

# Theme Partnership Program (TPP) - 2021 Competition Guide for Applicants

The [PICS Theme Partnership Program \(TPP\)](#) supports the development of climate solutions that address complex problems through long term research partnerships. The TPP has three key objectives:

1. To facilitate the development and implementation of highly impactful climate change adaptation and mitigation solutions that are actively used. The TPP funds research that is co-designed and co-produced by interdisciplinary teams of researchers working with knowledge users that we at PICS call Solution Seekers. Solution Seekers—who may be based in the private sector, government, First Nations, civil society or non-governmental organizations—play a key role in identifying and framing the problem, developing solutions, and ultimately implementing the results.
2. To establish durable long-term partnerships that will exist beyond the project and build capacity for advancing research, knowledge mobilization and implementation to solve climate change problems now and in the future.
3. To build and strengthen international leadership in the BC research community around climate change solutions in key thematic areas.

Meeting these objectives will both address near-term knowledge needs in key areas and build the capacity to generate adaptation and mitigation solutions in British Columbia and beyond.

The PICS Theme Partnership Program is an initiative under the PICS Research Engagement Program.

## PICS Collaborative Research Model

The Theme Partnership Program provides support to active partnerships between academic researchers and Solution Seekers to mobilize mutual learning for solution co-development. Teams comprising two or more researchers from diverse disciplines alongside Solution Seekers with complementary research and implementation skills are strongly encouraged. The PICS collaborative model relies on three kinds of contributing partners to co-design, co-develop and co-deliver the project:

- **Research Partners** bring theoretical knowledge and experience, research skills and academic excellence to the project to help generate and transform novel ideas to produce new knowledge and social, technical and institutional innovations.
- **Solution Seekers** bring practical, domain knowledge and experience. They play a key role in identifying and framing the problem, developing solutions that are not only useful but used, and supporting the implementation of results, helping to translate theory to action. Solutions Seekers may be based in the private sector, government, First Nations, civil society or non-governmental organizations.



- **The PICS Partner** is a convener, knowledge broker and active project partner that works to ensure that the project is innovative and impactful from project onset to completion. PICS provides financial, engagement and communication support aimed at bridge-building between engaged research and evidence-based practice through the proposal development stage, at the onset of the project, and throughout the project to overall completion.

### Eligible Activities and Recipients

The Theme Partnership Program requires the definition of anticipated research impact and complementary non-research activities that will lead to solution implementation. Project implementation activities should begin during the funding period and continue after the completion of the research funding term.

Proposals must show the research to be world-leading and of importance to British Columbia in developing climate change solutions and clearly articulate how climate change solution capacity will be increased through the conduct of the proposed work. Project proposals are not limited to any particular field of mitigation or adaptation.

Applications must be submitted by the project team's Principle Investigator (PI) who is a fulltime faculty member at one of the four PICS partner universities: Simon Fraser University, the University of Victoria, the University of Northern British Columbia or the University of British Columbia. In exceptional cases, PICS may consider project proposals in which the PI may have a different affiliation. In all cases significant participation of faculty from at least one of the four PICS supported universities is required, and participation of faculty from more than one PICS university is encouraged. Projects can include national and international collaboration. Solution seeking partners must have a major role in problem identification, project framing, delivery and use of results.

Occasionally, a solution seeker interested in forming a research partnership may not have an existing relationship with a researcher. Conversely, researchers proposing very early stage, ground-breaking projects may be looking for complementary climate solution seeking partners. In such cases, proponents of the project are encouraged to contact PICS before submitting an application to obtain assistance with forming partnerships and/or guidance on the requirement for partnerships.

Projects will be funded to a maximum of \$250,000 per year, per project for up to four years. At least 50 percent of project funding must be spent to support graduate students or post-doctoral fellows' salaries at PICS partner universities. In addition, and extra to this budget amount, PICS will hire a "Researcher in Residence" for each funded Theme Partnership to engage in synthesis research, assist with boundary spanning and partner engagement, and support the overall management of the project. Matching funding from project partners is not a requirement, but demonstration of leveraging PICS funding to secure additional funds and resources is encouraged.

Any Intellectual Property (IP) created from the projects will be managed in accordance with the IP policy of the universities involved. Further, proposals should envision the utilization of research results for widespread benefit in BC, Canada and internationally. PICS expects the publication of research results to be in open literature and encourages researchers to explore high quality open-access



publication options. Notwithstanding, productive partnerships recognize the unique contribution brought by each partner while protecting the IP assets of all participants. Proposed research activities should align with the IP policies of the academic institutions and/or research agreements in place, and participants are expected to identify, disclose, and address any potential conflicts as early as possible.

PICS will maintain a continually renewing portfolio of three to four Theme Partnership Program projects. PICS aims to develop a portfolio of research activities that has a diversity of research topics, implementation timeframes, the geographic locations of intended impacts within BC, and PICS universities' involvement.

One Theme Partnership Program project will be awarded through this 2021 competition. Subsequent award competitions will be held approximately every 18 months.

## Application Process

Given the complex nature of the themes expected to be supported and that only one award will be made under this program, applications will be made using a two-tier process consisting of an open call for letters of intent (LOI) followed by an invitation only full proposal application for the most promising Theme Partnership Program LOIs received.

### Open Call Letter of Intent

A Letter of Intent (LOI) (maximum three pages) for a Theme Partnership project should be developed jointly by the proposed theme partners (researchers and solution seekers) using the guidelines in Appendix A. LOIs must be submitted by email to [picstheme@uvic.ca](mailto:picstheme@uvic.ca) before **November 15<sup>th</sup>, 2021 (11:59 p.m. PST)**. Applicants are encouraged to contact PICS staff through [picstheme@uvic.ca](mailto:picstheme@uvic.ca) to discuss their project intention before submitting a LOI. PICS staff may provide some guidance at that time to increase alignment of the LOI with the goals of the Theme Partnership program. Three to four LOIs will be chosen for advancement to full proposal stage based on PICS selection criteria and a consideration of the diversity in PICS' research portfolio. Notification of LOI adjudication decisions is anticipated by **mid-December 2021**.

### Full Proposal

Successful LOI applicants will be invited by PICS to complete a full proposal prepared according to the guidelines in Appendix A. Full proposals must be submitted as a single PDF by email to [picstheme@uvic.ca](mailto:picstheme@uvic.ca) before **March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2022 (11:59 PST)**.

Applicants chosen for development of a full proposal will be encouraged to conduct at least one "strengthening workshop" before full proposal submission. Through this proposal strengthening workshop they will further define the proposed research, invite other potential partners and researchers to contribute their ideas, and ideally, expand the scope of the partnerships and/or strength of the full proposal. Staff time, organizational support and some offsetting costs (to a limited budget) for workshops and proposal preparation will be contributed by PICS to all LOI applicants selected for full proposal development.



Notification of adjudication decisions is anticipated by August 2022. One award will be made. Awardees will be required to adhere to PICS terms of reference for research engagement as described in Appendix B.

## **Evaluation**

LOIs will be evaluated for alignment with PICS overall program objectives by PICS staff and possibly domain experts. Promising LOIs will be invited to enter into full proposal development stage as outlined above.

Full proposals will be subject to external review by nationally and internationally recognized domain experts in both the academic and solutions seeking communities. The external reviews are meant to ensure the targeted solutions are of high importance and research excellence is achievable.

The PICS Executive Director will make the final selection in consultation with the Associate Director and additional expert input, as needed. Selection will consider the external reviews, PICS selection criteria, available budget envelope for a given year, and diversity of the PICS portfolio.

Proposals will be evaluated on the following three areas with equal weight given to each:

### **1. Relevance of the proposed project to meaningful climate change solutions:**

- The proposal has potential to achieve high impact solutions for effective adaptation to climate change and/or net GHG emissions reductions in BC and beyond.
- The project demonstrates the need for original research to address the specific climate change adaptation and/or mitigation problem and contributes to its solution.
- The proposed solution and research approach are demonstrably original.
- The proposal identifies the main intended outcome(s) and longer-term impacts and explains the means by which the project will contribute to and track their realization.

### **2. Credibility of the research component of the proposed project:**

- The solution seeker partners have had a major role in problem identification and framing, and demonstrate a clear need for the research results.
- The research problem, research question, objectives and supporting activities are clearly defined and logically defended.
- Research methods and team are well-suited and qualified to answer the research questions and achieve the objectives.

- The proposal reflects critical understanding of relevant theory and experience from a variety of perspectives and contributes to the knowledge base in the relevant domain.
- Actual, perceived, and potential bias and limitations in the research are clearly stated and accounted for.
- Plans for project collaboration clearly outline all partners' roles and contributions in defining the research problem, co-designing, co-producing, and implementing the research results.
- Wider user engagement, knowledge translation and implementation plans are adequately described.
- Budget is realistic and other resources are sufficient to make the proposed work successful.

### **3. Effectiveness of proposed project:**

- The project plan includes strong, specific actions to engage with intended users beyond the project team and to position the research results for use.
- The proposal anticipates and appropriately takes account of stakeholder and other perspectives, values, and contexts.
- Indicators and methods for monitoring progress during the project and for assessing outcomes during and afterwards are proposed.
- The role of each partner and tangible partner contributions are fully described in the research proposal. Partner activities during and after the formal research program form an important part of PICS sponsored research activities and are clearly described in the research proposal.
- Partnerships contribute to diversity and interdisciplinarity in the project and enhance representativeness.
- The project will build capacity in the identified area (e.g., students/postdocs; knowledge mobilization to academic and user communities, etc.), including the development of a long-term expanded partnership network in British Columbia that continues to address new questions even after PICS award funding ends.
- The project has high potential to build new international leadership in the BC research community in the thematic area.



## Appendix A: Proposal submission and checklist for applicants

### Letters of Intent (LOI)

Letters of intent for Theme partnerships should be submitted by email to [picstheme@uvic.ca](mailto:picstheme@uvic.ca) before **November 15<sup>th</sup>, 2021 (11:59 PST)**. Acknowledgement of the submission will be sent by PICS to applicants upon receipt of the LOI. If you do not receive a receipt email within a week, phone (250) 853-3595.

A completed LOI will include:

1. Cover page using supplied template and signed by all research and solution seeker project partners.
2. Maximum three-page description of the proposed Theme Partnership addressing the following major points:
  - The importance, timeliness, originality, feasibility of the solutions planned to be developed, and anticipated major outcomes during the tenure of the project (i.e. definition of the theme, what tangible progress will be made while the award is ongoing). The research program must be novel and innovative.
  - The nature of the partnership with planned contributions between project partners and partner engagement activities clearly outlined (i.e. definition of the partnership, including meaningful partnership engagement process designed to assist in the implementation of solutions).
  - A description of how the research partnership can extend beyond the period for which PICS may provide funding. PICS aims to support long-term initiatives and themes that can continue to develop beyond the timeline of the PICS allocated award.
  - Indication of how this project can lead to international leadership in BC in climate solutions research.
3. Maximum one-page summary budget outlining planned use of funds (estimated yearly totals for major categories: students/postdocs; other personnel; travel and workshops; supplies; other).
4. List of cited literature.
5. Names and contact information for three suggested academic reviewers and three solution seeker reviewers (see item 6 under full proposal guidelines).
6. CVs (maximum two pages each) for major project participants.



### Full Proposals (by invitation only based on LOI selection)

Invited Theme Partnership proposals should be submitted as a single PDF by email to [picstheme@uvic.ca](mailto:picstheme@uvic.ca) before **March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2022 (11:59 PST)**. Acknowledgement of the submission will be sent by PICS to applicants upon receipt of the proposal.

A full proposal must include:

1. **Cover page** using supplied template and signed by all research and solution seeker project partners.
2. **Main body** of research proposals are not to exceed twelve pages in length, minimum 11 pt. font and 2.5 cm margins. Required components include:
  - Objective of the project. Explain the need for the research, scale, scope and originality of the targeted solution. The project must be novel and innovative.
  - Description of anticipated climate solution impacts and proposal for how impacts will be measured and tracked.
  - Details of proposed research activities, work plan, timeline, and roles/responsibilities of project team and relevant decision-making position of solution partners within their organization.
  - Plans for impact tracking and implementation of anticipated solutions.
  - Justification and plans for development of expanded network that is self-sustaining after PICS funding ends.
3. **Literature** citations.
4. **Budget** and justification, including description of partner contributions as described in Appendix B.
5. **Project collaboration/management plan** including how the entire project team will work collaboratively recognizing the variety of perspectives, values, and contexts of all partners as the project moves forward (~1 page).
6. **Suggested reviewers'** names and contact information: three reviewers for the research component, and three solution seeking reviewers who can evaluate the proposed project from the user perspective. Reviewers should have no conflicts of interest with the applicants and must be from outside of BC (see Appendix D: Reviewer conflict of interest).
7. **Two-page CVs** of all research and solutions seeker project participants.

Additional guidance will be provided to candidates who are invited to submit full proposals. PICS will acknowledge receipt of the application within one week. If you do not receive a receipt email within a week, phone (250) 853-3595.



## **Appendix B: Budget details**

Include a table with an annualized budget for the entire planned program.

Financial contributions from partner organizations are welcome but not required. Where appropriate, indicate partner contributions in the form of in-kind or financial contributions to the project.

In situations where contributions do not take the form of auditable expenses please list the nature of anticipated contributions (e.g. access to data, use of facilities, etc.) below the detailed budget table.

What PICS will fund under the Theme Partnership Program:

- Financial support of graduate student stipends and/or post-doctoral fellows' salaries. A minimum of 50% of PICS funds must be allocated for stipends and/or salary support of students or postdoctoral fellows working at one or more of the PICS collaborating universities.
- Equipment, materials, supplies, as needed to conduct the research and mobilize the knowledge generated.
- Support for research associates or other research staff, incremental from current staffing.
- Costs associated with specialized software, costs associated with obtaining access to data.
- Travel, in particular for workshops, partner engagement, knowledge mobilization and fieldwork.

What PICS will NOT fund under the Theme Partnership Program:

- Staff costs for project administration.
- Hospitality.
- Capital equipment, furniture, space refurbishment or improvement.
- Indirect costs of research, *i.e.* overhead charges will not be paid as per the terms of the PICS endowment.





## **Appendix C: Terms of Reference – Theme Partnership Program projects**

### **Project Funding**

Project funds will be transferred to the recipients' home institution semi-annually.

Unspent funds will not in general be allowed to be carried forward into future years. If circumstances merit carry forward, a written request and justification must be submitted to PICS at least 60 days prior to the end of the current project year for consideration by PICS.

Renewal of funding beyond the first year will be subject to an annual PICS progress review. Near the end of year two, PICS will organize an external review of the project. If progress is unsatisfactory to PICS, funding may be reduced or wound down to zero in the following year.

### **Collaborative Engagement and Partner Roles**

Upon award of a Theme Partnership Program project, PICS will become a partner with the project team and will work to facilitate effective collaboration among participants to maximize research impact. The PICS team will support this process through its networks, staff time, convening and communications capabilities.

The PICS Researcher-in-Residence and/or a PICS liaison will coordinate a co-designed project “kick-off” workshop within one month of the project start date. A key aim for this workshop is to set the stage and terms for partnership engagement for the project as well as facilitate discussion on impact pathways and progress indicators. The Researcher-in-Residence and/or PICS liaison will also support project meetings, facilitate engagement with governments and industry, and track and report project impact through the duration of the project. The PICS Researcher-in-Residence will also share and contribute to building research expertise and knowledge in a specific aspect of the project and/or the overall research program.

The project partners must be committed to co-defining the project proposal and to actively participating in the research program throughout the project timeline. In addition, partners will commit to pursuing a suite of activities that will move the new research knowledge into the realm of implementation.

Solution seeker partners must be prepared to contribute significantly to the project in the form of not only regular engagement with the researchers but as appropriate through contributions such as data, equipment, resources for field studies, financial contributions, human resources, etc.

### **Monthly Project Meetings**

To ensure effective collaboration, monthly meetings should be planned with PICS, the research team, and solution seeker partners. These tri-partner engagements should include discussion of research results, progress on project impact objectives, barriers to research and impact goals, communication products, and support needs, etc. An end-of-project meeting with all partners plus additional relevant stakeholders should be held before the end date of the project.



## **Students**

Students and post-docs who are working on a PICS sponsored project will be acknowledged as PICS Scholars and will be invited to participate in PICS Scholars' engagement activities. To facilitate this the project team will provide PICS with the names, contact information and research topic/title for students and postdoctoral fellows working on the funded project.

## **Annual Reports**

An annual report (up to five pages of text plus graphics, publications lists, financial report, etc.) will be submitted to PICS at least 60 days prior to the end of the current project year to allow for review and approval of subsequent year's funding.

## **Intellectual Property**

Any Intellectual Property (IP) created from the projects will be managed in accordance with the IP policy of the universities involved. Further, proposals should envision the utilization of research results for widespread benefit in BC, Canada and internationally. PICS expects the publication of research results to be in open literature and encourages researchers to explore high quality open-access publication options.

## **PICS Acknowledgement**

Researchers will provide PICS with details of their publication plan upon submission of manuscripts and theses for review. This will ensure PICS has sufficient lead time to work with authors to help publicize research contributions once they are published.

The project team will provide PICS with a copy of documents/infographics/etc. for knowledge mobilization and engagement for PICS feedback and layout/editing/graphic assistance as necessary.

All such products will contain the PICS logo and follow the [PICS branding guidelines](#).

All project team members will acknowledge the support of PICS on all publications, documents, infographics, etc., and activities and events related to PICS-sponsored projects.

**Author affiliation on publications:** Acknowledgement will be in the form of researchers identifying themselves as being affiliated with PICS in addition to their normal title, as described in the following example:

Author<sup>1</sup>, author<sup>2</sup>, and author<sup>3</sup>

*Example:*

<sup>1</sup> Name, Pacific Institute for Climate Solutions and School of Environmental Studies,  
University of Victoria, Victoria, British Columbia, Canada

<sup>2</sup> Name, Department of Biology, University of Manchester, Manchester, UK.

<sup>3</sup> Name, Pacific Institute for Climate Solutions and School of Resource and Environmental  
Management, Simon Fraser University, British Columbia, Canada



**Acknowledgment of PICS financial support:** PICS should be acknowledged within any published manuscript in a way compatible with the following example:

The authors acknowledge the Pacific Institute for Climate Solutions for funding this research under the Research Engagement Program. (Proposal # xxxxxx-xxxx).



#### **Appendix D: Reviewer conflict of interest**

To ensure the integrity of the proposal review, the Pacific Institute for Climate Solutions adheres to the principles of fairness and the absence of conflict of interest. Potential conflicts of interest may arise from:

- A current, previous (within 12 months) or possible future employment or affiliation with the institution involved in the proposed project.
- An existing or past relationship as a thesis advisor or student/postdoc with the applicant(s).
- Co-authorship on a paper or collaboration on a project within the past 48 months.
- A family or friend relationship.
- A financial interest in the outcome of the decision.
- Suggested reviewers must be from outside BC.