



NORTH CAROLINA SEA GRANT

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REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

November 14, 2022

TO: Deans, Directors, Department Heads, and Faculty
FROM: Susan White, Executive Director, North Carolina Sea Grant
SUBJECT: **Proposals for 2024–2026 North Carolina Sea Grant support**

North Carolina Sea Grant (NC Sea Grant) has opened a two-stage request for proposals (RFP) for the 2024–2026 Biennial Competitive Research Funding Cycle, which runs from February 1, 2024, through January 31, 2026.

During the first stage of this process, we are accepting preproposals until ~~5 p.m. ET on January 13, 2023~~. (Extended to 5 p.m. ET on February 3, 2023)

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 and NC Sea Grant champion diversity, equity, inclusion, justice, and accessibility (DEIJA) by recruiting, retaining, and preparing a diverse workforce, as well as proactively engaging and serving 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 in 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 2024–2027](https://go.ncsu.edu/the-plan) (go.ncsu.edu/the-plan) to help 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 for [diversity, equity, inclusion, justice and accessibility](https://www.ncsu.edu/DEIJA) (go.ncsu.edu/DEIJA).

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

Projects 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. We encourage applicants to reach out to NC Sea Grant staff to help develop applicants' ideas for proposals and outreach. A list of NC Sea Grant staff and their expertise is available [here](https://ncseagrant.ncsu.edu/about-us/our-team/) (ncseagrant.ncsu.edu/about-us/our-team/).

These projects will run for two years, with an expected start date of Feb. 1, 2024. Funds are awarded on a yearly basis, depending upon the availability of federal funds, which have not yet been appropriated.

Application Process

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

The submission system includes the **required templates for narratives** for preproposals and full proposals. These templates are also available [here](https://ncseagrant.ncsu.edu/core-funding) (ncseagrant.ncsu.edu/core-funding). If you do not use these approved forms, we will be unable to consider your application.

NC Sea Grant utilizes a **two-stage RFP process** for our Biennial Competitive Research Funding Cycle.

Stage 1: Preproposals

The preproposal application period is open now to any eligible investigator (see below). Preproposals allow researchers to present their ideas to NC Sea Grant and our advisors with minimal time commitment. Preproposals do not require formal references and are not required to carry University signatures. We do not request or accept letters of support at the preproposal stage. However, preproposals should identify key partners and/or end-users.

A complete preproposal application package includes:

- 2-page Curriculum Vitae (CV) for each project participant
- a completed [preproposal narrative form](#)

The deadline for preproposals is ~~5 p.m. ET on January 13, 2023~~. **Extended to 5 p.m. ET on February 3, 2023.**

Please do not wait until the last minute to start the process and/or submit your materials. We are unable to extend the deadline for any reason.

Only investigators who submit preproposals will be eligible to submit full proposals.

Stage 2: Full Proposals

Full proposals will allow applicants to wholly describe their ideas, methods, and deliverables. Applicants will submit full proposals through the same [eSeaGrant](#); portal they used during the preproposal stage. To access all materials to submit a [full proposal](#), login to eSeaGrant and click “Add Proposal.”

A complete full proposal application package includes:

- **signed full proposal narrative template (includes your university’s letter of intent),**
- **CV for each project participant (2-page limit),**
- **current and pending support for each participant,**
- **budget and budget justification forms,**
- **project timeline,**
- **a data management plan (2-page limit), and**
- **a completed abbreviated environmental compliance questionnaire.**

Letters of support from stakeholders (if appropriate for your project) may be submitted through the portal as part of your application. **These letters must be received prior to the submission deadline.** We are unable to consider proposals that do not adhere to formatting instructions and that lack campus approvals and signatures.

Applicants submitting full proposals that involve the use of human test subjects (including surveys) should state so clearly in their application. These proposed research activities require approval of the applicant’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) before such research can proceed. Applicants are responsible for obtaining IRB approval from their institution and providing that documentation to NC Sea Grant prior to any Sea Grant-funded human subject testing. Proposals intending to use human test subjects should specify clearly in the timeline approximately when IRB approval will be obtained and when the testing is expected to occur. All funded projects that involve animal use/testing will require institutional animal care and use committee (IACUC) approval.

The anticipated deadline for full proposals is **5 p.m. ET on April 21, 2023**. This date and time will be confirmed/adjusted as needed when the encouragement/discouragement emails are disseminated. The portal will automatically close at the deadline. Please do not wait until the last minute to start your application process and/or submit your materials. We are not able to extend the deadline for anyone 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? Does the project address the NC Sea Grant Strategic Plan and vision for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Justice and Accessibility) 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 often include representatives of state and federal agencies, NC Sea Grant advisory board members, NC Sea Grant staff, and other coastal resource stakeholders. Based on their review, 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.

Full proposals will be reviewed by at least three external peer reviewers. This review stage evaluates full proposals against the following criteria, using the same five-point rating system as the preproposals:

- Relevancy/Need (Will the project help address a high priority coastal issue? Is this work needed? Does the project address the NC Sea Grant Strategic Plan and vision for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Justice and Accessibility) 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%.

A scientific review panel — consisting of external researchers and other experts with expertise in disciplines broadly represented by the proposals under consideration — will evaluate proposals and peer reviews, 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 Office reviews and provides final approval on the projects to be funded.

NC Sea Grant may forward (or not forward) a proposal for funding out of rank based on the following criteria:

- balance/distribution of funds across academic disciplines RFP focus areas, and geography of work location;
- availability of funding;
- program-specific objectives; and
- poor performance of a principal investigator in completing progress and final reports on previous NC Sea Grant-funded projects.

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 nine *two-year* research projects in this Biennial Competitive Research Funding Cycle. The maximum federal request per project is \$150,000 over the two-year project period, and it must be split evenly at \$75,000 maximum per year. You do not have to request the maximum amount. Matching dollars (nonfederal) are required for this program at a 2:1 ratio (\$2 federal to \$1 nonfederal). Indirect charges are not limited.

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. If federal funding is not received, NC Sea Grant may not fund any proposals out of this RFP.

Eligibility Information

Investigators may submit only one preproposal as Principal Investigator (PI), but may be listed as a Co-PI on as many preproposals as they desire. PIs must be affiliated with an accredited 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.

Reminder: Only investigators who submit preproposals will be eligible to submit full proposals.

Questions: If you have questions, contact NC Sea Grant Deputy Director John Fear at jmfear@ncsu.edu. You also may contact Executive Director Susan White at snwhite3@ncsu.edu. Email is the preferred method of contact. Phone and Zoom calls also can be arranged, if needed.

This RFP is available at ncseagrant.ncsu.edu/core-funding.

Funding Schedule (subject to change)

Nov. 4, 2022	Preproposal call released
Jan. 13, 2023	Preproposals due
Jan – Feb 2023	(relevance reviews obtained)
March 13, 2023	Full proposal encouragements sent
April 21, 2023	Full proposals due
Apr – June 2023	(peer reviews obtained)
July 12, 2023	Peer reviews sent to technical review panel
Week of Aug. 14, 2023	Technical review panel meets to recommend full proposals
Aug. 31, 2023	Funding decisions distributed
Sept. 22, 2023	Revised proposals due
Feb. 1, 2024	New projects start