

Oceans Collaborative of Environment Funders Canada

Terms of Reference

1. Introduction:

The Oceans Collaborative (OC) is an active group of environmental funders who share the overarching goal of restoring and protecting healthy, productive oceans and coasts in Canada. We focus on supporting Indigenous leadership, building stewardship and governance capacity, and engaging coastal communities and constituencies as key avenues to deliver positive outcomes for marine ecosystems and the communities that depend on them.

We are committed to advancing trust-based philanthropy and collaborative grantmaking, and we rely on the advice and leadership of Indigenous organizations and community partners to guide our work.

2. Strategic value of the OC:

While each of our organizations has its own strategic and program plans, goals, and objectives, we believe our individual efforts will be strengthened and supported through our participation in an Oceans Collaborative as a shared platform that adds value in the following ways.

2.1. Growing and expanding oceans grantmaking (see Section 5):

- Increasing the total amount of philanthropic funding and other resources directed to ocean protection in Canada.
- Growing the community of funders investing in Canada's oceans.
- Facilitating a range of grantmaking strategies, including pooled and aligned funding.
- Identifying and facilitating opportunities to support alignment of public and private investments.
- Enabling funders to work together, and with a range of partners, in pursuit of bold and ambitious ocean protection and stewardship strategies.
- Increasing integration and points of strategic leverage with other funder collaboratives and initiatives.

2.2. Embedding practices of equity, inclusion, and reciprocity with Indigenous partners into our work by:

- Learning together how to fund as allies in the context of reconciliation, including by:
 - Learning and practicing trust-based philanthropy.

- Strengthening reciprocity and collaborative grantmaking.
- Operationalizing principles and practices that advance racial and cultural equity.
- Investing in the roots of conservation and community stewardship, including initiatives that restore and strengthen the connections between people and place.
- Increasing the accessibility of ocean funding to a diverse community of potential grantees, including by removing barriers faced by smaller organizations and non-charity organizations, and supporting entities that have not been traditional grantees.
- Ensuring responsiveness to evolving conditions and grantee priorities.

2.3 Enhancing capacity available to support participating oceans funders by:

- Collectively retaining periodic or ongoing advice from regional and/or subject-matter experts to promote situational awareness; bring relevant experience, knowledge, and perspectives; or maximize impact, flexibility, and responsiveness in grantmaking.
- Sharing contacts, brokering introductions, and building relationships within and among our individual networks while actively expanding our networks.
- Maintaining effective platforms and practices to support learning, updates and information-sharing within and beyond the OC, including, for example, through conference sessions, workshops, roundtables and other such venues.

3. Membership Criteria:

- i. Membership in the OC is open to funders¹ with a demonstrated interest in the goals of the OC, a record of grantmaking or intention to make grants aligned with OC values and goals, and a willingness to invest time and effort in contributing to OC strategies. Membership in Environment Funders Canada (EFC) is not a prerequisite; however, OC members are encouraged to become members of EFC.
- ii. Recognizing the need for support to ensure sound management of the OC and its activities, OC members are expected to help cost-share personnel and other operational OC costs at a scale appropriate to their organization, unless otherwise precluded by their organizational policies. Regardless of financial capacity, all OC members will seek to make meaningful contributions, such as by fostering new relationships, actively recruiting new members to the OC, or hosting meetings or learning sessions.
- iii. The OC may also invite participation by individuals or organizations who are not funders per se, but who bring valuable non-monetary resources including diverse knowledge, experience, and relationships that strengthen the work of the OC. These invited OC members are not expected to contribute financially to the OC.

¹ For the purposes of these Terms of Reference, “funders” means an individual or organization that meets the eligibility guidelines for membership in Environment Funders Canada, available here: <https://environmentfunders.ca/join/membership-guidelines/>.

- iv. OC members act as ambassadors of the OC, helping recruit new members and funding to advance the work.

4. Governance and Responsibilities:

4.1. *Oceans Collaborative*

- i. The OC will appoint one of its members as Chair, for a 2-year term from the date of appointment, renewable once (for a total of 4 years) unless otherwise agreed to by the OC. The Chair will lead meetings of the OC and be a member of the Leadership Team.
- ii. The OC will seek to make all decisions by consensus. In cases where time is of the essence and consensus cannot be reached, decisions will be made by majority vote or other means as determined by the OC. Granting decisions for the Ocean Fund are made with delegated authority from the EFC Board of Directors.
- iii. Should an OC member have a direct relationship with a proposal being considered for support through the Oceans Fund that is or could be perceived to be a conflict of interest, they shall declare it as such and recuse themselves from discussion and/or decision unless otherwise agreed to by the OC, as further referenced in 4.4(v).
- iv. The OC meets regularly (via video call or in person) on a schedule determined annually. OC members come to these meetings prepared to share experiences, learnings, updates, and perspectives from their organizations, as well as to make decisions.
- v. The OC proactively seeks opportunities to learn together and to invest in relationships among its members and partners. Where time and resources permit, this may include convening OC meetings in community, in the field, or at wider EFC convenings.
- vi. The OC does not intervene in or replace direct relationships between OC members and their grantees or partners. OC members are encouraged to bring forth ideas for grant opportunities, including where co-funding with an OC member might be possible.

4.2. *Oceans Collaborative Leadership Team*

- i. The Leadership Team for the Oceans Collaborative plans meetings, develops agendas, identifies challenges and opportunities for discussion by the OC, and oversees the annual work plan.
- ii. The Leadership Team will include the following:
 - o A senior staff member(s) of EFC
 - o The OC Program Consultant (see below)
 - o The OC Chairperson
 - o Additional OC members as invited by the Leadership Team, taking into account the value of diverse knowledge and experience, geographic representation, relationships, and other contributions to the work of the OC.

4.3. *Oceans Collaborative Program Consultant*

- i. EFC contracts annually with a Program Consultant based on a scope of work with defined activities and deliverables, subject to OC priorities and available funding.

- ii. The Program Consultant supports the OC with overall proactive strategy development, working closely with OC members, advisors, and partners, and with EFC staff and advisors.
- iii. The Program Consultant brings forward opportunities for the OC to consider in its decision-making. The Program Consultant conducts proactive research and analysis as required; engages with potential grantees and project proponents to prepare proposals for consideration by the OC for Ocean Fund disbursements; and offers information and advice to support the OC members in making their recommendations and/or decisions.

4.4. *Environment Funders Canada*

- i. EFC houses the Oceans Collaborative and has ultimate responsibility for its governance, strategic and financial management, and administration.
 - o EFC works with the Program Consultant to support strategy development and to prepare an annual plan and budget for review and approval by the OC Leadership Team and, where appropriate, the OC.
 - o EFC manages the OC budget, including incoming revenue – grants and contributions from OC members to support the OC and outgoing expenses – payments to consultants and advisors, disbursements from the pooled Oceans Fund for grants or other financial contributions, and costs for other program-related activities.
 - o EFC provides administrative and logistical support for OC meetings and operations, in collaboration with the Program Consultant and OC Chair.
 - o EFC manages the Oceans Fund and provides a high-level financial update to the OC twice a year that includes a listing of projects currently supported.
- i. EFC aims to ensure that at least one member of the EFC Board is an active participant in the Oceans Collaborative and serves as liaison between the OC and the EFC Board. EFC staff and/or board liaison update the EFC Board on activities and granting by the OC on a quarterly basis at board meetings.
- ii. EFC is responsible for any public representation of the OC, as approved by the EFC Board of Directors, taking into account advice and input from the OC Leadership Team or membership.
- iii. EFC will promote the work of the OC to the EFC membership, through blogs, newsletters, and other avenues.
- iv. EFC will either house, be informed of, and/or will have the opportunity to participate in government relations activities undertaken by the OC collectively (for clarity, this does not apply to government relations activities of individual OC members).
- v. EFC ensures any conflicts of interest are handled in accordance with EFC policy. This policy will provide the means for members to flag a potential conflict of interest and recuse themselves from granting or other decisions or discussions that could be seen to be affected by the conflict. Declared Conflicts of Interest shall be documented in the associated meeting notes.

5. Pooled Oceans Fund

- i. The pooled Oceans Fund exists to enable rapid, informed, catalytic, and responsive grant-making to advance shared OC goals.
- ii. All members of the OC are invited to contribute to the Oceans Fund; however, contributions to the Oceans Fund are not mandatory for membership in the OC.
- iii. Proposals/recommendations for expenditures from the Oceans Fund are brought forward to the OC for consideration by the Program Consultant, following a documented process as agreed to by the OC.
- iv. In order to maintain maximum flexibility and responsiveness, disbursements from the Oceans Fund are not restricted to regional or topic-related targets. If necessary to enable participation, a contributor to the OC may direct that its allocation be spent on a specific geographic area or project supported by the OC.
- v. Disbursements from the Oceans Fund are subject to the requirements of Revenue Canada applicable to EFC. Where the project proponent is a Non-Qualified Donee (NQD), the process followed to enable support (e.g., grant to NQD, service contract, or grant through fiduciary partner) shall be determined by EFC and the Program Consultant, in consultation with the project proponent as needed.
- vi. The OC Program Consultant, independently and together with the OC and EFC, proactively identifies potential Oceans Fund partners to consider for financial support and ensures broad communication of the existence and priorities of the Oceans Fund. Generally, proposals to the Oceans Pooled Fund are considered by invitation only, though a targeted public call for proposals may be issued upon agreement of the OC.

6. Accountability and Evaluation

We are committed to holding ourselves accountable for results with respect to both supporting our members in delivering ocean conservation outcomes in Canada and advancing trust-based, collaborative grantmaking and the decolonization of philanthropy.

- i. EFC defines measures to track the success of the OC in delivering added value to its members. As resources permit, EFC will undertake periodic evaluations of the OC's work and the value derived by its members. The OC Leadership Team, in consultation with the OC membership, will collaborate in developing program evaluation frameworks and metrics and, as feasible and appropriate, will participate in evaluation processes.
- ii. The OC utilizes a customized dashboard to track investments from the Oceans Fund to evaluate how it is meeting its objectives. This includes key metrics related to the identity of the grant recipient and project lead, regional distribution and which OC strategy or priority has been supported. EFC, together with the Program Consultant

and OC Leadership Team, will work to update the dashboard on a quarterly basis. The dashboard is accessible to all members of the OC through the shared drive.

- iii. The OC works with our Indigenous partners and grantees to continually improve our ability to track progress with respect to the decolonization of philanthropy. This includes seeking advice on the development of qualitative and quantitative measures that can be applied in a range of accountability practices, from ongoing informal feedback to structured evaluations and reporting.