

Transforming Climate Action

Community-Led Research Program: Tier 2 Application Guidelines



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1. Overview of the TCA Community-Led Research Program

The Community-Led Research Program is designed to develop, nurture and engage in respectful and reciprocal relationships between partner communities and the four Transforming Climate Action (TCA) partner institutions: Dalhousie University, Université du Québec à Rimouski, Université Laval, and Memorial University, around the human-climate-ocean nexus.

This program recognizes Indigenous communities as leaders in initiatives that contribute to building research capacity, both in a reciprocal way and in partnership with universities. The program aims **to develop relationships** that value scientific, cultural and Indigenous knowledge systems; **to promote research by Indigenous peoples and communities**, in accordance with their needs and values; and **to build capacity for community-based research**, including through training, education and mentoring.

Two levels of funding are available through the Community-Led Research Program:

- **Tier 1** funding aims to initiate contacts and build trusting relationships between Indigenous communities and academic TCA institutions around research.
- **Tier 2** aims to strengthen and enrich established relationships by conducting research activities that are aligned with priorities identified by the community and TCA's science strategy.

Please contact the institutional representative before preparing and submitting your application. Tier 2 funding processes, requirements, eligibility and available funding differ between TCA institutions. An initial conversation will help us determine whether this opportunity is a good fit for your proposed initiative and identify any institutional requirements that apply to your application. We are happy to discuss your idea at an early stage and provide guidance as you develop your proposal. You do not need to have a fully developed proposal before contacting us.

This guide has been prepared to support applications for Tier 2 Community-led Research Program funding, but with a focus on the current open call for proposals that is being run through Dalhousie University and Memorial University.

Amount and duration of funding available	
Open call for proposals	
Dalhousie University	• Duration: up to 3 years, must be completed by December 31, 2029 • Projects to be funded: 6-8 projects • Recommended project budgets: between \$50,000 and \$500,000
Memorial University	• Duration: up to 3 years, must be completed by December 31, 2029 • Projects to be funded: 1-3 projects



- Recommended project budgets: between \$25,000 and \$300,000

By invitation (Reach out to institutional contact if you are interested in applying)

Université du Québec à Rimouski

- Duration: up to 3 years, must be completed by December 31, 2029
- Projects to be funded: 2-5 projects
- Recommended project budgets: between \$25,000 and \$300,000+

Université Laval

- Duration: up to 3 years, must be completed by December 31, 2029
- Projects to be funded: 1-3 projects
- Recommended project budgets: between \$25,000 and \$200,000

Objectives of the Tier 2 Community-Led Research Program

Tier 2 funding focuses on research initiatives led or co-led by Indigenous or Indigenous-linked communities, conducted in partnership with academic institutions and based on community priorities. The aim is for reciprocal research capacity building and shared learning, to support the resilience and well-being of coastal and Indigenous communities. The specific objectives of Tier 2 Community-Led Research Program funding are to:

- Establish or promote a community-led research program, collaborating with one or more researchers from TCA partner universities.
- To respond to community-defined priorities, in line with the scientific strategy of the TCA program.
- Support and enhance research collaboration and capacity across TCA.
- To develop marine science research capacity in communities.

2. Application Guidelines and Budget

Applicant Eligibility

Eligible recipients of this program fund only include Indigenous or Indigenous-linked communities, and post-secondary researchers and institutions affiliated with the TCA program. As such, each project must be led or co-led by an Indigenous or Indigenous-linked community, and must include a partnership with at least one researcher associated with one of the four participating TCA universities. If



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Applications are welcomed from Indigenous or Indigenous-linked governments and organizations, community groups and non-profit organizations, community researchers, knowledge holders and practitioners.

Projects involving collaboration between multiple TCA communities and institutions are strongly encouraged. Applicants for joint projects only need to contact and submit their application to one relevant institution.

TCA's partner institutions are committed to fostering a collegial culture based on respectful engagement and balanced representation, and encourage applications from Indigenous people, people with disabilities, racialized people, women, members of 2SLGBTQIA+ communities.

Project Activity Eligibility

Indigenous communities define what is meant by "research" in their context. The topic should serve the community's priorities and be conducted under the leadership of the community. For example, in addition to climate change adaptation, research may focus on ancestral practices, oral knowledge sharing, ceremonies or knowledge sharing.

The fund can be used to support a wide range of activities and costs, including (but not limited to):

- Community-based monitoring of marine or coastal environmental change
- Research on fisheries, food security, stewardship, marine resource management and climate change adaptation
- Activities exploring culture and human connections to marine and coastal environments, including artists, film, community wellbeing and other social sciences

TCA Research Theme Alignment

Tier 2 proposals should align with one of the three TCA research themes:

- Theme 1: Reducing uncertainty in the climate carbon budget
- Theme 2: Ocean-based climate change mitigation
- Theme 3: Just and equitable adaptation

More detailed information about the TCA research themes is available through the [TCA website](#).

The alignment with a TCA research theme should be clearly identified within your proposal. If you need support in identifying your project's fit within the research themes, please reach out to discuss with the institutional contact named below

Data and Knowledge Management

Projects involving Indigenous communities should ensure that decisions about data and knowledge reflect the rights, interests, priorities, and governance practices of the communities involved.

At the proposal stage, applicants should indicate how a Data Management Plan will be developed in collaboration with the community. A detailed plan is not required until after funding is awarded.

Projects should include the development of a Data Management Plan as a project deliverable. The plan



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should be developed early in the project in collaboration with participating communities and should document the data governance and management arrangements agreed upon through this process. Program staff will be available to work with funded projects to develop an appropriate plan if support in this process is required.

Funding and Budget

All expenses must be eligible according to the [Canada First Research Excellence Fund administration guidelines](#) and in accordance with institutional policies. Eligible costs include, but are not limited to:

- Project staff, student stipends and honoraria (based in or out of community)
- Research supplies, small equipment and related costs (e.g. sampling, processing, etc.)
- Travel for fieldwork, conferences or collaboration
- Training for project staff, community members, students or others
- Community workshops, meetings and other engagement and knowledge sharing activities

A detailed budget that follows the Excel template provided must be submitted. Please include detailed of any in-kind or cash contributions from partners and/or leveraged funding.

Community-Led Research Fund grants are not eligible for overhead costs.

5. How to apply

To apply for funding, please first reach out to the institutional contact listed at the end of this guide to indicate your interest in the program and intention to submit a proposal.

Following that, you should complete the following documents and send by email to the institutional contact:

1. Tier 2 Application Form
2. Proposed budget spreadsheet
3. Optional but encouraged supporting materials include:
 - a. Letter of Support from community
 - b. CVs of lead applicants
 - c. Multimedia submissions to explain the work
 - d. Any additional information you feel is relevant for the reviewers

Please note that Letters of Support from the community may be requested depending on institutional requirements, and the applicant's relationship to the community and role in the project.

Accepted video formats: MP4, MOV. The video may be sent by email as an attachment to the application.



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Submission Deadlines

Please see the TCA website for application submission dates for the Dalhousie and Memorial call for proposals. For other institutions, applications can be submitted at any time, until the funds earmarked for the program are exhausted, and no later than December 31, 2029.

6. Evaluation criteria for Tier 2 proposals

Tier 2 entries will undergo a rigorous evaluation process for scientific excellence, positive impact, and relevance to the community. Applications are evaluated by an external review committee with expertise in Indigenous research contexts. Each committee is formed specifically for the application under review.

I. Community-Defined Research and Leadership (30%)

- Is the research topic defined by the community and aligned with their priorities?
- Is the project community-led?
- Does the project align with the research themes of the TCA programme?

II. Partnership and capacity building (25%)

- Does the project include meaningful roles for academic partners?
- Are training and knowledge sharing components included?

III. Methodology and approach (20%)

- Are the methods culturally appropriate and scientifically sound?
- Are consent, data governance, and Indigenous protocols established in collaboration with the community?

IV. Knowledge impact & mobilization (15%)

- Will the project strengthen the community's research capacity and contribute to improving its quality of life?
- Are the knowledge dissemination plans clear and inclusive? Is the dissemination in accessible formats (oral, video, art)?

V. Budget & Feasibility (10%)

- Is the budget reasonable and aligned with the objectives?
- Is the timeframe achievable within the program window?



7. Reporting requirements

Projects will be required to report on grant activities and deliverables. Reports can be submitted in various formats (written reports, oral or video presentations, artwork or creative work, publications, etc.). Financial reporting will also be required. Additional information about reporting requirements and timelines will be provided at the beginning of the grant.

8. Collaborative Research Agreement

In order to allocate funding to successful applicants, a collaborative research agreement will be developed jointly by both parties to agree on the terms and conditions surrounding the research. This process may vary at each academic partner institution.

The program recognizes the National Inuit Strategy on Research and the [Assembly of First Nations \(AFN\) research, ethics and conflict of interest directives](#) that aim to protect the integrity, intellectual property and strategic governance of First Nations and Inuit. These standards require informed consent, respect for traditional knowledge, transparency on funding sources, and rigorous management of conflicts of interest to ensure ethical and responsible research.

9. Program Contacts

The entire Transforming Climate Action team remains available for any questions or additional clarifications. Do not hesitate to contact us, if necessary:

Dalhousie: Megan McLaren Megan.mclaren@dal.ca	Visit our website for application details  https://www.ofi.ca/tca/opportunities/community-led-research-program
UQAR: Marie-Michelle Dugas marie-michelle_dugas@uqar.ca	
Memorial: IndigenousResearch@mun.ca	
Université Laval: Marie-Helene Forget marie-helene.forget@takuvik.ulaval.ca	
OFI Indigenous Research Advisor: Tamara Joseph tamara.joseph@dal.ca	