

Scaling Autonomous Integrated Global eDNA Observations (SAIGe) Microgrant Funding Procedures

OBJECTIVES

As part of the implementation of the SAIGe project, POGO/OBON is offering support for OBON-related Initiatives in the form of Microgrants. The Microgrants programme aims to accelerate eDNA monitoring by supporting projects such as autonomous sampling, standardising protocols, building data infrastructure, expanding reference libraries, and citizen science initiatives using eDNA kits.

The proposals should focus on identifying and filling gaps in biomolecular ocean observation by providing a platform for the members to discuss and produce recommendations for addressing these issues. Topics could include (but are not limited to): testing autonomous eDNA sampling alongside established monitoring programmes; setting up a coordinated regional data infrastructure hub; protocol standardisation training (related to ongoing OBON Projects' work linking FAIR eDNA standards to protocols and GBIF/OBIS published datasets); identifying and filling gaps in regional reference libraries; establishing eDNA sampling in a new biodiversity hotspot or ecosystem; harmonising ASV datasets from different studies in the region; regional biomolecular hackathon; distribution of eDNA kits (e.g. commercial eDNA sampling kits) for citizen science initiatives and/or to add eDNA sampling to existing time-series stations where physico-chemical parameters are being measured.

Outputs and impacts from SAIGe will be disseminated to different stakeholders via social media and traditional media; OBON/POGO newsletters; UN Ocean Decade communication platforms; publications; OBON annual meetings and a wide range of regional and international meetings.

Other sources of funding should be used where possible to complement the SAIGe funds. The Microgrants shall be for a fixed duration of 12 months.

PROCEDURE AND TIME SCALES

Dissemination of the Microgrant opportunities will be conducted through regional networks in the Western Pacific, as well as through the OBON global network.

Phase I proposal submission will follow a two-stage process:

- (1) Submission of Expression of Intent (**deadline 10 Dec 2025**)
- (2) Successful applicants invited to submit full proposal (**deadline 14 Jan 2026**).

Microgrants of different sizes (5K, 10K, 25K, and 50K GBP) on a range of marine biomolecular topics/applications, will be made available to not-for-profit organisations, prioritising the WESTPAC region and endorsed projects associated with OBON. Microgrant proposal selection will follow tried and tested procedures from POGO: typically, short proposals of 4-pages to cover: 1) Partners involved; 2) Intellectual Merit; 3) Challenges Addressed; 4) Innovations; 5) Relevance to OBON; 6) Timelines; 7) Budget Justification.

A call for proposals will be issued to OBON members and scientific community once a year for two years, including a template for applicants to complete and submit to the OBON Secretariat. **Priority will be given to proposals submitted and led by Members of the OBON and/or Western Pacific communities.**

For the purpose of this call, we define Western Pacific priority countries as those that are:

- [Members of the IOC Sub-Commission for the Western Pacific \(WESTPAC\)](#), or
- Pacific Island States that are not IOC-WESTPAC Members

AND listed on the [OECD DAC list of Overseas Development Assistance \(ODA\) recipients](#).

Short reports on Microgrant outcomes will be expected within 1 month after the end of the Microgrant term completion. Reports will be collated and summarised to create SAIGe interim and final reports for Mindereroo.

The timeline for 2025 Call (Phase I) and 2026 Call (Phase II) proposals is as follows:

Action	Time frame	
Agree on templates/procedures at OBON Annual Meeting in Hobart	2025	October
Secretariat announces opportunity and deadline for Phase I proposals	2025	24 Nov
Proponents inform Secretariat of intent to submit a proposal	2025	10 Dec
Proponents invited to submit full proposal, if successful	2025	12 Dec
Phase I application deadline	2026	14 Jan
Phase I proposals selected	2026	End Feb
Phase I Microgrant Agreements signed and funding initiated	2026	1 April
Phase II call for proposals	2026	1 May
Phase II deadline for expressions of intent to submit a proposal	2026	21 May
Phase II application deadline	2026	30 June
Phase II proposals selected	2026	31 July
Phase II Microgrant Agreements signed and funding initiated	2026	1 Sept
Phase I Interim reports to OBON	2026	30 Sep
Phase II Interim reports to OBON	2027	28 Feb
Phase I Final reports to OBON	2027	31 March
Phase II Final reports to OBON	2027	30 Sep

SELECTION PROCESS

OBON's Executive Committee, with support from the Scientific Advisory Committee, will oversee the grant selection process, post-grant administration, and SAIGe output dissemination.

Microgrant proposals should focus on identifying and filling gaps in biomolecular ocean observation by providing a platform for the members to discuss and address these issues. Topics could include (but are not limited to): testing autonomous eDNA sampling alongside established monitoring programmes; setting up a coordinated regional data infrastructure hub; protocol standardisation training (related to ongoing OBON Projects' work linking FAIR eDNA standards to protocols and GBIF/OBIS published datasets); identifying and filling gaps in regional reference libraries; establishing eDNA sampling in a new biodiversity hotspot or ecosystem; harmonising ASV datasets from different studies in the region; regional biomolecular hackathon; distribution of eDNA kits (e.g. commercial eDNA sampling kits) for citizen science initiatives and/or to add eDNA sampling to existing time-series stations where physico-chemical parameters are being measured.

The Scientific Advisory Committee and the Executive Committee (minus any members who have conflicts of interest) will review the proposals, according to a number of criteria, e.g. existing links to OBON projects or Working Groups, and/or Western Pacific region; relevance to OBON's Strategy and SAIGe priority areas; timeliness of proposal; adequacy of proposed deliverables, milestones, and indicators of success; adequacy of requested budget; adequacy of consortium (including geographic and gender balance).

Based on the SAC's recommendation, the ExCom will then decide on the proposal(s) to take forward, depending on the available budget. The availability (or otherwise) of other funding sources should not be a determining factor in the selection process.

REPORTING

The proposal leaders (or nominees) will be required to give presentations on progress on the OBON annual webinar series and at each OBON Annual Meeting (either in-person or in-line). It is anticipated that the OBON Annual Meetings may also provide opportunities for the Working Groups to meet. Interim reports will need to be submitted as per the above schedule. A final written report (including financial report) will be required no later than one month after the Microgrant has ended, showing clear impact. Expenditures must be backed up with copies of receipts. In addition, the leaders will be asked to provide short articles and images for the OBON newsletter.

FURTHER INFORMATION

If you have any queries please contact the OBON Programme Manager:

Ms. Luz H Rodriguez-Vargas

E-mail: lro@pml.ac.uk; please CC observing@obon-ocean.org in all correspondence to ensure that e-mails are picked up by a member of the team during the holiday period.