PHYTOPLANKTON CARBON SOLUTIONS PROGRAM

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Last updated: October 30, 2026

This FAQ document is intended to provide prospective applicants with additional information about the program and its funding opportunities. It addresses common questions related to proposal requirements, project scope, funding, and the application process. Applicants should also review the relevant Request for Proposal (RFP) and application materials, as those documents contain the official requirements and guidance for each funding opportunity.

If you have additional questions that are not addressed in this FAQ, please submit them to oceanspcs@edf.org. We review questions on an ongoing basis and update this FAQ regularly as new questions arise. We encourage applicants to check back periodically for the latest information.

General (RFP process)

1. **Where can I find PCS funding opportunity documents, including Letters of Intent (LOIs) and Requests for Proposals (RFPs)?**

   Answer: All information and materials related to the PCS funding opportunities, including RFPs, LOIs, application templates, and program updates, are available on EDF's PCS funding webpage: https://www.edf.org/edfpcsprogram

   We encourage applicants to check the webpage regularly, as new information, resources, and updates may be posted throughout the application process. If you have any questions, please send them to oceanspcs@edf.org.

2. **RFP #1 deadline is October 12th, 2026 - will it be the same for the other RFPs?**

   Answer: The Letter of Intent (LOI) for RFP #1 is due Monday, October 12, 2026, at 11:59 p.m. ET. Applicants invited to submit a full proposal will be notified of the RFP #1 proposal deadline.

   Deadlines for other RFPs may vary. Please visit the PCS funding webpage for the most current information on application timelines and key dates.

Project Scope

3. **Do you anticipate funding only one award, or would you also consider smaller scope proposals that advance some, but not all, of the three stated objectives? Example: A proposed project contributes to objective 1 and parts of objective 3.**

   Answer: For RFP#1, our intention is to fund one project that addresses all of the stated objectives. However, if you feel that your work speaks to a particular aspect of the stated objectives, please feel free to submit an LOI, flagging where you would need to bring in additional

expertise or dimensions. We will be reviewing these submissions to see if there are ways to bring together different research strengths, which could entail a suggestion to consider partnering with another team based on their submission to the LOI and their strengths and focal areas.

4. **Is it necessary to have collaborators from different geographical locations? Would it be viewed negatively if the consortium consisted of partners from only one center or country?**

   Answer: We are looking for a diversity of perspectives and geographies so we will be looking at diversity as a specific criteria in the evaluation process. As noted in **RFP #1: Characterization of Critical Uncertainties for Ocean Iron Fertilization:** "*The project team will be evaluated based on the collective expertise, collaborative approach, and demonstrated ability to execute the proposed work. Team structure will also be considered, including the extent of international collaborations, career stage diversity, early career researchers in substantive rather than nominal roles, and representation of and beyond the established marine CDR research community*."

5. **Will RFP #4 have the same geographic focus (Southern Ocean + subtropical) as RFP #1?**

   Answer: The Southern Ocean and subtropical regions are primary regions of interest for the PCS Program given the theoretical effectiveness of OIF in those regions and their contrasting environmental, biogeochemical, and social contexts. Given this, these two regions remain geographic focus areas for RFP #4. However, proposals addressing other geographies, or a combination of these and other geographies, are also welcome and will be considered. LOIs and proposals submitted to RFP #4 should clearly articulate why and how research conducted in the proposed geographies align with the objectives and scope of the RFP, and how they will contribute to advancing the program's research goals and decision making within the stage gate structure.

6. **Can a person be a Principal Investigator (PI) on multiple RFP calls (#1-4)?**

   Answer: We require the designation of a Financial Lead who is the person responsible for financial and grants management for the project as a whole and acts as the lead reporting entity on finances and grant management to EDF. We also require the designation of a Lead PI who is responsible for the overall success of the project, bringing together distinct workstreams and technical aspects of the work to achieve overall objectives of the project. The Lead PI will act as the point for EDF for the scientific and technical aspects of the project. The Financial Lead and Lead PI could be the same for the project, but it is not required.

   Full proposals will require a description of the proposed leadership structure, beyond the designation of the Financial Lead and Lead PI. For example, the Lead PI may choose to share leadership across various work streams within a project among multiple co-PIs. The definition of these roles is for operational clarity but not meant to impose a particular structure for the day-to-day functioning of the team. Applicants applying to multiple RFPs may serve in the Lead PI role in only one proposal but can be a PI on multiple submissions.

7. **What types of institutions (e.g., academic, government, nonprofit) are eligible to lead a proposal?**

   Answer: Eligible lead institutions include academic institutions, research organizations, and nonprofit organizations. Teams may include members affiliated with non-research institutions (e.g., consulting, marine industry). However, funds may not be used to support commercial PCS activities or activities tied to carbon credit transactions.

8. **Is team composition fixed after the LOI stage or can composition evolve?**

   Answer: Team composition may evolve throughout the LOI and proposal submission stage. Acknowledging that developing partnership takes time, we expect team information submitted during the LOI stage to be an initial idea, and that teams will evolve as a result of further discussion and feedback from PCS leadership for LOIs that are invited to progress to the full proposal stage. Team composition may evolve for successful proposals, but plans for changes will need to be submitted to EDF for review with appropriate justification.

9. **I have an idea that addresses a component of RFP #1, but may also be a fit in the other RFPs. Do you accept LOIs that address only some of the objectives of RFP #1? Should I submit to RFP #1? Or wait for other opportunities?**

   Answer: There is a close relationship and overlap between certain aspects of each RFP, with the vision of the program being that all funded team function as one Consortium to address program objectives. For RFP #1, we expect the funded team to carry out all objectives listed in the RFP, which includes developing an uncertainty framework, developing deployment scenarios, and other listed objectives. In practice this would mean that a given team is likely composed of individuals that focus their expertise on a given objective but collaborate on achieving the overarching objectives of the entire project. The objectives for RFP #2, and for RFP #3, will be less prescriptive, and we expect teams to submit more focused initiatives compared to the broader and more prescriptive RFP#1. For RFP #1, if your project only addresses a subset of the objectives, we encourage you to explore how additional capacity brought though collaboration on a joint submission could allow you to address all objectives in RFP #1 and otherwise build strong project proposals for other RFPs.

   In submitting an LOI to RFP #1, you will need to ensure that your idea and the team's capacity align with the stated objectives. In reviewing the LOIs we will assess strengths and weakness of the proposed project along defined criteria and provide feedback on opportunities for a given project to be strengthened through collaboration or addition of team members/expertise/capacity.

10. **The RFP encourages broad participation in the research and mentions criteria by which team composition will be judged. How should project teams think about balancing budgetary and other constraints and these requirements?**

    Answer: Teams should think broadly about pathways for bringing in appropriate perspectives to their proposed projects to ensure that the methods employed and resulting products are robust and can stand scrutiny of broad audiences. Approaches to achieve this goal will

include having key expertise and perspectives represented on the team but also employing other approaches as part of the research to reach a broader swath of people via other participatory processes (e.g., expert elicitations).

11. **Are inclusion of sedimentary records within scope for RFP #3?**

    Answer: Paleoceanographic research is within scope for RFP #3. This RFP aims to fund interdisciplinary research that address critical aspects of biological carbon pump research to inform the assessment of and decision making on PCS. We expect all proposal teams to provide a robust narrative detailing the importance of proposed research, how it will contribute to RFP objectives, and how different aspects of the proposed research will together contribute to proposal aims, including in this case the proposed sediment analyses.

Financial

12. **Can tuition costs for students be included in the proposal budget?**

    Answer: Tuition costs for undergraduate and postgraduate students may not be included as allowable expenses in proposal budgets for any of the RFPs. However, PCS is open to supporting other direct costs associated with student involvement in proposed projects. This may include, for example, research stipends, fieldwork and travel expenses, materials and supplies, publication fees, and other project-related costs that directly support the proposed research.

13. **For RFPs #1 and #3, are listed budgets the total budgets for all awards or the anticipated budget per award?**

    Answer: The amount listed for each RFP represents the maximum funding available under that opportunity. The number of awards will vary by RFP (see the individual RFP documents for details) and will be determined by EDF following proposal review. For example, RFP #1 is expected to fund one project with up to $1.3 million. For RFPs that support multiple awards, the combined value of all awards will not exceed the maximum funding amount listed for that RFP.

14. **Are non-US institutions eligible to apply for this funding? For example: Is a UK university eligible to submit a proposal as the lead institution, and can a researcher based at such an institution serve as the lead PI/project lead?**

    Answer: We are open to receiving proposals from non-US institutions. Investigators from non-US institutions may serve as PI and be designated as a lead in the team's leadership structure.

15. **Can funds be awarded directly to non-US institutions, and/or are there any restrictions on the proportion of project funding that may be allocated to non-US partners.**

Answer: Funds can be awarded directly to non-US institutions, pending completion of EDF compliance review and vendor setup. There are no restrictions on the proportion of project funding allocated among partners in the project team. EDF requests detailed information about partners. However, funds may not be used to support commercial PCS activities or activities tied to carbon credit transactions.

16. **I have previously received funding from both federal sources and philanthropic sources, such as private foundations, and my university has different pathways for handling funding from these different sources. What will funding distribution look like for the PCS Program?**

Answer: Funding distribution and associated requirements (e.g., reporting) will be most aligned with philanthropy.

17. **How is the indirect rate calculated?**

Answer: The indirect costs are calculated as a % of the direct project costs (personnel and non-personnel project costs). So, if you have $100 in direct project costs, you could include up to $15 (15%) in indirect costs, bringing the total proposal budget to $115.

Indirect costs need to fit within EDF's overall funding limit. For RFP #1, for example, your total proposal budget (which would include direct project costs and indirect costs combined) cannot exceed the $1.3 million maximum funding amount.