



Request for Research Proposals

Rhode Island Sea Grant 2026–2028 Research Program

Issued: Monday December 23, 2024

Information Session

Monday January 13, 2025, 2:00PM EST

[Register Here](#)

Pre-proposal Submission Deadline

Friday February 14, 2025, 5:00 PM EST

Full Proposal Submission Deadline

Wednesday May 28, 2025, 5:00 PM EDT

Rhode Island Sea Grant College Program
University of Rhode Island
Coastal Institute Building
URI Narragansett Bay Campus
Narragansett, RI 02882-1197
seagrant.gso.uri.edu

To declare your intent to apply for this funding opportunity, [click here](#)

This RFP is available at: seagrant.gso.uri.edu/research/

Request for Research Proposals

Rhode Island Sea Grant 2026-2028 Research Program

Introduction

Rhode Island Sea Grant's core mission is to integrate research, extension, communications, legal, and workforce development activities to improve understanding and just and sustainable use and management of Rhode Island's coastal and marine ecosystems. 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, and our Extension Program is at the URI Coastal Resources Center. Rhode Island Sea Grant (RISG) is a partnership among URI, the National Sea Grant College Program, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and the State of Rhode Island.

This Request for Proposals (RFP) is for research projects (individual or multi-institutional) up to 2 years in length to be funded as part of RISG's 2024-2027 Omnibus Proposal. Project funding will begin 01 February 2026 and end no later than 31 January 2028.

We anticipate supporting as many as 6 projects up to \$150,000 per project year (\$300,000 total per project) 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 competitive research program receives extensive out-of-state peer review, with final evaluation conducted by an *ad hoc* panel of external technical experts and relevancy specialists. All reviewers are assessed for conflict of interest at all stages of the review process.

An informational meeting for this RFP will be held on **Monday, January 13, 2023**, from 2:00PM-4:00PM via Zoom. Please register [HERE](#) to gain access to the meeting. Attendance by applicants is optional. This meeting is an opportunity to meet with RISG 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. This meeting will be recorded and made available via the RISG website.

Preproposal submission deadline is **5:00 PM EST Friday February 14, 2025**.

Full proposal submission deadline is **5:00 PM EDT Wednesday May 28, 2025**.

Important note: *RISG and University staff, including Office of Sponsored Projects and budget-development professionals are not guaranteed to be responsive or available outside of normal working hours. Investigators are implored to consider this when developing their submission timeline.*

Preproposals and full proposals must be submitted via the eSeaGrant interface, as detailed below. Late submission will not be accepted. A full schedule for this research competition is provided as the last page of this RFP document.

Eligibility Information

We encourage participation of researchers at institutions and organizations across Rhode Island and southern New England. Eligible institutions include universities, two- or four-year college programs, museum, research laboratory or other nonprofit or tribal institutions. State government offices and municipalities are also welcome to apply for this funding opportunity. All proposed field work and

research must occur primarily within Rhode Island and/or Rhode Island state waters and adjacent federal waters.

To submit a full proposal for this competition, all candidates **must** submit a preproposal before 5:00PM EST on February 14, 2025, in accordance with the requirements detailed below. Applicants who, at the time of application, have overdue annual or completion reports from previously funded RISG projects will not be considered for funding through this competition. Federal agencies and their personnel are not permitted to receive federal funding under this competition; however, federal scientists and other employees can serve as uncompensated partners or co-Principal Investigators on applications. Federal labs and offices can also make available specialized expertise, facilities or equipment to applicants but cannot be compensated under this competition for their use, nor can the value of such assets be used as match.

RISG is committed to building inclusive research, extension, communication, and education programs that serve people with varying backgrounds, circumstances, needs, perspectives, and ways of thinking.

Rhode Island Sea Grant's Program Priorities 2026–2028

RISG seeks competitive research proposals that align with the organization's strategic mission, goals and cross-cutting principles, promote transformative collaboration, and show promise for application and/or societal impact.

Specifically, RISG is soliciting proposals that directly focus on one or more of the following three thematic areas as outlined in our [2024-2027 Strategic plan](#): **Healthy Coastal Ecosystems, Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture** and **Resilient Communities and Economies**. Below, we identify program-specific strategic goals as they relate to each of these focus areas.

Each proposal should clearly identify how the proposed research relates to one or more of these strategic goals. Proposals will be evaluated on how well they align with RISG's strategic plan, values, and overall mission

Table 1. RISG 2024-2027 Thematic Areas and Programmatic Goals

Thematic Area	Program Goals
Healthy Coastal Ecosystems	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support sustainable management of coastal and ocean habitats, ecosystems, and the services they provide towards balanced development, protection, and enhancement.• Technical, engineering, and scientific tools and techniques as well as legal, policy and planning approaches are implemented towards the sustainable management of coastal and ocean habitats, ecosystems, and the services they provide.

<p>Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management of fisheries and aquaculture in Rhode Island supports social, cultural, economic, and ecological benefits associated with the ocean economy. • Commercial, recreational, subsistence and traditional uses of fisheries and aquaculture resources are sustainable, effectively managed, and accessible. • Applied science supports resilient natural resources and communities associated with fisheries and aquaculture within the context of environmental change.
<p>Resilient Communities and Economies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leverage Rhode Island’s ocean economy community to collectively contribute to a sustainable and resilient ocean economy. • Coastal communities have capacity and resources to prepare for and adapt to the impacts of flooding, erosion, sea level rise and urban heat island effect. • Safe, welcoming, and ecologically healthy coastal places are accessible to all residents, users, and visitors.

Relevant Focus Areas

Investigators are welcome to submit proposals on any emerging natural and social-science research topics that align with the thematic areas and goals listed above. Below are examples of potential research topics by thematic area that are relevant to Rhode Island’s coastal communities, as identified by RISG partners and priority audiences¹.

Healthy Coastal Ecosystems

- Understanding anthropogenic impacts to water quality in Narragansett Bay and surrounding waterways, implications for ecological health and relevant mitigation measures.
- Impacts of thermal stress and warming temperatures on coastal habitats and species distribution, implications for ecosystems, economies, and food systems.

Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture

- Understanding drivers behind changes in population and geographic distribution of commercially- and recreationally-harvested shellfish—particularly hard-shell clams; identification and exploration of potential mitigation measures.
- Research that addresses topics of concern related to Rhode Island’s aquaculture industry, including environmental, genetic and societal factors that influence aquaculture production.
- Research seeking to understand overall biomass, health and/or resiliency of commercially harvested fish and shellfish species in state and surrounding federal waters.

¹ For this RFP, priority audiences are defined as individuals, groups and organizations associated with coastal issues in Rhode Island that stand to be impacted by the outcomes of a particular project or initiative.

Resilient Communities and Economies

- Research that addresses usage, sustainability and questions pertaining to multi-use, shoreline access and/or the ocean economy in Rhode Island.
- Studies of the benefits, hazards and/or social implications of environmentally driven community resilience activities, including managed retreat, flood mitigation and shoreline restoration

Cross-cutting Principles

The following are a list of principles that RISG is dedicated to implementing and advancing across all programmatic areas, including in the research we support. Investigators are encouraged to consider how to incorporate these topics when developing their research projects and proposals.

- Understanding, mitigating, and adapting to the impacts of environmental change will be a major challenge facing Rhode Island communities in the coming decades. Impacts of environmental change on RI coastlines and communities plays an overarching role in shaping RISG's research priorities and thematic areas. RISG encourages investigators to consider environmental flux and its associated impacts when proposing projects that address any of the thematic areas discussed above.
- One of RISG's four thematic areas, Environmental Literacy and Workforce Development cuts across all RISG programs. We are committed to providing accessibility to information and to proactively recruiting, advancing, and training a skilled and resilient workforce while supporting the next generation of marine resource professionals. We encourage applicants to consider these goals and how they may address these needs through the development of their research, engagement and outreach plans.

Application Process

An online system—eSeaGrant—is used by RISG for pre- and full proposal development.

Applicants must establish new accounts or activate existing accounts in eSeaGrant to begin the application process. To declare your intent to apply for this opportunity and to gain access to eSeaGrant, please complete [this form](#).

Applicants are encouraged to reach out early to assure technical difficulties do not prevent on-time submission; account creation and/or activation may take up to 48 hours.

Budget Development and Match (Full Proposal Phase)

Research proposals 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 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. Examples of 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, and
- Contributions by private, local, or state entities or non-federal special project funds.

Impacts of Research

Proposal narratives must clearly communicate how the anticipated outcomes of research projects will address priority needs in Rhode Island and how they may be applied to solving or better understanding problems and issues at local, state, and regional scales. Applicants should describe which resource management audiences would likely find their research results useful, and how. Additionally, applicants are encouraged to communicate how anticipated outcomes may be relevant to or have impacts on communities across Rhode Island. Meaningful involvement of relevant RI Sea Grant priority audiences at different stages throughout the project will help to ensure that projects address local needs and will be useful for different audiences.

Reporting of research impacts and accomplishments to funders and intended users is a critical element of showing the benefits of research for the public. 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. 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.

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.

Sea Grant Graduate Research Fellows

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

Sea Grant Law Fellows

The RISG 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. The cost of a Law Fellow does not need to be included in your research project budget. For instance, a Law Fellow may be used to research regulatory, policy, or legal challenges to future multi-use of Rhode Island waters. 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 then hire and oversee the Law Fellows and their work product. If your research could benefit from inclusion of legal and/or policy research, or if you want to explore this opportunity further, contact Julia Wyman (jwyman@rwu.edu, (401) 254-4613).

Undergraduate Research Fellows

RISG encourages PIs to incorporate undergraduate students interested in engaging in hands-on experience in a research environment into their funded research projects. The request for an undergraduate summer research fellows should be included in the full proposal budget. URI-based investigators may consider engaging a summer research fellow through the [CELS Summer Fellowship Program](#) or other internship programs. For more information about engaging undergraduate students or budgeting for fellows, contact Kim Ohnemus (kohnemus@uri.edu) or Sarah Puckett (sarah_puckett@uri.edu). Non-URI investigators are similarly encouraged to engage undergraduate students as research fellows in their proposed research plans.

Connections to RISG Extension, Legal, and Communications

RISG seeks to fund research of the highest scientific excellence and relevance; proposed research projects must be well designed and scientifically rigorous. Applicants to the RFP are strongly encouraged to develop their engagement and outreach plans in consultation with RISG extension and legal program staff, as well as with RISG communications and education program staff as appropriate. An opportunity to open such a dialog will occur at the January 13 Informational Meeting. Collaborations with industry, state and regional agencies, and other research institutions are also strongly encouraged. Proposals will be evaluated on the intentionality and strength of partnerships detailed in a project's engagement and outreach plan.

Preproposals

Preproposals should present a succinct but detailed synopsis of the project in order that they may be evaluated for adherence to programmatic areas defined in the RFP, the robustness of the research approach and proposed methodology, relevance potential of research findings, and potential use of those findings to RISG priority audiences as made possible through the engagement and outreach plan.

YOU MUST SUBMIT A PREPROPOSAL TO BE ELIGIBLE TO SUBMIT A FULL PROPOSAL. Preproposals must be submitted in eSeaGrant by **5:00 PM, February 14, 2025**, the eSeaGrant portal automatically deactivates at the deadline time; late proposals will not be accepted. Exceptions will not be made.

NOTE: URI APPLICANTS will not use InfoEd for the preproposal phase of this research competition. Guidance on the use of InfoEd will be provided at the full proposal phase.

Preproposal text is uploaded to eSeaGrant as a single PDF document, limited to **3 pages single-spaced**,

and must contain the following elements arranged in the following order:

- Statement of Problem—indicate the specific problem to be addressed and how it helps address the goals and objectives of the RISG 2024-2027 Strategic Plan.
- 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 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 priority audiences are likely to find the research findings useful, and how.
- Engagement and Outreach Plan—A summary of engagement opportunities, potential partnerships and outreach activities, how they will help move science into practice, and if the project intends to interface with RISG extension, legal, and/or communications programs, and how. How will RISG priority audiences and end-users be engaged throughout the life of the project?
- Anticipated Budget Request—An estimated cost for the overall project, for each year, and associated match/cost share, is to be provided. Budget breakdown is not requested for the preproposal. While this budget estimate is not binding to development of a full proposal, it is expected that broad deviation from the preproposal budget estimate will not occur.
- Relevant references and figures (not part of 3-page limit).

RISG welcomes any recommendations for non-conflicted reviewers with expertise in the proposal's subject area that you wish to submit for consideration. Suggested reviewers are input into eSeaGrant's reviewer database.

Full Proposals

It is expected that the full proposal will more fully define and describe the proposed research, as well as provide a detailed budget. Full proposal goals and objectives are not expected to deviate to any large degree from those stated in the preproposal. Full proposal guidelines and guidance will be available in eSeaGrant when the full proposal phase of this research competition is open.

Proposal Evaluation and Selection

Preproposals

Preproposals are reviewed internally by RISG staff and representation from the RISG Advisory Council and/or relevant partners, as appropriate. All preproposal reviewers are assessed for conflict of interest and will attest they have no conflict of interest for preproposals they are reviewing.

Preproposal evaluation criteria are:

- Adherence to RISG thematic areas and strategic plan,
- Degree of rigor in proposed approach and methodology,
- Relevance and application of research findings and their potential application to improving the understanding and/or use of Rhode Island's coastal resources, and
- Ability to engage intended end users and RISG priority audiences as proposed in the engagement and

outreach plan(s).

Preproposals are rated as:

- Strong—shows strength in all criteria; **encouraged** to develop a full proposal,
- Moderate—shows strength in some criteria; **encouraged** to develop a full proposal,
- Weak—shows little strength in most or all areas; **not encouraged** to develop a full proposal.
- Does not adhere to the RFP; **not permitted** to develop a full proposal.

All applicants will receive feedback which may include suggestions to improve relevancy and/or engagement of relevant priority audiences throughout the project. Feedback may also include suggestions for potential interaction and collaboration with RISG staff to improve a project’s engagement and outreach capabilities. All applicants, *except* those who receive a “does not adhere to the RFP” rating are welcome to submit full proposals ahead of the May 28, 2025, deadline.

FULL PROPOSALS

Full proposals will be reviewed by at least three external out-of-state peer reviewers selected by Rhode Island Sea Grant. A full proposal technical review panel (TRP) will be convened in August 2025 to review full proposals, written peer reviews, and relevancy to the needs of priority audiences. A representative of the National Sea Grant College Program will attend the full proposal technical review panel meeting. The TRP assesses the scientific 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 RFP's topical areas and serve as resources that respond to panelist's questions. Relevancy specialists will have no conflict of interest with the proposals and take no part in their review or ranking. The Director of the RISG College Program retains sole responsibility for final selection of proposals to be considered for funding, while the National Sea Grant Office has final approval for research project funding.

Full Proposal Evaluation Criteria

As stated above, each full proposal will receive at least three external written peer reviews from individual representative of a diversity of scientific expertise and perspective. A technical review panel (TRP) will then be convened to discuss, rate and rank proposals based on written reviewer comments and their own expertise. All evaluations will be conducted using a two-part scoring system that assess 1) a proposal’s scientific and technical merit and 2) its relevance, engagement and outreach potential as detailed below.

Component 1: Scientific and Technical Merit (60 points)

Rationale and Scientific Merit (20 points)—Degree to which the proposed work addresses an important scientific question, issue or opportunity and advances understanding of Rhode Island coastal ecosystems, communities and/or economies. Research questions, hypotheses and project objectives are stated clearly and supported by the proposed methodology.

- Does the project address an important problem, question or opportunity related to understanding or just and sustainable use of Rhode Island’s coastal and marine ecosystems, economies and/or communities?

- Do the authors demonstrate familiarity with previous or ongoing work related to the proposed research topic and describe how the proposed project will build-upon or advance the scientific field or discipline?
- Are the research questions, hypotheses and project objectives clearly stated and supported by the proposed methodology?

Technical Rigor (20 points)—Degree to which the investigators apply innovative and technically sound scientific methods to address problem solving throughout the project period.

- Are the proposed methods technologically sound, innovative and/or appropriate for the proposed activities?
- Do project leaders integrate a combination of cutting-edge scientific methodologies with traditional and/or local sources of knowledge in the design and proposed execution of project activities?
- Does the project employ appropriate qualitative/quantitative tools, techniques and methodologies proposed to analyze data?
- Are the proposed research activities feasible and reasonable within the proposed timeline?

Budget (10 points)—Degree to which the proposed budget is reasonable and sufficient to execute all proposed aspects of the project effectively. Degree to which the investigators effectively leverage other resources to meet project objectives and enhance outcomes.

- Is the proposed budget reasonable and sufficient to carry out the proposed activities in the suggested timeframe?
- Do the investigators effectively leverage other resources to meet project objectives and provide adequate cost-share/match?

Professional Qualifications of Investigators (10 points)—Degree to which the investigators are qualified by education, training, and/or experience to execute the proposed work as suggested by accomplishment derived from previous projects.

- Does the research team collectively have the qualifications and appropriate technical and educational background to conduct the proposed research activities?
- Does the research team leverage the skills, support and knowledge of non-academic partners in the proposed work?

Component 2: Relevancy, impact, engagement and outreach (40 Points)

Project applicability and relevancy (20 points) — Degree to which the proposed work aligns with program mission and goals set in RISG’s 2024-2027 Strategic Plan, and the thematic areas as outlined in the RFP; Degree to which the proposed work will make its way into practical use or application in local resource management.

- Does the proposed work align with RISG’s thematic areas, goals and cross-cutting principles as outlined in the RFP and with RISG overall mission?
- Does the proposed project have practical applications and do the investigators effectively communicate how those applications can be implemented by relevant resource users and managers?
- Will the results and/or outcomes of the proposed work improve understanding of and capacity for addressing relevant coastal and marine issues?

Engagement and Outreach (20 points)-- The degree to which end-users or potential end-users of the

proposed outcomes participate in project planning and implementation and/or will be targeted by the project outreach components; Degree to which investigators ensure that relevant priority audiences have the opportunity to contribute to, learn about and benefit from project outcomes through the development of an effective, thoughtful outreach plan.

- Do investigators effectively and meaningfully engage relevant partners at various points throughout the course of the project? Relevant partners may include extension/outreach specialists, end-users, resource managers, community organizations, etc.
- Have appropriate partners been identified and included in full proposal development, or have they expressed support/commitment to engage in the proposed research activities?
- Does the proposal contain a thoughtful and thorough outreach plan that ensures priority audiences will have the opportunity to access, learn about, utilize, and benefit from project outcomes?

Selection Factors

Final funding recommendations to the National Sea Grant Office are made by the RISG 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,
- Similarities of projects funded previously by RISG,
- Prior award performance, and
- Diversity of institutions, geography, career stage, and engaged audiences and partners.

Reporting Expectations

All funded investigators shall submit progress reports according to reporting needs dictated by national reporting requirements which may include a brief 6-month update and a more comprehensive annual update; a project completion report within 3 months of the end of the funding period is required. 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 may 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

Visit our website (seagrants.gso.uri.edu) for further information about Rhode Island Sea Grant, including the 2024–2027 Strategic Plan .

For questions on the RFP Process or the eSeaGrant system, please contact:

Kim Ohnemus, Research Coordinator, kohnemus@uri.edu

For questions about communication of research results with public audiences please contact:

Meredith Haas, Digital Media Manager and Science Writer, mmhaas@uri.edu

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

Jennifer McCann, Coastal Program Director, jmccann@uri.edu

Julia Wyman, Legal Program Director, jwyman@rwu.edu

2026-2028 Omnibus Research RFP Schedule

For Omnibus Period 01 February 2026 to 31 January 2028

2025

January 13, 2025, Monday	RFP Informational Meeting via Zoom
Feb. 14, Friday	Preproposals due by 11:59 PM in eSeaGrant
Feb. 17 – Feb. 28	Preproposal Review Period
Early March	Preproposal reviews issued to applicants
May 28, Wednesday	Full proposals due by 5:00PM EDT in eSeaGrant
June-July	Full proposal peer review period
Early-Mid August	Full proposal review panel convened
August 20, Wednesday	Final funding decisions issued to PIs (approximate)
September 1, Monday	Final Proposal, Budget, etc. due to RISG

2026

Early January	Funded PIs and meet with RISG admin
February 1, Sunday	Funded research projects begin