



# OCEAN STEWARDSHIP FUND – TRANSITION ASSISTANCE FUND (TAF)

## GUIDANCE FOR APPLICANTS

Applications are welcome from all fisheries in developing economies that are verified as improving towards MSC certification through the [In-Transition to MSC](#) (ITM) Program. The Transition Assistance Fund (TAF) aims to support the costs associated with implementing improvements identified in ITM fisheries' improvement action plans. The TAF is part of the MSC's [Ocean Stewardship Fund](#).

### 1) Who can apply?

- a) The TAF is open to fisheries in developing economies and small-scale fisheries that are in the ITM Program. Fisheries in developing economies will be defined by the [United Nations Stat M49 Standard](#) for classifying countries according to their economic status.
- b) Each ITM fishery can only submit one application for consideration. If the fishery is applying for a second TAF grant, the term of the first TAF grant must have concluded by the time of application. For example, if the first TAF grant finishes before December 2022, the fishery will be eligible to apply in this TAF funding round.
- c) 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](#).
- d) All submissions must have a named individual (the ITM Project Manager) responsible for the project.
- e) **Projects linked to fisheries outside the ITM Program are not eligible for the TAF.**
- f) MSC employees, trustees, agents, current contractors, and relatives of employees or trustees are ineligible.
- g) Applicants must be able to accept the TAF Grant Agreement and OSF Privacy Policy, which can be found on the [TAF web page](#).

## 2) 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.

## 3) 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, including assistance with traceability or MSC Chain of Custody (CoC) Standard compliance if specified in the fishery's improvement action plan.

## 4) 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 if these are captured in the relevant section of the Improvement Action Plan.
- 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.

## 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 include the name of the fishery involved in the project as well as the title of any fishery improvement project of which the TAF project forms part.

c) **Project summary**

Applicants must provide a brief overview of their project that summarises all the key elements: the introduction, aim, 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) **Aim of the project**

Please provide one clear aim for the project that describes the broad change it is intended to create. Applicants will be required to provide more detail on the outputs and outcomes of the project that will demonstrate how the project has achieved this aim in Section E of the Application Form (see Section 6 of the Application Guidance for more details).

f) **Method**

Please describe in detail the activities, processes and methods proposed for implementation of the project. For each activity, the method must describe the materials and equipment that would be used, how/when/where they would be used, the measurements and statistical analysis that would be carried out and who would be carrying out each element of the work. Applicants should also explain why they have selected the approach and techniques they are proposing (citing supporting publications where applicable) and explain how their method will help the project meet its aim. Applicants should explain how their method is appropriate for the specific fishery (or fisheries) involved e.g., if the method is suited to the scale of the fishery. Applicants should further 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 aim. The materials and methods used in the project must be able to generate the types of outcome that will address the project aim.

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 Section 7 “What must TAF applications include” for details).

i) **Timing of Interim Grant Report**

TAF Awardees are 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 Section 9 “What happens if a TAF application is successful?”). Applicants are invited to propose a timing for the Interim Grant Report that would suit the project plan.

j) **Other activities in this project that would NOT be funded by this TAF 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 TAF grant. This information will be used to aid MSC’s understanding of the project as a whole.

## 6) What should be the project outputs and outcomes?

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

Each activity should have at least one output that will be delivered by the activity. Outputs are essentially products or services such as a meeting, workshop, new tool, information manual, data analysis etc.

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

Each output will deliver outcomes for the project. Outcomes are desired changes that will occur in the short and medium term as a result of the outputs achieved and these individual changes will indicate progress towards the overall aim of the project. 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.

## 7) What must TAF applications include?

a) Completed applications must be submitted in English to [OSF@msc.org](mailto:OSF@msc.org) and include:

i) **A completed Application Form (which can be downloaded from the TAF web page)**

ii) **A signed Declarations Form (which can be downloaded from the TAF web page)**

iii) **Excel Grant Budget Calculator (which can be downloaded from the TAF web page)**

iv) **CV of the ITM Project Manager**

v) **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.

vi) **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.

b) The following documents may be submitted in the applicant's language of origin if they are not available in English:

i) **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.

ii) **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.

iii) **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.

- c) If applicants are unable to provide any of the documents in 7b above, they can attach a statement explaining why and provide alternative information to evidence the financial stability of their application.

## 8) 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. The MSC reserves the right to request modifications to applications, in consultation with applicants, before reaching a decision regarding whether to fund an application. To ensure the best quality review of applications, the MSC's assessments remain confidential.
- b) Applications will be assessed on a range of criteria including:
- i) clarity of outcomes
  - ii) project outcome(s) linked to specific MSC Performance Indicator(s)
  - iii) project impact
  - iv) project feasibility
  - v) ITM Project Manager credentials
  - vi) project activity leads and contributors
  - vii) evidence of matched funding and/or in-kind support
  - viii) financial risk assessment.

## 9) What happens if a TAF application is successful?

- a) Successful TAF applicants will be notified in March 2023 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 and final reports) to release stage payments. A copy of the TAF Grant Agreement can be found on the [TAF web page](#).
- b) 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) – essentially the outputs and outcomes outlined in the Application Form
  - 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 for such communication 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.

## 10) How will the funding be disbursed?

- a) The Grant Agreement contract will define the grant disbursement schedule and triggers required (i.e., interim and final reports) to release stage payments.
- b) The grant disbursement schedule in the Grant Agreement will be informed by the Budget provided in the Excel Grant Budget Calculator.
- c) Grant payments will be issued in three stages:
  - i) Upon signing of the Grant Agreement
  - ii) Upon satisfactory receipt of the Interim Grant Report
  - iii) Upon satisfactory receipt of the Final Grant Report
- d) 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.

## 11) 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) Applicants 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](mailto:OSF@msc.org).

## 12) Further questions

- a) Please email any further questions to [OSF@msc.org](mailto:OSF@msc.org).