

Marine Megafauna Research Grants

Program Guidelines 2025



**SEA WORLD
FOUNDATION**

Research Rescue Conservation

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Overview

Operated by Village Roadshow Theme Parks and headquartered at Sea World Australia on the Gold Coast, Sea World Foundation is Australia's largest marine wildlife rescue and rehabilitation charity.

Sea World Foundation's mission is to protect the marine environment for future generations through research, rescue and conservation initiatives.

This grants program offers funding and communication support to field-based research projects that address critical knowledge gaps and develop evidence-based strategies to mitigate threats to Australia's wild marine megafauna species. Priority areas include biology, ecology, health, rescue and rehabilitation and mitigating human-wildlife conflict.

By supporting these efforts, we aim to reduce the need for, and enhance the effectiveness of, marine wildlife rescue and rehabilitation efforts across Australia.

This program has received funding support from Winifred Violet Scott Charitable Trust.

Program objectives

The objectives of this program are:

- **scientific research:** promote scientific investigations that address key challenges and emerging issues related to Australia's wild marine megafauna species;
- **public communication of science:** foster public interest and awareness in marine conservation by bridging the gap between scientific research and the public.

Available funding

A total funding pool of \$250,000 is available. Eligible applicants are invited to submit proposals of up to \$50,000 of primary funding for 1-2-year research projects. Up to \$10,000 in supplementary funding is available to develop professional photographic assets that document the research.

Key dates

Activity	Date
Applications open	1 February 2025
Applications close	1 April 2025
Grants awarded	April/May 2025
Funding available	From 1 July 2025
Deadline for securing permits and ethics	1 October 2025
Project completion	By 30 June 2027
Final report due	1 September 2027

Sea World Foundation may not advise unsuccessful applicants until grant agreements have been executed with successful applicants.

Eligible organisations

To be eligible for funding, the lead organisation must be one of the following in Australia:

- charities registered with the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profits Commission (ACNC)
- not-for-profit organisations registered under the Corporations Act 2001 or the Co-operatives National Law Act
- tertiary education institutions administered by the Commonwealth or State
- Indigenous corporations incorporated under the Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Act 2006 (Cwlth))

The lead organisation must be registered for GST under A New Tax System (Goods and Services Tax) Act 1999 (Cth).

One application per research group will be accepted. However, more than one application per organisation can be submitted.

Ineligible organisations

Bodies not eligible for funding include:

- private individuals
- for-profit organisations
- unincorporated organisations
- unregistered charities and not-for-profit organisations
- schools (government and non-government schools)
- Local, State, Territory and Australian Government agencies or associated agencies such as statutory bodies or government owned corporations
- Natural Resource Management (NRM) bodies

- political parties or lobbyists

Collaborations

Two or more eligible organisations can work in collaboration on a single project, but a lead organisation must be nominated. The lead organisation is responsible for project management, budget and reporting requirements for the duration of the funding agreement.

Team composition

Each must name one First Investigator. The First Investigator is the researcher that will lead the project and act as the main contact for reporting, financial and administrative matters.

If the Lead Investigator is a student, the principal supervisor must be listed as the Second Investigator and will be a co-signatory to the grant agreement.

Other Investigators can also be named as a person or persons contributing to the project.

The Project Team should have demonstrated research experience in the field that the proposal relates to and will be considered against the assessment criteria.

Project timeframes

Projects must have a practical completion by 30 June 2027. A maximum 1-year extension may be granted for parental leave and compassionate circumstances.

Eligible species

Eligible species comprise all large-bodied organisms inhabiting coastal and open oceans habitats. For example, cetaceans, pinnipeds, sirenians, large sharks and rays, marine turtles, albatross and penguins. Estuarine (saltwater) crocodiles and invertebrates are not eligible.

Eligible activities

Eligible activities that will be considered for funding under this round will adhere to one or more of the following categories:

- **conservation science:** projects aimed at safeguarding and enhancing the prospects for survival and recovery of species.
- **mitigation science:** studies aimed at reducing human-wildlife conflict and decreasing the necessity for wildlife rescue and rehabilitation efforts.
- **rescue and rehabilitation science:** investigations focused on enhancing the techniques and outcomes of wildlife rescue and rehabilitation operations.
- **veterinary and health science:** research dedicated to refining the methods and outcomes associated with veterinary care and wildlife health.

Projects may involve animals in human care. However, the primary research purpose and outcomes must demonstrably benefit wild animal populations.

Ineligible activities

Ineligible projects and activities that will not be considered for funding under this round include:

- desktop studies, projects must include a field component
- habitat restoration studies and restoration activities
- projects that occur outside of Australia's EEZ or Territories
- **devolved grant funding:** requests for funding to be provided to an applicant organisation who will then disseminate this funding to other organisations or individuals to complete work)
- **commenced works:** projects or activities where work has already commenced or has been completed.

Funding applications for multi-stage projects will be considered. For example, if Stage 1 of a project has been completed, you may apply for funding for Stage 2. In such cases, it must be clear which portion of the work is being funded by Sea World Foundation and what outcomes are directly attributable to this grant.

Eligible expenditure

Eligible expenses include costs directly related to the delivery of the project, including but not limited to:

Eligible primary expenditure

Type	Description
Salaries	Salaries for Research Assistants.
Consumables	Supplies and materials needed to complete the research project and usually consumed or used within the life of the project. Excludes office supplies.
Equipment	Equipment must specifically apply to the research project in the application.
Services	Services that are required for research e.g. sequencing costs.
Travel	Travel costs for field work and visiting other research sites. Includes vessel, vehicle hire, accommodation, transfers and incidentals.
Other	Publication and dissemination of project research outputs (limited to AUD \$2,000 total per project).

Eligible supplementary expenditure

Type	Description
Photography	Professional photography-related expenses including production services, supplier travel and logistics.

Quotes are required as part of the application process.

Applicants will be responsible for any eligible costs over and above the approved funding amount and must ensure they have adequate funds and resources to meet these costs.

Ineligible expenditure

Costs associated with the following activities (whether on their own or part of an otherwise eligible or approved project) are ineligible for funding:

Ineligible primary expenditure

Type	Description
Out of region expenses	Costs incurred outside of Australia's EEZ and Australian Antarctic Territory.
Approvals	Permits and ethics.
Infrastructure	Capital improvements or large infrastructure (such as boats or vehicles).
Salaries	Salaries for investigators.
Administration on-costs	Administration costs required by research institute or organisation.
Operation on-costs	Ongoing operations expenses including electronic/office equipment or insurance costs.
Software	Computer programs, research aids and tools unless they are being directly used for the project.
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Profit-making activities, fundraising or general income-growth purposes - conference/seminar fees - entertainment costs - prize money - non-research activities - accommodation or catering that does not directly relate to the project

Ineligible supplementary expenditure

Type	Description
Photography	Post-production services (which are provided by Sea World Foundation) and stock imagery.

Applicants will be responsible for all ineligible project costs and must ensure they have adequate funds and resources to meet these costs.

Contributions

Cash and in-kind contributions from the lead organisation, collaborating organisations and other sources are encouraged but not mandatory.

Approvals

Ethics

Research which involves:

- **human experimentation:** must be carried out in accordance with the guidelines laid down in the NHMRC code of practice; National Statement on Ethical Conduct of Research Involving Humans (1999)
- **animal experimentation:** must be carried out in accordance with the guidelines laid down in the Animal Care and Protection 2001 and the NHMRC Code of Practice for the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes, 7th ed., 2004. Animal experiments must be carried out by a person or organisation registered as a scientific user with the relevant state government regulatory body and activities must be assessed by an approved Animal Ethics

Committee

- **the use of recombinant nucleic acids constructed in vitro from sources which do not ordinarily recombine genetic information:** must be carried out in accordance with the guidelines laid down by the Recombinant DNA Monitoring Committee
- **all projects involving the genetic modification of animals:** must be conducted in accordance with requirements and guidelines of the Office of the Gene Technology Regulator and the relevant Institutional Biosafety Committee
- **the use of ionising radiation:** must have the risks involved assessed by a recognised Ethics, Safety or Bio-Safety Committee, personnel must be trained and hold a current licence.

Permits

Projects must obtain all necessary permits before commencement, including but not limited to private land access, national and marine park and filming permits. Applicants are responsible for identifying and securing the required authorisations in compliance with relevant regulations. Evidence of permit approvals, or a clear plan for obtaining them, should be provided as part of the application where applicable.

All required permits and ethics must be evidenced before funds are released and no later than 1 October of the funding year. Failure to meet this deadline may result in the withdrawal of the funding offer.

First Nations

Applicants are encouraged to consult with, and consider collaborating with, Traditional Owners of the Country on which their project is proposed to occur. Details of any consultation should be included in the application document.

The [National Native Title Register](#) includes native title search functionality to help locate contact details for the Traditional Owners of the Country on which a project is located.

Sea World Foundation endorses the [AIATSIS Code of Ethics for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research](#) and encourages all researchers to read the [Guide to Applying the AIATSIS Code of Ethics](#) prior to planning their project.

Insurances

Applicants must be covered by at least the following insurance:

- public liability insurance of at least \$20 million
- workers compensation insurance as required under the Work Health and Safety Act 2011
- volunteer insurance coverage (if the project engages volunteers).

All required certificates of currency must be evidenced before the funding agreement can be executed.

Goods and services tax (GST)

Applicants will be provided with funding to account for costs directly related to GST and are required to exclude GST in the project budget. For advice on GST, please seek assistance from the [Australian Tax Office](#).

Public communication of science

As a public-facing institution, Sea World Foundation prioritises investment in projects that leverage both our platform and their own to share scientific knowledge, research, and findings in a way that is accessible, compelling, and easy to understand.

In support of this objective, grant recipients must supply the following as part of the Final Report:

- **professional photography:** at least 15 high-quality images documenting the research process
- **popular science article:** a 1,400-word article suitable for a general audience
- **guest speaker appearance:** participation by a lead investigator as a guest speaker at an in-person or virtual Sea World Foundation speaker series
- **co-license arrangement:** grant Sea World Foundation and its related entities a first-release, non-exclusive, and in-perpetuity license to publish the above communication materials.

To assist grant recipients in fulfilling these obligations, the following resources are available:

- **supplementary funding:** up to \$10,000 to engage a professional photographer and support logistics for photographic documentation
- **planning advice:** access to the [Planning Effective Marine Science Photography](#) webinar, which will be recorded and made available on the Sea World Foundation website

- **post-production services:** photographs must be submitted in raw format. If selected for publication, Sea World Foundation will handle post-production, and grantees will receive edited versions
- **co-licensing arrangement:** all communication assets created through the grant will remain the property of the host organisation.

Sea World Foundation acknowledges that engaging a professional photographer may be impractical for some projects, such as research conducted in remote field locations. In these cases, applicants are encouraged to contact the Grants Coordinator to discuss alternative solutions.

Applicants are encouraged to seek guidance from their institution's marketing and communications office when developing production and public science communication plans.

Application process

Applicants are required to submit their application and all supporting documentation in full by the submission deadline. All applications must be submitted using the [Sea World Foundation Grants Portal](#), the funder's online grants administration platform.

New users to Good Grants will need to set up a free online account. If you already have an account, you can log in using your existing details. The Good Grants [Help Guide for Applicants](#) explains the steps you need to take to complete and submit your application.

Deadlines for applying are strict. No extensions will be provided.

Assessment criteria

Projects will be ranked on the following assessment criteria:

1. Aims, significance and impact (20%)

This assessment criterion evaluates the extent to which the proposed project has the potential to catalyse conservation action.

2. Methods (20%)

This assessment criterion evaluates how well the proposed methodology demonstrates scientific rigor and comprehensiveness to ensure valid research outcomes.

3. Feasibility (20%)

This assessment criterion evaluates whether the project is achievable, well-planned, and can be executed effectively within the available constraints

4. Value for money (10%)

This assessment criterion evaluates the scale of the project and benefits relative to the funding sought.

5. Track record (10%)

This assessment criterion evaluates the project team's capability and capacity to manage and deliver the proposal successfully.

6. Public communication of science (20%)

This assessment criterion evaluates how well the project will utilise Sea World Foundation's and other platforms to enhance public interest and awareness in marine conservation.

Assessment process

All applications will undergo a competitive evaluation.

Eligible submissions will advance to an assessment panel consisting of both external and internal judges with relevant qualifications:

- **Assessment Criterion 1 -5:** will be externally evaluated by a minimum of three [Scientific Advisory Committee](#) judges, with a weighting of 80% applied.
- **Assessment Criterion 6:** will be internally evaluated by a minimum of two Sea World Foundation judges, with a weighting of 20% applied.

Where necessary, the assessment panel may consult additional external experts.

The final score for each project will be the average of the panel's evaluations. Funding will be awarded to the highest-scoring projects based on this assessment.

Conflict of interest declaration

To maintain transparency and fairness throughout the assessment process, applicants are required to disclose any actual or perceived conflicts of interest with members of the Scientific Advisory Committee.

Declaring a conflict of interest will not disadvantage an applicant; this information is collected to help determine the composition of the judging panel. However, failure to disclose a conflict of interest may result in the application being deemed ineligible or the withdrawal of awarded funding.

Funding announcement

All applicants will be advised of the outcome of their application in writing via email. Successful grants recipients will be published on the Sea World Foundation website.

Funding agreement

Sea World Foundation requires successful applicants to complete a funding agreement, including the supply of bank account details and evidence of relevant insurances.

You will have 60 days from the date of offer to execute this funding agreement. After which time it will expire.

Sea World Foundation will not be responsible for any expenditure incurred until the grant agreement has been executed by both parties.

Funding schedule

Funding will be released in a three-stage process, available from 1 July in the funding year:

- **stage 1:** project commencement (40%)
- **stage 2:** upon receipt of a satisfactory progress report (40%)
- **stage 3:** upon receipt of a satisfactory final report (20%)

Funding acknowledgement

All public statements relating to the project must acknowledge funding as per the program Acknowledgement Guidelines, which will be provided to successful grants recipients.

Reporting

Progress reports

All grant recipients will be required to report on project progress against agreed milestones and expenditure of grant funds. You must retain receipts and invoices until full project acquittal.

Sea World Foundation will monitor the progress of your project by assessing reports you submit and may conduct project audits to confirm details of your reports, if necessary. You must discuss any project milestone or reporting delays with us as soon as you become aware of them.

If Sea World Foundation is not satisfied with the progress of the project, further payment of funds may be withheld until satisfactory progress has been made against agreed milestones.

If satisfactory progress is not achieved within a reasonable period, the grant may be terminated, and unspent funds will be recovered.

Final report

All grant recipients will be required to complete and submit a final report and acquittal by 1 September in the completion year. The final report, if not submitted or not satisfactory, will also be considered an eligibility matter for future Sea World Foundation funding for the named participants on the project.

Further information

If you have questions relating to these guidelines or if you would like to discuss your application, please contact the Grants Coordinator by email at enquiry@seaworldfoundation.com.au.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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