



Sea-Changers Innovation Fund 2024/25 - Guidelines for Applicants

1. About this fund

Sea-Changers first set-up their Innovation Fund in 2021 because the seas remain in crisis. Climate change, pollution, over-fishing and the decline of key marine species are all affecting the UK's coast and seas. We need to encourage, support and accelerate possible solutions to these issues. New ideas and solutions need to be supported. This is the third time we have run the fund and in previous years we've funded innovative approaches including:

- new microplastic surveying techniques
- marine mammal surveys using thermal imaging, drones and AI image analysis
- testing new ways of reducing commercial fishery bycatch
- use of AI models to interpret data on estuary contaminants.

2. Overview

The aim of the Innovation Fund is simply ***“To support innovative marine conservation approaches and solutions.”***

This includes any innovation that may:

1. **Address the root causes** of marine conservation threats and challenges in the UK.
2. **Prevent or reduce negative impacts** on UK coastal and marine environments and/or species.
3. **Add to the body of knowledge** about marine conservation threats and challenges in the UK and ways to overcome them.

What are we looking for?

Sea-Changers welcomes applications for innovative approaches to all kinds of marine conservation challenges:

Supporting innovation in:

Research



For example:

- Innovative citizen-science projects.
- New ways to measure and monitor marine environmental issues.

Direct Action



For example:

- Innovative approaches to habitat restoration.
- New solutions to cleaning up polluted habitats.

Species Protection



For example:

- Projects that support, replenish, or protect threatened marine species in new ways.

Education /Community engagement



For example:

- Projects that educate and involve people, businesses and / or communities in marine conservation in ways that are previously untested.

Your project could be in the very early stages - e.g., developing a **prototype or model**. It could be that your idea is developed, but it needs **piloting in to gather evidence** of its efficacy. It could also be an idea that, whilst tested other parts of the world, is a **new solution for the UK marine environment** and needs to be tested here.

We want to ensure that there is learning from both project successes and failures and will therefore ask all grant applicants to explain how the success or failure of the project being applied for will be judged and measured.

3. Grant award sizes and budgets

We will review all applications and we may award one or two large grants of around £10k or several smaller ones depending on the quality and range of applications. Higher awards in the region of £10k will need to be exceptionally compelling to be successful, since it is likely that our trustees will prefer to spread the risk among a number of projects.

You can, if you want, submit differing budget scenarios, showing what could be achieved with grants of different sizes under the programme. The form encourages you to do this and below is an example of what an application budget might look like from a project wishing to undertake some innovative research which requires funding for boat hire and purchasing of equipment and software. They are applying for three possible amounts.

The extra value / better outcomes that will be gained for the larger amounts applied for would need also to be explained in the application.

Item	Higher budget scenario (max £10k)	Mid budget scenario	Minimum budget
Boat hire (@£200 per day) <i>(boat provider to be named)</i> ¹	£4000 - 20 days	£3,000 - 15 days	£2,200 - 12 days
Underwater hardware - e.g. cameras, lights, sensors, hydrophones <i>(cost per item should be listed)</i> ¹	£4,000 - 4 locations	£3,000 - 3 locations	£2,000 - 3 locations (no hydrophones)
Purchase of off the shelf software for data processing <i>(specific software and pricing to be shown)</i> ¹	£870	£870	£870
Total	£8,870	£6,870	£5,070

In-kind support

ARC Marine Ltd. one of the Innovation Fund funders is also able to offer **in-kind support** to successful applicants where relevant.

They can support turning some ideas into prototypes, for example, they have 3D printers, engineering software, Life Cycle Assessment programs for product development, and a team of staff with expertise in science and engineering who, depending on the nature of your application, may be able to offer support.

ARC Marine also have 2 vessels, one with a fishing licence and one light work boat that could be made available for installing devices etc.

If you feel that any of your project costs could be met by ARC Marine's support, then you can indicate this on your application. If you are unsure and would potentially like to factor their support into your application, please get in touch with us and we will arrange for a discussion directly with the ARC Marine team.

4. Who can apply?

Sea-Changers welcomes applications from a wide range of UK based organisations including:

- companies, including CICs
- charities and trusts
- universities or students² who are carrying out marine conservation related activities
- schools
- constituted community groups

¹ Please itemise and justify your costs in detail.

² Students should note that the grant award will need to be paid to your University / Education Institution, we cannot make personal payments to private individuals.

5. Evaluation criteria

Innovation Fund applications will be judged against the following criteria:

Degree of innovation and creativity

- How well has the applicant evidenced the innovative nature of their project?
- Is there clear evidence that the approach has not been tried before?

Potential for impact on coastal and marine environments and / or species.

- How well does the application explain the potential/expected/hoped for impact on the coastal and marine environment and/or species and how significant is this impact?
- How well does the application explain how the success or failure of the proposed innovation will be judged and evaluated?
- How will learning be shared to maximise the potential benefits of the innovation?

Value for money

- How well justified are the sums proposed?
- Is the applicant's budget clear and detailed?
- Is the project good value for money?
- How likely is this to act as a 'seed' for larger/wider scale replication?

Deliverability and Scalability

- Does the project have a comprehensive budget that details all areas of expenditure including where any additional funding costs will be met?
- Is the application convincing in terms of deliverability? Does it outline clear milestones and timescales?
- If the innovation is a success, do applicants have plans for a bigger roll out? What are the plans and how viable do they appear? (have they identified possible funds/commercial potential?)

6. What don't we fund?

We don't fund:

- Applications solely to fund administrative or core operating costs.
- Projects that have a political aim.
- Retrospective projects or funding requests.
- Individuals or causes that will benefit only one person.

7. The application and evaluation process

Applying

- Download and complete the Innovation Fund Application Form from Sea-Changers' website.
- Ensure you read through the guidelines above and that your application meets the outlined criteria.
- Part of our funding is restricted to projects based in Scotland. It is therefore important that you indicate, when asked within the form, the location of your organisation and / or project.

- Please complete and return the application form by email to info@sea-changers.org.uk

The timescales for the Innovation Fund 2024/25 are as follows:

- **Deadline** for receipt of applications - **midnight on Friday 28th February 2025.**
- Decisions, announcement of outcomes and payments made - end April 2025.
- Implementation - we expect projects to take from 6 to 12 months. If your project will take longer than that, we will ask for an interim evaluation approximately 12 months after the grant is awarded.

8. Evaluation

All successful applicants will be asked to provide data and feedback on the outcomes achieved through the funding received, as a condition of receiving a grant.

We will send an evaluation form for you to complete but we would also ask that you consider in your application how you will evaluate your project at all stages of implementation.