



Expression of Interest Guide

The Natural Ecosystems Focus Area is guided by the vision of *healthy ecosystems, safeguarded for all generations*. To realise this vision, we are focussed on **protecting ocean biodiversity and habitats**; we aim to do this through four key activities

1. Increasing coverage and improving effective management of Ocean Conservation Areas (OCAs)
2. Catalysing scalable solutions for biodiversity discovery and monitoring
3. Promoting sustainable seafood industries
4. Climate action and mitigation

The Minderoo Exmouth Research Lab (MERL) enables and supports marine science in the Nyngulu Ningaloo Region, playing a critical role in our activities and contributing to the outcome of protecting biodiversity and reducing harmful impacts on ocean ecosystems.

Eligibility

The research proposal must demonstrate a clear pathway to real impact. Researchers will generally, but not necessarily, have a university or research institute affiliation.

Project requirements and evaluation criteria

Proposals will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- Proposals must be well developed, concise and high quality
- Projects that demonstrate strategic alignment with Natural Ecosystems key activities will be favourably viewed (Attachment 1)
- Visiting researchers must have sufficient technical skills, knowledge and experience to undertake the proposed work
- Proposed methods and analysis must be robust and rigorous, with capacity to contribute towards a scientific publication
- Projects must detail a clear path to impact in the project proposal (Attachment 2).
- Projects that lever multiple sources of funding and demonstrate in-kind contribution will be given preference
- Projects that are collaborative will be favoured, i.e., include researchers from more than one institution and ideally collaborate across disciplines
- Proposals that meaningfully add value to other Minderoo Focus Areas will be ranked highly (minderoo.org "Our focus areas and impact missions")
- Projects must ensure that destructive sampling is avoided wherever possible.

Ethics approvals and permits

You must conduct your research in an ethical, diligent manner and in accordance with all laws, any policies of the Administering Institution regarding the conduct of research and any reasonable directions given by us to ensure the ethical, safe and diligent conduct of the project. It is the responsibility of the researcher to ensure that all necessary ethics approvals and permits required are in place before the project commences.

Research agreement

The successful Administering Institution will be required to enter into a Grant and Collaboration agreement (GCA) with the Minderoo Foundation and sign a User's Agreement. Further details will be provided upon acceptance.

Data use and sharing

Minderoo Foundation is committed to openly sharing data collected through the collaborative projects run from our facilities. We request that:

- Data must be shared between researchers and institutions participating in the project and on open access data platforms where possible.
- Data must be made fully open access at project completion, or when any submitted papers are published.
- Papers should be published in open access form (preference high impact journal); costs should be included in the proposal budget

Attachment 1: Strategic Alignment with Natural Ecosystems Key Activities

Biodiversity is crucial for maintaining the balance of ecosystems and providing resilience against environmental changes. However, it is declining faster than at any other time in human history. This fact underpins the rationale for our primary body of work, **protecting ocean biodiversity and habitats**. There are four interconnected, key activities within this body of work, as described below. Proposals that align with this strategic approach will be ranked highly. Please note other research activities not listed below may be considered if the science is robust and the impact is well justified.

1. Increase coverage and improve effectiveness of ocean conservation areas.

Examples:

- increasing understanding of the current status of Australian ocean conservation areas and management,
- improving management practices and building cost effective solutions
- designation of more ocean conservation areas, nationally and globally
- inclusive and comprehensive marine spatial planning

2. Scalable Biodiversity Solutions

Examples:

- Using eDNA technology to enable ocean-scale biodiversity discovery and monitoring
- Improving our understanding and application of eDNA methods in the field

3. Sustainable seafood industries

Examples:

- Increasing actionable information to improve fisheries management
- Fisheries rules and regulations strengthened to discourage irresponsible behaviour
- Investigating technologies and processes to decrease harmful impacts from aquaculture and wild-caught fisheries implemented

4. Climate Action

Examples:

- Increasing knowledge to support policy development and public education
- Mitigating impacts of climate change
- Building resilience and adapting to impacts

Attachment 2: Demonstrating Impact

Minderoo will look favourably on Projects that can demonstrate research impact to the Nyinggulu Ningaloo region, the Indian Ocean, and beyond. Research impact is the contribution that research makes to the economy, society, environment or culture, beyond the contribution to academic research.

Applicants are strongly advised to ensure the project has a clear and well-articulated impact with respect to the following:

- **Management:** management-based outcomes and results that will meaningfully contribute to our understanding of the Key Activities (Attachment 1)
- **Environment:** have direct implications for improved management, conservation, and potentially restoration in the region
- **Research:** use cutting edge technology, or lead to technological advances
- **Community:** contribute positively to the community through direct or indirect impacts, as marine resources play a vital role for multiple sectors of the community in the area.

Attachment 3: Fee for Services

Please use the table below to indicate the value of the in-kind support requested.

Full access to aquaria and molecular labs:

- Researcher: \$125/d
- Commercial user: \$250/d

Accommodation:

- Per person per night: \$80/d

Vessels:

- Minderoo vessel "Tethys": 5 pax (1 skipper + 4 crew) \$850 /day + fuel at cost
- External / third party vessel: dependant on company. Please note if we cannot provide the Minderoo vessel, you may request funds to cover the cost of hiring an external provider