



# **Guide for applicants**

Climate Foresight Dialogues

March 2025



**Pacific Institute  
for Climate Solutions**

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# 1. About the Pacific Institute for Climate Solutions

The [Pacific Institute for Climate Solutions](#) (PICS) catalyzes and mobilizes research, partnerships, and knowledge that generate climate action in British Columbia and around the world. PICS is a multi-university institute encompassing the four major research-intensive universities in British Columbia: the University of Victoria, University of British Columbia, Simon Fraser University, and the University of Northern British Columbia.

In the face of accelerating climate challenge, PICS is increasing our investment in collaboration, research, and knowledge mobilization, guided by our [Strategic Plan: 2024 and Beyond](#). Our work focuses on solutions to the most pressing climate issues facing people, communities, and the land. PICS is here to support B.C.'s collective capacity to act. PICS is a values-based organization committed to equity and to reconciliation, justice, diversity, and inclusion.

## 2. Climate Foresight Program Objectives

The Climate Foresight Program incubates new, transdisciplinary, and cross-sectoral collaborations to explore complex and emergent climate challenges.

### The Program has three objectives:

- to generate transformative knowledge and solutions to complex and emergent climate challenges facing BC and the broader world.
- to convene and support new, transdisciplinary knowledge networks among researchers, knowledge holders, and practitioners.
- to build leadership and strengthen capacity in the B.C. climate research community.

The first stage of this program is a series of dialogues, which will generate the priorities and programs of work for subsequent programming and grants.

## 3. The Dialogues

PICS believes deep insights begin with expansive, generative conversation, and remarkable collaborations are seeded through in-person connection, significant experiences, and shared inquiry. The dialogues are intended as a reflective prelude

to potential future co-development of collaborative programs of work, offering the opportunity to scope critical gaps in understanding, explore diverse methods of inquiry and ways of knowing, and build the connections that will form the basis for innovative, experimental scholarship. While virtual and hybrid meetings have an important role in collaborative processes, for this purpose we are placing a priority on face-to-face interaction.

Proposals for dialogues may be submitted by interdisciplinary teams of two to three applicants who will lead the agenda design, participant selection, recruitment, and discussions, in collaboration with PICS staff. Dialogues will take place over two to three days in Fall 2025, at an inspiring, retreat-style setting in B.C.'s Gulf Islands (subject to participants and topic focus).

PICS will support all aspects of planning and hosting the dialogues (valued up to \$30,000), and will be an active project partner to ensure the dialogue has impact. PICS will also source and fund a writer-in-residence to produce a public-facing account of the dialogue for online publication by PICS in a series entitled Climate Foresight: The Dialogues. PICS staff will work with dialogue leads to ensure event documentation aligns with relevant frameworks for data and knowledges sovereignty.

Following the dialogues, PICS will support interested participants to co-develop collaborative programs of work that may include, e.g., sequential meetings, network building and facilitation, grant proposal development, and/or research. This longer-term program of work will engage transformative approaches to research and collaboration appropriate to the issues identified (see Appendix 2), and be oriented toward knowledge that can be used by practitioners, communities, and/or decision-makers in support of transformative climate solutions. Promising projects will be considered for contributions of up to \$300,000 for these activities, and for continued support from the PICS communications team to mobilize and communicate knowledge outputs to relevant audiences.

### **3.1 Eligible Topics**

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The thematic focus is open to issues in climate change mitigation and/or adaptation that can inform transformative approaches across at least two of PICS' three impact areas: justice, wellbeing, and biodiversity; policy, practice, and technology; and communities and place, and that are in alignment with PICS' values.

Eligible topics will be characterized by complexity and emergence, such that solutions

require diverse disciplinary perspectives and ways of knowing. Proposals will show how the dialogue retreat will contribute to a longer-term collaborative project that would give rise to transformative approaches, including addressing the root drivers of complex challenges and the barriers to change, and with consideration across the biophysical, technological, sociopolitical, and justice dimensions of the topics, as appropriate.

Topics must be directly relevant to B.C. but can also have relevance beyond the province. This program is funded through PICS' public endowment, and as such topics must offer a benefit to the public good.

*For more details on PICS values, impact areas, and perspective on complexity and transformative change, see Appendix 2.*

## 3.2 Eligible Applicants

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Applicant teams must be at minimum two full-time faculty members from one or more of the four PICS universities (SFU, UBC Vancouver and UBC Okanagan, UNBC, UVic). We encourage applicant teams involving more than one PICS university. An additional member of the applicant team may be from a non-PICS post-secondary institution, private and practitioner sector, community or Indigenous organization, or government.

Applicant teams will lead the retreat discussion, agenda design, participant selection, and recruitment in collaboration with PICS staff.

## 3.3 Eligible Dialogue Participants

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PICS is deeply committed to co-designed, collaborative learning and solutions that forge partnerships at an early stage in project development, and that include groups who have historically not benefited from or had access to climate knowledge co-production opportunities.

We will provide support for up to 15 dialogue participants (including the applicants). Participants should reflect the disciplinary and intersectoral range critical to the conversation (leading scholars across academic disciplines, decision makers, practitioners, and thought leaders situated across sectors, and rights holders, as relevant to the proposed topic), and early career as well as established scholars.

Applicants do not need to have confirmed interest from specific participants at the stage of application. However, applicants are asked to identify potential invitees, including specific individuals with affiliations if known. If specific invitees are

unknown, specify the expertise, organizations, and/or initiatives you would look to recruit and who you believe may have an interest in attending.

In keeping with PICS' B.C.-focused mandate, at least half of participants should be B.C.-based, and we will give scoring weight based on the potential for participation from multiple PICS consortium universities. Subject to budget, other participants may be national and/or international depending on expertise and perspective required for the chosen topic. PICS staff will participate as co-facilitators and observers.

### 3.4 Award Value

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The total value of a Dialogue is estimated at \$30,000, with all funds administered directly by PICS in collaboration with applicant teams. Accommodation, food, and venue are valued at around \$17,000. PICS staff will work with applicant teams to allocate the remaining funds (approximately \$13,000) for additional costs, including participant travel; preparation of background materials; honoraria for Indigenous, NGO, or community members; and/or other services or supplies necessary to support the meeting.

## 4. Application Process and Evaluation

### 4.1 Application Process

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[Applicants should submit a proposal via application form on the PICS website](#) by **May 15, 2025** (11:59pm PDT).

*The application template is included in Appendix 1 below.*

### 4.2 Evaluation

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Dialogue proposals will be evaluated by PICS staff and an external decision review committee, based on the criteria below. PICS staff may reach out to applicants for additional information to complete their evaluations.

We will communicate decisions in late June. Planning for the Fall dialogues will begin in July.

Proposal component	Value /100	Scoring considerations and relationship to PICS priorities
<b>Significance and relevance of the proposed topic (35%)</b>		
1. a. Summary statement	10	⇒ The problem statement is accessible and compelling.
1. b. Background & significance of topic	15	⇒ Critical nature of the issue is demonstrated and described from a variety of perspectives. ⇒ Knowledge gap is demonstrated. Consequences of knowledge gap are clearly identified.
1. c. Complexity & emergence	10	⇒ Complex and emergent nature of issue is clearly described. ⇒ Need for integrated interdisciplinary and intersectoral responses is demonstrated.
<b>Potential for transformative impact (40%)</b>		
1.d. Need for transformative approaches	10	⇒ Preliminary understanding of root drivers of challenges and barriers to change is clearly described. ⇒ The need for transformative solutions is demonstrated.
1.e. Potential for collaboration and impacts	15	⇒ Clear preliminary ideas for a longer-term outcome from the dialogue, with clear potential to eventually lead to actionable knowledge through co-design and co-production with relevant practitioner sectors, impacted communities, and decision-makers. ⇒ Preliminary vision for outcomes links clearly to the described need for transformative insights and solutions. ⇒ Potential for impacts across at least two of PICS' three impact areas.
1.f. Suggested participants	15	⇒ Relevance and diversity of expertise and experience of suggested participants (gender, age, backgrounds, constituencies, disciplinary breadth, and knowledges) is appropriate to topic. ⇒ Demonstrates knowledge and existing relationships that would support engagement in the dialogue and longer-term. ⇒ Specifically identifies potential individuals or relevant organizations/ initiatives who may participate.
<b>Diversity and credibility of the team (25%)</b>		
1.g. Leadership, feasibility, and capacity  3.a. Resumes/ CVs	25	⇒ Co-leads demonstrate interdisciplinary breadth. ⇒ Co-leads represent more than one university and/or organization. ⇒ Experience leading interdisciplinary teams. ⇒ Experience with collaborative research. ⇒ Active engagement with relevant practitioner communities.
<b>Fit with PICS strategic goals, partnerships, and priorities</b>		
	Y/N	⇒ Contributes to balance of PICS portfolio.
	Y/N	⇒ Contributes to balance between PICS universities.
	Y/N	⇒ Demonstrates collaboration among more than one PICS university (in leadership and/or participants).

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# Appendix 1: Application template and instructions: Climate Foresight Dialogues

## **Identification**

*Please provide full contact information for Co-leads, indicating the corresponding co-lead.*

Corresponding Co-lead Name:

Title and institutional affiliation:

Email:

Co-lead name:

Title and institutional affiliation:

Email:

Co-lead name:

Title and institutional affiliation:

Email:

## **Part 1: Proposal Narrative**

This section details the focus, intentions, significance, and potential participants for your dialogue retreat. You may cite relevant sources as needed in any consistent reference format. A reference list may be uploaded as a separate document at the end of the section.

### **1a. Dialogue Retreat title and summary statement (up to 200 words)**

Title:

Summary statement (200 words): A concise explanation of the topic, preliminary definition of the problem statement, and preliminary aspiration(s) for the dialogue retreat's outcome that can be widely understood by a range of individuals and groups. It should introduce the project name and provide a clear, stand\_alone, and accessible

explanation of your initiative. Please avoid citations in your summary statement.

**1b. Background and significance of the topic (up to 500 words)**

Explain the challenge that your dialogue retreat will address. In your answer, explain why this issue is critical for climate research and/or action; in what areas it is under-researched or little-understood; and what the consequences are of these knowledge gaps.

**1c. Characteristics of complexity and emergence (up to 250 words)**

Explain your preliminary understanding of the root drivers of this challenge, and the characteristics that make it a complex and emergent problem that requires interdisciplinary and intersectoral responses. (Please refer to Appendix 2 of the Guide for Applicants for PICS' perspective on collaborative and transformative research.)

**1d. Need for transformative approaches (up to 250 words)**

Explain your preliminary understanding of the barriers to change on your topic, and why current responses to this problem require transformative approaches. (Please refer to Appendix 2 of the Guide for Applicants for PICS' perspective on collaborative and transformative research.)

**1.e. Potential for transformative impact (up to 500 words)**

How would the dialogue retreat contribute to a longer-term collaborative project that would give rise to transformative approaches? Describe how the dialogue event would support identification of transformative insights-, and how subsequent collaboration could lead to co-produced approaches and applicable knowledge for practitioners, communities, and/or decision-makers. (Please refer to Appendix 2 of the Guide for Applicants for more information on PICS impact areas).

**1f. Suggested participants (up to 300 words).**

Describe, broadly, the types of participants and backgrounds you consider critical to this conversation (specific individuals with affiliations if known, and if not, the expertise, organizations, and/or initiatives you would look to recruit), and why this assembly would be well-situated to address the challenges you have identified. Highlight relevant information such as related work and existing relationships on which the dialogue would build, and any other tangible measures of relevant expertise, qualifications,

experience, and perspective. Demonstrate the potential for involvement of researchers from multiple PICS universities.

**Note:** *Suggested participants do not need to have confirmed interest at this stage, but applicants should have a reasonable belief in their interest in attending and be able to contact them for recruitment.*

### **1g. Leadership, feasibility and capacity (up to 300 words)**

Describe the co-leads' experience with transdisciplinary and codesigned initiatives, and why they are equipped to lead this team in the proposed activities. Highlight relevant information such as related work, existing relationships, awards, and any other tangible measures of relevant expertise, qualifications, and experience.

### **1h. Reference list (optional)**

Please upload a document listing any references cited in the application. References may be in any consistent citation format.

## **Part 2: Dialogue Logistics (not scored)**

### **2a. Availability**

Please confirm co-leads' availability for a two- to three-day dialogue scheduled in October or November 2025. If you have identified specific preferred dates, please list them. If there are blackout dates when co-leads will be fully offline and unavailable for planning in summer or fall, please highlight those.

### **2.b. Venue needs (optional, up to 100 words)**

Dialogues will be held in person, at a retreat-style location in B.C. organized by PICS. Are there any specific needs that your group would have regarding venue amenities or accessibility (including technology needs)?

## **Part 3: Co-Leads' Resumes/CVs**

Please attach a **two- to four-page** resume or CV for each co-lead, including information on position and education, and highlighting awards, service and community engagement, publications, and other achievements relevant to the proposal.

## **Part 4: Suggested Reviewers**

Please list the names and email contact information for two suggested reviewers. PICS may or may not request reviews from these individuals. Suggested reviewers may not be:

- ⇒ Affiliated with your research team or lab;
- ⇒ Someone with whom any of the co-leads has collaborated on research in the past 3 years;
- ⇒ Someone who has or has had a supervisory/supervisee or mentoring/mentee relationship with any of the co-leads over the course of their studies or career;
- ⇒ Someone with whom any co-lead has a personal relationship; or
- ⇒ Someone with a financial interest in the outcome of the decision.

Reviewer 1 Name:

Reviewer 1 title and institutional affiliation:

Reviewer 1 email:

Reviewer 2 Name:

Reviewer 2 title and institutional affiliation:

Reviewer 2 email:

## **Part 5: Co-Lead Signature**

*As corresponding co-lead, I attest that all co-leads have read, contributed to, and approve of this application.*

Corresponding Co-lead Name:

Signature:

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# Appendix 2: PICS Purpose and Values, Intended Impacts, and Collaborative Research Model

## **Purpose and Values**

PICS' purpose and values shape our decision-making, how we connect and collaborate, and the culture we develop internally as an organization and externally with our partners to generate our intended impacts.

**PURPOSE:** To catalyze and mobilize research, partnerships, and knowledge that generate climate action.

**VALUES:** The Pacific Institute for Climate Solutions is a values-based organization that centres its work on principles of respect, relationality, reciprocity, trust, transparency, and transformation.

- ⇒ RESPECT – by meaningfully considering how equity, inclusion and justice factor in our work and workplace, we commit to respecting diverse species, diverse ways of knowing, and diverse approaches to how we co-generate climate action.
- ⇒ RELATIONALITY – by thinking in holistic ways, embracing complexity, and appreciation for the web of intergenerational relationships that climate change affects, we commit to fostering good relations now and into the future.
- ⇒ RECIPROCITY – by recognizing the interconnectedness across climate, environmental, and human systems, we commit to climate action that generates co-benefits and gives back to people, places and the planet that sustains us.
- ⇒ TRUST – by developing high integrity processes and programs, we commit to generating knowledge, research and policy recommendations that earn us trust as a credible and creative source for climate information and knowledge mobilization.
- ⇒ TRANSPARENCY – by practicing openness and honesty as an organization, we commit to being transparent and accountable for our decisions and processes related to the research, education, and services we deliver and support.
- ⇒ TRANSFORMATION – by recognizing the significance, magnitude, and urgency of climate change and the underlying and unequal systems and structures that contribute to it, we commit to taking a values-based approach to collaborative climate action that supports transformation.

## **Intended Impacts**

PICS aims to catalyze and mobilize research, partnerships, and knowledge that advance mitigation and adaptation at the intersections of our three intended impacts:

### **JUSTICE, WELLBEING, AND BIODIVERSITY:**

Intersectional approaches to climate action that embrace diverse ways of knowing, which support wellbeing and deep respect for nature and biodiversity.

### **POLICY, PRACTICE, AND TECHNOLOGY:**

Agile, adaptive and interactive approaches to developing policy-relevant research and services that enhance climate action.

### **COMMUNITIES AND PLACE:**

Transdisciplinary research connected and co-designed with diverse communities and constituencies, which is rooted in place.

This holistic framing of our intended impacts encourages transdisciplinary and transformative complexity in a systematic, relational, and synergistic way.

## **Co-design and Collaborative Research**

PICS is deeply committed to co-designed, collaborative learning and solving approaches that forge partnerships at an early stage in project development, and that include groups who have historically not benefited from or had access to climate knowledge co-production opportunities. Research partners and community partners each bring essential knowledge and skills to produce effective research and useful knowledge. This model relies on contributing partners to co-design, co-develop, and co-deliver the project:

- ⇒ Research partners bring theoretical analysis, empirical knowledge and experience, research skills, and academic excellence to the project to help generate new knowledge and social, technical, and institutional innovations.
- ⇒ Community partners bring applicable research as well as domain knowledge and analysis informed by experience. They play a key role in identifying and framing the problem, defining relevant research questions, developing solutions that are not only useful but used, and implementing results, helping to translate theory to action. Community partners may be based in the private sector, government, First Nations, civil society or non-governmental organizations.

## Research for Transformative Change

Robust and internationally recognized evidence shows that transformative change to social and economic systems is necessary to prevent the worst impacts of climate change and biodiversity loss (IPBES 2019, 2024; IPCC 2023). Transformative change involves systemic, mutually reinforcing shifts in “*views* – ways of thinking, knowing and seeing; *structures* – ways of organizing, regulating and governing; and *practices* – ways of doing, behaving and relating” (IPBES 2024; original emphasis) that result in “a change in the fundamental attributes of human and natural systems” (UNFCCC 2024, 6).

While the terms *transformation* and *transition* are sometimes used interchangeably in climate literature, transformation generally indicates deeper changes across multiple dimensions of society (political, economic, cultural), and aims to describe how changes can amplify and scale under conditions of *complexity* and *emergence*. In a complex and emergent system, functions and outcomes result from dynamic, non-linear interactions among a system’s elements and sub-systems, such that the properties of a system cannot be understood through its individual parts alone.<sup>1</sup> Understanding the conditions and opportunities for transformative change in complex and emergent systems requires interdisciplinary, intersectoral, and holistic approaches that can grasp these interactions.<sup>2</sup> Incremental or small-scale changes can have transformative potential when they reverberate across scales and spheres of influence (e.g. views, structures, practices) via these dynamics, to create “different and new patterns of interactions and outcomes” (Augenstein et al. 2024, 1; Lam et al. 2020a).



Figure 1: Elements of research for transformative change. Image by PICS.

Whereas transformation in general is a descriptive concept, research and practice for sustainability transformations carry normative intent: to rapidly decarbonize economies and establish new structures and functions in the global system that maintain climate stability and biodiversity (Augenstein 2024; UNFCCC 2024). International research bodies have emphasized that transformative change for sustainability requires critically assessing the systemic and structural barriers to change, including power relations and resource flows, and that climate actions that support equity, justice, and inclusion lead to more sustainable outcomes and better support transformative change (IPBES 2025; IPCC 2023).

The vocabulary of transformative change comes mainly from systems science and ecology. However, many academic fields have robust theoretical and empirical literatures on the conditions for and barriers to systemic change. Diverse Indigenous traditions have distinct understandings of transformative change that are underrepresented in existing research on sustainability transitions (Lam et al. 2020b). Insights from many fields, including Indigenous Knowledges, are relevant to understanding the prospects for transformation toward sustainable climate futures (West et al. 2024; Orlove et al. 2023).

Research for transformative change is action-oriented, addressing the root drivers of complex, systemic problems through deep engagement with diverse constituencies and ways of knowing. Transformative research for sustainability requires transdisciplinary approaches that not only integrate or triangulate multiple methods but that co-produce knowledge and solutions among practitioners and Knowledge Holders with diverse perspectives and expertise (Augenstein et al. 2024; Horcea-Milcu et al. 2024). Transformative approaches can draw on the robust resources and methods of ethical community-engaged and action-oriented research (Horcea-Milcu et al. 2024; Caniglia et al. 2021; Mertens 2009). They may go beyond these approaches in the breadth of their interdisciplinarity; their focus on how change may amplify or scale through complex interactions; and their emphasis on addressing the root causes of problems and barriers to change, which may include power relations, resource flows, and worldviews.

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