



2024-2026 Biennial Request for Proposals
<http://www.seagrant.umaine.edu/funding>

Deadline for Pre-proposals:
Friday, February 3, 2023, by 11:59 p.m.

Deadline for Full Proposals*
Monday, May 1, 2023, by 11:59 p.m.

***Note: Full proposals will only be considered if applicants have submitted a pre-proposal
Late applications will not be considered.**

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A. Introduction

The Maine Sea Grant College Program invites preliminary proposals for research projects to be funded in the period February 2024 through January 2026. Maine Sea Grant is a state-federal partnership based at the University of Maine and sponsored by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the State of Maine. The mission of Maine Sea Grant is *to support the responsible use and conservation of coastal resources to sustain diverse, thriving coastal communities and ecosystems*. Through our biennial request for proposals, we strive to sponsor a diverse research portfolio that links the scientific capacity of Maine with the needs of coastal community partners and interests, and advance Maine Sea Grant's mission.

Maine Sea Grant seeks to foster the highest quality marine research with a strong likelihood of societal impact in Maine, so only the most creative and rigorously conceived proposals will receive consideration. We seek to support projects developed through meaningful engagement with coastal or marine interests and focused on research questions that are responsive to the needs of Maine's communities. We accept proposals aligned with any part of our current strategic plan, and we strongly encourage proposals that address cross-cutting principles outlined in this plan (*please refer to Section D of this RFP*). We also strongly encourage proposals that:

- Engage diverse partners and end users throughout all phases of the research study, including proposal development
- Integrate concepts and methods from multiple disciplinary perspectives and engage researchers from both the social and biophysical sciences
- Develop cross-cultural perspectives in research on emerging environmental, economic, and cultural issues
- Provide student training, professional development, and/or mentorship opportunities
- Strive to promote the ideals of justice, equity, diversity and inclusion and advance issues important to the state's underserved and underrepresented coastal communities

Maine Sea Grant's funding programs are highly competitive, with each pre-proposal being reviewed by an in-state Advisory Panel; and each submitted full proposal being reviewed, in writing, by a minimum of three peers, with final review of the full proposal, previous reviews, and PI rebuttals by a separate external peer-review (Technical Review Panel). Pre-proposal and full proposal review processes are free from conflicts-of-interest. Maine Sea Grant routinely receives numerous excellent proposals and available funds are never sufficient to support all of them.

B. Eligibility

Maine Sea Grant is administered by the University of Maine, but the research competition is open to faculty and staff at any public or private research or higher education institution within the state of Maine. We are especially interested in receiving proposals from new faculty and underrepresented faculty/principal investigators. Researchers are eligible to submit only one pre-proposal as lead PI, but may serve as a co-PI on other proposals. Co-PI's outside of the state of Maine may be funded through sub-awards from the lead PI's institution.

Maine 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 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 research opportunity.

Researchers and their team members are expected to represent Maine Sea Grant with the highest integrity and ethical standards. They are expected to foster an equitable, positive, and respectful working and learning environment free of discrimination, harassment, and bullying. They must abide by the standard code of conduct policies of their home institution(s) including, but not limited to, any: personnel policy, policy regarding sexual harassment, policy regarding workplace violence, and policy regarding ethical behavior. Furthermore, the funding provided through this research award is subject to [NOAA policies](#) relating to scientific integrity and sexual assault or harassment that may be in force at the time of the award. This code of conduct will be enforced in accordance with university policies.

C. Funding Levels and Duration

Proposed research activities may be one or two years in duration, for the period between February 2024 and January 2026. Assuming no changes in the federal Sea Grant appropriation and the requirements of the non-research components of the Maine Sea Grant program, an estimated **\$600,000** will be available to support research projects over the two-year funding period. Maine Sea Grant will consider funding research projects up to \$200,000. Maine Sea Grant intends to fund as many excellent proposals as is possible within budgetary constraints; **projects with smaller requests and those that show strong leveraging of Sea Grant funding are encouraged.** Due to Maine Sea Grant’s limited resources, total two-year requests over \$200,000 in Sea Grant funds (including all direct and indirect costs) will not be considered. Sea Grant funding requires a 50% non-federal match; all preliminary proposals must indicate source and level of available non-federal match. Proposals without sufficient match will not be considered.

D. Maine Sea Grant Strategic Goals, Objectives, and Cross-Cutting Principles

Maine Sea Grant requests competitive research proposals that align with the strategic goals and cross-cutting principles, integrate across Sea Grant’s functional areas of research, education, and outreach (extension and communications), and display a strong promise for meaningful societal impact and application. Collaborations with state and regional agencies, municipalities, local organizations, industry, and other research institutions are encouraged. All proposals must clearly identify how the proposed research applies to one (or more) of the strategic goals and objectives (stated as actions in the strategic plan) and cross-cutting principles (*please see below*). Investigators will be evaluated on how well they explicitly describe how understanding, tools, and data products generated in their projects will lead to measurable progress toward these goals and actions.

Maine Sea Grants strategic plan for 2024 – 2027 with goals, objectives (actions), and cross-cutting principles are outlined below and can be found here: <https://seagrant.umaine.edu/resource/strategic-plan-2024-2027/>

Maine Sea Grant Strategic Goals for 2024 – 2027

Coastal Ecosystems	<u>Goal:</u> Coastal ecosystems are healthy, connected, and functional. People understand the links between ecosystem function and resilient communities and support ecosystem stewardship activities.
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<p>Communities and Economies</p>	<p><u>Goal:</u> Coastal communities are prepared to address current and emerging environmental, economic, and social/cultural challenges and opportunities using relevant scientific, local, and traditional knowledge and assets.</p>
<p>Fisheries and Aquaculture</p>	<p><u>Goal:</u> Fisheries and aquaculture, their associated value chains, and the communities that depend on them, are economically viable, resilient to change, and ecologically sustainable.</p>
<p>Environmental Literacy & Workforce Development</p>	<p><u>Goal:</u> An environmentally literate public and diverse workforce are skilled and ready to use and apply scientific, traditional, and cultural knowledge to identify questions, draw evidence-based conclusions, and address issues that affect the ecological health, economic vitality, and resilience of coastal communities and ecosystems.</p>

Maine Sea Grant Cross-Cutting Principles:

1. *Center and Prioritize Efforts to Address the Impacts of Climate Change* by leveraging and integrating climate-related expertise, resources, and partnerships in every aspect of our research, extension, community engagement, and education programming.
2. *Champion Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Justice, and Accessibility (DEIJA)* by seeking and engaging diverse perspectives to enhance understanding and enable our program to pursue its vision and mission with equity and integrity.
3. *Enhance coastal community resilience* by fostering the ability of coastal communities to effectively respond to economic, social, and environmental change.

Maine Sea Grant DEI Statement

Maine Sea Grant is committed to implementing activities that embrace principles of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) to proactively engage, reflect, and serve the diverse populations of coastal communities. Sea Grant is a champion of DEI principles in which all coastal community members are respected and valued. Applicants should review Diversity, Equity and Inclusion: [Current Conditions and Best Practices across the National Sea Grant Network](#) and Maine Sea Grant Program Strategic plan for further details, and all applicants are encouraged to incorporate these practices and principles into the proposed research and outreach.

Maine Sea Grant seeks proposals that aim to advance issues around environmental justice for the state’s underserved and underrepresented coastal communities. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

defines environmental justice as “the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin or income, with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations and policies” and “...will be achieved when everyone enjoys the same degree of protection from environmental and health hazards and equal access to the decision-making process to have a healthy environment in which to live, learn and work.” For Maine Sea Grant to meet its vision of having thriving coastal ecosystems and communities, it is imperative to engage and address the specific needs of underserved and underrepresented groups. According to Sea Grant ([National Sea Grant’s 10-year Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice \(DEIJ\) Vision, Version 2, 2021](#)), “*Underserved communities are those that have experienced low levels of access to our programming, while underrepresented communities refer to persons for whom representation in our programs is smaller than that of the general population.*” It is important to recognize the barriers that prevent marginalized communities from safely and equitably accessing, enjoying and benefiting from Maine’s coastal communities, resources and projects.

E. Pre-Proposal Components and Guidance

Pre-proposals will be evaluated primarily on the basis of their relevance to the Maine Sea Grant strategic priorities and potential benefits to interested parties and citizens. Interested parties are individuals, groups, organizations, and other entities that may affect or be affected by the process, outputs, and outcomes of the proposed research.

All components of the pre-proposal (as described below) must be submitted through eSeaGrant (esg.umaine.edu) by Friday, February 3, 11:59 p.m.

Applicants must first create an eSeaGrant account. A short walkthrough tutorial on how to use eSeaGrant can be found at <https://seagrant.umaine.edu/resource/eseagrant-instructions-and-tutorial/>. Applicants are encouraged to contact the Assistant Director for Research, (sgresearch@maine.edu) with questions. *For investigators from a University of Maine campus, please note that you will be required to follow submission guidelines from the Office of Research Administration.*

Pre-proposals must contain the following required elements. Pre-proposals that do not include all components will not be considered. **A 75 word limit is imposed for each of the first three sections and a 3-page limit for section 4 (proposal narrative):**

- 1) **List of investigators:** name, e-mail, affiliation, and role (principal investigator or co-principal investigator)
- 2) **List of additional personnel involved in the project:** name, e-mail, affiliation, and role in the project
- 3) **Project Abstract:** A brief summary of the project that describes the objectives, methodology, and rationale.
- 4) **Proposal Narrative:** Proposals must be single-spaced using Times New Roman 12-point font with 1-inch margins on the top, bottom, and both sides of the page. **There is a 3-page limit to the proposal narrative.**

The 3-page limit covers the following required components (a-d). Literature citations (e) do not contribute to the 3-page limit.

- a. **Justification and expected impacts:** Describe the question or problem that you propose to address and clearly identify how it applies to one (or more) of Maine Sea Grant’s strategic goals and cross-cutting principles. It is particularly important to explicitly address the anticipated societal impacts of the research by explaining how the information obtained will be used by a clearly identified group of interested parties. If the idea originated with an interested party then state and explain how your results will impact their needs.
- b. **Scientific objectives:** Describe the major goals and objectives of the research, including the questions or hypotheses that will be addressed or tested. Outline the conceptual approaches and methodologies that will be used, and provide a general timeline for the project.
- c. **Available resources:** Briefly summarize the qualifications of the investigator(s) and the institutional capabilities that will be brought to bear on the proposed project.
- d. **Outreach and Engagement:** Describe the strategies that will be used to: (1) communicate the research results to interested parties and (2) engage diverse partners and end users throughout all phases of the research study, including proposal development. The overall goal of outreach is to effect change by having individuals, groups, or institutions use science-based information when making decisions. Accordingly, engaging diverse interests in the development and implementation of research projects is critical to ensure that project processes and products are accessible and useful for individuals and groups with different priorities and capacities. Outreach is activity that extends Sea Grant-sponsored and other relevant coastal and marine information to user groups. Presenting results at a scientific meeting, academic seminar, or publishing in peer-reviewed journals are encouraged but are not considered outreach within this context. Applicants are encouraged to review [Maine Sea Grant’s public outreach and engagement document](#) and discuss outreach goals and strategies with Natalie Springuel, Marine Extension Program Leader, and Hannah Robbins, Maine Sea Grant’s Communication Manager. If Marine Extension Team members or other Sea Grant staff will participate in the project, you must have their explicit permission to be included in the proposal, and their roles must be specified. **Do not assume their participation.**
- e. **Literature cited:** Provide complete citations for all literature referenced in the proposal.

5) **Budget form**

Applicants will be required to complete a budget using the NOAA 90-4 budget form template that can be downloaded from eSeaGrant (esg.umaine.edu) in the applicant’s proposal submission page. Prepare a budget for each year of the proposal and an overall summary (if the project is for two years).

Applicants should allow sufficient time before the deadline to review draft budgets and budget justifications with Bobby MacLeod, Maine Sea Grant Fiscal Officer (207-581-1448; robert.MacLeod@maine.edu). If the applicant submits their budget at least two weeks ahead of the deadline, the Maine Sea Grant fiscal team will review for accuracy.

- a. **Matching funds: 50% match of federal funds (i.e., one dollar of match for every two dollars of federal money received) is required on all Sea Grant proposals. The first year must contain at least 50% or more of required match. If over 50% match was**

applied in the first year, then subsequent years must contain enough match to keep the cumulative match at or above 50% of the total amount of federal funding that has been received up to that point. Matching funds on Sea Grant proposals must be from non-federal sources. For questions about appropriate match contact Bobby MacLeod, Maine Sea Grant Fiscal Officer (207-581-1448; robert.macleod@maine.edu) or your institution's sponsored programs office.

- b. **Note for all applicants:** Prepare a budget for each year of the project and a total summary budget (if the project is for two years). The budget should include all direct (including fringe benefits) and indirect costs of the research. Applicants should contact the sponsored research office of their home institution to obtain the current rates for fringe benefits and indirect costs. Be sure to indicate which salaries and wages are subject to indirect costs, and those not subject to indirect costs. Applicants must budget for all costs of the project, including anticipated salary and wage increases for year 2.
- c. **Notes for applicants outside the University of Maine:** University of Maine indirect costs must be added to the first \$25,000 of the total budget for grant administration. See the University of Maine website for the most up-to-date rates <https://umaine.edu/ora/proposals/indirect-costs-fa/rates/>
- d. **Notes for applicants from more than one institution:** A yearly and total budget for each institution and a yearly and total budget for the overall project must be prepared and submitted. Applicants outside the University of Maine see note (c). If the awarded project contains subawards or the primary award is to an off-campus institution, the project must also match indirect costs that the University of Maine will charge at a rate of 26% of the first \$25,000 (\$6,500).
- e. **Graduate education:** Because graduate education is a priority for Maine Sea Grant, applicants are encouraged to include support for graduate students in their projects. Graduate student stipends should account for minimum rates at the applicant's institution. For example, minimum graduate student research assistant stipends at the University of Maine are \$22,667 for Masters students and \$26,667 for PhD students for 12 months.

For University of Maine applicants please refer to <https://umaine.edu/ora/proposals/indirect-costs-fa/rates/> for the most up-to-date information on minimum stipends, health insurance, and tuition rates for graduate students. Requests for student support at other universities should be checked with their home institution. If graduate student support is included, our expectation is that the research project would form all or part of the graduate student's thesis, and that the student will be supported full-time. Requests for partial graduate student support (e.g., for a six-month stipend) must explain the nature of the student's involvement in the project and indicate how the student will be supported for the remainder of the year. For example, the University of Maine requires at least 50% of the cost of health insurance and also full tuition for the period of performance. This requirement may be waived if the student has these costs covered from other sources. Tuition is exempt from indirect costs. Requests for student support at other universities should be checked with that institution.

- f. **Outreach:** Applicants must budget for the cost of outreach aspects of their project, such as printing costs, outreach-related meetings or workshops, or participation of extension and communications staff.

- g. **Budget justification:** Briefly justify the major items of the budget. A budget justification Word document template can be downloaded from eSeaGrant (esg.umaine.edu) in the applicant's proposal submission page. The template provides an example of how to complete the budget justification.
- 6) **Current and pending support:** For each PI, list all pending, current, and recent (within three years) outside support. Include project title, amount, source, and period of funding, and the extent of the PI's involvement in each project.
- 7) **CV of principal investigator(s):** (2-page limit for each investigator). Indicate institutional affiliation and key professional details. List up to five publications most relevant to the proposal, along with five additional recent publications. This is a document that the applicant will upload to eSeaGrant.
- 8) **Letters of support (optional):** Provide 2 or 3 letters from interested parties (e.g., government agencies, tribes, NGOs, industry, etc.) that support your proposed work.

Please note: Applicants who intend to submit a full proposal must submit a Notice of Intent (NOI) to the Assistant Director for Research sgresearch@maine.edu by 11:59 pm Monday March 20, 2023

The Notice of Intent must include the following components:

- Applicant(s) name and institution
- Project title
- Suggested reviewers: Provide the names, addresses, telephone numbers and e-mail addresses of a minimum of four people you consider qualified to review the proposal. Reviewers must work outside Maine and have no conflict of interests with any of the applicants. Contact Sea Grant Assistant Director for Research at sgresearch@maine.edu if you need guidance.
- Conflict of interest: Indicate any individuals you believe should not be allowed to review your proposal, together with a brief explanation of your concern.

F. Pre-Proposal Development and Evaluation Process

The development and review of Sea Grant proposals is a multi-step process.

- 1) Pre-proposals are to be submitted electronically to Maine Sea Grant through eSeaGrant (esg.umaine.edu) by **11:59 p.m. on Friday, February 3, 2023**. **Applicants must first create an eSeaGrant account. A short walkthrough tutorial on how to use eSeaGrant can be found at <https://seagrant.umaine.edu/resource/eseagrant-instructions-and-tutorial/>.** Applicants are encouraged to contact the Assistant Director for Research, (sgresearch@maine.edu) with questions. *For investigators from a University of Maine campus, please note that you will be required to follow submission guidelines from the Office of Research Administration.*
- 2) Pre-proposals are evaluated by an in-state Advisory Panel. The objective at this stage of review is to identify pre-proposals that provide the most promise in advancing knowledge in one (or more) of the four identified Maine Sea Grant strategic goals and objectives and with significant potential for societal impact. Pre-proposals that integrate cross-cutting principles (e.g., climate change, DEIJA, coastal resilience, *see Section D above*) will receive extra consideration in the review process. The pre-proposal review is primarily focused on the relevance and potential of the project, rather than scientific merit, although obvious flaws in project design will be identified. The pre-proposal stage

also offers the opportunity to give applicants feedback on how their proposals might be improved. Panelists will be asked to identify realized or potential conflicts of interest among submitted proposals and will be asked to sign a reviewer conflict of interest and confidentiality form. Panelists that identify a conflict of interest will not participate in the review or discussion process of the proposal(s) for which they have a conflict.

Pre-proposal review criteria include, but are not limited to:

- Does the proposed work apply in a meaningful way to one (or more) of Maine Sea Grant's strategic goals and objectives?
- Does the proposed work integrate one or more of Maine Sea Grant's cross-cutting principles (e.g., climate, diversity/equity/inclusion/access, coastal resilience)?
- Does the proposed work relate to, or complement, Maine Sea Grant's ongoing research or extension efforts? (See <https://seagrant.umaine.edu/research-program-development-projects/> for information on previous Maine Sea Grant-funded research projects.)
- Are the anticipated societal impacts credible and do they justify the investment?
- Does the research engage diverse individuals, groups, and institutions throughout the project and identify how these different interests may benefit from the results?
- Is the outreach strategy well-conceived and appropriate?
- Does the project advance issues important to the state's underserved and underrepresented coastal communities?
- Does the project provide student training and/or workforce development opportunities?

The in-state Advisory Panel will consider the review criteria and assign quantitative numerical scores for each of the criteria above to generate an overall proposal score. Scores will follow the scheme of 1 – poor/does not meet criteria, to 5 – excellent/substantially meet criteria. During the review panel discussion, the Advisory Panel will provide qualitative scores of each proposal, in the form of High, Medium, and Low, after the discussion of each proposal. Quantitative scores and qualitative feedback will be used to develop a consensus ranking of all proposals.

The Advisory Panel's evaluations are advisory; final decisions on inviting full proposals will be made by Maine Sea Grant Leadership.

- 3) Applicants who submit the most promising pre-proposals will be encouraged to submit full proposals. Full proposals are to be submitted electronically to Maine Sea Grant through eSeaGrant (esg.umaine.edu) by **11:59 p.m. on Monday May 1, 2023**. Full proposal development and evaluation processes are described below.

Pre-proposal applicants not encouraged to submit a full proposal by Maine Sea Grant may still choose to submit a full proposal. ***Applicants must have submitted a pre-proposal to be eligible to submit a full proposal.*** Applicants of discouraged pre-proposals that choose 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.

G. Checklist for Pre-Proposals

Note for University of Maine investigators: The Proposal Approval Routing System (PARS) process is required for pre-proposals. You must file a notice of intent for this pre-proposal. Please refer to the Office of Research Administration website for more detail.

- All proposal elements must be submitted electronically through Maine eSeaGrant (esg.umaine.edu)

- ❑ Uploaded proposal narratives must be in pdf format with Times New Roman in 12-point font with 1-inch margins on the top, bottom, and both sides.
- ❑ The pre-proposal will include:
 - ❑ List of project investigators
 - ❑ List of additional personnel
 - ❑ Project abstract that includes objectives, methodology, and rationale (75-word limit for each of the three sections)
 - ❑ Proposal narrative (3-page maximum) and literature citations
 - ❑ Completed 90-4 budget form for each year of project, and an overall summary if the project is for two years, and accompanying budget justification Word document
 - ❑ Current and pending support (*Note:* There is not required template. Applicants may use other agency/funder templates, e.g., NSF, USAA, etc.)
 - ❑ CVs for each investigator (2-page limit per investigator)
 - ❑ Letters of support (optional)

H. Pre-Proposal Submission Deadlines and Decision Timetable (2023)

Monday December 19, 2022: Announce 2024-2026 request for pre-proposals.

Tuesday, January 10, 2023 (12:00-1:00 PM): Informational Zoom webinar introducing the RFP.

Friday, February 3: Pre-proposal submissions due electronically through eSeaGrant (esg.umaine.edu) by 11:59 p.m.

Early-Mid February: Advisory panel reviews pre-proposals and makes recommendations to Maine Sea Grant regarding full proposal development.

Mid-March: Applicants receive proposal feedback and are encouraged or discouraged regarding development of full proposals.

I. Important Notes about Full Proposal Development

- Full project proposals will only be accepted from applicants who submitted a pre-proposal to the Maine Sea Grant 2024-2026 request for proposals.
- Applicants who intend to submit a full proposal must submit a Notice of Intent (NOI) to the Assistant Director for Research sgresearch@maine.edu by 11:59 pm **Monday March 20, 2023** (*please refer to Section K below for important details on the NOI submission*)
- Total funds requested from Sea Grant should not exceed \$200,000; 50% non-federal match required.

- All components of the full proposal (described in section J-L) must be submitted electronically through eSeaGrant (esg.umaine.edu) by 11:59 p.m. on **Monday, May 1, 2023**. Some items submitted by the applicant during the pre-proposal phase will transfer to the full proposal phase. It will be up to the applicant to make any necessary changes and updates if applicable. Please contact the Assistant Director for Research (sgresearch@maine.edu) if you have questions about using the program.

J. Full Proposal Guidelines

Full proposals are to be submitted through eSeaGrant (esg.umaine.edu) and must contain the following required elements. Proposals that do not include all components will not be considered.

1. **List of investigators:** name, e-mail, affiliation, and role (principal investigator or co-principal investigator)
2. **List of additional personnel involved in the project:** name, e-mail, affiliation, and role in the project
3. **Project Abstract:** A brief summary of the project that describes the objectives, methodology, and rationale. A **75-word limit** is imposed for the abstract.
4. **Proposal Narrative:** Proposals must be single-spaced using Times New Roman 12-point font with 1-inch margins on the top, bottom, and both sides of the page. **There is a 12-page limit to the proposal narrative, including figures and tables.** The page limit establishes the maximum length of a proposal and is not intended to be a target. Applicants should strive to be as succinct and concise as possible in explaining their research effort.

The 12-page limit covers the following required components (a-e) and includes any tables or figures used to explain the research. Literature citations (f) do not contribute to the 12-page limit.

- a. **Background and rationale:** Explain why the proposed research effort is important in the context of the Maine Sea Grant Strategic goals and objectives (actions) and cross-cutting principles. Describe the potential users of the information and how they will benefit from the results. Discuss the research relative to the current state of knowledge in the field and to previous or ongoing research by the applicant and/or other investigators.
- b. **Scientific objectives:** Provide a statement of the project's goals and objectives. Explain the questions that will be addressed and hypotheses that will be tested in the research.
- c. **Proposed research:** Describe the research that will be conducted to answer the questions and test the hypotheses outlined in section (b). This section of the proposal should be written for technical experts in the field, using the appropriate terminology. The research plan should be consistent with the highest standards in the discipline. Particular attention should be paid to experimental design, appropriate methodology, and data analysis.
- d. **Outreach and engagement:** Describe the strategies that will be used to: (1) communicate the research results to interested parties and (2) engage diverse partners and end users throughout all phases of the research study, including proposal development.. The overall goal of outreach is to effect change by having individuals, groups, or institutions use scientifically based information when making decisions. Accordingly, engaging diverse

interests in the development and implementation of research projects is critical to ensure that project processes and products are accessible and useful for individuals and groups with different priorities and capacities. Outreach is activity that extends Sea Grant-sponsored and other relevant coastal and marine information to user groups. Presenting results at a scientific meeting, academic seminar, or publishing in peer-reviewed journals are encouraged but are not considered outreach within this context.

Applicants are encouraged to review [Maine Sea Grant's public outreach and engagement document](#) and discuss outreach goals and strategies with Natalie Springuel, Marine Extension Program Leader and Hannah Robbins, Maine Sea Grant's Communication Manager. If Marine Extension Team members or other Maine Sea Grant staff will participate in the project, you must have their explicit permission to be included in the proposal, and their roles must be specified. **Do not assume their participation.**

- e. **Educational impact (optional):** Briefly describe the involvement of high school, undergraduate, graduate students, or post-doctoral researchers in the proposed research.
- f. **Literature cited:** Provide complete citations for all literature referenced in the proposal.

5. **Budget form**

Applicants completing a full proposal will be required to fill out a NOAA 90-4 excel budget form using the template that can be downloaded from eSeaGrant (esg.umaine.edu) in the applicant's proposal submission page. Budget items previously entered in the pre-proposal phase will be transferred to the full proposal phase. However, at this phase, it is expected that PIs develop a more accurate and detailed budget that shows appropriate match. After completing the 90-4 budget form it must be uploaded to eSeaGrant in the designated section.

Budgets for all full proposals must be reviewed and approved by the appropriate institutional sponsored programs office prior to submission to our office. Applicants should allow sufficient time before the deadline to review draft budgets and budget justifications with Bobby MacLeod, Maine Sea Grant Fiscal Officer (207-581-1448). If the applicant submits their budget at least two weeks ahead of the deadline, the Maine Sea Grant fiscal team will review for accuracy.

- a. **Matching funds: 50% match of federal funds (i.e., one dollar of match for every two dollars of federal money received) is required on all Sea Grant proposals. The first year must contain at least 50% or more of required match. If over 50% match was applied in the first year, then subsequent years must contain enough match to keep the cumulative match at or above 50% of the total amount of federal funding that has been received up to that point.** Matching funds on Sea Grant proposals must be from non-federal sources. For questions about appropriate match, contact Bobby MacLeod, Maine Sea Grant Fiscal Officer (207-581-1448; robert.macleod@maine.edu) or your institution's sponsored program office.
- b. **Note for all applicants:** Prepare a budget for each year of the project and a total summary budget (if the project is for two years). The budget should include all direct costs (including fringe benefits) and indirect costs of the project. Applicants should contact the sponsored research office of their home institution to obtain the current rates for fringe benefits and indirect costs. Be sure to indicate which salaries and wages are subject to

indirect costs, and those not subject to indirect costs. Applicants must budget for all costs of the project, including anticipated salary and wage increases for year 2.

- c. **Note for applicants outside the University of Maine:** University of Maine indirect costs must be added to the first \$25,000 of the total budget for grant administration. See the University of Maine website for the most up-to-date rates <https://umaine.edu/ora/proposals/indirect-costs-fa/rates/>
- d. **Notes for applicants from more than one institution:** A yearly and total budget for each institution and a yearly and total budget for the overall project must be prepared and submitted. Applicants outside the University of Maine see note (c). If the awarded project contains subawards or the primary award is to an off-campus institution, the project must also match indirect costs that the University of Maine will charge at a rate of 26% of the first \$25,000 (\$6,500).
- e. **Graduate education:** Because graduate education is a priority for Maine Sea Grant, applicants are encouraged to include support for graduate students in their projects. Graduate student stipends should account for minimum rates at the applicant's institution. For example, minimum graduate student research assistant stipends at the University of Maine are \$22,667 for Masters students and \$26,667 for PhD students for twelve months.

For University of Maine applicants please refer to:

<https://umaine.edu/ora/proposals/indirect-costs-fa/rates/> for the most up-to-date information on minimum stipends, health insurance, and tuition rates for graduate students. Requests for student support at other universities should be checked with their home institution. If graduate student support is included, our expectation is that the research project would form all or part of the graduate student's thesis, and that the student will be supported full-time. Requests for partial graduate student support (e.g., for a six-month stipend) must explain the nature of the student's involvement in the project and indicate how the student will be supported for the remainder of the year. For example, the University of Maine requires at least 50% of the cost of health insurance and also full tuition for the period of performance. This requirement may be waived if the student has these costs covered from other sources. Tuition is exempt from indirect costs. Requests for student support at other universities should be checked with that institution.

- f. **Outreach:** Applicants must budget for the cost of outreach aspects of their project, such as printing costs, or outreach-related meetings or workshops, or participation of extension and communications staff.
 - g. **Budget justification:** In greater detail, justify all elements of the budget. A budget justification Word document template can be downloaded from eSeaGrant in the applicant's proposal submission page. The template provides an example of how to complete the budget justification. Justifications will need to be entered for all budget items. **It is expected that expenditures are thoughtfully considered and well justified at the full proposal stage.**
6. **Previous Sea Grant support (if applicable):** All principal investigators who have received Sea Grant (Maine or National) support are required to provide a summary (two-page limit) for each project funded in the past five years. The report should contain the following elements:

- Project title.
 - Principal investigator(s).
 - Period and amount of award.
 - Summary of major results and conclusions (250-word limit).
 - List of all publications that resulted from the grant, distinguishing between peer-reviewed and other literature.
 - List of students, post-docs, and other professionals supported with degree titles and dates (if appropriate).
 - List of significant outreach accomplishments or impacts on industry or other stakeholders.
7. **Current and pending support:** For each PI, list all pending, current, and recent (within three years) outside support. Include project title, amount, source, and period of funding, and the extent of the PI's involvement in each project. This is a document that the applicant will upload to eSeaGrant. (*Note:* There is no required template. Applicants may use other agency/funder templates, e.g., NSF, USAA, etc.)
8. **CVs of principal investigator(s):** (2-page limit for each investigator): Indicate institutional affiliation and key professional details. List up to five publications most relevant to the proposal, plus up to five additional recent publications. This is a document that the applicant will upload to eSeaGrant.
9. **Data Management Plan:** NOAA requires that all environmental data collected from funded projects be visible, accessible and understandable to users. Applicants will be required to complete a data management plan that addresses these aspects. The form, to be completed by the applicant, will be provided on eSeaGrant as part of the application process and submitted through eSeaGrant as part of the application package. If the proposed research will not generate environmental data then a Data Management Plan will need to be stated as such: “This project will not generate any environmental data.”
10. **National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Questionnaire:** The objectives of NEPA are to disclose, analyze, and consider environmental information as criteria when making decisions about federal actions and to inform the public of potential impacts and alternatives and involve the public in decision making. Applicants are required to complete a NEPA Questionnaire that gauges potential impact to the environment. We request applicants give extra consideration to describing the proposed location of research activities and documenting permits that will be required to conduct research activities. Note that any Sea Grant funded fieldwork cannot commence until the necessary permits have been obtained and copies sent to Maine Sea Grant and the National Sea Grant Office. The form, to be completed by the applicant, will be provided on eSeaGrant as part of the application process and submitted through eSeaGrant as part of the application package. Maine Sea Grant can provide assistance and guidance with completing the Data Management Plan and NEPA Questionnaire. Contact the Assistant Director for Research (sgresearch@maine.edu) with questions or assistance.
11. **Letters of support (optional):** Provide 2 or 3 letters from stakeholders (e.g., government agencies, tribes, NGOs, industry, etc.) that support your proposed work.

K. Full Proposal Development and Evaluation Process

Applicants who will submit a full proposal will be required to submit a Notice of Intent. The Notice of Intent must include the following components:

- Applicant(s) name and institution
- Project title
- Suggested reviewers: Provide the names, addresses, telephone numbers and e-mail addresses of a minimum of four people you consider qualified to review the proposal. Reviewers must work outside Maine and have no conflict of interests with any of the applicants. Contact Sea Grant Assistant Director for Research at sgresearch@maine.edu if you need guidance.
- Conflict of interest: Indicate any individuals you believe should not be allowed to review your proposal, together with a brief explanation of your concern.

Completed Notice of Intent should be emailed to the Assistant Director for Research (sgresearch@maine.edu) by 11:59 p.m. March 20. Please use the following email subject line: Notice of Intent: 2024-2026 Maine Sea Grant Biennial RFP.

Full proposals are evaluated on **scientific merit** based on the highest national and international standards in the field. The full proposal evaluation process has several steps.

1) Full proposals are reviewed by external U.S. and international experts in the area of the proposed research. Each proposal receives 3-4 written reviews. Applicants are requested to suggest potential reviewers, and may also identify potential reviewers with conflicts of interest (on the Notice of Intent to submit a full proposal, see guidelines above). These scientific peer reviewers will consider, comment and numerically score the proposals on the following aspects:

- a. **Rationale** – the degree to which the proposal addresses an important issue, problem, or opportunity in support of Maine Sea Grant’s strategic goals.
- b. **Scientific or Professional Merit** – the degree to which the project will advance the state of the science or discipline(s)
- c. **Innovativeness** – the degree to which the proposal incorporates new approaches to problems and issues or explores new opportunities consistent with Maine Sea Grant’s strategic goals.
- d. **Qualifications and Past Record of Investigators** – the degree to which investigators are qualified to execute the proposed research including the quality and quantity of their published research and outcomes of previous Sea Grant awards
- e. **Relevance** – the degree to which the proposed research will benefit coastal communities and other end users and the mechanisms proposed to keep them apprised of progress and results

The scientific peer reviewers will assign numerical scores of 1 – 5 for each review criteria a – e. Scores will follow the scheme of 1 – poor, to 5 – excellent. Scientific peer reviewers will also be given an opportunity to write qualitative comments about each assigned proposal.

2) Applicants are provided with anonymous copies of the written reviews and given the opportunity to write rebuttals to the scientific peer reviewers’ comments.

3) A separate Technical Review Panel of external experts convenes to evaluate proposals that considers all aspects of the RFP process including:

- a. Scientific and technical merit

- b. Interdisciplinary nature
- c. Programmatic fit with Sea Grant’s strategic goals and objectives
- d. Links with Maine Sea Grant’s cross-cutting principles, DEI goals and cross-cultural perspectives
- e. Meaningful societal impact
- f. Expert peer reviews and the applicants’ responsiveness to the peer reviews

The Technical Review Panel evaluates the criteria (a – f) based on both a quantitative review system (each reviewer assigns a score of 1-5 for each criterion, with 1 – poor, to 5 – excellent) and qualitative scoring system (during the review panel meeting, each individual assigns a High, Medium, and Low score to each proposal). The Technical Review Panel then develops a consensus ranked order of all proposals and provides a summary of the scientific merit and prospects for success of the proposals. The Technical Review Panel may be conducted in person or held virtually.

4) Recommendations for funding of Sea Grant proposals are made by the Maine Sea Grant Leadership based on the evaluations and recommendations of the Technical Review Panel.

The Maine Sea Grant Director, after consultation with Maine Sea Grant Leadership, makes final funding recommendations to the National Sea Grant Program Office based on these rankings except in instances where the program chooses to select a meritorious project out of rank order based upon the following selection factors.

Selection Factors:

- 1. availability of funding;
- 2. balance of selected projects across strategic program priorities;
- 3. similarities of projects funded previously by Maine Sea Grant;
- 4. past performance - timeliness of progress, reporting, and correspondence with Maine Sea Grant related to prior awards; and
- 5. diversity of institutions, geography, career stage, and engaged interests and partners.

5) Final award decisions are subject to approval by Maine Sea Grant’s designated Program Officer from the National Sea Grant Program, who attends the full proposal Technical Review Panel.

L. Checklist for Full Proposals

- All proposal elements must be submitted electronically through eSeaGrant (esg.umaine.edu)
- University of Maine investigators must obtain permission for submission through the Proposal Approval Routing System (PARS). Investigators from other institutions may need formal approval from their own institutions.
- Proposal narratives must be Times New Roman in 12-point font with 1-inch margins on the top, bottom, and both sides.

- ❑ The proposal should include:
 - ❑ List of project investigators
 - ❑ List of additional personnel
 - ❑ Proposal abstract that includes objectives, methodology, and rationale (75-word limit for each of the three sections)
 - ❑ Proposal narrative (12-page maximum) and literature citations
 - ❑ Completed 90-4 budget form completed for each institution and each year of the project, and overall summary if the project is for two years, and accompanying budget justification Word document.
 - ❑ Prior Sea Grant Support
 - ❑ Current and pending support
 - ❑ CVs for each investigator (2-page limit per investigator)
 - ❑ Data Management Plan
 - ❑ NEPA Questionnaire
 - ❑ Letters of support (optional)

M. Full Proposal Submission Deadlines and Decision Timetable (2023)

All PIs should reach out to Fiscal Officer Bobby MacLeod for budget advice, by email robert.macleod@maine.edu or phone (207-581-1448).

Monday, March 20: Notice of Intent to submit full proposal with list of suggested reviewers due to the Assistant Director for Research via email (sgresearch@maine.edu) by 11:59 p.m. March 20, 2023

***The following dates apply only to proposals submitted by University of Maine PIs.**

***Friday, April 7:** Draft of budget, justification, and abstract is due to the University of Maine’s Office of Research and Sponsored Programs (ORA) by 4:30 p.m.

***Monday, April 14:** Finalized budget and justification is due to the University of Maine’s ORA. Proposal Approval Routing System (PARS) should be initiated.

***Wednesday, April 26:** Final proposal package must be submitted to ORA by 4:30 p.m..

Monday, May 1: Full proposals due electronically through eSeaGrant (esg.umaine.edu) by 11:59 p.m.

Monday, May 8: Full proposals emailed to scientific peer reviewers.

Thursday, June 5: Full proposal peer reviews due in eSeaGrant by 5:00 p.m. EDT.

Friday June 16: Peer review blind copies provided to applicants for rebuttals.

Monday June 26: Applicant rebuttal letters due in eSeaGrant by 5:00 p.m. EDT.

Wednesday July 6: Proposals, peer reviews, and rebuttals sent to Technical Review Panel and to the National Sea Grant Office.

Early to Mid-August: Technical Review Panel reviews proposal packages in accordance with evaluation criteria and makes recommendations to Maine Sea Grant Leadership. Maine Sea Grant Leadership Team meets to make final decisions on which projects to include in the proposal to the National Sea Grant office for funding.

Early-September: Selected projects and rationale submitted to the National Sea Grant office for approval.

By October: Applicants informed of decisions.

February 1, 2024: Anticipated 2024-2026 awards begin.

N. Additional Information and Maine Sea Grant Contacts

Additional Information can be found at: <https://www.seagrant.umaine.edu/funding/research>:

- Maine Sea Grant 2024 – 2027 Strategic Plan:
<https://seagrant.umaine.edu/resource/strategic-plan-2024-2027/>
- Outreach and Engagement: A Primer for Sea Grant Researchers:
<https://seagrant.umaine.edu/resource/public-outreach-engagement-a-primer-for-sea-grant-researchers/>
- Tutorial for using eSeaGrant:
<https://seagrant.umaine.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/467/2019/05/2019-eseagrant-instructions.pdf>
- Diversity, Equity and Inclusion: Current Conditions and Best Practices across the National Sea Grant Network: <https://seagrant.noaa.gov/Portals/1/DEI%20Best%20Practices%20Paper.pdf>

Prospective applicants are encouraged to contact Jessica Jansujwicz, Assistant Director for Research to discuss proposal development, Bobby MacLeod, Fiscal Officer to discuss budgeting, and Hannah Robbins, Communications Manager to discuss effective ways to communicate research.

Assistant Director for Research: Dr. Jessica Jansujwicz
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Fiscal Officer: Bobby MacLeod
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Communications Manager: Hannah Robbins
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