asked during the submission stage if they assent to their proposal being shared with other potential funding partners should it not be funded in this call.

The [CORDAP Privacy Policy](#) explains how, and on what legal basis, we collect, store, and use personal information about you as an Applicant or Awardee for CORDAP funding programs or as any other person that interacts with our Organization.

5. Proposal Evaluation Criteria and Process

All proposals received will be checked for compliance with the Funding Call criteria, policies, terms and conditions.

Applicants will first submit a Concept Note proposal (Pre-Proposal) will be evaluated by a CORDAP Panel of Experts.

Applicants who are successful in the Concept Note phase of the call will be invited to submit a Full Proposal, which will undergo an international peer review followed by panel assessment.

All proposals will be evaluated against the criteria below:

- Qualifications and track record of the Applicant teams and applicant diversity
- Innovation or novelty of the idea
- Potential of the project to make step changes, be transformational in its field.
- Targeted impact and pathway and timing to impact
- Alignment with nominated R&D investment themes or areas
- Management and coordination of the project
- Cost-effectiveness of the proposed project
- Broader impact and breadth of socioeconomic applicability

6. Proposal Budget

The total available funding for this call is expected to be approximately USD \$18M. The maximum allowable budget per project is \$1.5M. Budgets must be prepared using the supplied budget template.

6.1 Eligible Costs

1. Requested costs must be related to research, development and integrated educational activities directly related to the project.
2. **Equipment:** It is expected that participating organizations will already be largely equipped to pursue their current research. Purchase of equipment essential for the project which is proposed is eligible. The maximum allowable cost for any single unit of equipment is US\$ 80,000.
3. **Materials and supplies:** Costs of general consumables, computer software necessary for the scientific collaboration.
4. **Services:** Consulting services and printing, access charges, computer services specific to the project, including rental fees and other miscellaneous expenses. Open access publication fees.

5. **Personnel:** Project Staff salaries. All staff salary requests must be adequately justified. Salary costs sought for support staff should be commensurate with the level of skills, responsibilities, and expertise necessary to carry out the proposed activities.

6.2 Ineligible Costs

Costs for administrative personnel, routine business operations, IP protection and management, and professional development are not allowed.

6.3 Indirect Costs (Overhead Costs)

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

- 20% of the applicable direct research costs if the applicant based in a low- or middle-income country
- 10% of the applicable direct research costs if the applicant based anywhere else.

To determine eligibility for the higher rate of indirect costs, please refer to the [OECD List](#) of low and middle-income countries.

The following budget items are not eligible in calculating indirect costs: Capital equipment and capital expenditures over \$5K, rental costs, student tuition fees, scholarships and fellowships, and external services.

The rates provided above are the maximum rates allowed under the foundation's policy. An Awardee, or Co-Applicant, organization with an actual indirect cost rate lower than the maximum rate provided above should not increase the funding request to the maximum allowed.

It is important to note that CORDAP is a charitable entity, funded by voluntary contributions, and does not have the financial capacity to match the indirect-cost rates that national science funders may pay to its awardees.

6.4 Cost Share (Cash and In-Kind Contributions)

Contributions, both cash and in-kind are encouraged in projects in order to maximize the leveraging of CORDAP funding. At the Concept Note submission stage, applicants should outline what contributions they intend make towards the proposed project. It should be noted however that cost share contributions are not mandatory on applications, but will be taken into consideration in evaluating the overall impact of the project. In-Kind contributions should be described and not stated in monetary terms or figures.

7. Proposal Preparation and Online Submission

The Award Term can be between a minimum of 12 months up to a maximum of 36 months with a total Award Budget not to exceed USD \$1.5M.

The Lead Applicant should go to [myCORDAP](#) to register through our online submission system. Once successfully registered you can start your Concept Note application.

Only the Lead Applicant is required to register and can submit an application.

myCORDAP is accessed through the internet; no additional software needs to be installed. You can access the system online from any location. The configuration of some browsers and internet infrastructure (popup blockers, firewalls, etc.) may restrict an individual's access to the internet and as a result to the myCORDAP system. If you are having any such difficulties, please contact your organization's internal IT support team.

Concept Note submission templates (Concept Note Submission Form and Budget Template) can be downloaded from the [CORDAP website funding pages](#), and are available on from the [myCORDAP](#) portal.

The main steps in applying are as follows:

- The research team must designate one member as Lead Applicant, who will be responsible for the proposal submission of the project on behalf of the team.
- The Lead Applicant will need an account on myCORDAP. This will provide access to the online application form and further instructions concerning the online submission.
- The Concept Note proposal along with the required documents must be submitted before the submission deadline. No changes can be made after final submission.
- The Lead Applicant will be notified if the team is invited to submit a Full Proposal application.

8. Award Reporting and Payment Schedule

The Lead Applicant/Lead Organization will receive the CORDAP funds for the entire consortium and has the obligation to distribute the payments received from CORDAP to the other Co-Applicant Organizations.

Awardees will be required to submit progress reports annually, using templates and forms, which CORDAP will make available. Payments will be made upon signing of the Award Agreement, and receipt and approval of annual progress or final reports. Reports must demonstrate sufficient progress against the project milestones for that reporting period or risk subsequent payments being delayed until progress has been shown. Awardees will also be requested to submit brief project highlights on a quarterly basis. Such highlights are vital in raising the profile of CORDAP projects and the continued resourcing of the Platform.

An indicative payment schedule is outlined below. It is recognized that many organizations, particularly in developing countries, may not have the resources to take on much of the project costs in advance. This is reflected in the initial payment, however, this aspect can still be negotiated in justified cases based on available funding.

Payments are lump sum payments. Unspent funds may be carried over to the next period without prior approval from CORDAP. At the Project close, a financial reconciliation will take place of Project funds spent against the awarded budget. Any unspent funds must be returned to CORDAP at the end of the Project within 90 days.

8.1 Indicative Reporting and Payment Schedule

	Reporting Deliverable	1 Year Project	Up to 2 years	Up to 3 years
Upon Agreement Signing/before project start date		50% of Project total	40% of Project total	30% of Project total
End of Year 1	Progress/Final Report Financial Report	Financial Reconciliation – Payment of remainder of project funds spent.	40% of Project Total	30% of Project Total
End of Year 2	Progress/Final Report Financial Report	NA	Financial Reconciliation – Payment of remainder of project funds spent.	30% of project Total
End of Year 3	Final Report Financial Report	NA	NA	Financial Reconciliation – Payment of remainder of project funds spent.

9. Proposal Submission Checklist

Prior to considering an application, applicants are encouraged to read the [CORDAP Strategic Plan](#), noting that the Project Type descriptions and Priority Areas in the Strategic Plan have been updated, therefore **for this call only the Project Type descriptions and Priority Areas outlined in this call document are eligible.**

9.1 Concept Note Submission Stage:

1. Concept Note Proposal Submission Form (including biographical information form).
2. Concept Note Budget Template

9.2 Full Proposal Submission Stage (Invitation Only, documents will be available after Concept Note submission):

1. Full Proposal Template (including Gantt Chart and biographical information form)
2. Full Proposal Budget Template
3. Statement of Intent to Collaborate (from each applicant organization)
4. Letters of Support

All call and policy documents can be downloaded from the [Funding Awards](#) pages on the [cordap.org](#) website.

9.3 Application Assistance

Potential applicants are first directed to the [Call FAQ](#) and [Submission Assistance](#) document. In addition webinars will be held (and made available afterwards on the CORDAP funding pages for reference). If your query is not addressed in the sources, please contact the CORDAP funding team at funding@cordap.org