

Opportunity Projects Program - 2021 Competition Guide for Applicants

Introduction

The [PICS Opportunity Projects Program](#) provides support for research projects that develop new knowledge that is used directly for climate change mitigation and adaptation solutions. The program is intended to fund projects that result in tangible action.

This program invites proposals that advance innovative and impactful ideas, generate new climate solutions, and forge novel partnerships between academics and 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.

Through this program, PICS encourages researchers to shift thinking and practice towards active knowledge exchange and translation of their research to facilitate more direct contributions (e.g. in management, policy and decision making) to climate change adaptation and mitigation.

Proposals from all fields of climate change mitigation and adaptation are accepted for this program, which funds projects of up to three years' duration. We seek to have a portfolio of projects that reflect a diversity of topics, implementation timeframes, and geographic locations of intended impacts in British Columbia (BC). Projects must be relevant to BC, but proposals with national and international relevance are encouraged. Three to five projects will be awarded per call.

PICS Collaborative Research Model

The Opportunity Projects Program supports active partnerships between academic researchers and Solution Seekers that produce co-developed climate solutions. 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. Solution Seekers may be based in private sector, governmental 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 through project continuum to overall completion.



Eligible Activities and Recipients

Proposals must be submitted by a project team's Principal Investigator (PI), who must be a full-time faculty member at one of the four PICS universities (University of British Columbia, Simon Fraser University, University of Northern British Columbia, University of Victoria).

Project proposals may request support for up to three years. Matching funding from a solution seeker or other partner is not a requirement, but demonstration of leveraging PICS funding to secure additional funds and resources is encouraged.

Opportunity Projects must improve climate solutions expertise and capacity in BC. To this end, at least 50 percent of research funds must be used to support graduate student stipends and postdoctoral fellows at one or more of the four PICS universities.

Researchers located outside of BC are welcome to be part of a project team so long as this minimum requirement is met. Project teams comprising two or more Research Partners from diverse disciplines and Solution Seekers with complementary implementation skills are encouraged to apply.

Proposals should define anticipated impact from research and non-research activities. Project implementation activities should begin during the funding period and continue after the completion of the funding period.

Occasionally, a solution seeker interested in forming a research partnership may not have an existing relationship with a researcher. Or, the work may be at an early stage and it may be difficult to envision how innovative projects will produce knowledge that can be put to practical use. In such cases, proponents are encouraged to contact PICS before submitting a proposal to obtain assistance in forming suitable partnerships.

With regards to Intellectual Property (IP), proposals should envision the use 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. 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.

Proposal requirements and submission details for the Opportunity Projects Program:

- The deadline for proposal submissions is August 4th, 2021 at 11:59 p.m. PDT
- Proposals must be submitted to picsopp@uvic.ca.
- Notification of adjudication decisions will be made in December 2021.
- The official start date of projects will be on or after January 1, 2022.
- Project duration should be based on the scope of work, but shall not exceed three years. Projects of shorter duration are welcome.
- Maximum project support is \$180,000 distributed over three years. Smaller budgets are welcome.



- At least 50 percent of requested project funding must be used to support graduate student stipends and/or postdoctoral fellows' salaries at Simon Fraser University, University of Victoria, University of Northern British Columbia or the University of British Columbia.
- Proposals should be prepared using the format described in **Appendix A** and include a budget using the format described in **Appendix B**.
- Awarded projects will be required to adhere to the Terms of Reference described in **Appendix C**.
- Applicants are encouraged to contact PICS at picsopp@uvic.ca to discuss their proposal before submitting it. PICS may provide some guidance to increase alignment with the Opportunity Projects Program.

Evaluation

Proposals will be initially evaluated for alignment with PICS' objectives by PICS staff and domain experts. Promising proposals will enter into an international peer review process that includes both academics and solution seeker communities to ensure the targeted solutions are valuable and research excellence is achievable.

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

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

- The project has high potential to contribute to reduced carbon emissions and/or effective adaptation to climate change in BC and beyond.
- The project demonstrates the need for original research to address the specific climate change adaptation and/or mitigation problem and contribute to its solution.
- The proposed solution and research approach are demonstrably original.
- The project 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 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.
- Risks to the research or potentially negative effects of the project are clearly stated and accounted for.
- Plans for collaboration and project management 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 clearly 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 and to position the research results for use.
- The proposal anticipates and appropriately takes into account stakeholder and other perspectives, values, and contexts.
- Indicators and methods for monitoring impact during the project and for assessing outcomes afterwards are proposed.
- The project will help build capacity in the identified area (e.g., students/postdocs; dissemination to academic and user communities, etc.).
- Partnerships contribute to diversity and interdisciplinarity in the project and enhance representativeness.

A complete proposal will include:

- ✓ [Cover page](#) using template supplied
- ✓ Maximum five-page proposal prepared according to guidelines in Appendix A
- ✓ Literature citations
- ✓ Project management plan
- ✓ Budget details and justification prepared according to guidelines in Appendix B
- ✓ List of suggested reviewers from outside of BC
- ✓ CVs (maximum two page) for major project participants

PICS will acknowledge receipt of the proposal within one week. If you do not receive a receipt email within a week, phone (250) 853-3595.



Appendix A: Required content and format of proposals

The proposal should be submitted as a *single pdf file* and include the following components:

1. Cover page prepared using supplied template and signed by all research and solution seeker project partners.
2. Main body (maximum five pages, 11 pt. font and 2.5 cm margins). Required components and suggested length:
 - a. Objective of the project. Explain the motivating problems as well as the scale, scope and originality of the targeted solution (one page). The proposal should seek to address both an original research problem and an important solution-seeker problem.
 - b. Description of anticipated climate solution impacts and a proposal for how impacts will be measured and tracked (one page). Clearly state how the research results will be used by the solution seeker and what the anticipated impact will be.
 - c. Details of proposed research activities, work plan and timeline (two pages).
 - d. Plans for implementation of anticipated solution (one page).
3. Literature citations.
4. Proposed budget and justification, including description of each partner's contributions.
5. Project management plan including description of how the team will work together, schedule for partner meetings, project review.
6. Suggested reviewers' names and contact information. Reviewers must be from outside of BC. We require three reviewers for the research component and three reviewers from solution seeking communities (e.g., government, First Nations, business, or civil society). Reviewers should have no conflicts of interest with the applicants (see **Appendix D: Reviewer conflict of interest**).
7. Two-page CVs of all research and solution seeker project participants.



Appendix B: Proposed 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 Opportunity Projects Program:

- Financial support of graduate student stipends, and/or post-doctoral fellow salary (minimum 50 per cent of budget must be in this category) at one or more of the four 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 fieldwork, partner engagement, and knowledge mobilization.

What PICS will NOT fund under the Opportunity Projects 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

Project Funding

Project funds will be transferred to the Principal Investigator's research institution semi-annually.

Unspent funds will not in general be allowed to be carried forward into future years. If exceptional 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. If progress is unsatisfactory to PICS, funding may be reduced or withheld in the following year.

Collaborative Engagement and Partner Roles

Upon award of an Opportunity 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. A PICS liaison will coordinate a project "kick-off" workshop, support project meetings, facilitate engagement with governments and industry, and track and report project impact.

Research and solution seeker partners must be committed to co-defining 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.

Kick-off Workshop

A collaboratively designed kick-off workshop must be held within one month of the project start date. A key aim for this workshop is to set the stage and terms for project team (solution seeker, research partner and PICS) engagement for the duration of the project as well as facilitate discussion on impact pathways and progress indicators.

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 Scholar engagement activities. To facilitate this the PI 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 list, 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.

PICS Acknowledgement

Research partners will provide PICS with details of their publication plan upon submission of manuscripts and theses for review. This will ensure that 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 copies of documents, infographics, etc. for knowledge mobilization and engagement for PICS feedback and layout, editing and graphic design 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., activities and events related to the Opportunity Project.

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:

Author¹, author², and author³.

Example:

¹ Name, School of Environmental Studies and Pacific Institute for Climate Solutions, University of Victoria, Victoria, British Columbia, Canada.

² Name, Department of Biology, University of Manchester, Manchester, UK.

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

Acknowledgment of PICS financial support: PICS shall 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 PICS Opportunity Projects Program (Project # xxxxxx-xxxx).



Appendix D: Reviewer conflict of interest

To ensure the integrity of the proposal review, PICS 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.