**NORTH** **CAROLINA** **SEA** **GRANT**

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REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

November 11, 2020

TO: Deans, Directors, Department Heads, and Faculty

FROM: Susan White, Executive Director, North Carolina Sea Grant

**SUBJECT: Proposals sought for 2022-2024 North Carolina Sea Grant support**

North Carolina Sea Grant (NC Sea Grant) has initiated the two-stage request for proposal (RFP) process for the 2020–2022 Biennial Competitive Research Funding Cycle, which runs from Feb. 1, 2022, through Jan. 31, 2024. During the first stage of this process, we are accepting preproposals until Jan. 11, 2021.

**Program Background**

NC Sea Grant is one of 34 Sea Grant programs within the National Sea Grant College Program. The National Sea Grant College Program is housed within the Office of Ocean and Atmospheric Research, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and the U.S. Department of Commerce. The National Sea Grant College Program champions diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) by recruiting, retaining and preparing a diverse workforce, and proactively engaging and serving the diverse populations of coastal communities. Sea Grant is committed to building inclusive research, extension, communication, and education programs that serve people with unique backgrounds, circumstances, needs, perspectives, and ways of thinking. We encourage applicants from all backgrounds to apply for this competitive research opportunity.

NC Sea Grant supports a multidisciplinary, integrated program of applied research, outreach, and education that addresses coastal and marine issues important to the state of North Carolina. NC Sea Grant strives to fund applied research within four focus areas: **Healthy Coastal Ecosystems; Resilient Communities and Economies; Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture; and Environmental Literacy and Workforce Development**.

Proposed work must clearly align with one or more of these focus areas, be based within North Carolina, and target issues important to North Carolina’s coastal region. Please refer to the NC Sea Grant Strategic Plan for 2018–2023 ([*go.ncsu.edu/Sea-Grant-Plan*](http://go.ncsu.edu/Sea-Grant-Plan)) to help you ensure your project ideas align with these focus areas.

Successful NC Sea Grant projects are based on clear, testable questions/hypotheses. Inventory and monitoring-only projects as well as methods development projects are not appropriate for this funding. NC Sea Grant encourages multi-campus submissions, projects that foster graduate and undergraduate training, and that align with NC Sea Grant’s vision statement for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion ([*go.ncsu.edu/DEI*](https://ncseagrant.ncsu.edu/about-us/diversity-equity-and-inclusion/)).

We encourage proposals from investigators at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs), and/or from traditionally underserved and underrepresented communities; research teams that include co-leadership and strong collaboration with investigators affiliated at HBCUs, MSI, and/or underrepresented and underserved communities; projects that include training for undergraduate and/or graduate students at HBCUs, MSIs, and/or underrepresented and underserved communities.

Projects also must include a detailed outreach plan describing how results will be transferred to appropriate stakeholders. Projects that do not clearly identify users of results will not compete well. Applicants are highly encouraged to reach out to NC Sea Grant staff to help develop their proposal and outreach ideas. A list of NC Sea Grant staff and their expertise is available on the NC Sea Grant website ([*https://ncseagrant.ncsu.edu/about-us/our-team/*](https://ncseagrant.ncsu.edu/about-us/our-team/)).

Projects supported by NC Sea Grant run for two years, with an expected start date of Feb. 1, 2022. Funds are awarded on a yearly basis and are dependent upon the availability of federal funds, which have not yet been appropriated.

**Application Process**

NC Sea Grant utilizes a two-stage (preproposal and full proposal) RFP process for its Biennial Competitive Research Funding Cycle. The preproposal application is open now to any eligible investigator (see below) wishing to make a submission. Preproposals allow NC Sea Grant the opportunity to evaluate initial ideas. They do not require formal references and are not required to carry University signatures.

NC Sea Grant uses the proposal management system, eSeaGrant (accessible at [*go.ncsu.edu/ncesg*](https://eseagrant.ncseagrant.ncsu.edu/)) for all proposal (pre and full proposal) submissions. We are unable to accept emailed, faxed, and mailed proposals.

Submissions should use the supplied preproposal narrative form available within eSeaGrant. Each project participant also should submit a two-page Curriculum Vitae using the form available in eSeaGrant. We are unable to consider submissions that do not use these forms.

We do not request or accept Letters of Support at the preproposal stage. However, key partners and/or end-users should be clearly identified.

Deadline for preproposals is **5 p.m. Eastern Standard Time** on **Jan. 11, 2021**. Please do not wait to the last minute to start the process and/or submit your materials. We are unable to extend the deadline for any reason.

**Review Criteria**

Sea Grant uses a five-point rating system for all proposals: Excellent: top 100% (exhibits outstanding quality/relevance); Very Good 75-90%: (above average quality/relevance); Good: 50-75% (routine/average quality/relevance); Fair: 25-50% (marginal quality/relevance); Poor: bottom 25% (missed the mark, has major deficiencies, not relevant).

Preproposals are reviewed based on three aspects:

* Relevancy/need (Will the project help address a high priority coastal issue?) 50%;
* Approach (Are the proposed methods appropriate to complete the work?) 25%: and
* Transferability (Is it clear the results of the work will be provided to end-users, and do they want them?) 25%.

Reviewers of preproposals may include representatives of state and federal agencies, NC Sea Grant advisory board members, NC Sea Grant staff, and other coastal resource stakeholders. Based on this review stage, we will encourage a subset of investigators representing the most highly competitive preproposal submissions to submit full proposals.

Only investigators who submitted preproposals are eligible to submit full proposals. Teams that submitted preproposals but were not encouraged to submit full proposals still can do so. However, this discouragement represents the collective opinion of NC Sea Grant and our advisors that those proposals have a low probability of being funded. We will provide the application instructions and the schedule for full proposals after the preproposal stage is complete.

The planned NC Sea Grant Biennial Competitive Research Funding Cycle schedule is provided at the end of the document.

Full proposals will allow applicants to fully describe their ideas, methods and deliverables. Full proposals will be reviewed by at least three out-of-state peer reviewers as well as NC Sea Grant staff/advisors. This review stage evaluates full proposals against the following criteria:

* Relevancy/Need (Will the project help address a high priority coastal issue? Is this work needed?) 30%;
* Technical/Scientific merit (Are the proposed methods appropriate and scientifically valid to complete the work? Are clear objectives/hypothesis present? Is the project innovative?) 30%;
* Transferability/Outreach (Is it clear the results of the work will be provided to end-users through an appropriate medium to be shared broadly, and do they want them?) 30%;
* Qualifications of the applicants (Is the project team qualified to do the work?) 5%; and
* Budget (Are the requested funds appropriate for completion of the proposed work?) 5%. Reviewers use the same five-point rating system described above.

In addition, a technical review panel — consisting of out-of-state researchers and other experts with expertise in those disciplines broadly represented by the proposals under consideration — will evaluate the proposals and the peer reviews and then recommend proposals for funding to NC Sea Grant leadership. NC Sea Grant will submit the final list of projects recommended for funding to the National Sea Grant College Program based on the full review process, panel recommendations, available funding, and current program priorities. The National Sea Grant College Program Office reviews and provides final approval on the projects to be funded.

Applicants should be aware that not all highly rated projects will be funded. NC Sea Grant does not have enough funding to cover all the outstanding applications that we receive.

**Available Funding**

NC Sea Grant expects to fund 10 two-year research projects in this Biennial Competitive Research Funding Cycle. The maximum federal request per project is $120,000 over the two-year project period, and must be split evenly at $60,000 per year. Matching dollars (nonfederal) are required for this program at a 2:1 ratio ($2 federal to $1 nonfederal). Indirect charges are also required. All funding is reliant upon NC Sea Grant receiving federal funds that currently have not yet been appropriated. As such, no funding can be guaranteed. All funding levels, including the maximum amount per project and the number of projects, are subject to change. Applicants may be asked to revise scopes of work, start date, and budgets so that their projects align with available funding levels.

**Eligibility Information**

Investigators may submit only one preproposal as Principle Investigator (PI), but may be listed as a Co-PI on as many preproposals as they desire. PIs must be affiliated with an academic institution of higher education in North Carolina. Co-PIs and project collaborators can have any affiliation and can be based either within or outside North Carolina. Postdoctoral researchers and federal employees are not eligible to apply as PIs, but can be project participants.

Applicants with poor prior performance in completing progress and final reports on previous NC Sea Grant-funded projects may be deemed ineligible even if their current submission receives favorable reviews.

**Questions**

If you have questions, contact NC Sea Grant Deputy Director John Fear ([*jmfear@ncsu.edu*](mailto:jmfear@ncsu.edu)*)*. You also may contact me at [*snwhite3@ncsu.edu*](mailto:snwhite3@ncsu.edu). Due to NC Sea Grant’s current teleworking situation, email is the preferred contact method. Phone and Zoom calls, can be arranged if needed. This proposal call is available at [*ncseagrant.ncsu.edu/core-funding*](https://ncseagrant.ncsu.edu/core-funding).

**Funding Schedule** (subject to change)

Nov. 09, 2020 Preproposal call released

Jan. 11, 2021 Preproposals due

Jan – Feb 2021 (relevance reviews obtained)

March 1, 2021 Full proposal encouragements sent

April 19, 2021 Full proposals due

Apr – June 2021 (peer reviews obtained)

July 12, 2021 Peer reviews sent to technical review panel

Week of Aug. 2, 2021 Technical review panel meets to recommend full proposals

Aug. 30, 2021 Funding decisions distributed

Sept. 30, 2021 Revised proposals due

Feb. 1, 2022 New projects start