

**Northeast Sea Grant College Consortium in Partnership with the U.S. Department of Energy and NOAA Northeast Fisheries Science Center**

**Advancing Research for the co-existence of Fishing, Coastal Communities and Regional Ocean Renewable Energies**

**Guidelines for Preparing Pre-proposals and Full Proposals for the 2022-2024 Funding Period**

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**Introduction**

The Northeast Sea Grant Consortium (NESGC), consisting of the New York, Connecticut, Rhode Island, MIT, Woods Hole, New Hampshire, and Maine Sea Grant College Programs, in partnership with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s (NOAA)’s Northeast Fisheries Science Center (NEFSC) and the U.S. Department of Energy’s (DOE) Wind Energy Technologies Office and Water Power Technologies Office (Funders), is seeking proposals to improve understanding of the effects on coastal communities including the fishing industry by ocean renewable energy (ORE) (e.g., wind and hydrokinetic [wave, current, and tidal energy]) development in the U.S. Northeast (New York Bight through the Gulf of Maine).

Through this competition, we seek to catalyze social science and technology research in the Northeast that will further our understanding of the effects of ORE on community resilience and economies. Through this Request for Proposals (RFP), the NESGC and its funding partners are providing a regional approach to supporting objective research on ORE across stakeholders, including developers, communities, fishers, etc.

Successful research proposals will undertake collaborative, multidisciplinary, and/or innovative approaches with results that will be applicable and/or useful to stakeholders and users throughout the Northeast region. ORE development is an issue of regional importance, and research approaches that incorporate and address specific regional aspects and applicability of the topic are encouraged.

The National Sea Grant College Program (NSGCP) 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. As part of this, NESGC encourages applicants to recruit and engage with students, fellows, and research team members from underrepresented racial and ethnic groups, individuals with disabilities and individuals from economically or educationally disadvantaged backgrounds that have inhibited their ability to pursue a career in STEM.

Interested parties are invited at this time to submit pre-proposals to the NESGC as a single PDF file to Massachusetts Institute of Technology Sea Grant College Program (MITSG) eSeaGrant portal no later than **5:00 p.m. ET on May 14, 2021**. Late or incomplete proposals will not be reviewed.

### **Important Dates and Details**

- **Pre-proposal Due: May 14, 2021 by 5pm** via MITSG's eSeaGrant online portal, [eSeaGrant](#).
- **Full Proposals Due: July 16, 2021 by 5pm** via MITSG's online portal, [eSeaGrant](#).
- **Eligibility:** This research competition is open to faculty and staff at any public or private research or higher education institution in the six states of the NESGC (i.e. NY, CT, MA, NH, ME, RI) who are eligible to submit a proposal according to their home institution guidelines. Co-PIs may be from outside of the NESGC states. International (non-U.S.) partner organizations may not receive federal funding. Federal agencies and staff may not receive salary support as part of this competition. However, they can serve as uncompensated partners or co-Principal Investigators. Federal labs and offices can also make available specialized expertise, facilities, or equipment to applicants but cannot be compensated under this competition for their use, nor can the value of such assets be used as match. See FAQs found at the link: <https://seagrant.noaa.gov/Funding>. Sea Grant employees may not receive funding as part of this competition but can be engaged in proposal activities.
- **Requested Funding:** Budget requests may not exceed \$100,000 annually, for a maximum funding request of \$100,000 for one year or \$200,000 for two years. Proposals requesting lower levels of support are welcome and will receive full consideration. A 50% non-federal match is required for all proposals.
- **Submitting:** Proposals must be submitted through MITSG's eSeaGrant portal; proposals submitted to other Sea Grant programs will not be considered.

### **Duration and Funding**

Proposed activities may be one or two years in duration, for the period between February 1, 2022 and January 31, 2024. Proposal budgets should include all direct and indirect costs. Project scope should reflect available funds. It is anticipated that approximately \$1 million will be available to support these projects contingent on FY2022 and FY2023 agency funding. Partners reserve the right not to select any proposals if proposals are not responsive to the RFP and Research Priority Areas as deemed by the selection criteria.

## Research Priority Areas

Proposals that are responsive to one or more of the following three Research Priority Areas will be given full consideration. Proposals that address one or more of the topical research areas within each priority area are encouraged. However, proposals are not limited to the topical examples as long as the research would address a priority area in an innovative way.

### Fisheries & Fishing Community Resilience

**Purpose:** Advance research on the interactions of fisheries and fishing communities with offshore wind energy. A fishing “community” defined here refers to the fishing industry sector and a community/town that is dependent or engaged in fishing. The focus is on advancing needed socio-economic research to inform communities and other decision-makers. Research might focus on marine resource management strategies, impact mitigation, and socio-economic analysis to facilitate the co-existence of offshore wind and fishing communities.

*Topical research areas include, but are not limited to:*

- Apply collaborative and/or regional socio-economic research approaches and methods (e.g., structured surveys, case studies, predictive models) to identify, quantify, and find solutions to fishing community needs, concerns, opportunities and/or priorities when considering all aspects of offshore wind development, including but not limited to site selection, site characterization/monitoring, construction, operations and maintenance (O&M), and decommissioning, and shoreside infrastructure needs.
- Collaboratively develop tools to assist fishing communities to integrate local needs (e.g., infrastructure, business expansion, workforce development, and community engagement) with offshore wind planning and development.

### Coastal Community and Economic Resilience

**Purpose:** Advance research on the interactions of communities with ocean renewable energy (offshore wind and marine hydrokinetic [wave, current, and tidal energy]). The focus is on informing communities and decision-makers about ocean energy development. Research might focus on impact mitigation, socio-economic analysis, or development for multiple end users. Communities can include but are not limited to, the fishing industry and associated services, fishing communities/towns, tourism, maritime transport, energy, municipalities, and the public.

*Topical research areas include, but are not limited to:*

- Examine how communities effectively integrate energy planning at regional-scales in the context of other community and ecosystem resilience goals as well as the potential regulatory and social license challenges.
- Develop knowledge, tools, technical capacities, collaborative approaches, and mechanisms that align with community needs considering all aspects (e.g., planning, policy, and development processes) of ocean energy development (e.g. working waterfront, transmission lines, substations, and turbines) including construction, operations & maintenance, and decommissioning.
- Develop tools and technologies that could be used at a regional planning level to measure benefits and impacts of food and energy production, (e.g., social and cultural costs and benefits (e.g., direct and indirect)) to be realized and could be implemented for collective economic profit and minimization of cost.

## Multi-use Marine Activities

Purpose: Research that enhances understanding and improves co-location/multi-use management of ocean renewable energy development and other marine activities and end-user applications, including but not limited to commercial and recreational fishing, non-grid connected energy systems, tourism, offshore aquaculture, and ocean observing. Co-location/multi-use is defined as an intentional joint use of space and resources by two or more users in close geographic proximity.

*Research topics should consider anthropogenic and environmental factors that influence multi-use potential, including but not limited to:*

- Advance multi-use of ocean structures and other marine activities through research design(s) (e.g., application of control sites, approaches to allow continued fishing among other marine uses), policies and strategies (e.g., legal, social acceptance, and other services), and/or technological solutions (e.g., sensors, inspection, and servicing).
- Develop adaptive approaches for synergistic activities for co-location, including access to fishing ground or locations among offshore infrastructure.
- Assess multi-use activities for economic risk, safety, social acceptance, and/or environmental justice values through suitable analyses.
- Study conditions and dependencies (e.g., seabed type, habitat condition and availability, marine resource abundance and availability, ocean conditions, distance to shore, foundation/technology, existing use density and dependence) to facilitate co-location of uses (e.g., aquaculture, fishing, and ocean renewable energy).
- Develop spatial analyses and methods that may support technological, data collection, and tool development and/or multi-use planning processes within ocean energy structures.

## Engagement and Sea Grant ORE Extension Team

Because of the regional nature of the ORE topic and impacts as well as the accelerated development of ORE within the Northeast, PIs will be expected to work closely with the Sea Grant ORE Team (ORE Team) to enhance stakeholder relevance and practical application of the funded research. The ORE Team includes a representative from each participating NESGC program including the Rhode Island Sea Grant Legal Program at Roger Williams University and representatives from the funding partners, and has the responsibility of assisting the research teams by implementing actions including, but not limited to communicating research results and assisting in connecting researchers with stakeholders. Funded PIs will be required to attend three meetings during the course of the period of performance. Please contact Rob Vincent ([rvincent@mit.edu](mailto:rvincent@mit.edu)) for questions on how the ORE Team should be integrated into the full proposal's "Stakeholder Relevance and Potential for Practical Application" and "Expected Outcomes and Impacts" sections described on pp. 9-10.

## Pre-proposal Requirements

A pre-proposal is required for this competition. Late or incomplete pre-proposals will not be considered and full proposals will be returned without review to the PI(s) if a pre-proposal has not been submitted. The pre-proposal should clearly state which Research Priority Area(s), and topic(s) if applicable, the proposed work addresses. Pre-proposals should clearly indicate all PIs and co-PIs involved, and any collaborating Sea Grant programs. PIs are encouraged to discuss their research focus and objectives with relevant Sea Grant staff including extension, legal or communication specialists.

The pre-proposal must be single-spaced in Times New Roman 12-point font or equivalent with 1-inch margins.

The pre-proposal will consist of a single PDF file consisting of the following information:

- a one-page cover sheet stating:
  - the project title;
  - the names, titles, affiliations, and contact information (email and phone number) of the Principal Investigator (PI) and co-PIs;
  - a total federal request and cost share (overall and per year);
  - (optional) up to three suggested reviewers (name, affiliation, e-mail address), and
- a two-page project description including:
  - brief summary of the project, including objectives, methodologies, and significance;
  - relevance to the RFP, including specifically stated Research Priority Areas and topics if applicable;
  - brief description of research relevance to stakeholder groups and its potential for practical application and societal benefits;
  - regional impact, specifically how the research would be beneficial on a regional (i.e. U.S. Northeast) scale or beyond.

## Pre-proposal Submittal and Evaluation

Pre-proposals must be clearly identified as such on the cover page and submitted to MITSG via their online portal, [eSeaGrant](#) no later than **5:00 p.m. on May 14, 2021**. Please contact MITSG's Research Program Director Mary Newton Lima ([mnewlim@mit.edu](mailto:mnewlim@mit.edu)) for access.

All pre-proposals will be assessed for compliance with required criteria. Late or incomplete pre-proposals will not be considered. Pre-proposals that are judged to comply with the stated standards will be read and evaluated by each member of the Pre-proposal Review Committee comprised of the Sea Grant Program Directors of the NESGC states and representatives of the funding partners. Committee members will score each pre-proposal using the scoring criteria outlined below.

Scoring Criteria:

- 5 - Excellent (see full description on p. 14)
- 4 - Very Good (see full description on p. 14)
- 3 - Good (see full description on p. 14)
- 2 - Fair (see full description on p. 14)
- 1 - Poor (see full description on p. 14)

Evaluation will be based on:

- responsiveness to the RFP and Research Priority Areas (25%)
- scientific / technical merit (25%)
- anticipated societal benefits from the results (25%)
- applicability of results across the Northeast region (25%)

The Pre-proposal Review Committee will meet to discuss and rank the proposals according to the evaluation criteria noted above to ‘Encourage’ or ‘Do Not Encourage’ PIs to submit a full proposal. In determining the final list of Encouraged proposals, the committee will also consider whether or not selected projects represent the full range of strategic priorities. Note all PIs that submitted a pre-proposal are allowed to submit a full proposal regardless of the final pre-proposal rating. However, PIs of pre-proposals not encouraged that decide to submit a full proposal should be aware that their chance of funding success is low given the typical volume of proposals received and funding available.

## Full Proposal Requirements

NESGC will inform all PIs as to whether pre-proposals are Encouraged or Discouraged to move to the full proposal stage by June 3, 2021. Full proposals must be submitted to MITSG through the [eSeaGrant online portal](#) by 5:00 pm ET on July 16, 2021. Full proposals will not be accepted unless a reviewed pre-proposal was previously submitted by May 14, 2021.

## Full Proposal Components

All documents must be uploaded into the corresponding form in eSeaGrant as PDF files. All uploaded materials must be in Times New Roman 12-point font or equivalent with one-inch margins and may not be more than single spaced. The components are:

- **Sea Grant 90-4 Budget Worksheets**
- **Project Summary: Objectives, Methodology, Rationale, Data Management Plan Summary**
- **Proposal Narrative:** 12 pages maximum. Figures and tables are included in the page limit. A list of collaborators and references should be included in the narrative but do not count towards the 12-page limit.
- **Data Management Plan (2 pages max)**
- **Curriculum Vitae or biosketch (2 pages max per CV)**
- **Additional Personnel**
- **Current and Pending Support**
- **Focus Areas and Classifications**
- **Letters of Support and/or Collaboration with ORE Team**
- **Letters of Commitment for Cost Share or Sub-Award**
- **NEPA Short Form**

If applicants have questions about any facet of proposal preparation, do not hesitate to ask us for help. Content, format, or schedule questions should be directed to Mary Newton Lima ([mnewlim@mit.edu](mailto:mnewlim@mit.edu)). Budget questions should be directed to Caroline Johnston ([carolin@mit.edu](mailto:carolin@mit.edu)). Questions about stakeholder engagement and/or the ORE extension team should be directed to Rob Vincent ([rvincent@mit.edu](mailto:rvincent@mit.edu)). Communications questions should be directed to Lily Keyes ([keyes@mit.edu](mailto:keyes@mit.edu)).

The rest of this section describes the requirements for each component listed above.

### **Sea Grant 90-4 Budget Worksheets and Justifications (Required)**

Budget worksheets are required for each year of the project. Separate worksheets are required for each year of every subaward. Budget justifications must provide enough detail to allow NOAA Grants Management personnel to understand how funding will be spent. Applicants are strongly encouraged to begin the budget preparation process early. If the budget is incorrect, it may lead to the proposal being removed from further consideration. The budget must include all direct (including fringe benefits) and indirect costs of the project. Be sure to indicate which salaries and wages are subject to indirect costs, and those not subject to indirect costs on the worksheets. Applicants must budget for all costs of the project, including anticipated salary and wage increases for year 2 and costs of any extension, communications, and publication activities.

Budgets should include travel funds to MIT in Year 2 for PIs to participate in a meeting with the Sea Grant ORE Team as well as associated engagement plan costs. Further details on the scope of the meeting, as well as 2 other (virtual) meetings are described below.

Detailed information on how to fill out the budget worksheets can be found on the Budget Instructions tab in the Budgets forms of eSeaGrant. Applicants will need to fill out an online budget worksheet for each year for the project, and each year of each subaward.

### Budget Justifications

Budget justifications must be prepared for each budget category (e.g., Salaries and Wages, Fringe Benefits). This feature is integrated into the eSeaGrant online tool and justifications must be entered as line by line descriptions. Failure to include complete budget justifications, or if the budget justifications do not match the budget worksheet, may result in the proposal being removed from the competition. Subcontracts must have their own budget justifications.

Please refer to the NOAA Grants Management Division's (GMD) [Budget Narrative Guidance](#) and eSeaGrant's budget justification examples for complete guidance on developing the budget section with proper justification.

### Home Institution Approval

Applicants should contact the appropriate office of their home institution to obtain the current rates for fringe benefits and indirect costs. In addition, the PI's home institution must review and approve the proposal's budget, including matching fund estimates, prior to submission to MITSG in eSeaGrant.

### Matching Funds

A 50% match from non-federal sources is required for this competition. For example, if applicants are requesting \$100,000 from NESGC, then the budget must include at least \$50,000 from qualified, non-federal matching sources. Applicants may not under-match in year one and over-match in year two. Matching funds are difficult to modify later and are a firm commitment. All PIs are asked to pay extra attention to cost share sources and documentation.

The source of matching funds must be specified in the budget. Acceptable matching sources are specific to each submitting institution; however, sources of matching funds often include but are not limited to: private foundation grants, state and local government contracts, co-sponsorship by industry, salary, waived tuition, equipment, supplies, cash, and in-kind contributions. Examples of in-kind contributions include salaries, wages / benefits of investigators and students working on the project, expendable supplies and equipment, ship time, and donated supplies, space or equipment. Foreign government funds also qualify, but **funds from federal sources cannot be used as matching funds**. Note that matching funds from an external source require a letter of commitment as described below.

Matching funds require an authorized letter, certified/signed by the person with authority over the source funds (typically not the PI), and must be clear as to the specific dollar amount of matching funds being provided as well as the source (where the funds are from). Documentation must be consistent with the budget and budget justification. Multiple sources of matching funds will require a separate certification for each source. Applicants may submit these letters on the **Letters of Commitment for Cost Share or Sub-Award** form in eSeaGrant.



## **Project Summary: Objectives, Methodology, Rationale, Data Management Plan Summary (Required)**

Please provide a brief (1-2 sentence) summary of each of the following: Objectives, Methodology, Rationale, and Data Management Plan that will act as an abstract for the proposal.

The “Objectives” section should state concisely what the investigator will undertake to do. Stated objectives should enable later comparison to project results. The objectives should begin with the word “To”, followed by a verb. The most appropriate verbs for Sea Grant are: *test* (the hypothesis), *develop*, *provide*, *determine*, *isolate*, *characterize*, *identify*, *restore*, *implement*. Less desirable but sometimes appropriate verbs are: *promote*, *conduct*, *analyze*, *apply*, *investigate*, *examine*, *describe*. Do not use verbs like *study*, *consider*, and *continue*, since failure to do these is not determinable.

For the “Methodology” section, in concise outline form, with an optional one or two sentence preface, state the methodology to be used. Specific questions that an interested person would ask should be answered (such as which stressors, what species of shellfish, what kind of model?).

The “Rationale” section should make a concise statement of why this problem or opportunity is being addressed. The project need not promise to fully solve a problem, but it should be shown as a logical step toward a solution. Long involved background statements should be avoided. Potential users of the research results, if they have been identified, should be stated here.

## **Full Proposal Narrative (Required)**

The full proposal narrative must be single-spaced using Times New Roman and no smaller than 12 point font or equivalent. Each page should have 1-inch margins all around. Include page numbers. Write out acronyms on first use. The narrative must not exceed 12 pages. This maximum length includes tables and graphics but excludes references.

The following tips, from the National Science Foundation to proposal writers, apply equally well to Sea Grant:

- Try to make your proposal convey your own enthusiasm for the concept and for the approach.
- Make sure that the proposal is technically perfect. Comply completely with the guidelines. Reread your proposal as if you were reviewing someone else’s proposal. Look for flaws and correct them, including spelling and grammar.
- Ask yourself (a) if all the budget items requested are necessary to conduct the project and (b) if the research would be substantially diminished if any item were deleted. If the answer to either question is “no,” then do not request funds for that budget item. Do not pad your budget request.

The Project Proposal Narrative must include the following sections (it is suggested but not required to use section headers identified below):

**Problem or Opportunity** - Describe the background for the proposal. Evaluate existing knowledge and demonstrate how related work, past and present, supports this proposal. Explain why this is an important topic to research. Avoid relying solely on technical terminology; for instance, supplement scientific names with common names. Refer to supporting information with appropriate citations.

**Relevance to RFP Research Priority Area(s)** – How does the research align with the Research Priority Areas and topics? Please be specific.

Objectives - State the overall purpose of the proposal: What is the question the proposal plans to address or the outcome(s) that will be achieved? Show clearly how the goals of the project are related to the needs described earlier. Be concrete and specific. Clearly state the proposal's hypothesis(es). List the project objectives. Present them in the same order in which they appear in the "Objectives" section of the Project Summary.

Approach and Methodology – Describe the overall approach to be taken to address the opportunity or problem identified. Discuss in detail the experimental design and the procedures that will be used to achieve the specific aims of the project. Identify specific tasks and describe the methods necessary to accomplish each task. Include the means by which the data will be analyzed and interpreted.

Stakeholder Relevance and Potential for Practical Application –PIs will be required to attend three (3) internal meetings organized by the ORE Team to enhance stakeholder relevance and practical application. Key stakeholders may attend these meetings when appropriate. The three meetings, held: 1) prior to research initiation, i.e., at the beginning of the funding period; 2) at the halfway point; and 3) at the completion of the research period, will allow the researchers and the ORE Team to discuss findings, obstacles, and opportunities for integrating research results into decision making and other appropriate forums. Upon completion of the research, researchers will review final communication projects that describe research results and have been developed by the ORE Team, to ensure accuracy.

To this end, proposals should describe how the research has regional stakeholder relevance and practical application. They should define the regional stakeholders (beneficiaries) of the project, and indicate whether PIs on the project and these beneficiaries have been in communication to develop the project ideas and objectives. Include letters of collaboration where appropriate and be sure to budget for associated engagement plan costs where applicable.

State what is the need and potential benefits and application accruing to the identified stakeholders as well as other individuals, organizations, or society in general and regionally from the application of the project's results. Explain the proposal's approach for engaging with and disseminating findings and/or products to relevant stakeholders throughout the Northeast region and outside of the scientific community. Describe how the ORE Team efforts will be a part of this plan.

Expected Outcomes and Impacts – Identify effects or changes that might be expected from the outcomes of the research and when these impacts or outcomes might be expected. Estimate the time frame in which the results would make a difference to project beneficiaries. Describe how the results of the project may be used by others.

Identify how results serve to advance the NESGC's mission to improve the translation of scientific information into knowledge for use in the marine environment. Further, please describe the means by which Sea Grant or others could evaluate and disseminate the results of the project. State what the project's potential benefits are with respect to individuals, organizations, and/or society in general. What effects or changes might be expected? When might these effects or outcomes be expected? Communicating with NESGC Sea Grant extension and legal representatives to discuss research focus and methods and determine these outcomes and impacts is encouraged and should be stated in the proposal.

Broader Societal Benefits – Describe how the proposed research will benefit coastal communities especially focused on stakeholders from underrepresented or underserved communities.

Project Management – Describe the steps PIs will take to coordinate the project with project team members and collaborators and with interested parties and the NESGC. Describe activities to foster engagement and transfer of knowledge or skills generated by the project to others.

Relationship to Other Programs – Describe the relationship of the proposed research to related projects, programs, or other ongoing activities. Awardees should exercise awareness to prevent duplication of efforts of partner activities such as [DOE Blue Economy](#).

### **Data Management Plan (Required)**

Data and information collected and/or created under NOAA grants and cooperative agreements, including this RFP, must be made visible, accessible, and independently understandable to general users, free of charge and in a timely manner, except where limited by law, regulation, policy or by security requirements. NOAA grant applications for projects expected to produce environmental data must include a Data Management Plan (DMP) to make the data available. The plan must conform to NOAA’s Data Sharing Directive for Grants, Cooperative Agreements, and Contracts. PIs are expected to fully execute the plan.

A typical DMP is no more than two pages long (4,600 characters), and includes the sections listed below:

- Description of data to be generated by the project, including file format, likely size, etc.
- A tentative date by which data will be shared (no later than two years after the data are collected or created)
- Standards to be used for data/metadata format and content
- Policies on data stewardship and preservation
- Procedures for providing access, sharing, and security

If the applicant’s university or institution has established data-sharing practices and policies, applicants may base the DMP on theirs. If the project does not generate datasets, a simple statement to that effect is all that is necessary to satisfy the DMP requirement. Please refer to the MITSG Data Sharing Directive Policy found on eSeaGrant for more information.

### **Curriculum Vitae: Principal Investigator (Required) and Co-Principal Investigators (Required)**

Enter contact information for the Principal Investigator (PI) and Co-Principal Investigators, including name, mailing address, email address, phone number, university/organization, and Department. When entering phone numbers, omit all spaces and non-numeric characters.

Attach a CV/resume (PDF, 2-page maximum, page numbers, headers, or footers) at the bottom of the forms for each. Only CVs submitted as PDFs and that are two pages or less will be accepted. The CV will not be uploaded until the Save button is clicked on.

### **Curriculum Vitae: Additional Personnel (Optional)**

List additional personnel such as sub-awardees, graduate students, post docs and staff that will work on the project and listed in the budget. While Resumes or CVs are not required for these individuals, please include them if they are considered key staff.

### **Current and Pending Support (Required)**

Make sure each PI completes every field. Failure to provide complete information for these sources of support may delay consideration of the proposal application.

### **Focus Areas and Classifications (Required)**

In the form fields in eSeaGrant, please select a Primary Focus Area, Secondary Focus Area, and up to two Sea Grant Classifications. See the eSeaGrant form for more detailed instructions.

### **Letters of Support and/or Collaboration with ORE Team (Optional)**

Letters of support are limited to unfunded collaborators and stakeholders that will directly participate and/or benefit from the proposed work. Letters of collaboration from stakeholders are especially encouraged and should describe how the research will have regional relevance and practical application. Include letters of collaboration with NESGC Extension agents and the ORE Team, as discussed on page 10, as appropriate. Do not submit endorsement letters from elected officials or other individuals not listed in the proposal. Upload each letter as a single PDF.

### **Letters of Commitment for cost-sharing and sub-awards (Required)**

A letter of commitment is required for: a) The contractor of each subaward; b) Any external source for cost-sharing (match); or c) institutional approval from those involved in the proposal. Failure to provide letters of commitment for these may impact consideration of the proposal. Please note federal funds, including equipment purchased with federal funds, cannot be used as match.

### **NEPA Short Form (Required)**

Applicants are required to submit a copy of NOAA's Abbreviated Environmental Compliance Questionnaire (i.e., NEPA) form in order to receive funding for the research. Please leave the field 'Grant number and/or Project ID' blank.

The NEPA form "Abbreviated Environmental Compliance Questionnaire", as well as examples of completed forms, can be downloaded "Abbreviated Environmental Compliance Questionnaire" [here](#). Address each question as completely as possible. Avoid answering any question with "N/A" or any other version of "Not Applicable". If a question does not pertain to applicant's work, state how the work does not pertain to the question being asked. Detailed responses will help with NEPA evaluations and determinations. Imprecise answers or "N/A" may result in delays in the proposal's review.

Per the requirements in the NEPA, potential PIs must include with their full proposal a list of all state and federal permits required to complete the project, including copies of the permits that have already been acquired, in the appropriate section of the questionnaire. Applications of pending permits are not required but must be listed. If a partner institution will be responsible for acquiring permits, this should be stated in the application. The responsibility for acquiring permits lies with the funded PI, and failure to secure permits may result in delayed receipt of funds or changes to the scope of work proposed.

Funded PIs are required to share with the Sea Grant program proof that all required permits and permissions have been granted prior to expending funds on the work covered by the permit. If permits are still pending, funds may be expended on portions of the project that do not require permitting, such as student support, statistical work, and project planning. Absence of required permits will result in the NSGO placing restrictions on the award until those permits are provided, and host institutions may have additional restrictions on such funds, per their own policies.

## **Full Proposal Submission and Evaluation**

### **Full Proposal Submission**

Applicants may submit their final application by clicking SUBMIT on the Proposal Summary form. Applicants may submit the proposal at any time, and continue to work on elements of the proposal until the deadline stated. This will time-stamp the submission and generate an acknowledgement email for your records. If applicants have not pressed the SUBMIT button by the deadline, the full proposal will not be processed. No exceptions can be made.

Full proposals must be submitted no later than 5:00 p.m. EST on July 16, 2021.

### **Full Proposal Evaluation**

All full proposals will be assessed for completeness. Late or incomplete full proposals will not be considered. Full proposals that are determined as complete and contain all requested components will be read and evaluated by a Technical Review Panel (TRP). TRP members will be experts in the field(s) which are covered in the proposals and free from conflicts of interests as documented on the required Conflict of Interest forms for each full proposal. TRP members will read all full proposals and rate them using the criteria identified in the Evaluation Criteria section of this RFP. In addition, members will supply written reviews of full proposals such that each full proposal will receive a minimum of three written reviews per the NSGCP National Competition Policy Guidance. The TRP will meet in late summer for extensive discussion of the technical merits of the full proposals.

### **Evaluation Criteria**

The fundamental criteria for full proposal evaluations and their respective weights are:

- Scientific Merit and Rationale (40%)
- Stakeholder Relevance and Potential for Practical Application and Societal Benefits (40%)
- Qualifications and/or Promise of PIs (10%)
- Appropriate and Cost-Effective Budget (10%)

Key considerations for proposal evaluation are:

#### **Scientific Merit and Rationale (40%)**

- Clarity and attainability of the objectives as detailed in the project description;
- Adequacy of the proposed methodology to test hypotheses, accomplish stated objectives, soundness of the technical approach, scientific design, methods, and data analysis and interpretation;
- The degree to which the proposed activity appropriately employs innovative techniques or uses state-of-the-art methods to address important resource issues.
- Results and tools and technologies are general and applicable to the Northeast region (i.e., from New York to Maine)

#### **Stakeholder Relevance and Potential for Practical Application and Societal Benefits (40%)**

- Degree to which users or potential users of the results of the proposed activity have been brought into the planning of the activity (e.g. collaborative research), will be brought into the execution of the activity, or will be kept apprised of progress and results.

- Degree to which the proposed work will make its way into practical use or application in resources management, and/or be brought forth to general public or target audiences throughout the Northeast region, to improve understanding of, and capacity for addressing pertinent coastal marine issues.
- Degree to which investigators have developed an effective engagement/extension plan, including the ORE Team, for the research findings or tools they plan to develop, and the appropriateness and impact of the outreach/education component outlined.
- Broader societal impacts on the coastal community especially focused on stakeholders from underrepresented or underserved communities

Qualifications and/or Promise of PIs (10%)

- Past performance in successfully completing projects of similar size, scope, and publication record of findings in the scientific literature; this may include performance on past Sea Grant projects, completeness of annual reporting, and publication record of Sea Grant-funded research.
- PI expertise, knowledge, promise, and access to resources to successfully achieve the goals of the project.

Appropriate and Cost-Effective Budget (10%)

- Degree to which the requested funding and matching costs levels are appropriate and reflect reasonable costs for the proposed research
- Adequacy of the proposed budget to accomplish objectives and of the budget justification in explaining the need for resources.

**Scoring Criteria**

Reviewers will then assign an overall proposal score by choosing one of the following, ultimately resulting in a ranked list for projects:

5 - Excellent - Exhibits outstanding scientific quality; demonstrates research strategy and methods well-designed to address problem; contributes to basic discipline as well as more general Sea Grant goals in marine resource development, use, management; and stakeholder relevance and engagement, and practical application, including the identification of stakeholders and/or linkages to user groups

4 - Very Good - With careful consideration of recommended changes, would be rated Excellent

3 - Good - Routine but acceptable scientific quality; needs revision in some major part of the proposal; for example, the methodology, linkage to user groups, clarification of relationship to similar projects, or major budget changes necessary to achieve objectives

2 - Fair - Marginal scientific approach to a potentially interesting problem; limited understanding of how proposed research related to general Sea Grant goals; major deficiencies in problem definition, research strategy, and methods; inadequate institutional support

1 - Poor - Proposal has major deficiencies and should not be considered further

**Final Funding Determination and Selection Factors**

Final funding recommendations to the National Sea Grant Program Office are made by the NESGC Directors and Funder representatives based on TRP rankings, except in instances where the program chooses to select a meritorious project out of rank order based upon the following selection factors:

- Availability of funds;
- Balance of selected projects across strategic priorities;
- Prior award performance; and
- Diversity of institutions, geography, career stage, and engaged stakeholders and partners.

Funding begins on February 1, 2022, depending on final appropriations.

## Reporting Requirements

NOAA requires Sea Grant programs to report the impacts, accomplishments and metrics of each proposal it funds, and sets strict deadlines and formats for these reports as part of its robust and integrated Planning, Implementation and Evaluation System. These products include annual reports and performance measures that are used to review the program and ensure it is meeting the expectations as set forth by Congress.

Programs are evaluated in three general areas: 1) on their approach to management; 2) on the scope and success of their engagement with stakeholders; and, 3) on the impact their program has on society from both an environmental and a socio-economic perspective. In other words, program viability and future funding is based on highlighting the positive impacts funded research is having on the US Northeast region and the nation.

As a result, funded researchers are expected to provide:

- Annual progress reports while the project is underway and a final report when completed, both within a reasonable time frame. The reports should include specific impacts and accomplishments. Details on report formats, impact statements and metrics desired will be provided to researchers upon funding.
- Copies of any publication or product intended for public dissemination produced as part of, or as a result, the project. This includes peer-reviewed reprints from journals, books and proceedings, brochures, pamphlets, news articles, DVDs, etc. These documents are submitted to the National Sea Grant Library (NSGL).
- Acknowledgement of NESGC funding on any publication or product. Text to use that includes funding award number will be provided to PIs at the start of funding.
- Participation, including presenting, at the three internal PI-ORE Team meetings. The first two meetings will be virtual while it is anticipated that the final meeting in 2024 will be in person (travel to the MIT offices must be included in the budget).
- Information and other assistance to Communications and Extension personnel of the seven programs of the NESGC (i.e. Maine, New Hampshire, MIT, Woods Hole, Rhode Island, Connecticut, and New York Sea Grant programs.)

## Contact Information

- Mary Newton Lima, Research Program Coordinator ([mnewlim@mit.edu](mailto:mnewlim@mit.edu))
- Caroline Johnston, Fiscal Officer ([carolin@mit.edu](mailto:carolin@mit.edu))
- Rob Vincent, Extension Lead ([rvincent@mit.edu](mailto:rvincent@mit.edu)).
- Lily Keyes, Communications Lead ([keyes@mit.edu](mailto:keyes@mit.edu)).