



OCEAN STEWARDSHIP FUND – TRANSITION ASSISTANCE FUND (TAF)

GUIDANCE FOR APPLICANTS

Applications are welcome from all small-scale and Global South fisheries verified as improving towards MSC certification through the [In-Transition to MSC](#) (ITM) Program. The TAF is part of the MSC's [Ocean Stewardship Fund](#).

1) Aims of the TAF

- a) Increase the number of small-scale fisheries and fisheries in the Global South transitioning towards sustainable practices through the ITM Program.
- b) Incentivise fisheries in the ITM Program to continue to work towards MSC certification.
- c) Support the costs associated with implementing improvements identified in ITM fisheries' improvement action plans.

2) Who can apply?

- a) The TAF is open to all small-scale **and/or** Global South fisheries that are in the ITM Program.
- b) For first-time TAF applicants, the fishery should have undergone an independent verification demonstrating that it meets MSC's ITM entry requirements or has achieved sufficient progress in the ITM Program. For repeat TAF applicants, the fishery should have been verified independently as meeting the ITM progress requirements. Further information regarding the ITM Program and its eligibility requirements can be found in the [ITM Program brochure](#).
- c) All submissions must have a named individual (the ITM Project Manager) responsible for the project.
- d) **Projects linked to fisheries outside the ITM Program are not eligible for the TAF.**
- e) MSC employees, trustees, agents, current contractors, and relatives of employees or trustees are ineligible.
- f) Applicants must be able to accept the TAF Grant Agreement and OSF Privacy Policy, which can be found on the [TAF web page](#).

3) What is the ITM Program?

- a) The [ITM Program](#) provides an independent way of verifying the progress of Fishery Improvement Projects (FIPs) as they move toward MSC certification. Please consult this [guide](#) for more information on the ITM Program and what steps a fishery needs to take to become eligible.

4) What kind of projects will the TAF fund?

- a) Projects must be no longer than two years in duration and can include a range of activities, such as:
 - i) implementing improvements: implementing one or more actions linked to MSC Performance Indicators in the fishery improvement action plan of an ITM fishery; supporting the ITM Project Manager in managing and implementing the improvement action plan
 - ii) technical assistance: getting assistance from technical consultants or other experts needed for completing specific activities.

5) What should the project description include?

- a) All applicants are required to provide a full description of their project, which must be no more than five pages in length. This description must only focus on those activities that would be funded by the grant and include the following sections:
- b) **Project title**
Please provide a project title that conveys the main aims and focus of the project in a clear and succinct way. The title also needs to make sense in terms of the fishery improvement project that it is involved in.
- c) **Project summary**
Applicants must provide a brief overview of their project that summarises all the key elements: the introduction, aims and objectives, method, expected results and associated timelines. The project summary should be written in such a way that reviewers will be able to read it as it stands and understand the purpose of the project.
- d) **Introduction**
Please give brief details about the background and context of the project, the fishery or fisheries involved and the particular issues that the fishery(ies) face with respect to the MSC Standard and intends to address through this project.
- e) **Aims and objectives**
Please provide clear aims and objectives for the project. Ideally there would be one overall aim of the project that describes the broad change it is intended to create, along with several smaller aims that describe the changes desired in the short- and medium-term, which will indicate progress towards the overall aim. Important for TAF applications is that any objective should link to specific improvements that are aimed at achieving a score change for one or more MSC Performance Indicators as set out in the ITM Improvement Action Plan.
The objectives should outline the things that will be done to achieve the project aims. Each objective should be linked to one of the aims set out for the project.

f) **Method**

Please outline the activities, processes and methods proposed for implementation of the project. Applicants should consider the timescale in which the project must be completed and any fishing seasons relevant to the research.

g) **Expected results**

This section should indicate what results or outcomes applicants expect to achieve with their project and link this back to the project aims. The materials and methods used in the project must be able to generate the types of outcomes that will address the project aims.

h) **Timeline of proposed TAF-funded work**

Applicants should also provide a basic timeline that includes all the significant milestones of their project, from the planning stages through to completion. Overall, the project's duration should be no longer than two years. This timeline must be supported by a more detailed project time plan, attached to the application form (see "What must TAF applications include" for details).

i) **TAF grant report schedule**

In most cases, TAF Awardees will be expected to provide the MSC with at least one Interim Grant Report approximately midway through the project and a Final Grant Report at the end of the project (see "What happens if a TAF application is successful?"). Depending on the length and nature of the project, however, an alternative reporting schedule may be more appropriate, and so applicants are invited to propose their own grant report schedule here.

j) **Other activities in this project that would NOT be funded by this grant (optional)**

This section is optional and an opportunity for applicants to outline any activities taking place within the same project that would NOT be funded by the grant. This information will be used to aid MSC's understanding of the project as a whole.

6) What should be the project outcomes and outputs?

a) As part of their proposal, applicants are required to complete a table outlining all of the project outputs and outcomes that would be funded by the grant. There are two reasons for this: firstly, so that the reviewers are able to make an informed assessment regarding the feasibility of the project and its potential for impact; and secondly, to help applicants develop a monitoring and evaluation tool that they can then use if their application is successful. Within this table are the following elements:

b) **Activity number**

Put simply, this is just the number assigned by the applicant to a particular area of work within the project e.g. 1, 2, 3 or 1.1, 1.2 etc. Please use this number to refer to this part of the project throughout the application, including the project budget and Excel budget calculator.

c) **Action ID**

For each activity in the proposal, applicants must provide the Action ID from the fishery's Improvement Action Plan that is linked to the activity.

d) **Name of activity**

Applicants are also advised to provide a brief descriptor of their activity for reference in the rest of their proposal.

e) **MSC Performance Indicator(s)**

Applicants must state the Performance Indicator(s) of the MSC Fisheries Standard that the activity is linked to. This should correspond to the information in the ITM Improvement Action Plan.

f) **Outcome(s) (what will this activity achieve?)**

Outcomes are desired changes that will occur as a result of the activity. An outcome should be easy to understand and defined clearly as a single change e.g. improved performance against a performance indicator, reduced bycatch etc. Outcomes can also be derived by breaking down the project aims.

g) **Output(s) of this activity**

The project outcomes will be delivered through outputs. An output is essentially a product or service that is delivered within an objective e.g. meeting/workshop, new tool, information manual, data analysis etc. Outputs can be derived from the project objectives.

7) What does the TAF cover?

- a) The maximum funding available is £50,000 per TAF application.
- b) Fisheries can receive a maximum of two grants throughout their involvement in the ITM Program.
- c) The scope of activities that can be funded by TAF include the following:
 - i) cost of retaining the services of a Technical Consultant (or ITM Project Manager) to mentor the fishery or support improvements
 - ii) fishery improvement action costs e.g. data collection, implementing a new assessment tool, meetings/workshops, hire of essential equipment
 - iii) essential fixed asset costs (up to £2,500 of the total grant request to cover essential assets such as a computer, software etc.)
 - iv) CAB progress verification costs (but NOT any costs associated with entry into ITM or MSC certification)
 - v) Improvement activities that relate to addressing traceability risks within the fishery may be considered for funding if these are captured in the relevant section of the Improvement Action Plan, but ONLY for ITM fisheries that are applying for a second TAF grant.
- d) MSC's Indirect Cost Recovery Rate for TAF grants is 5%; up to 5% of TAF grants can be recovered by grantees to support their overhead costs.

8) How will the funding be disbursed?

- a) The Grant Agreement contract will define the grant disbursement schedule and triggers required (i.e. interim reports) to release stage payments.
- b) The grant disbursement schedule in the Grant Agreement will be informed by the Budget provided in the Application Form (the expected spend by reporting period). MSC will retain a minimum of 10% of the total grant for disbursement at the end of the project, upon receipt of a satisfactory Final Grant Report.

9) What must TAF applications include?

- a) **A completed application form (which can be downloaded from the TAF web page)**
- b) **Excel grant budget calculator (which can be downloaded from the TAF web page)**
- c) **CV of the ITM Project Manager**
- d) **Detailed project time plan**

Applicants must provide a separate time plan for their project, which outlines all the activities in detail and when each activity will be carried out in the two-year grant period. The time plan must also include any significant milestones and the grant report schedule. It should further indicate how much of the project will be completed in the first year of the grant versus how much will be completed in the second year.
- e) **Copy of latest audited accounts**

Applicants must provide a copy of their organisation's latest audited accounts, which should include a statement from an independent auditor regarding their view of the organisation's assets, liabilities, financial position and internal controls.
- f) **Proof of legal status of organisation**

Applicants must provide evidence of the legal status of their organisation to ensure it has the capacity to enter into a legally binding grant agreement. This could be a letter of the organisation's legal registration with the relevant Government or a copy of an official document attesting that the organisation is a recognised University or has a main objective to carry out research.
- g) **Details of organisation's Board members/management team and length of service**

Applicants must provide the names, positions and length of service of all the executive and non-executive members of the organisation's Board.
- h) **Letter of endorsement from a previous or current funder (if applicable)**

If the applicant has received grant funding before, they are welcome to submit a signed and headed letter of endorsement from the funder outlining their views of the applicant and their previous performance.

- i) If applicants are unable to provide any of the documents in e-h above, they can attach a statement explaining why and provide alternative information to evidence the financial stability of their application.
- j) Completed applications must be submitted in English to OSF@msc.org.

10) How are applications assessed?

- a) All TAF applications are assessed using standardised appraisal criteria by the MSC review panel. The decision of the MSC's Executive Committee in respect of making TAF grant awards is final. To ensure the best quality review of applications, the MSC's assessments remain confidential.
- b) Applications will be assessed on:
 - i) clarity of outcomes
 - ii) project outcome(s) linked to specific MSC Performance Indicator(s)
 - iii) project feasibility
 - iv) ITM Project Manager credentials
 - v) project activity leads and contributors
 - vi) evidence of matched funding and/or in-kind support
 - vii) project impact
 - viii) financial risk assessment.

11) What happens if a TAF application is successful?

- a) Successful TAF applicants will be notified in March 2022 and will be required to enter into a Grant Agreement contract, which will set out the terms and conditions of the grant awarded. The Grant Agreement will define the grant disbursement schedule and triggers required (i.e. interim reports) to release stage payments. A copy of the TAF Grant Agreement can be found on the [TAF web page](#).
- b) In most cases, TAF Awardees will be expected to provide:
 - i) at least one narrative/financial interim report approximately midway through the project including performance against agreed Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)
 - ii) a final narrative/financial report at the end of the project including performance against agreed KPIs, summary of expenditure and any supporting communication assets such as images, videos etc.
- c) TAF Awardees will also be expected to:
 - i) share the outcomes of their project with a wider audience and keep MSC informed of their plans so that MSC can help maximise the reach of the research.
 - ii) provide the MSC with timely contributions towards any Q&A, blog or social media posts relating to their project or the TAF as a whole.
- d) Depending on the length and nature of the project, alternative reporting schedules may be agreed and included in the Grant Agreement.

12) Dissemination of personal data

- a) TAF applicants are strongly advised to read the OSF Privacy Policy (which can be found on the [TAF web page](#)) before submitting their application.



- b) All applications will be stored on MSC's secure servers and internally reviewed to help MSC make a decision. If an application is successful, details concerning the Award, including the Awardee's name, may be made publicly available on the MSC's website and other media outlets, e.g. annual report, a press release.
- c) The MSC may also use this information to contact Awardees about potential communications opportunities to help promote their project. This will include:
 - i) actively promoting the project to the media, seeking opportunities for journalists to interview the Awardee that could involve sharing their contact details with them once additional written permission is gained from the Awardee by email
 - ii) actively approaching the Awardee for additional videos, photographs or updates around their project for MSC's communications channels, on the website, through emails, newsletters, social media and in press releases or other marketing activities in relation to the Awardee's project that promote the MSC and/or the OSF.
- d) Awardees have the right to obtain a copy of their personal data that MSC holds, and to require MSC to correct errors in the personal data if it is inaccurate or incomplete. They also have the right at any time to require that MSC deletes their personal data. To exercise these rights, or any other rights under applicable laws, please contact OSF@msc.org.

13) Further questions

- a) Please email any further questions to OSF@msc.org.