



Request for Research Proposals

Rhode Island Sea Grant 2020–2022 Research Program

Issued Wednesday, January 02, 2019

**Pre-proposal Submission Deadline:
4:00 PM Friday, 22 February 2019**

Rhode Island Sea Grant College Program
University of Rhode Island
Coastal Institute Suite 34
URI Narragansett Bay Campus Narragansett, RI
02882-1197
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This RFP is available at: seagrant.gso.uri.edu/research/

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Introduction

Rhode Island Sea Grant's core mission is to improve understanding and management of Rhode Island's coastal and marine ecosystems. To achieve this mission, we provide support for scientific research, legal and policy studies, outreach, extension, communications, and educational workforce development programs. Our primary offices are located at the University of Rhode Island (URI) Graduate School of Oceanography. Our Legal Program is located at Roger Williams University School of Law, and our extension program is at the URI Coastal Resources Center. Rhode Island Sea Grant is a partnership among URI, the National Sea Grant College Program, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and the State of Rhode Island.

Rhode Island 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, education levels, job classifications, veteran status types, income, and socioeconomic status types to apply for this opportunity.

This Request for Proposals (RFP) is for research projects (individual or multi-institutional) up to 2 years in length to be funded under Rhode Island Sea Grant's 2018-2022 Omnibus Proposal. Project funding will begin 01 February 2020 and end 31 January 2022.

We anticipate supporting up to eight (8) projects contingent upon receipt of federal funding. Modification in the number of and/or funding for individual proposals may be made based on final program budget allocations. Each proposal for this highly competitive research program receives extensive peer review, with final evaluation conducted by an ad hoc panel of external technical experts, and relevancy review panelists.

An informational meeting for this RFP will be held on Monday, January 28, 2019, in the Coastal Institute Large Conference Room, 10:00 AM–11:30 AM on the URI Narragansett Bay Campus. Attendance by applicants is optional. This meeting is an opportunity to meet with Rhode Island Sea Grant staff to discuss specifics of this RFP, assess the potential to engage RISG extension, legal, or communications specialists, and address any questions about developing and submitting proposals.

Preproposal submission deadline is 4:00 PM Friday, February 22, 2019.

Full proposal submission deadline is 4:00 PM Friday, June 07, 2019.

A full schedule for this research competition is provided as the last page of this RFP document.

Rhode Island Sea Grant's Research Priorities for 2020–2022

For the 2020–2022 portion of its 2018–2022 Omnibus, Rhode Island Sea Grant intends to fund projects that include Sea Grant's functional areas of research, education, outreach, and communications, and that are collaborative, multi-disciplinary, and/or multi-institutional in the following topical/thematic areas:

1) Improved understanding of impacts of ecosystem change, such as from ocean acidification, water temperature increase, harmful algal blooms, or changes in nutrient dynamics, (e.g., from nutrient reduction programs), to shellfish and/or aquaculture in Rhode Island waters, including, but not limited to:

- Effects of ocean acidification on settlement and establishment of shellfish larvae;
- Ecology of harmful algae blooms, particularly *Pseudo-nitzschia* species, and factors that influence production (or lack) of domoic acid;
- Prevalence and impacts of disease and parasitic organisms, such as *Vibrio*;
- Impact of micro-plastics on shellfish growth.

2) Improved understanding of the change in benthic communities of Narragansett Bay over time relative to nutrient reduction programs, changing water temperatures, acidification, and/or anthropogenic influenced change, including, but not limited to:

- Comparative studies of benthic community change over time in Upper Narragansett Bay as compared to previous studies and surveys;
- Comparative studies of benthic community change between upper and lower bay, or along north-south transects, relative to nutrient availability and/or environmental change over time.

EXPERIMENTAL METHODS NOTE—Methodologies employed in the study of the above areas may be suitable for use of the mesocosm facilities located at the URI Graduate School of Oceanography campus. This RFP encourages the use of these facilities for experimentation in the topical areas described above. Those proposals that incorporate use of the mesocosm facilities at URI GSO may apply for an additional \$25,000 in funds, per year, to help defray costs associated with use of the mesocosms for experimentation. (*see Budget Development section for details*)

Application Process

- An online system—eSeaGrant—is used by Rhode Island Sea Grant for all proposal development and project reporting activities. Applicants must establish new accounts, or activate existing accounts in eSeaGrant, by contacting Alan Desbonnet (aland@uri.edu). Account creation and/or activation may take up to 48 hours.
- Applicants with overdue project reports from previously funded Rhode Island Sea Grant projects will not be considered.

Budget Development

- *Research proposals NOT making use of mesocosm facilities* at URI GSO will have a \$125,000 per year, \$250,000 total project maximum allowable budget, which includes institutional overhead.
- *Research proposals USING mesocosm facilities* located at URI GSO will have a \$150,000 per year, \$300,000 total project maximum allowable budget, which includes institutional overhead.
- Sea Grant is a match program; for each \$2 of Sea Grant funding received at least \$1 of non-federal support must be contributed. The applicant is responsible for provision of the 50% match on the total funding requested. **Federal funds cannot be used as matching funds.** Match support may include:
 - Salaries, wages, and benefits of those working on the project;
 - Tuition provided by non-federal sources;
 - Expendable supplies, equipment and ship time;
 - Indirect costs;
 - Contributions by private, local, or state entities or non-federal special project funds.

Impacts of Research

Reporting of research impacts and accomplishments to funders and stakeholders is a critical element of showing the benefits of research for the public. Applicants must describe anticipated research outcomes and how they may be applied to solving or better understanding problems and issues at local, state and regional scales, and which resource management audiences would likely find the research results useful, and how.

Funded projects will be required to report annually during life of project, and for several years beyond end of project, on research impacts and accomplishments. Detailed guidance will be provided to funded investigators.

Publication of Research Findings

Publication of research findings from your Sea Grant supported research is a critical element of the Sea Grant mission to improve understanding of coastal and ocean resources. It is expected that receipt of Sea Grant research funding will lead to publication in the peer-reviewed literature 1-to-2 years post project. Investigators with a history of poor publication of Sea Grant-funded research findings may become ineligible for future funding.

Data Sharing

NOAA requires the inclusion of data management plans for all funded research except where limited by law, regulation, policy, or security agreement. Data, along with accompanying metadata, must be available to general users, free of charge and in a timely manner, generally no later than two (2) years after the project end date. Further detail on Data Management Plan (DMP) development is provided in eSeaGrant; the DMP is only required at the *full proposal phase*. Failure to comply with a submitted and approved data management plan could result in ineligibility for future NOAA and/or Sea Grant funding.

NEPA Questionnaire

Any applicant who will conduct research outside of a strictly laboratory setting must complete an abbreviated NEPA questionnaire at the *full proposal phase* of this research competition. The questionnaire will be available for download in eSeaGrant. The NEPA document must be reviewed and approved by NOAA/National Sea Grant prior to award of funding.

Sea Grant Graduate Research Fellows

Rhode Island Sea Grant Graduate Research Fellows (e.g., graduate students receiving RISG research funding through this RFP) may be required to meet with Rhode Island Sea Grant staff at the beginning of the funded project and may be requested to engage in a Rhode Island Sea Grant outreach or education activity of their choice. These activities will not detract from the primary research focus of the fellowship, but will help develop a better understanding of the linkages between science, outreach, and application of science findings to resources management.

Sea Grant Law Fellows

The Rhode Island Sea Grant Legal Program, located at Roger Williams University School of Law, can engage a Law Fellow to support legal or policy research questions related to your research project. Law Fellows are current law students with an interest in marine law and policy and strong writing and research skills. Legal Program staff work with researchers to identify and select projects, and they hire and oversee the Law Fellows and their work product. The cost of Law Fellow projects does not need to be included in your research project budget. If your research could benefit from inclusion of legal and/or policy research, or if you want to explore this opportunity further, contact Read Porter (rporter@rwu.edu, (401) 254-5734) for more information.

URI Undergraduate Coastal Fellows

Rhode Island Sea Grant encourages PIs to incorporate URI Coastal Fellows interested in engaging in hands-on experience in a research environment into their funded research projects. The request for a URI Coastal Fellow should be included in the budget of pre-proposals and full proposals. Coastal Fellows engage in the research project for 20 hours per week during the summer session; please contact the Coastal Fellows Program to determine the correct amount to budget for inclusion of a Coastal Fellow in your proposal. Contact Sarah Moseley (401-874-7829; sarah_moseley@uri.edu; or see cels.uri.edu/coastalfellows/).

Connections to RISG Extension, Legal, Education and Communications

Rhode Island Sea Grant seeks to fund research of the highest scientific excellence and relevance; proposed research projects must be well designed and scientifically rigorous. No proposal will be considered for funding unless the rationale, methods, prospective uses, and evaluation of impacts are explained thoroughly. In addition, well thought out, direct connections to other parts of the overall Rhode Island Sea Grant program will be essential considerations during proposal evaluation. Applicants to the RFP are strongly encouraged to develop their outreach plans in consultation with Rhode Island Sea Grant extension and legal program staff, as well as with RISG communications and education program staff. An opportunity to open such a dialog will occur at the January 28 Informational Meeting. Collaborations with industry, state and regional agencies, and other research institutions are also strongly encouraged.

PRE-PROPOSALS

Preproposals should present a succinct but detailed synopsis of the project in order to evaluate relevance to the RFP, PI qualifications, and potential outcomes of the proposed research.

YOU MUST SUBMIT A PRE-PROPOSAL TO BE ELIGIBLE TO SUBMIT A FULL PROPOSAL. Pre-proposals must be submitted in eSeaGrant by 4:00 PM, Friday, February 22, 2019. The eSeaGrant portal automatically deactivates at the deadline time.

Pre-proposal text is uploaded to eSeaGrant as a single PDF document, limited to 5 pages (not including references) and contains the following elements arranged in the order given below:

- Statement of Problem—indicate the specific problem to be addressed;
- Outline of Project Objectives and Goals;
- Methodology—this must be succinct, but detailed enough so that a preliminary determination of the appropriateness of the proposed approach, including statistical analyses can be made;
- Impact Statement—A concise explanation of how anticipated research outcomes will contribute to and have impact upon solving or better understanding problems and issues relative to this RFP at local, state and/or regional scales, and which management audiences are likely to find the research findings useful, and how;
- Outreach Plan—A summary of education and outreach activities proposed, and how these will interface with Rhode Island Sea Grant extension and legal programs;
- References;
- Budgets and other materials are input directly into eSeaGrant online budget worksheets. Budget justifications are not required for pre-proposals; origins of match must be shown but does not need institutional verification at the pre-proposal phase.

The Data Management Plan, NEPA Questionnaire, and Rhode Island Sea Grant Cover Sheet are *not* applicable to the pre-proposal phase of this research competition.

Rhode Island Sea Grant welcomes any recommendations for reviewers expert in the proposal's subject area that you wish to submit for consideration. Suggested reviewers are input in eSeaGrant.

FULL PROPOSALS

Full proposal guidelines and guidance will be available in eSeaGrant when the full proposal phase of this research competition is open.

Proposal Evaluations

PRE-PROPOSALS are reviewed for relevancy to the needs described in the RFP, and that they present a sound research plan that can achieve/test stated hypotheses. *Even if Rhode Island Sea Grant does not recommend that a pre-proposal be developed into a full proposal, applicants may still submit a full proposal. In such cases, the applicant MUST notify Alan Desbonnet (aland@uri.edu; 401.874.6813) by Friday April 05, 2019, of the intent to submit a full proposal.*

FULL PROPOSALS are expected to be reviewed by at least three external peer reviewers selected by Rhode Island Sea Grant. Applicants will be given anonymous access to all external reviews of their proposals and will have the opportunity to respond in writing to the reviews. A full proposal technical review panel will be convened in August 2019 to review full proposals, their peer reviews, applicant rebuttals to the reviews, and relevancy to stakeholder needs. A representative of the National Sea Grant College Program Office will attend the full proposal panel meeting. The Rhode Island Sea Grant director and other administrative staff participate as ad hoc members in the deliberations of review panels; however, technical experts are responsible for ranking proposals. Based on these external evaluations, applicants with proposals selected for funding may be asked to modify objectives, work plans, or budgets according to recommendations of the full proposal technical review panel. *The Director of the Rhode Island Sea Grant College Program retains sole responsibility for final decisions on funding of proposals.*

Review Criteria for Rhode Island Sea Grant Research Proposals

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

- Scientific Merit and Rationale (30%);
- Technical Rigor and Innovation (30%)
- Connections to Sea Grant Extension and Legal Programs (15%);
- Relevancy to Rhode Island Sea Grant Stakeholders (15%);
- Professional Qualifications of Investigators (10%).

Key considerations for proposal evaluation are:

Scientific Merit and Rationale—Degree to which the proposed work addresses an important issue, problem or opportunity in sustainable utilization and/or management of marine and coastal resources in Rhode Island as requested in the RFP.

Technical Rigor and Innovation—Degree to which the proposed work advances the state of the science or discipline in a rigorous fashion through use of state-of-the-art scientific methods and/or use of innovative approaches to problem solving or exploiting opportunities in resource management.

Connections to Sea Grant Extension and Legal Programs—Degree to which the proposed work will make its way into practical use or application in local resources management, and/or be brought forth to general public or target audiences, to improve understanding of, and capacity for addressing, pertinent coastal marine issues, and the degree to which the PIs have engaged with Rhode Island Sea Grant extension, legal program, and/or communications staff in developing their research project outreach plan.

Relevancy to Rhode Island Sea Grant Stakeholders—Degree to which the proposed work relates to priorities set in the 2020–2022 Research RFP and current Rhode Island Sea Grant Strategic Plan, and the degree to which users or potential users of the proposed work's outputs and outcomes have or will participate in project planning and implementation, or will be targeted by the project outreach components.

Professional Qualifications of Investigators—Degree to which the investigators are qualified by education, training, and/or experience to execute the proposed work and the degree to which they possess solid records or accomplishment derived from previous projects, including performance on past Sea Grant projects, completeness of annual reporting, and publication record of Sea Grant funded research.

Reporting/Failure to Report

All funded investigators shall submit a Year 1 progress report, and a project completion report within 3 months of the end of the funding period. All reporting will be done through eSeaGrant; guidance will be provided to funded investigators.

Post project reporting to describe research impacts and peer reviewed publications will be defined pending submission of the final project completion report. Compliance with the NOAA data sharing plan will occur according to the schedule submitted as part of the full proposal.

Rhode Island Sea Grant's Program Administration Assistance

Visit our website (seagrant.gso.uri.edu) for further information about Rhode Island Sea Grant, including the 2018–2022 Strategic Plan document.

For questions on Rhode Island Sea Grant's strategic goals and priorities, proposal reviews and grant decision-making, budgeting and match requirements, or about the online eSeaGrant system, application or review process, please contact:

Alan Desbonnet, Assistant Director
401.874.6813 | aland@uri.edu

For questions and/or guidance regarding communication of research results with public audiences please contact:

Meredith Haas, Research Communications Specialist
401.874.6019 | mmhaas@uri.edu

For assistance in developing goals and work plans for the outreach components of your research proposal please contact:

Jennifer McCann, Director for Extension, Rhode Island Sea Grant
401.874.6127 | mccann@crc.uri.edu

Julia Wyman, Director, Rhode Island Sea Grant Legal Program
401.254.5734 | jwyman@rwu.edu

2020-2022 Omnibus Research RFP Schedule

For Omnibus Period 01 February 2020 to 31 January 2022

2019

January 02, Wednesday	RISG Omnibus RFP Released
January 28, Monday	RFP Informational Meeting (optional); Bay Campus 10:00 AM-11:30 AM
February 22, Friday	Pre-proposals due by 4:00 PM
Feb 25 – Mar 15	Pre-proposal review period
March 22, Friday	Invitations for Full Proposals issued to applicants
April 05, Friday	Intent to submit Full Proposal by 4:00 PM (uninvited proposals only)
June 07, Friday	Full Proposals due by 4:00 PM
June – July	Full proposal peer review period
August 02, Friday	Blinded reviews to Applicants for optional rebuttal
August 14, Wednesday	Rebuttals from Applicants due by 4:00 PM
Late August	Full Proposal Review Panel Convened
September 06, Friday	Proposal Funding Decisions issued to PIs
October 04, Friday	Final Proposal, Budget, etc. due to RISG via Cayuse by 4:00 PM

2020

mid-January	Funded PI/Graduate Research Fellow Meeting
February 01	Funded research projects begin