

# Conservation and Science Program

## Science Strategy Brief

The David and Lucile Packard Foundation is rooted in the belief in the power of science to improve the human condition and restore the health of the planet. In order to create real, long-term impact, we need solutions that are grounded in science and research, not speculation. The Science subprogram invests in developing timely knowledge that accelerates progress toward the Foundation's climate mitigation and ocean and land conservation goals.

### The Challenge

Scientists and engineers studying critical problems, such as climate change, are often not included in the dialogues where potential solutions are identified and chosen. Scientific knowledge is essential, but research produced for scientific peer review is often not articulated in forms useful to decision-making. In addition, the data needed for sound decisions in particular places and situations are often lacking. Knowledge that is timely and relevant, legitimate when the decision may be controversial, and produced in a transparent and inclusive way has the potential to inform decision-making. But that requires changes in the way knowledge is produced, bringing in users from the start.

### Our Strategy

Our use-inspired approach, *Linking Knowledge with Action*, connects scientists with decisionmakers to help tackle complex problems in climate mitigation and ocean and land conservation. Our grantees have the independence to produce concrete evidence and

objective knowledge that helps decisionmakers find practical solutions that work in the real world.

This approach includes three essential elements:

1. We engage both scientists and decision makers at the outset of a project.
2. Each project focuses research on questions that are likely to be useful to decision makers.
3. The engagement with scientists should help decision makers better understand the limits of knowledge and scope of uncertainties as they make their policy and management choices.

### Our Approach

We support scientific assessments, use-inspired research, and communication of science to decision-makers. Projects are required to have specific, measurable outcomes, achievable within one to three years. Normally, proposals are invited only when they are directly linked to the Foundation's Conservation and Science Program strategies.

Projects sometimes involve more than one grant, employing coordinated activities by several grantees and their partners. In such cases, some grantees will be actively engaged in a deliberate process of linking knowledge with action, while others may participate in that process, but not as agents of change themselves.

For example, a grantee conducting research may engage stakeholders in defining the questions to be addressed, but may not need to focus on how the findings will be used.

In the short-term, we expect to see research and synthesis inform decisionmaking, and scientists gain communications skills and engage with media and policy. Over the long-term, we hope to see science informing decision making routinely, leading to better outcomes.

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The Packard Foundation welcomes new project ideas, which are considered annually by staff. Letters of inquiry should meet the following criteria:

- **Impact.** Is there an opportunity for science to contribute significantly to a policy or management outcome? Would that opportunity be missed without the Foundation's support?
- **Focus.** Would the policy or management outcome support the strategies of the Conservation and Science Program?
- **Definable outcome.** Is the expected policy or management outcome clearly defined and ripe for intervention?
- **Short to medium timeframe.** Can the outcome be achieved over a period of one to three years?

Inquiries received by June 30 will be considered for funding in the following calendar year.

## Progress

In 2012, we completed a third-party evaluation to evaluate three years of *Linking Knowledge with Action* grantmaking. The full evaluation can be found on our website, but a few lessons we have learned include:

- *Linking scientists with users is not a simple matter.* We have required users of the research to be engaged and asking for the product. This has been difficult for scientists to understand and, in some instances has led to *pro forma* indications of user engagement.
- *Not all opportunities require user engagement.* Some research can be agenda setting without the engagement of decision makers. This type of research may be higher risk, and we may occasionally fund significant opportunities.
- *Mini-strategies may be more effective than individual grants.* Although we have had success with individual grants, for many of the issues we are addressing, several grants to different researchers or organizations may result in more progress than an individual grant.
- *Ad-hoc project identification may be suboptimal.* To date we have relied on the program officers' own networks to identify possible Science Subprogram grants. This increases the likelihood that a grant will align with a C&S subprogram but we are concerned that we may be missing opportunities for more influential investments.

## What We Don't Fund

The Science subprogram does not fund scientific research, unless decision-makers request specific questions be answered and plan use those findings within three years in a specific decision process. We

also do not fund education, including graduate student theses, or meetings and convenings.

### **Institutional Investments**

We also have longstanding commitments to support specific institutions that use the power of science to generate new knowledge about our Earth's natural systems and communicate that knowledge to the public. These commitments include:

- Monterey Bay Aquarium Research Institute (MBARI)
- Center for Ocean Solutions (COS)
- Communications Partnership for Science and the Sea (COMPASS)

- Aldo Leopold Leadership Program (ALLP)
- Partnership for Interdisciplinary Studies of Coastal Oceans (PISCO)

### **To Learn More**

For more information about the Packard Foundation's Science Subprogram and grantmaking, visit [www.packard.org/science](http://www.packard.org/science) or contact our team:

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