



## Request for Proposals

Rhode Island Sea Grant 2023–2024 Research Planning Grant  
Competition

Issued August 19, 2022

Letter of Intent Submission Deadline:  
5:00 PM September 22, 2022

Full Proposal Submission Deadline  
5:00 PM November 1, 2022

Rhode Island Sea Grant College Program  
University of Rhode Island  
Coastal Institute  
URI Narragansett Bay Campus  
Narragansett, RI 02882-1197  
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# Request for Research Planning Proposals

Rhode Island Sea Grant 2023–2024 Research Planning Grant

## Introduction

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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) Narragansett Bay Campus. Our Legal Program is located at Roger Williams University School of Law. 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 (RISG) 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 are dedicated to removing the barriers that have historically limited access to Sea Grant opportunities, acknowledging and honoring the cultures, traditions, knowledge and wisdom of local communities and facilitating research opportunities for underserved and underrepresented communities. With these goals in mind, we encourage applicants of all ages, races, ethnicities, national origins, gender identities, sexual orientations, disabilities, cultures, religions, citizenship types, education levels, job classifications, veteran status types and socioeconomic status types to consider this funding opportunity.

The Rhode Island Sea Grant program encourages applicants to recruit and engage students and fellows from underrepresented racial and ethnic groups, individuals with disabilities and individuals from economically or educationally disadvantaged backgrounds that may have inhibited their ability to pursue a career in STEM. To encourage participation in research by communities across Rhode Island, applicants are encouraged to recruit and engage investigators, students and participants from Predominantly Undergraduate Institutions (PUIs). Applicants should articulate how their research will have broader social impacts on the coastal community including stakeholders from underrepresented or underserved communities.

More information about Rhode Island Sea Grant's Mission, Values and Focus Areas can be found in our current [Strategic Plan](#).

## Description of Funding Opportunity

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### Overview of Competition

Rhode Island Sea Grant invites researchers to submit proposals for a research planning grant aimed at supporting the development of interdisciplinary research teams and research projects that relate to relevant marine and coastal issues. This research planning grant is NOT intended to support community planning projects. This research planning grant would provide up to 12 months of support for the research team and would ideally lead to the development of proposals seeking longer-term, larger scale funding. Project funding will begin 01 February 2023 and end 31 January 2024.

We anticipate supporting **up to three projects at up to \$65,000 each** 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. This competition is composed of two components: the Letter of Intent (LOI) and the Full Project Proposal. Each full proposal for this competitive grant receives extensive out-of-state 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 **September 6, 2022**, from **2-3pm** via Zoom interface. RSVP to Kim Ohnemus (kohnemus@uri.edu) to gain access to the meeting. Attendance by applicants is optional, and the meeting will be recorded and accessible via the RISG Website. 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.

Letter of Intent submission deadline is **September 22, 2022, at 5:00PM**

Full proposal submission deadline is **November 1, 2022, at 5:00pm**

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

## Eligibility Information

We encourage participation of researchers throughout Rhode Island. **All candidates must submit a Letter of Intent before 5:00PM on September 22, 2022, in order to submit a full proposal.** Due to the intent to support interdisciplinary research projects that address multi-faceted issues, applicants are required to include participants and investigators from at least **two** distinct disciplines (e.g., physical or biological sciences, or engineering, partnered with social sciences and humanities). Furthermore, we require involvement in the proposed project of non-academic collaborative partners (collaborations may be with industry, state/regional/federal agencies, tribes, NGOs, local municipalities, or individual community members). Full proposals will be evaluated on how effectively they engage non-academic partners.

## Project and Proposal Criteria

Research planning grants funded through this RFP are expected to support the development of research projects that improve our understanding and management of Rhode Island's coastal systems while actively addressing the diversity, equity, justice and inclusion goals that serve as core values of Rhode Island Sea Grant. A strong planning grant proposal will apply the best interdisciplinary approach to designing an innovative project to address a well-defined coastal or marine problem or opportunity that is important to coastal Rhode Island communities.

As a result of research planning grant activities, teams should be better equipped to carry out potentially transformative research and should serve as strong candidates for future funding from RISG or other funding sources. Proposers supported through this grant may use the funding to organize activities that help stimulate the formation of integrative, collaborative teams and crystalize the ideas and research plans to be presented in a future grant proposal.

We anticipate that much of the effort conducted under these research planning grants would include gathering preliminary data, convening a diverse scientific and engagement team and collaborating with a wide variety of relevant stakeholders. Examples of research planning grant activities and outcomes can include, but are not limited to:

- Workshop(s) to recruit, form, and strengthen a diverse team. Project leaders could build teams that include PIs, CoPIs, students and participants from Primarily Undergraduate Institutions (PUIs) and underrepresented groups in STEM such as women, persons with disabilities and underrepresented minorities.
- Professional development and mentoring opportunities for PIs and team members on engagement, diversity and inclusion-related topics such as:
  - Community outreach and engagement.
  - Facilitation and negotiation.
  - Inclusive science communication.
- Workshops and outreach events to engage relevant stakeholders in research project creation and design.
- Collection, analysis and presentation of initial data.
- Engaging members of local communities to assist in the development of potential research questions and a research plan that addresses topics relevant to RI coastal communities
- Development or initial development of a research proposal that draws on collaborative stakeholder input.
- Identification of potential future sources of funding.

## Application Process

URI applicants will **NOT** use InfoEd for proposal development; all approvals, etc., will be conducted using eSeaGrant. Detail to be provided below and at the full proposal phase.

An online system—eSeaGrant—is used by Rhode Island Sea Grant for proposal development. Applicants must establish new accounts or activate existing accounts in eSeaGrant in order to submit the full proposal. Accounts will be created or activated for applicants after a Letter of Intent has been received.

Applicants with overdue annual or completion project reports from previously funded Rhode Island Sea Grant projects will not be considered for funding through this competition.

## Budget Development (Full Proposal Phase)

- Research proposals will have up to \$65,000 allowable budget, which includes institutional overhead.
- Sea Grant is a match program; for example, for each \$2 of Sea Grant funding applied for 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 travel time.
- Indirect costs.
- Contributions by private, local, or state entities or non-federal special project funds.

## Impacts of Planning Grant Activities

Reporting of impacts and accomplishments to funders and stakeholders is a critical element of showing the benefits of such funding for the public. Applicants must describe anticipated planning grant outcomes and how they may be applied to solving or better understanding problems and issues at local, state and regional scales.

Funded projects will be required to report annually during life of project, and for several years beyond end of project on research impacts, accomplishments, and publications, and/or other metrics deemed useful to Sea Grant in assessing programmatic and project goals. Detailed guidance will be provided to funded investigators.

## 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

All applicants 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 Program prior to award of funding.

- State and/or other permits—Permits, such as state scientific collector permits, or institutional IRB approvals, must be in place to conduct research. Those proposals that are selected for funding will need to have copies of any required permits attached to their NEPA questionnaires prior to the release of funding.

## Connections to RISG Extension, Legal, Education, and Communications

Rhode Island Sea Grant seeks to fund research of the highest scientific excellence and relevance; proposed projects must be well designed and relevant to the mission, goals and values of RISG. Applicants to the RFP are strongly encouraged to consult RISG extension and legal program staff as appropriate to support project goals and outcomes. Collaborations with industry, state and regional agencies, and other research institutions are also strongly encouraged.

## Proposal Development Guidelines

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### Letter of Intent

**The Letter of Intent (LOI) must be emailed to Kim Ohnemus ([kohnemus@uri.edu](mailto:kohnemus@uri.edu)) BEFORE 5:00PM on September 22, 2022.** YOU MUST SUBMIT A LETTER OF INTENT, RELEVANT TO RFP TOPICAL AREAS, TO BE ELIGIBLE TO SUBMIT A FULL PROPOSAL. The LOI contains a short narrative—not to exceed two (2) single-spaced pages—and serves various purposes. It serves as the PIs request to gain access to eSeaGrant, informs the proposal review and panel, and allows RISG leadership the opportunity to assess the project’s alignment with RISG’s Strategic Plan, Core Values, and Priority Areas and provide feedback to applicants. Feedback on LOIs will be provided by September 30, 2022.

Letter of Intent must include:

1. Anticipated Title of Proposed Project.
2. Expected project personnel, indicating lead Principal Investigator and, if known, any co-Pis and community representatives. Please include this information: Names, Titles, and Institutional Affiliations. Contact Information is required for the lead PI only.
3. General Project Objectives, in no more than **two (2) single-spaced pages with one-inch margins, using a 12-pt font**, describe the project’s general objectives, methods and significance. Identify the main issues being addressed and the stakeholder groups most impacted by those issues. Page limit excludes any references and figures.
4. *Optional:* Potential Peer Reviewer Information (must be from outside of Rhode Island), including the following: Names, Titles, Institutional Affiliation, and any potential Conflicts of Interest.

### Full Proposal and Proposal Narrative

The full proposal, including proposal narrative, must be submitted to Rhode Island Sea Grant via eSeaGrant no later than **5:00PM on November 1, 2022.**

Proposal Narratives are not to exceed **five (5) single-spaced pages with one-inch margins using a 12-point font** not including references and figures. It is expected that the full proposal will more fully define and describe the proposed project, as well as provide a detailed budget. However, full proposal goals and objectives are not expected to deviate to any large degree from those stated in the Letter of Intent. Full proposal guidelines and guidance will be available in eSeaGrant when the full proposal phase of this competition is open on September 30, 2022, or at time of LOI comment return to PIs, whichever is earlier.

Your full proposal narrative should address the following points:

1. **Issue Identification.** Provide a brief background and introduction. Why is this topic important to Rhode Island coasts and coastal communities? Who are the stakeholders impacted by this issue? How does this project relate to Rhode Island Sea Grant’s Strategic Plan, focus areas and core values?

2. **Planned Interdisciplinary approach.** Which disciplines are represented and how will they contribute to the project? How will non-academic participants be included in the proposed project? How will the team work to ensure diversity and inclusion? How will participants be compensated for their time?
3. **Research Planning Grant Activities.** What programs or activities do you expect to engage in during this project? How will these activities help further project goals?
4. **Project Evaluation.** How will you define success for this project? Applicants must describe anticipated outcomes and/or deliverables and how they may be applied to solving or better understanding problems and issues relevant to the Rhode Island Sea Grant program, and which resource management audiences would likely find the results useful, and how?
5. **Looking Ahead.** Following the end of this 12-month research planning grant, what's next? Where would the project ideally grow following this planning period? What future support could be sought to further the goals of the project?

Required components listed below are completed in eSeaGrant and do not count against the project narrative 5-page limit:

1. Expected Project Duration and Time Schedule
2. For all PIs and Co-PIs, 2-page max Curriculum Vitae (CV)
3. Diversity and Inclusivity Statement
4. NEPA questionnaire and any required state and/or institutional permits to conduct research
5. OMB-approved Demographics Question
6. NOAA Data Sharing Plan
7. Budget and Budget Justification, including Cost Share
8. Letters of support (optional)

## Proposal Evaluations

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Letters of Intent (LOIs) are reviewed “in-house” by Rhode Island Sea Grant staff and representation from the RI Sea Grant Advisory Council and/or stakeholder communities, as appropriate. All LOI reviewers are assessed for conflict of interest and will attest they have no conflict of interest for preproposals they are reviewing. LOI evaluation criteria are:

- Adherence to topical areas as defined in the RFP and Rhode Island Sea Grant’s Strategic Plan; LOIs that do not address issues within the topical areas as defined by this RFP document will be disqualified and will not be allowed to submit a full proposal for consideration.
- Development of collaborative, interdisciplinary research planning grant activities that engage participants and stakeholders from diverse groups and communities.
- Proposed outcomes and/or deliverables of research planning grant activities and their potential use by RI Sea Grant stakeholders to improve understanding and/or management of Rhode Island’s coastal resources.

Letters of Intent will be assessed as:

- encouraged to submit a full proposal—shows strength some or most criteria;
- not Encouraged to submit a full proposal—shows weakness in most or all areas; or

- does not adhere to topical areas of the RFP—therefore NOT allowed to submit a full proposal.

All applicants that submit LOIs will receive feedback, including suggestions to improve relevancy, engagement of stakeholders, and potential for interaction with RI Sea Grant staff to improve outreach capabilities. Even if Rhode Island Sea Grant does not recommend that a preproposal be developed into a full proposal, applicants may still submit a full proposal, unless rated as *Does not adhere to topical areas of the RFP*.

FULL PROPOSALS are expected to receive a written review by at least three external out-of-state peer reviewers selected by Rhode Island Sea Grant. All reviewers are assessed for conflict of interest and will attest they have no conflict of interest for preproposals they are reviewing. A full proposal technical review panel (TRP) will be convened in early December 2022, to review full proposals, their peer reviews, and relevancy to stakeholder needs. A representative of the National Sea Grant College Program will attend the full proposal technical review panel meeting. The TRP assesses the merit of each proposal and, as part of the panel, may ask clarifying questions of relevancy specialists prior to their final ranking of the proposals. Relevancy specialists have practical experience in the RFPs topical areas and serve as resources that respond to panelists' questions. Relevancy specialists will have no conflict of interest with the proposals and take no part in their review or ranking. Reviewed proposals will receive a determination of "fundable" or "unfundable" based on written reviews and panel discussions. Fundable projects will be listed by priority based on the strength of the proposal according to the review criteria identified in the following section. The Director of the Rhode Island Sea Grant College Program retains sole responsibility for final selection of proposals to be considered for funding, while the National Sea Grant Program has final authority of approval for research project funding.

## Review Criteria for Rhode Island Sea Grant Research Planning Grant Full Proposals

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

- Project Merit and Rationale (30%);
- Quality and Value of Proposed Collaborations (30%);
- Potential for Future Project Development and Growth (15%);
- Relevancy to and Involvement of Rhode Island Sea Grant Stakeholders (15%); and
- Professional Qualifications of Investigators (10%).

### Key considerations for proposal evaluation are:

1. Project Merit and Rationale—Degree to which the proposed activities seek to address an important issue, problem or opportunity in the general understanding, sustainable use or management of marine and coastal resources in Rhode Island as requested in the RFP.
2. Quality and Value of Proposed Collaboration—Degree to which the proposed project incorporates the goals and requirements highlighted in this RFP to build collaborative, interdisciplinary teams that strengthen networks and add value to the Rhode Island research community.
3. Potential for future project development and growth—Degree to which the proposed work has a clear path for growth and/or expansion following the end of the 12-month funding period. This includes proposed outlines for future steps and plans for financial sustainability.

4. Relevancy to and involvement of Rhode Island Sea Grant Stakeholders—Degree to which the proposed work relates to priorities set in the 2018-2023 Rhode Island Sea Grant Strategic Plan, and the degree to which users or potential users of the proposed outcomes will actively participate in project planning and implementation.
5. Professional Qualifications of Investigators—Degree to which the investigators are qualified by education, training, and/or experience to execute the proposed work. This may include performance on past Sea Grant projects, completeness of annual reporting, and publication record of Sea Grant-funded research. Degree of active involvement of investigators from diverse disciplines and non-academic partners to contribute to collaborative, interdisciplinary teams will also be assessed.

## Selection Factors

Final funding recommendations to the National Sea Grant Program Office are made by the RI Sea Grant Director 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 program priorities;
- Prior award performance; and
- Diversity of institutions, geography, career stage, and engaged stakeholders and partners.

## Reporting Expectations

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All funded investigators shall submit a project completion report within 3 months of the end of funding period. An annual report will be required if the project funding period is extended past the original, expected 12-month 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 continue several years beyond the project completion date. 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

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Visit our website ([seagrants.gso.uri.edu](http://seagrants.gso.uri.edu)) for further information about Rhode Island Sea Grant, including the 2018–2023 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: Kim Ohnemus, Research Coordinator, [kohnemus@uri.edu](mailto:kohnemus@uri.edu)

For questions and/or guidance regarding communication of research results with public audiences please contact: Meredith Haas, Digital Media Manager and Science Writer, [mmhaas@uri.edu](mailto:mmhaas@uri.edu)

For assistance related to matters of outreach and Sea Grant Extension activities, contact: Jennifer McCann, Coastal Program Director, [jmccann@uri.edu](mailto:jmccann@uri.edu)

For assistance with potential legal questions that may benefit from legal research, contact: Julia Wyman, Legal Program Director, [jwyman@rwu.edu](mailto:jwyman@rwu.edu)

## 2022-2023 Planning Grant RFP Schedule

### 2022

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September 6, 2022	RFP Informational Meeting (optional); Zoom 2pm EST
September 22, 2022	Letters of Intent (LOI) due by 5:00 PM
September 23-29, 2022	LOI Review Period
September 30, 2022	LOI reviews issued to applicants
November 1, 2022	Full Proposals due by 5:00 PM
November 2-18, 2022	Full proposal peer review period
Early December 2022	Full Proposal Review Panel Convened
December 15, 2022	Proposal Funding Decisions issued to PIs
TBD	Final Proposal, Budget, etc. due to RISG

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### 2023

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February 1	Funded research projects begin
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