



HER OCEAN

HER OCEAN 2026–2027 Acceleration Program

Call for Proposals
April 20th – May 31st, 2026



MAR+Invest



Introduction

The Mesoamerican Reef Fund (MAR Fund), in partnership with New Ventures, announces the call for proposals for the **Her Ocean Accelerator 2026–2027**, a regional acceleration program designed to support women-led enterprises contributing to the conservation, resilience, and sustainable use of the Mesoamerican Reef (MAR).

Applications are open to women-led businesses operating at early growth and scaling stages, provided they demonstrate a positive environmental impact on the MAR and its dependent communities.

Background

The Mesoamerican Reef stretches over 1,000 kilometers across Mexico, Belize, Guatemala, and Honduras, and represents one of the most important marine ecosystems in the world. It generates significant economic value through tourism, fisheries, and coastal development, while supporting biodiversity and livelihoods across the region.

However, the reef faces increasing threats from climate change, overfishing, and pollution. At the same time, women entrepreneurs in the region face structural barriers to accessing acceleration programs, financing, and strategic networks.

MAR Fund addresses these gaps through two complementary initiatives: **MAR+Invest**, a blended finance mechanism that supports reef-positive businesses through acceleration, financial structuring, and access to capital, and **Women for the MAR**, which supports early-stage women-led ventures through capacity building, leadership, and network strengthening, particularly in sectors such as fisheries, tourism, and circular economy.

In this context, the Her Ocean Accelerator addresses these challenges by supporting women-led ventures that deliver market-based solutions for reef conservation and climate resilience, while strengthening their business performance and long-term sustainability.

About the Her Ocean Accelerator

The Her Ocean Accelerator is a **regional, six-month acceleration program** designed to strengthen and scale women-led enterprises contributing to the health and resilience of the Mesoamerican Reef.

The program combines:

- A structured acceleration methodology
- Tailored, one-on-one mentorship

- Business and climate-focused training
- Peer-to-peer learning and networking
- Access to catalytic grant funding

The program is specifically designed to address the barriers faced by women entrepreneurs in the region, while enhancing the **viability, scalability, and measurable impact** of their businesses.

Participants will go through a **six-month acceleration journey**, including:

- An in-person regional kick-off
- Individual diagnostics and work plans
- Continuous mentorship and workshops
- Climate change training
- Monitoring and evaluation of progress
- A Regional Exchange and closing event

Participant Profiles

The following participant profiles aim to balance diversity in business stages while ensuring all selected enterprises can effectively benefit from acceleration services, mentorship, technical assistance, and grant financing.

Priority Sectors

The program prioritizes enterprises addressing key threats to reef ecosystems and climate resilience in the MAR region, including:

- Sustainable fisheries and regenerative aquaculture/mariculture
- Regenerative tourism and ecotourism
- Coastal and marine ecosystem restoration
- Marine waste management and circular economy
- Wastewater treatment solutions
- Renewable energy applied to conservation
- Marine conservation technologies
- Blue carbon and conservation finance instruments
- Others addressing threats and climate resilience

Profile 1 – Early Growth Stage Enterprises (MVP Stage)

Description

This profile targets women-led enterprises with a validated product or service (Minimum Viable Product – MVP), including pilot or prototype evidence. These businesses are in early growth stages and seek to strengthen their business model, expand market access, and deepen environmental impact within the MAR ecosystem.

Enterprises must demonstrate interest in and alignment with the reduction of threats to the reef and/or activities that help people, ecosystems, and livelihoods adjust to the effects of climate change, enhance resilience, and reduce vulnerability to climate-related risks—particularly in coastal and marine contexts.

Companies may be formally or informally established but must demonstrate commitment to formalization and the capacity to benefit from acceleration support.

Key Characteristics

- A functional and validated MVP, with evidence of use by real customers, beneficiaries, or pilot users
- Early commercial traction, such as initial revenues, pilot clients, partnerships, or signed letters of intent
- A business model that is defined but still evolving, with clear pathways for refinement and scalability
- Active female leadership engaged in day-to-day operations and strategic decision-making
- A committed core team with defined roles and the capacity to execute and grow the business
- Initial evidence or a credible theory of change demonstrating positive environmental impact on MAR ecosystems
- Clear motivation to strengthen business fundamentals, including financial management, operations, and market strategy

Eligibility Criteria

- Women-founded and/or led (active leadership role)
- Located in Quintana Roo (Mexico), Belize, Guatemala, or Honduras
- Operational MVP, preferably with initial sales or clients
- Minimum team of two with defined and complementary roles
- Preferably legally registered (or in process of formalization)

- Business model addressing key reef or climate challenges
- Strong commitment to participation and learning (“coachability”)

Profile 2 – Scaling Stage Enterprises

Description

This profile is designed for women-led enterprises with validated business models, consistent revenues, and operational experience. These businesses aim to scale operations, strengthen financial and market strategies, and expand regional impact within the MAR ecosystem.

Participating enterprises are expected to demonstrate strong alignment with the reduction of threats to coral reefs and climate adaptation, including solutions that support people, ecosystems, and livelihoods in adjusting to climate change impacts, while enhancing resilience and reducing vulnerability to climate-related risks in coastal and marine environments.

Participants are expected to be formally established and capable of leveraging the program to accelerate growth and access investment or strategic partnerships.

Key Characteristics

- A validated and operational business model with documented performance, including measurable results and customer success cases
- Consistent revenue streams supported by recurring clients, contracts, or established commercial relationships
- Operational readiness to scale, including a structured team, defined processes, and minimum viable infrastructure
- Demonstrated ability to manage growth, with systems or practices in place for financial oversight, delivery, and operations
- Clear and credible strategy for expansion into new markets, geographies, or customer segments
- Strong female leadership with strategic vision, decision-making authority, and external representation capacity
- Demonstrable environmental impact, supported by data, indicators, or consistent implementation of impact-driven activities
- Readiness to engage with investors, partners, or blended finance opportunities

Eligibility Criteria

- Women-founded and/or led (active strategic role)
- Located in Quintana Roo (Mexico), Belize, Guatemala, or Honduras
- Established operations with recurring customers
- Consolidated team with defined and complementary roles
- Legally registered entity
- Demonstrated positive environmental impact
- Willingness to adapt and refine business model with external support

Criteria	Profile 1: Early Growth (MVP)	Profile 2: Scaling Stage
Women Leadership	Yes, active operational role	Yes, active strategic role
Age (18+)	Yes	Yes
Legal Registration	Preferred or in process	Required
Geographic Scope	Quintana Roo (Mexico), Belize, Guatemala, Honduras	Quintana Roo (Mexico), Belize, Guatemala, Honduras
Business Stage	MVP validated with evidence	Proven model with operational results
Revenue Generation	Initial revenues, pilot clients, partnerships, or letters of intent	Consistent revenues and recurring clients
Team Requirements	Minimum 2 members with defined roles	Consolidated team with defined and complementary roles

Business Plan	In development	Established
Environmental Impact (MAR)	Documented or projected	Demonstrable positive impact
Scalability Potential	Expected	Clear growth trajectory and expansion potential

Selection Considerations

The program will select between **8 and 10 women-led enterprises**. Profile distribution is indicative and may vary depending on the quality and diversity of applications.

Final selection will be conducted by a Selection Committee composed of MAR Fund, MAR+Invest, and New Ventures, with potential participation from partners with expertise in entrepreneurship, gender, climate solutions, and the MAR ecosystem.

Priority will be given to enterprises demonstrating:

- Strong alignment with environmental and gender objectives
- Clear potential for measurable impact on reef health and resilience
- Capacity to scale solutions within the MAR region

Acceleration Programme Phases

The Her Ocean Accelerator is structured as following:

1. Call for Proposals and Outreach (April–May 2026)

A regional call combined with targeted outreach to identify high-potential women-led enterprises, including those with limited access to traditional acceleration opportunities.

2. Selection Process (June 2026)

Applications will be evaluated and shortlisted candidates interviewed. A Selection Committee will choose the final cohort based on impact potential, business viability, and alignment with program objectives.

3. Program Kick-off and Onboarding (July 2026)

The program begins with a **three-day, in-person regional event**, designed to:

- Build cohort cohesion
- Introduce the methodology
- Align expectations
- Initiate diagnostics and mentor matching

4. Acceleration Phase (July 2026 – February 2027)

This is the core phase of the program and includes several integrated components:

a. Diagnostic and Work Plan Development

Each enterprise undergoes a structured diagnostic assessing:

- Business model and scalability
- Financial management
- Environmental and social impact
- Organizational capacity and gender integration, including women's participation in leadership and workforce, gender-inclusive policies and practices, and the extent to which products or services address gender-specific needs or reduce gender gaps

Based on this, each participant develops:

- A tailored work plan
- Strategic objectives
- OKRs (Objectives and Key Results)

b. Individual Mentorship

- Frequency: Every two weeks
- Format: 1-1 sessions (1-1.5 hours)
- Focus: Tailored support aligned with each venture's needs

Mentorship may cover:

- Market expansion
- Financial planning
- Organizational structure
- Fundraising strategies
- Sales and marketing

c. Group Workshops

- Minimum of 4 workshops
- Hybrid format (pre-work + live sessions)

Topics may include:

- Theory of Change
- Storytelling and pitch development
- Financial readiness
- Sales and go-to-market strategies

Workshops combine expert input, peer exchange, and practical application.

d. Climate Change Training

A dedicated training component delivered by a specialized expert to:

- Strengthen understanding of climate risks and opportunities
- Integrate climate adaptation and mitigation into business models
- Align solutions with long-term reef resilience

e. Peer-to-Peer Learning

- Monthly sessions
- Focus on experience sharing, problem-solving, and networking
- Builds a regional community of women entrepreneurs

f. Monitoring and Evaluation

Throughout the program:

- Progress is tracked against OKRs
- Deliverables are reviewed
- Mid-term and final satisfaction surveys are conducted

Outputs include:

- Business deliverables (e.g., strategy documents, financial plans)
- Progress reports per enterprise
- Program-level insights

5. Grant Component and Monitoring (2026–2027)

Selected enterprises may access **catalytic grant funding** to implement key business or impact activities, for example:

- Transparent selection and monitoring process
- Alignment with environmental and social safeguards
- Continuous tracking of business and impact indicators
- Others

Detailed information on the grant component and application process will be provided to selected candidates.

6. Regional Exchange and Closing Event (Q1 2027)

Participants will attend a **regional exchange event** to:

- Share experiences and lessons learned
- Strengthen regional networks
- Consolidate learning on climate and reef-related challenges

Why Join the Programme?

Selected participants will receive:

- Tailored, hands-on mentorship
- Structured business acceleration methodology
- Climate change training and integration tools
- Access to a strong regional and international network
- Peer learning and collaboration opportunities
- Participation in a regional exchange event
- Opportunity to apply for catalytic grant funding

Application Process

Applicants must:

- We have designed a two-step application process. The [first form](#) is a short version that allows us to better understand your initial project. Based on this information, we will contact selected participants directly and invite them to complete the full application form.

- The call for proposals will close on May 31st. However, **we strongly encourage you to submit the first form as soon as possible to begin the process.**
- Submit business, financial, and impact information requested in the second online application form.

Shortlisted applicants will be invited to interviews prior to final selection.

Selection Process

- Applications will be screened based on eligibility
- Shortlisted candidates will be interviewed
- Final selection will be conducted by a Selection Committee with

Up to 10 companies will be selected and notified no later than the week of June 21st, 2026.

Key Dates

- **Call opens:** April 20th, 2026
- **Application deadline:** May 31st, 2026
- **Selection process:** June 2026
- **Notification date of results (selected and non-selected applicants):** June 21st 2026
- **Acceleration Program Kick-off:** July 2026
- **Acceleration phase:** July 2026 – February 2027
- **Regional event:** Q1 2027

About the Alliance Members

2X Global

2X Global is a global industry body that advances gender-smart investing by mobilising capital to support women's economic empowerment and gender equality. Through its collaborative platform of investors, development finance institutions, and ecosystem partners, 2X Global promotes the adoption of the 2X Criteria, a shared framework that integrates gender considerations into investment decisions and strategies. The organisation drives systemic change by building market intelligence, fostering partnerships, and strengthening the pipeline of gender-lens investment opportunities across emerging and developed markets.

[\(2X Global\)](#)

Mesoamerican Reef Fund (MAR Fund)

MAR Fund is a private regional environmental fund established to support conservation and sustainable use of natural resources in the MAR as a single ecosystem and ecoregion. Its mission is to seek, secure and facilitate regional funding, foster partnerships and drive capacity building for the conservation, restoration, and sustainable use of marine and coastal ecosystems in the MAR. It was established by four pre-existing environmental funds, one from each MAR country: Protected Areas Conservation Trust (PACT) in Belize, Fundación para la Conservación de los Recursos Naturales y Ambiente en Guatemala (FCG) in Guatemala, Fundación Biosfera (FB) in Honduras, and Fondo Mexicano para la Conservación de la Naturaleza (FMCN) in Mexico. As part of its Blue and Regenerative Economy Program, MAR Fund implements two complementary initiatives: MAR+Invest, a blended finance mechanism that supports reef-positive businesses through acceleration, financial advisory, and access to capital; and Women for the MAR, which strengthens early-stage women-led ventures through capacity building and network development. MAR Fund is the convening agent that coordinates both the initiative's partners and the Technical Assistance Facility (MARTAF) for the MAR+Invest portfolio projects.

(www.marfund.org)

New Ventures

New Ventures (NV) is a company with the mission of empowering and catalyzing social and environmental entrepreneurship that seeks to provide solutions to the world's most pressing problems through innovative business models. Since 2004, New Ventures has approached this mission through four main axes: Acceleration, Financing, Ecosystem Building, and Innovative Finance. In MAR+Invest, New Ventures leads the Acceleration Programme and Transactional Services, strengthening and scaling reef-positive ventures in the MAR.

(<https://www.nvgroup.org/>)

Annex I

List of questions and information you will be asked to complete in the online platform as part of the initial, short application form:

No.	Question
1	Full name of the person completing the form
2	Write your phone number including the country code. Example: Mexico – +52 55 xxxx xxxx
3	Please write your email address
	Gender
4	Age
5	Which organization do you belong to?
6	What is your position?
7	If applicable, write your company's social media accounts
8	Please share your company's website
9	Where is your project located? – Mexico (Quintana Roo) – Belize – Guatemala

	<p>– Honduras</p> <p>– Other (Which?)</p>
10	If you selected “Other,” what is the location?
10.1	Do you have plans to expand to Mexico (Quintana Roo), Belize, Guatemala, or Honduras?
11	<p>How many years has your business been operating?</p> <p>– Less than one year → Business idea</p> <p>– Between 1 and 2 years</p> <p>– More than 2 years → Established business</p>
12	<p>How many years of sales do you have?</p> <p>– Less than 1 year → Early Stage</p> <p>– More than 1 year → Established business</p>

List of questions and information to be completed in the online platform as part of the second-stage application form. This section is for applicants who have submitted the initial form and have been contacted by the team for follow-up.

No.	Question
13	<p>Please describe your business model.</p> <p>A business model is a tool that clearly defines what you will offer to the market (your product or service), how you will do it, who you will sell it to, how you will reach your customers, how you will generate revenue, the stage of your technology, among other key elements.</p>

14	<p style="text-align: center;">What stage are you in?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Pre-sales (sporadic sales, prototype in development, not yet stable) – Sales (initial sales, recurring monthly but not yet stable) – Growth (monthly sales, stable sales, focus on growth) – Maturity (company with solid sales)
15	<p style="text-align: center;">Which industry does your project belong to?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Agriculture / Sustainable Aquaculture · Food or beverages · Consumer products · Cleaning services · Trading company · Beauty and cosmetics · Transport and logistics · Textile · Health · Hospitality / Restaurant / Tourism · Renewable energy · Education · Business consulting · Construction · Water treatment, ecotechnologies · Sustainable fishing · Renewable energies · Waste management · Emissions reduction technologies · Coral, mangrove, or seagrass restoration · Others</p>
16	<p style="text-align: center;">Describe the problem you aim to solve.</p>
17	<p style="text-align: center;">Who are your target customers?</p>
18	<p style="text-align: center;">What is your value proposition?</p>
19	<p style="text-align: center;">Do you have a minimum viable product?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">A minimum viable product (MVP) is a prototype of the product or service you want to launch, with basic features that allow you to present it to potential customers and test their interest.</p>
20	<p style="text-align: center;">Describe the implementation plan of your business model</p>
21	<p style="text-align: center;">Who are your strategic partners to launch the project?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">For example: government entities, co-managing organizations of protected natural areas, private sector companies (for example, a hotel), NGOs, among others.</p>

T9	Team
22	<p>Describe the management team</p> <p>Include names, roles, skills, previous experience, age, gender (man, woman, member of the LGBTQ+ community), among other relevant characteristics.</p>
23	<p>What percentage of your team are women? Please respond in the following format: xx% women. Example: 25% women.</p>
24	<p>Do you have employees hired by the company? How many?</p>
25	<p>Do you have temporary staff or volunteers? How many?</p>
26	<p>Does your team have experience in business and project implementation? Please describe</p>
T10	Financial Information
27	<p>Are you an individual, a legal entity, or an NGO?</p>
28	<p>Is your company registered with the tax authority in your country?</p>
28.1	<p>If yes, specify the legal structure</p>
28.2	<p>If yes, in which countries is your project (company) incorporated?</p>
29	<p>Have you identified potential revenue streams?</p>
30	<p>Do you have a budget to start the project?</p>
31	<p>Do you have initial sales?</p>

32	Have you received funding or investment to start the project?
32.1	If yes, how much funding or investment do you have?
32.2	<p>If yes, what type of funding do you have?</p> <p>– Loan – Investment – Grant – Award – Other</p>
T11	Funding Needs
34	Are you currently seeking funding or investment?
34.1	If yes, how much are you seeking?
34.2	<p>If yes, what type of funding are you looking for?</p> <p>– Loan – Investment – Grant – Other</p>
34.3	What will the funds be used for?
T12	Environmental and Social Impact
35	<p>Does your business model address any of the following issues directly or indirectly related to the Mesoamerican Reef?</p> <p>– Water quality and solid waste pollution</p> <p>– Overfishing</p> <p>– Climate change</p> <p>– Other</p>

36	<p>If you selected “Other,” can you link it to any of these issues?</p> <p>– Mass tourism (hospitality) · Agricultural runoff · Plastic pollution · Fossil energy · Unsustainable coastal agriculture and mariculture · Coral reef destruction · Sargassum · Other</p>
37	<p>If your answer was “climate change,” please select the subcategory</p> <p>– Renewable energy · Waste management · Sustainable agriculture · Emissions reduction technologies · Blue carbon · Mangrove and seagrass restoration · Coral restoration · Other</p>
38	<p>How does your company address the selected problem?</p> <p>Please describe in detail</p>
39	<p>Do you have a monitoring and evaluation process and/or a theory of change?</p>
39.1	<p>If yes, please describe</p>
40	<p>Do you have impact indicators?</p> <p>Impact indicators are metrics used to measure how the results generated contribute to solving the identified problem. For example: number of restored protected areas, annual carbon footprint reduction.</p>
40.1	<p>If yes, please list them</p>
41	<p>Does the implementation of your solution involve the participation of vulnerable groups (women, children, LGBTQ+ community), Indigenous groups, or traditional local communities?</p>
41.1	<p>If yes, indicate which ones</p>
41.2	<p>Have you identified any potential negative effects on these populations as a result of your solution?</p>

41.3	What is their role within your project or how do they benefit from it?
42	Describe how your solution will contribute to the social and economic development of families living in the community / natural protected area where the solution is implemented
43	Will the project be established in a protected natural area or in an area with high biodiversity? Which one?
43.1	If yes, do you have a plan to protect natural resources and biodiversity?
43.2	If yes, do you have permission from local authorities to implement your solution? From whom?
44	Does your project involve species of flora or fauna? Which ones (common name and scientific name)?
45	Additional comments
46	Why do you think the Her Ocean acceleration program will be valuable for your business, and what do you expect to gain from it?