

Maine Aquaculture Hub: Strengthening the sector through research, community engagement, and addressing farm challenges

Requesting **Letters of Intent (LOI)**
for projects seeking to
Address Action Items Identified by the Hub Network

Deadline for LOI: July 14, 2021*

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* Late applications may not be considered

A. Introduction

The Maine Aquaculture Hub is a network for strengthening aquaculture in Maine, connecting organizations and individuals across the state. The Hub is currently coordinating three activities toward this effort, including (1) training the next generation of sea farmers through Aquaculture in Shared Waters; (2) developing a shared vision for the future of aquaculture and a 10-year Roadmap for how to get there; and (3) funding projects to address barriers to aquaculture in Maine. The steering committee of the Hub consists of Maine Sea Grant, the Maine Aquaculture Association, Coastal Enterprises, Inc., the Maine Aquaculture Innovation Center, and the University of Maine Aquaculture Research Institute.

To gather input for the next 10-year Roadmap for aquaculture in Maine, the Hub held a series of Focus Group meetings throughout 2020 with a variety of stakeholders. During each meeting, progress made since the release of the 2010 Aquaculture Economic Development Plan was reviewed, goals for the new plan were shaped, and specific action items to achieve those goals were identified. These goals and action items have been used to inform this call for proposals. They have been synthesized here as *Areas of Focus*:

- *Make Maine a leader in triple bottom line sustainable aquaculture: social, economic, environmental*
- *Increase integration and understanding of aquaculture in Maine's coastal communities*
- *Expand & promote the Maine Seafood brand*

- *Develop solutions to production/farm/processing challenges that could be applied across a specific sector*

The Maine Aquaculture Hub invites proposals that seek to advance the Maine aquaculture industry **by addressing barriers** to sustainable growth of the sector. Project proposals must identify the barrier and propose actions to overcome the associated challenges. Additionally, projects should address one of the Areas of Focus of the new 10-year Roadmap for aquaculture in Maine described above. Those projects that address an Area of Focus will be ranked highest. Examples of actionable projects include but are not limited to the following:

- Identify and address bottlenecks in markets for aquaculture products (including but not limited to processing, distribution, product development, customer acquisition), particularly pertaining to seaweed and scallops
- Expand environmental monitoring and research (of and for) aquaculture to understand impacts of and identify mitigation measures for climate change
- Support working waterfront and supply chain infrastructure; Form cooperatives to support facility upgrades/capacity, shared space and gear
- Create guides or Best Management Practices document for: biosecurity; aquaculture production; gear management
- Improve awareness of and access to aquaculture education materials (e.g. K-12, community outreach)
- Harness marketing opportunities around ‘tasting tourism’ as it relates to aquaculture products
- Develop innovative culture methods to improve yield, manage biofouling, diversify crops and/or minimize social conflict

The Maine Aquaculture Hub seeks to support a series of investments to the industry (*growers or companies that provide goods and services to growers*) that will provide the capacity for innovation, realizing shared priorities, and addressing emergent barriers. Applicants that receive funding through this call will become a part of the Hub network through newsletters, and are encouraged to engage in discussions of emerging industry needs and potential barriers to growth.

Supporting Documents:

- Maine Aquaculture Hub
 - <https://seagrant.umaine.edu/maine-aquaculture-hub/>
- Research, Development and Education Priorities for the Aquaculture Sector in Maine. January 2020, Maine Aquaculture Innovation Center
 - <https://cpb-us-w2.wpmucdn.com/wpsites.maine.edu/dist/1/43/files/2020/01/2020-RDE-Survey-1.pdf>

B. Funding, Duration, and Eligibility (who can apply)

A total of up to \$200,000 is available to support 1 or 2-year projects. Awardees will be required to provide 1:1 match to the total funds requested. Matching funds must come from non-federal sources. For example, if an applicant requests \$25,000 for a project, then they will be required to

provide non-federal match of \$25,000. Match may either be through expenditure (i.e., cash), or in-kind (e.g. goods, services, personnel time). Proposals without sufficient match will not be considered. Existing equipment cannot be considered as match (please see further match details in section D). ***Funding may not be used toward the purchase or rental of any land or the purchase, rental, construction, preservation, or repair of any building, dock, or vessel. Payment under this grant may be applied to the short-term rental of buildings or facilities for meetings.***

The primary applicants (Principal Investigator) must be an industry member (*grower or company that provides goods and services to growers*). We encourage producers to submit collaborative proposals with other growers, industry members, researchers, or partners, and are willing to connect the primary applicant with other individuals to work together on a project. However, industry members (as defined above) must be the lead. We encourage applicants of all ages, races, ethnicities, national origins, gender identities, sexual orientations, disabilities, cultures, religions, citizenship types, marital statuses, educational levels, job classifications, veteran status types, and income, and socioeconomic status types to apply for this competitive opportunity.

C. Letter of Intent Guidelines

Letters of Intent are evaluated primarily on the identification of the emergent barrier (Section A) and the actions proposed to overcome the barrier and advance the growth of Maine's aquaculture industry.

Letter of Intent **must** be submitted through eSeaGrant (esg.umaine.edu). Applicants must first create an eSeaGrant account. Instructions for how to use eSeaGrant can be found at https://seagrant.umaine.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/467/2021/01/2021_MSG_eSG_Instruction_Guide.pdf.

There will be two information sessions held: one virtual session Wednesday June 30 ([register here](#)), and another in-person meeting Tuesday July 6. More details can be found on page 5 of this document. For questions please contact heather.sadusky@maine.edu.

Letters of Intent **must** be received by **July 14 by 5:00 p.m. Eastern time.**

Letters of Intent **must** contain the following elements (2-page maximum):

- 1) Project Team information
 - Name(s) of Principal Investigator
 - Position(s) of Principal Investigator
 - Contact information (name, phone & email addresses of PI and all team members)

- 2) Proposal narrative
 - ***Identification of the Barrier:*** Describe the question or problem that you propose to address and clearly reference the **Area(s) of Focus** from Section A.

- ***Steps to address the Barrier:*** Describe the major goals and objectives of the proposed work. Outline the conceptual approach that will be used.
- ***Relation to the Area(s) of Focus:*** Describe how the proposed project aligns with the goals of the next 10-year Roadmap for aquaculture in Maine, and how the proposed work would advance the industry.

3) Funding requested and justification

- State the ***approximate funding to be requested*** and
- Provide a ***few sentences*** on what the money would be used for.
- Briefly describe where match funds will originate

Note: A detailed budget for Letters of Intent is not required.

D. Overview of Proposal Development and Evaluation Process

The development and review of full proposals is a multi-step process:

- 1) Letters of Intent will be evaluated by the Maine Aquaculture Hub steering committee. The objective at this stage of review is to identify proposals that provide the most promise in advancing the Maine aquaculture industry through a realized barrier to growth, and will focus on the relevance and potential of the proposed project. Applicants will receive written feedback on their idea.
- 2) Applicants who submit the most promising project ideas will be invited to submit a full proposal. Full proposals will only be reviewed if a Letter of Intent was submitted. Full proposals are to be submitted electronically to Maine Sea Grant through eSeaGrant (esg.umaine.edu) by **5:00 p.m. Eastern time September 1, 2021**. Full proposal guidelines will be available after applicants have been invited to submit full proposals.
- 3) Full proposals are expected to describe in greater detail how the proposed project will accomplish the stated objective(s) for overcoming the barrier. This may involve a description of methods, engineering, testing, surveys, or meetings held. Anticipated results and implications of the work should be detailed. A detailed budget and justification that itemizes how the requested and matching funds will be spent is required.
- 4) Full proposals will be evaluated by experts in the proposed area of research or development. Each proposal is expected to receive 2-3 technical reviews. Applicants may suggest potential reviewers, and must identify potential conflicts of interest. Reviewers may be those suggested by the applicant, although this is not guaranteed. Applicants will be provided anonymous copies of the reviews.
- 5) The full proposals, reviews, and applicant responses will be reviewed by the Maine Aquaculture Hub steering committee and recommendations will be made as to which projects

will be funded. Final project selection takes into account the following criteria, using a ranking scale of 1-5:

- Discussion of the identified barrier
- Proposed steps to navigate through the barrier
- Relation to the **Areas of Focus** from the Roadmap goals
- Proposed methods
- Anticipated results and how they will be used to benefit Maine aquaculture
- Qualifications of the team

Important Notes Regarding Full Proposals:

If an applicant is invited to submit a full proposal then a detailed budget and justification will be required. A 100% match of federal funds (i.e., one dollar of match for every one dollar of federal money received) will be required on all proposals. If applicants do not have a negotiated Facilities and Administrative rate, the *de minimus* rate of 10% of modified direct costs must be used instead.

If an applicant is invited to submit a full proposal then the applicant will be responsible for completing a Data Management Plan and a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) questionnaire. Maine Sea Grant can provide assistance with completing these forms.

If your business does not ordinarily receive grants, consider partnering with a research institution who can coordinate with UMaine on contracts and payments. If that is not possible, there are procedures that will need to be followed in order to award your business funding.

When you submit your proposal (if not partnering with a research institution):

- Apply for a DUNS Number (Dun & Bradstreet) if you don't already have one
 - You will need this before applying for the SAM number and for award documents
- Apply for a SAM (System for Award Management) number if you don't already have one
 - Please note you may get an "acceptance" by email, however read the email carefully as there are final steps needed to get approval.
 - Also, you should say YES to allowing non-federal entities to review their public information (which allows UMaine to access it to complete the subaward).

These can take up to eight weeks to receive and you will need them before an award can be issued.

If you win an award...

- You will be asked to submit a copy of an annual audit. If you do not have one, a substitute questionnaire will be sent for completion.
- You will complete a Subrecipient Commitment [form](#) (where you will need the SAM and DUNS numbers).
- You will be required to complete/renew Conflict of Interest training available [here](#) on the Office of Research Administration at University of Maine website.

- You will be required to carry adequate liability insurance to cover your activities while working on the grant.

If you are applying as a Cooperative or similar group, you may have to have each member of the cooperative complete paperwork. Consider partnering with a research entity that routinely handles grant awards for ease of reimbursement of expenses.

Funds are issued by UMaine on a reimbursement basis and at the same time spending on match is reported with the submission of an invoice. A template will be available for the invoice. Invoices should be issued no more frequently than monthly.

F. Contacts for further information

Prospective applicants are encouraged to contact the Maine Aquaculture Hub Coordinator to discuss project ideas and proposal development. We can also connect industry members with partners to work together on a project. For questions specific to the application and review process or the eSeaGrant platform, please contact the general inquiries email below. To discuss budgeting, please contact Lynn Wardwell.

Project development inquiries:

Heather Sadusky, Maine Aquaculture Hub Coordinator
heather.sadusky@maine.edu

General Inquiries:

sgresearch@maine.edu

Fiscal Officer:

Lynn Wardwell

wardwell@maine.edu

Tel: 207-581-1448

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G. Request for Proposals Timeline (2021)

Late June: Announce request for Letter of Intent.

Wednesday, June 30 at 12:00 PM: Informational Zoom Webinar introducing the RFP and members from the Maine Aquaculture Hub. [Register here.](#)

Tuesday, July 6 at 2:00 PM: Informational in-person meeting introducing the RFP and members from the Maine Aquaculture Hub and Maine Sea Grant marine extension team. Hutchinson Center, Belfast, Maine. [Register here.](#)

Wednesday, July 14: Letters of Intent due electronically through eSeaGrant (esg.umaine.edu) by 5:00 p.m.

Thursday, July 15: Letters of Intent sent to Aquaculture Hub steering committee for review

Mid July: Aquaculture Hub steering committee meets to review Letters of Intent and makes recommendations regarding full proposal development.

Late July: Applicants receive recommendations regarding development of full proposals. Applicants provide a list of suggested reviewers to Maine Sea Grant Research Coordinator via email (sgresearch@maine.edu)

Wednesday, September 1: Full proposals due electronically through eSeaGrant (esg.umaine.edu) by 5:00 p.m.

Mid September: Full proposals emailed to technical reviewers.

Early October: Full proposal technical reviews due.

Early October: Proposals and technical reviews sent to Aquaculture Hub steering committee for review

Late October: Aquaculture Hub steering committee meets to review proposal packages and makes recommendations on which projects to fund.

Mid-November: Applicants are notified of funding decisions.