

COTS Control Innovation Program

Bridging Research Projects



Application Guidelines

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Acknowledgment of Country

The Great Barrier Reef Foundation extends its deepest respect and recognition to all Traditional Owners of the Great Barrier Reef and its Catchments as First Nations Peoples hold the hopes, dreams, traditions and cultures of the Reef.

1. About this Opportunity

1.1 The COTS Control Innovation Program

[The Crown-of-thorns starfish Control Innovation Program \(CCIP\)](#) is a targeted research program aimed at boosting capacity to predict, detect and respond to outbreaks of coral-eating crown-of-thorns starfish (COTS) at scale across the Great Barrier Reef. The innovation program delivers key research that underpins and supports improvements in the efficiency of Australia's on-water [COTS Control Program](#), led by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (Reef Authority).

The CCIP has been delivered through a collaborative research partnership between the Great Barrier Reef Foundation (GBRF), the Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMS), the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO), James Cook University (JCU), and the University of Queensland (UQ). Alongside these core partners, other research organisations and stakeholders have also made important contributions to delivering research as part of the program. Further background information on CCIP's approach and outcomes to date are provided in the [CCIP Synthesis & Impact Report \(2021-2024\)](#).

1.2 Objectives and Outcomes

This Funding Opportunity aims to support **Bridging Research Projects** that build upon the outcomes of CCIP, maintaining and expanding Australia's capacity to deliver world-leading protection of coral from COTS outbreaks across the Great Barrier Reef. This research investment aligns with the [Reef 2050 Plan's](#) Work Area 5 – Protect, Rehabilitate and Restore.

Priority areas for investment under this Funding Opportunity are:

- **Detection & Monitoring.** Research that advances development and operational deployment of tools and strategies that improve COTS, coral and co-benefit monitoring capabilities.
- **Innovating Control Methods.** Research that advances development of an expanded control toolbox to complement culling and/or address its limitations (e.g. depth, COTS life-history stage).
- **COTS, Coral & Climate Change.** Research that generates new knowledge and improved capability to adapt COTS management to changing environmental conditions.
- **Decisions for Coral Resilience.** Research that advances development and application of models and decision support tools that guide COTS Control Program strategic planning and tactical operations.

The table below provides examples of projects under each of these four research priority areas. While these project examples are not exhaustive, they are intended to provide guidance to potential applicants on knowledge and capability gaps that have been identified by partners and research stakeholders. Applications for other project topics across these priority areas will also be considered.

This Opportunity is an open call and organisations beyond the CCIP core partners are strongly encouraged to apply. Collaborative, multi-institution applications are also encouraged. We recommend that research proposals are developed in consultation with relevant users, including reef managers, Traditional Owners and industry stakeholders.

To provide effective and tailored support, all applicants will have the opportunity to discuss their application with the CCIP Program Director, Mary Bonin, during the open call for applications. Through this dialogue, CCIP can suggest ideas to consider for project design, facilitate connections with collaborators and stakeholders, and/or provide feedback to applicants on their specific questions. Summarised and de-identified information from these discussions will be shared via public FAQs for the benefit of all applicants. Applicants should read these Guidelines and the related Application Form in their entirety before deciding whether to apply.

Priority Area	Example Projects
Detection & Monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementing COTS eDNA monitoring, improving cost-effectiveness and analysis Trialling image-based monitoring platforms with users and analysing collected data Advancing ML model capabilities and image-based data management workflows Assessing and piloting options for juvenile COTS monitoring Developing co-benefits monitoring frameworks
Innovating Control Methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Testing semiochemical attractants and engaging with regulators and stakeholders
COTS, Coral & Climate Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifying and aligning on priority empirical gaps and modelling needs for improved outbreak prediction and response under climate change Collecting empirical data on response of COTS to changing environmental conditions
Decisions for Coral Resilience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementing and integrating data information systems Assessing Value of Information across COTS control decision processes Developing pathways and processes for knowledge exchange between researchers and Traditional Owners Enhancing understanding of COTS control biocultural risks Improving and updating the Reef Prioritisation process (models, structure, workflows) Improving alignment in modelling and decision support across COTS control and Reef Restoration and Adaptation (RRAP) activities

1.3 Traditional Owner opportunities and benefits

CCIP recognises and respects that Traditional Owners have inherent rights, interests, and responsibilities for their Sea Country, and is committed to working with Traditional Owners and First Nations peoples to create opportunities and benefits through COTS research.

Through this Funding Opportunity, we encourage applicants to recognise these rights and interests by planning for and genuinely engaging with relevant Traditional Owner groups about their projects. Building relationships based on mutual trust and understanding is an important first step in this process, and this takes time, planning and resources. Such engagement and discussion with Traditional Owners to identify opportunities for participation and collaboration can lead to the generation of shared benefits, both within the project and in future research.

It is also important to recognise that opportunities for participation and partnership-building with Traditional Owners will vary depending on the research project. In some cases, Traditional Owner groups may have strong interests in a project especially when it includes research on Sea Country, offers potential for participation and capacity building and/or aligns with their priorities. In other cases, opportunities to work with Traditional Owners in a project may be limited due to the nature of the research, or Traditional Owners may decide to focus on other priorities. These opportunities need to be assessed on a project-by-project basis and successful applicants will be required to develop a ***Traditional Owner Communication and Engagement Plan*** that is appropriate for their project.

Additional resources for engaging with Traditional Owners are provided below.

- [Whose Country am I on?:](#) Some tips for Identifying Traditional Owners
- [Ask First:](#) A guide to respecting Indigenous heritage places and values
- [Our Knowledge, Our Way guidelines - CSIRO:](#) Best-practice guidelines and case studies
- [Engaging Early:](#) Guidance on best practice Indigenous engagement for environmental assessments under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*

1.4 Available funding and co-contributions

A total of up to \$2 million is available for CCIP Bridging Research Projects.

CCIP project funding can support direct project costs including salaries of project personnel, use of specialist facilities, fieldwork costs, project management/engagement activities, and equipment and consumables.

In order to maximise the value of this publicly funded research, CCIP encourages projects that demonstrate value for money through co-contributions, including quantifiable and contractually recognised in-kind and cash contributions.

As a rule of thumb, projects should aim to co-contribute a minimum of 2:1, meaning that for every \$2 of funding requested, the funding recipient co-contributes \$1.

Administration costs (e.g. office space, utilities, corporate services, etc) and salary on-costs/overheads for project personnel are not eligible for funding but may be included in project budgets as co-contributions.

A **Budget Tool** is provided along with the Application Form to support applicants in costing their direct project activities and co-contributions. The budget tool incorporates the following assumptions:

- Set salary rates depending on position level, determined through benchmarking across research institutions.
- An automatic 50% is applied to these salary rates to cover on-costs and overheads, and these are included as co-contributions.

These assumptions are intended to provide a standard approach for costing collaborative, multi-institution projects. These assumptions (e.g. salary rates, % on-costs) can be adjusted by applicants if needed and sufficient justification is provided.

1.5 Key dates

Activity	Date
Guidelines available and call for Applications open	Monday 7 July 2025
Opportunities for project scoping meetings (30min sessions)*	Monday 14 July to Friday 25 July
Call for applications closes	Friday 1 August 2025
Assessment completed and applicants notified of outcome	By 15 September 2025
Projects start by	15 October 2025
Projects work completed by	15 October 2026
Final report & Acquittal due by	6 November 2026

* Applicants can email CCIP Program Director, Dr Mary Bonin mbonin@barrierreef.org, to schedule a meeting to discuss their application during this timeframe.

2. Application process

2.1 Who can apply?

To be eligible to apply, applicants must meet the following requirements:

- be operating in Australia and have an Australian Business Number (ABN)
- confirm that all potential, perceived or actual conflicts of interest are declared and a

management plan is proposed (if applicable)

- hold or be willing to hold the required insurances:

TYPE	MINIMUM VALUE INSURED	PERIOD TO BE HELD
Workers' Compensation	As required by law	During the Term
Public Liability	[\$20,000,000]	During the Term
Professional Indemnity	[\$5,000,000-\$10,000,000]	During the Term and for 7 years after the end of the Term
Motor Vehicle, Plant and Equipment Insurance	TBD (if applicable)	During the Term

Minimum insurance requirements may vary depending on the type of project. Exact insurance requirements will be discussed with applicants during Stage three assessment.

- have developed and implemented comprehensive WHS policies and procedures for the project, or are willing to undergo a WHS risk assessment, take all reasonable steps to manage identified risks, and undergo specific training or qualifications that the GBRF recommends prior to commencing the project
- accept the specified terms in the **CCIP Bridging Agreement** (attached). Note that successful applicants will be contracted under the terms of this CCIP Bridging Agreement. If successful applicants are from the CCIP core partners (AIMS, CSIRO, JCU, UQ), they will be contracted through an amendment to the existing CCIP Collaboration Agreement. The terms of these agreements are aligned so that all successful applicants are engaged under the same terms.
- accept the terms and conditions in the Application Form

In addition, all project activities must:

- comply with any relevant legislation;
- have all relevant permits obtained before any on-ground works commence in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.

2.2 What can be funded?

Whilst not exhaustive, the list below provides examples of the types of direct costs that would be considered eligible for funding under this opportunity:

- Salaries for project delivery staff
- Workshop, communication, engagement and training costs, including with Traditional Owners
- Data synthesis and interpretation costs
- Facilities, fieldwork or equipment costs if required to deliver the activity
- Consultancies and subcontractors engaged to deliver the activity
- Other project management costs required to deliver the activity

2.3 What cannot be funded?

The following indirect costs are not eligible for funding:

- Administration costs
- Salary on-costs and overheads

An application will be deemed ineligible if:

- the funds requested are to cover activities which have commenced before funding is allocated

under this opportunity (e.g. retroactive costs)

- the funds requested by the applicant are a duplication of funding with other investors for delivering the same activities

This list is not exhaustive. Other activities or specific expenditure may be ineligible if it does not directly support the achievement of the planned outcomes of the program or they are contrary to the spirit and intention of the funding opportunity.

2.4 How applications are assessed

This funding opportunity is a merit-based, competitive process.

Stage one – Eligibility

Each Application will be screened to check that the applicant organisation is eligible to apply. Applications that do not meet the eligibility requirements will not be progressed.

Stage two – Full application assessment against criteria

Full applications will be assessed against the assessment criteria by an Assessment Panel.

Stage three – Work planning and Contracting

Successful applications will be required to submit a project work plan (template to be provided) based on their application and incorporating any feedback from the assessment process. This work plan will form the basis of contracting.

Eligible applications will be assessed against these criteria:

Criteria	Description of Criteria	Weighting
Objectives, Activities and Outputs	The project objectives are clear and the proposed approach to achieve them is well developed and feasible under the timelines. This includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Objectives – The project addresses a clear need or opportunity relevant to one of the four priority areas. The project builds on previous research and fills a knowledge and capability gap.• Methodology – The design and approach proposed to achieve the objectives is innovative and fit-for-purpose.• Outputs – The milestones and deliverables are clearly defined and the proposed timelines for their delivery are achievable.	35%
Outcomes and Impact Pathway	The project delivers tangible outcomes and benefits, supporting GBR health through protection of coral from COTS outbreaks. The pathway to achieving impact is clear and relevant end-users have been identified and engaged. Complementarity and coordination with related research has been considered.	25%
Traditional Owner Opportunities	Opportunities and benefits for Traditional Owners from the research have been considered. Proposed plans and resourcing for communication and engagement activities are appropriate for the project.	10%
Capability and experience	The delivery team has the expertise, capacity and experience required to successfully deliver the proposed project, including management of risks. The assembled team builds or strengthens multi-institutional and/or multi-disciplinary collaborations.	10%
Value for Money	The proposed costs for undertaking the activities are clearly budgeted, reasonable, and include quantifiable co-contributions. Overall the project demonstrates value for investment when considering costs and benefits.	20%

Applications will be rated by an Assessment Panel against these criteria. All criteria are mandatory and an application that does not meet the minimum standard for any of the criteria will not progress to the

next stage of the assessment process. GBRF shall be the final decision-maker on any application, and it is a condition that the applicant accepts GBRF's decision as final.

2.5 Submitting an application

Applicants should consider the information provided in these Guidelines and the Application form. Potential applicants are encouraged to contact the CCIP Program Director Mary Bonin (mbonin@barrierreef.org) to discuss project scope prior to submitting their application. For general questions on the application process email applications@barrierreef.org.

Applications open on **Monday 7 July 2025** and close on **Friday 1 August 2025** at 5:00pm AEST.

Application forms (including all attachments) must be submitted to the GBRF's Grants email inbox applications@barrierreef.org by the closing date.

Late applications cannot be accepted. Applications that are incomplete, do not include the requested documentation, or do not address the assessment criteria may be deemed ineligible.

2.6 Applicant notification and next steps

During the assessment process, applicants may be asked to provide additional information to clarify the content of their applications.

Applicants will be informed in writing about the outcome of their application. Successful proposals will be developed into Project Work Plans which will form the basis for contracting.

GBRF will keep confidential all confidential information of the applicant which is obtained as part of the application process. However, GBRF may disclose confidential information to its personnel, contractors or advisors for the purposes of administering this funding opportunity; or as required by law; or where GBRF is required to comply with any provision of Reef Trust Partnership Agreement in respect of confidential information.