

Application Guidelines: Keystone Grant - Stage 1 Form

Information

The Save Our Seas Foundation (SOSF) is committed to protecting our oceans by funding and supporting research, conservation and education projects worldwide, focusing primarily on threatened marine wildlife and their habitats. Only projects concerned with marine chondrichthyan species (sharks, rays, skates, sawfishes and chimaeras) will be considered.

The funding cycle is biennial, with the grant application window opening in even years (2026, 2028, 2030, etc.), and the next grant cycle covering the period from March 2027 to June 2028. Funds are allocated on an annual basis, and successful applicants will be invited to apply for their continued funding every year. The usual project duration is limited to three years. Grants average 25,000 USD per annum.

The Keystone Grant is aimed at projects with applied conservation value for sharks, rays and chimaeras. It targets local projects conducted by, or in collaboration with local project leaders.

Only one application will be accepted from any one applicant. If a project leader has an ongoing SOSF Keystone Grant, they can't apply for a new grant.

All applications will be reviewed by the SOSF scientific committee and require final approval from the Foundation's Board of Directors at the end of the year.

Grant applications must be submitted no later than:

Stage 1: May 13th 2026 at 18:00 CET (Central European Time)

We fully acknowledge the challenges of navigating a professional space that may not be in your first language and accordingly do not judge applications on the quality of their English. But we still wish the application to be in your own words. It is acceptable to use tools to check what you've written (e.g. Grammarly, DeepL), but only if you feel the need - again, we will not judge applications on the quality of their English. However, we will not accept any applications where any generative tools (e.g. ChatGPT) have been used to create the text for you.

By checking the box below and continuing, you confirm that you will not use any generative AI tools to create the answers to any of the fields in this application.

I understand and agree to the AI statement (required)

Checkbox

Where did you hear about this grant opportunity? (required)

Dropdown (with "Other" option)

Options: Social media, Whatsapp flyer, SOSF newsletter, IUCN-SSG, My work, School/university

Applicant

1a. First name (required)

Short text

1b. Last name (required)

Short text

1c. Date of birth (required)

Date

1d. Nationality (required)

Dropdown

Options: (predefined list: country_names)

1e. Country of residence (required)

Dropdown

Options: (predefined list: country_names)

1f. Address (required)

Address

Fields: address, city, state/province, postal code, country

1g. Phone (required)

In standard international format (ie. +44 113 496 0000 for UK)

Phone number

1h. Email (required)

Email

1i. Social media

Long text · max 200 words

Institution

2a. Are you applying through an institution? (required)

You do not have to be part of an institution to apply or receive a grant, but we need to understand what entity the grant will be processed through if not an institution (e.g. NGO).

Dropdown

Options: Yes, No

2a.1 Name of institution (required)

Short text · conditional

2a.2 Institution website (required)

Make sure to include the 'https://' portion of the address.

URL · conditional

2a.3 Main mission (required)

Long text · max 50 words · conditional

2a.4 Institution address

Address · conditional

Fields: address, city, state/province, postal code, country

2a.5 Please explain who this work would be conducted through (required)

Long text · max 50 words · conditional

Overview

3a. Project title (required)

Short text · max 15 words

3b. Project summary (required)

Provide a brief overview of the project and explain why it is needed.

Long text · max 100 words

3c. What will you do? (required)

Provide an overview of methods, geographical scope and target species.

Long text · max 100 words

3d. Expected outcomes (required)

What are the expected outcomes of the project? Please emphasise the intended conservation impact.

Long text · max 100 words

3e. Species

Table

Columns: English name, Latin name, IUCN Red list status (3 rows)

3f. Species concerned (required)

Dropdown

Options: Sharks, Rays and skates, Chimera, Other

3g. Location (required)

Dropdown

Options: Choose countries, Worldwide

3g.1 Primary country (required)

Dropdown

Options: (predefined list: country_names)

3g.2 Additional country

Dropdown

Options: (predefined list: country_names)

3g.3 Additional country

Dropdown

Options: (predefined list: country_names)

3h. More precise location (if relevant)

Long text · max 25 words

3i. Project region (required)

What is the primary ISRA's region where the project activities will take place?

Dropdown

Options: Polar Waters, European Atlantic, Mediterranean & Black Seas, North American & Caribbean Atlantic, South American Atlantic, African Atlantic, Western Indian Ocean, Australian & Southeast Indian Ocean, Asia, New Zealand & Pacific Islands, North American Pacific, Central & South American Pacific, South American Inland Waters, Worldwide

Team

4a. Who is the project leader? (required)

Long text · max 25 words

4b. Who else is part of the team? (required)

Please include the name, affiliation and role in the project for each team member.

Long text · max 100 words

4c. Who will you collaborate with locally? (required)

We promote projects that are collaborative and develop opportunities locally. Please specify who you will collaborate with locally on the project in any capacity.

Long text · max 25 words

4d. Experience of the project leader (required)

Highlight relevant past projects or achievements.

Long text · max 100 words

4e. Referees (required)

Please provide three referees and their contact details – ensure the persons you add as referees are informed about it as we might contact them. Make sure to provide them with a copy of your project proposal.

Long text · max 100 words

4f. Supervisor(s) and advisor(s) (required)

If a recent postgraduate or graduate student is applying for funds, or if the applicant cannot demonstrate significant experience, provide name(s), respective affiliation and contact details of a supervisor or advisor, and describe their experience in the subject area and/or the region where the proposed project is to take place. A letter from this individual, outlining their experience and confirming their participation as supervisor/advisor, must also be provided with your application. Where students are applying, only one application will be accepted from each supervisor.

Long text · max 100 words

I have informed my named referees/supervisor(s) about referencing them on this application.
(required)

Checkbox

4g. Is this your first SOSF application? (required)

Dropdown

Options: (predefined list: yes_no)

4g.1 Please indicate previous applications, successful or not

Long text · conditional

Project

5a. Project duration (months) (required)

Number · min: 1, max: 36

5b. Planned start date (required)

Date · from Jan 1 2027 to Dec 31 2027

5c. Planned end date (required)

Date · from Jan 1 2027 to Dec 31 2035

5d. Is this a new project? (required)

Dropdown

Options: (predefined list: yes_no)

5e. Please explain how it fits in the broader context of your work (required)

Long text · conditional

Budget

6a. Total amount requested from SOSF (required)

Please state the full amount requested from SOSF for the full duration of the project. Successful Keystone grant applications will likely receive between 10,000 and 50,000 USD with an average of about 25,000 USD from the Foundation, each year for up to three years. SOSF funding will generally not exceed three years, and is subject to an annual review and continuation application – SOSF is not guaranteeing funding for more than one year at a time.

Short text

6b. Percentage of project budget requested from SOSF (required)

What percentage of the full budget of your project does the amount being requested from SOSF constitute?

Short text

6c. Other funding sources

If not 100%, please indicate what other source(s) of funding you have and if they are secured or planned.

Long text · max 250 words

6d. How many years does your budget cover? (required)

Dropdown

Options: 1, 2, 3

Budget FAQ:

International travel costs should not exceed 10% of the total budget – this is to encourage locally-led projects and collaborations. Boat time for fieldwork is not considered a travel expense. The 10% limit on travel expenses is more for international travel.

Costs for salaries, conference attendance and publications are not accepted. We support these through other means/grants.

The costs of short-term employees or the short-term extra costs of an individual's participation in a project may be eligible, if justified.

Specialist services (e.g. film editing, laboratory testing, library facilities) may also be eligible. Applicants are permitted to include a modest stipend, as long as the need is fully justified in the application.

SOSF will not support projects where an important portion is overhead or admin fees. We want to support the project leader and their work.

Rent: SOSF grants are not intended to pay for your home rent while you are conducting the project.

Mileage: You can claim mileage reimbursement if you use your personal car to reach a specific fieldwork location – the mileage rate must be the nationally recognised rate (this rate includes fuel).

What if my institution admin fees will partly be used for my project?

SOSF will not agree to support overheads or admin fees for institutions. If these fees are to support the project, then they should be listed on separate lines and explain what it will be used for, so we know we are not supporting the institution's general administration fees.

When do I receive the funds, if my application is approved?

The funds will be transferred to the applicant or his/her institution in March/April the following year (if you apply in 2026 for a 2027 grant, you receive the grant in 2027).

This webinar provided an overview of the grant application process, gave insight into what the scientific committee is looking for with the questions, and discussed common pitfalls and how to avoid them. This was followed by a Q&A session. [To watch our Small Grants information webinar held in June 2024 please click HERE](#)

6e.1 Budget sheet - Year 1 (required)

Please use the comments column as much as possible. It's always better if the reviewers can understand how the budget line is relevant to the project without having to go back and search for relevant information in the previous sections. Please enter expenses in relevant categories in the same order that the categories appear in the dropdown list. You may add up to 50 expense rows. Note: International travel costs should not exceed 10% of total budget.

Repeating fields

Up to 50 entries

- Category — Dropdown
- Description — Short text — max 10 words
- SOSF amount (\$) — Short text
- Other amount (\$) — Short text
- Comments — Short text — max 20 words

6e.2 Budget sheet - Year 2

Repeating fields · conditional

Up to 50 entries

- Category — Dropdown
- Description — Short text — max 10 words
- SOSF amount (\$) — Short text
- Other amount (\$) — Short text
- Comments — Short text — max 20 words

6e.3 Budget sheet - Year 3

Repeating fields · conditional

Up to 50 entries

- Category — Dropdown
- Description — Short text — max 10 words
- SOSF amount (\$) — Short text
- Other amount (\$) — Short text
- Comments — Short text — max 20 words

6f. Agreement confirmation

[Click here to download the agreement template](#) and ensure that your institution (if applicable) reviews it. Note this document cannot be modified.

I have read and shared the agreement template. (required)

Checkbox

Uploads

Please note that all files uploaded in support of your application **must be in English**.

7a. Recent CV for the Project Leader (and co-PL if relevant) (required)

Please ensure that your CV is dated and includes the date of your last degree awarded. Your CV must not exceed two pages, and should highlight the most relevant information related to your application (relevant studies, relevant skills, relevant work experience, last 2 publications, etc...)

Document upload

Accepted formats: pdf

7b. Letter of recommendation (required)

A letter of recommendation (with the header or the person's institution), from supervisor if appropriate, otherwise from another person from the institution, or if not someone who can vouch for you and the quality of your work. Please note: If you have a supervisor, the support letter should come from your supervisor. If you don't have a supervisor, the letter of support should come from someone external to your institution/organisation

Document upload

Accepted formats: pdf