

Funding Announcement

**2014-2016 Mid-Atlantic Sea Grant
Regional Research Request for Proposals**

Pre-proposals due March 15, 2013



Mid-Atlantic Sea Grant Regional Research Request for Proposals

Pre-proposal Deadline: March 15, 2013

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SUMMARY

Recognizing that many research questions cross state boundaries, the Mid-Atlantic Sea Grant programs are jointly releasing this request for proposals for collaborative and integrative research across the region that supports the Sea Grant mission. The participating state programs are New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, and North Carolina. Investigators are encouraged to define the region as appropriate for their research question, but projects must include two or more participating Mid-Atlantic states and proposals that include teams from three or more states are of particular interest. Projects should address issues of regional scale, but must also be relevant to the investigators' home states (i.e., proposals must be consistent with the investigators' states' Sea Grant strategic plans). Proposals should address one of the following four topics: (1) climate impacts and adaptation; (2) coupled social-ecological systems science that links social science and natural science research; (3) land-estuarine or land-sea interactions; or (4) cross-disciplinary, integrative research that analyzes and synthesizes existing data to address major, large-scale issues of relevance to coastal and marine communities. Within these four focus areas, the RFP seeks to answer regional-scale research questions by bringing together integrative research teams that can develop innovative ideas and approaches. Successful proposals will demonstrate a high degree of integration and clear mechanisms for regional interaction and coordination.

Available funds are tagged to the home states of the proposed research team (see details under Award Information below). Up to \$840,000 is available for a two-year award (for a project that includes all seven states in the Mid-Atlantic region, although proposals from two or more states are eligible); 50% non-federal match is required. The award period is February 1, 2014–January 31, 2016. Investigators are required to follow the eligibility requirements and proposal guidance of their state Sea

Grant programs. Pre-proposals are due March 15, 2013, at 5:00 p.m. EDT to Virginia Sea Grant via its online submission system eSeaGrant (<https://evaseagrant.vims.edu/RFP/proposals/>).

IMPORTANT NOTES FOR INVESTIGATORS

- Please contact your state Sea Grant programs early in the process to discuss potential ideas and the RFP process.
- While a single multi-state proposal will be submitted to Virginia Sea Grant by the lead principal investigator, collaborative, cross-state teams are expected and co-investigators must conform to all funding levels and expectations of their home state Sea Grant programs.
- Successful proposals will be relevant to both individual states and the Mid-Atlantic region, integrate across disciplines and/or functions, and have a strong plan for transferring knowledge and benefits to end users.
- Please be mindful of the deadlines (deadlines in this regional RFP may not be the same as deadlines under individual state Sea Grant program RFPs); no late proposals will be accepted under any circumstances.

INTRODUCTION

Sea Grant is a nationwide network (administered through the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration [NOAA]) of 33 university-based programs that work with coastal communities. This network is engaged in conducting scientific research, education, training, and extension projects designed to foster science-based decisions about the use and conservation of our aquatic resources.

While each Sea Grant program primarily supports research within its own state relevant to the state's unique needs, we recognize that many research questions cross state boundaries, as well as disciplinary boundaries (see, for example, regional research priorities outlined by the Mid-Atlantic Regional Ocean Research Plan, <http://www.midatlanticoceanresearchplan.org/>; the Mid-Atlantic Regional Council on the Ocean, <http://www.midatlanticocean.org/>; the Mid-Atlantic Regional Fishery Management Council, <http://www.mafmc.org/>, the Mid-Atlantic Regional Association Coastal Ocean Observing System <http://maracoos.org/>; and other regional organizations).

Thus, the Mid-Atlantic Sea Grant programs (New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, and North Carolina) are jointly releasing this request for proposals (RFP) for collaborative and integrative research within the Mid-Atlantic region that supports the Sea Grant mission.

Updated information on this RFP (e.g., full proposal guidance) will be maintained at Virginia Sea Grant's research opportunities website: <http://vaseagrant.vims.edu/research-opportunities/>.

REGIONAL RESEARCH PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The Mid-Atlantic Sea Grant programs are interested in funding regional projects that include investigators from at least two of the participating Mid-Atlantic states. The intent of the RFP is to support

large-scale regional research of relevance to the entire Mid-Atlantic. Within the geographical boundaries provided, investigators are encouraged to define the region as appropriate for their research question (i.e., projects may include anywhere from two to seven participating Mid-Atlantic states).

Projects should address issues of regional scale, but must also be relevant to the investigators' home states (i.e., align with state Sea Grant strategic plans and priorities). Successful proposals will demonstrate strong collaboration and integration between team members in the region. We expect to fund one regional project for 2014-2016, although multiple projects may be possible depending upon funding requests and team compositions.

The Mid-Atlantic Sea Grant programs recognize that this type of collaborative proposal will likely require the formation of new research and research-outreach-end-user teams. In addition, investigators will be required to comply with the funding guidelines of their home states in developing their proposals. Therefore, additional up-front proposal planning time has been built into the timeline. Furthermore, investigators are strongly encouraged to contact their respective state Sea Grant programs to discuss ideas early in the pre-proposal development process.

REGIONAL FUNDING PRIORITIES

All proposals must be consistent with the goals of each investigator's state Sea Grant strategic plans (see Additional Information section for links to each program's website and current priorities). Investigators are also encouraged to reference regional needs such as those identified in the new Mid-Atlantic Regional Ocean Research Plan (<http://www.midatlanticoceanresearchplan.org/>). Proposals must address one (or more) of the following four topics:

- Climate impacts and adaptation (e.g., sea level rise adaptation solutions);
- Coupled social-ecological systems science that links social science and natural science research (e.g., science related to fisheries management, marine spatial planning, water quality and quantity management, quantifying socioeconomic benefits of ecosystem services);
- Land-estuarine or land-sea interactions (e.g., watershed-wide nutrient research and management, freshwater-marine and estuarine-ocean interactions); or
- Cross-disciplinary, integrative research that analyzes and synthesizes existing data to address major, large-scale issues of relevance to coastal and marine communities.

All proposals are expected to describe how research results will be translated into useful information for coastal managers and stakeholders throughout the proposal's described region, and beyond if applicable.

Within these four focus areas, the RFP seeks to support research that brings together research teams that can develop innovative ideas and approaches. Successful proposals will meet some or all of the following criteria:

- Integration across disciplines (i.e., teams that cross social and natural science boundaries), across functions (i.e., teams that include expertise in research, extension, education, and communication), and/or across expertise (i.e., teams that include investigators or collaborators with expertise in outreach or who are end-users).

- Demonstration of synergistic regional benefits—in addition to achieving expectations of individual states (e.g., state-specific strategic plan priorities and performance measures), the investigators should produce and report on broader synergistic benefits on the regional scale.
- Mechanisms for transferring of knowledge or findings to other systems within and outside the region.

AWARD INFORMATION

The award period for this regional research project is February 1, 2014—January 31, 2016. Up to \$840,000 is available for a two-year award (for a project that includes all seven states in the Mid-Atlantic region, although proposals from two or more states are eligible), contingent on available federal funds. The Mid-Atlantic Sea Grant programs require a 50% funding match by state (i.e., the proposal budget for each state must show \$1 of match for every \$2 of Sea Grant funding requested). Only non-Federal funds may be committed as matching contribution. Full federally-negotiated indirect cost rates are allowable. We expect to fund one regional project through this RFP (although two or more projects may be funded, depending upon the state programs involved in the proposal and the available state Sea Grant program funding). Within a multi-state proposal with a single lead investigator, co-investigators or collaborators from an individual state are subject to the funding levels and conditions in their home state (e.g., restrictions on use of funds) for their portion of the overall multi-state proposal. Thus, the maximum award that a project is eligible for will depend on the number of collaborating states in the successful project(s) and those states' maximum award levels. For example, a project involving investigators in Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia can request up to \$420k with the potential for additional funding to support a graduate student in Delaware. As general guidance, the table on the following page lists maximum award levels and proposal conditions for each state; each investigator is required to follow their state's conditions and any additional budget guidance provided by their state Sea Grant programs.

While the funded regional project should be managed as a single cohesive project, as a practical matter each state team will receive a separate award from their state Sea Grant program. Therefore, teams will submit a single cohesive proposal that includes a separate two-year funding request for each state and a separate description of activities for each state team (see pre-proposal format and submission instructions below). Note that pre-proposal estimates are expected to be realistic; a substantial increase in the final budget request will be viewed negatively and will likely result in rejection or budget cuts.

New NOAA regulations require that data and information collected and/or created under NOAA (including Sea Grant) grants must be made visible, accessible, and independently understandable to general users, free of charge or at minimal cost, in a timely manner (typically no later than two years after the data are collected or created), except where limited by law, regulation, policy or by security requirements. The new requirement has two basic parts: (1) environmental and socioeconomic data generated by a grant project must be made available after a reasonable period of exclusive use, and (2) the grant proposal must describe the plan to make the data available. A data management plan will not be required until the full proposal stage; at the pre-proposal stage, PIs should consider if funds are needed for this task and include this in the project pre-proposal and full proposal budgets.

State	Max award	Conditions—apply to investigators from participating state
New York	\$70,000/year (\$140K total)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •NYSG funds available only for investigators from NY. •Contact NYSG about seeking Scholar status for graduate students, as this would have financial benefits for the project.
New Jersey	\$70,000/year (\$140K total)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •NJSJG funds available only for investigators from NJ. •NJSJG requires graduate or undergraduate student involvement in funded research, with significant research roles and budget support.
Pennsylvania	\$20,000/year (\$40K total)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •While PASG funds could be used to support a non-PA investigator as long as the research is clearly relevant to PA, participation by PA investigators is strongly encouraged.
Delaware	\$70,000/year (\$140K total)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •DESG funds available only for investigators from DE. •In addition to the \$70K/year for two years, funds can be requested from DESG to support a graduate student on the DE investigators' project.
Maryland	\$70,000/year (\$140K total)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •MDSG funds available only for investigators from MD. •MD PIs on any proposal accepted for funding must submit the accepted proposal and approved MD PIs' project summary (90-2), budget (90-4), and budget justification for the MD portion of their project to MDSG. PIs must use the MDSG online forms and contact MDSG to receive login information for using our online system. Routing procedures consistent with MD PI requirements must be followed and signed approvals provided to MDSG with the submission of the final project.
Virginia	\$70,000/year (\$140K total)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •VASG funds available only for investigators from VA.
North Carolina	\$50,000/year (\$100K total)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •NCSG funds available only for investigators from NC. •In addition to the \$50K/year for two years, funds can be requested from NCSG to support a graduate student on the NC investigators' project.
TOTAL	\$420K/year (\$840K total)	

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Proposals must include investigators from at least two participating Mid-Atlantic states. Projects that address the whole of or a large portion of the Mid-Atlantic and that include three or more states are of particular interest. Please also note any eligibility requirements for the applicable state programs.

PRE-PROPOSAL FORMAT AND SUBMISSION

Pre-proposals will be used to evaluate the research concept and its importance, relevance, potential impact, and feasibility. The pre-proposal should be a concise description of the problem being addressed, the general approach being used, including the strategies to advance integration, and the synergistic benefits and applications of the project's outcome, if funded.

Investigator teams will submit a single cohesive pre-proposal with a single lead PI from one state and co-PIs or collaborators from each of the other involved states. While a single pre-proposal will be

submitted, investigators from each state may need to receive signatures from their home institutions, as appropriate to their institutions' policies. By submitting a pre-proposal, the investigators certify that they have received all necessary reviews and authorizations.

An investigator is not encouraged to submit more than one regional pre-proposal on which s/he is the lead principal investigator (PI), although there is no limit on the number of pre-proposals on which an investigator serves as a co-investigator or collaborator.

Format and Content. A pre-proposal consists of the following (see detailed submission instructions in eSeaGrant, <https://evaseagrant.vims.edu/RFP/proposals/>):

1. **Investigator Information.** Detailed contact information and a 2-page (maximum) CV are required for each investigator. CVs must be submitted as PDFs.
2. **Project Summary Information.** Enter project title and proposed start and end date. The award period for this RFP is February 1, 2014—January 31, 2016. If appropriate, submit names of additional (non-PI) personnel who will be involved in the project.
3. **Project Narrative.** The narrative must be submitted as a single PDF file. There is a 5-page maximum including any graphical elements, using 12-pt font, 1-inch margins, and single spacing. Institutional transmittal letters and literature cited are not included in the 5-page maximum. The narrative should include the following elements.
 - a. Transmittal Letter (optional). If appropriate, institutional transmittal letters or cover sheets may be submitted as part of the narrative, and they will not count toward the page limit.
 - b. Funding Request. An estimated total funding request is required for each state and for the overall project. This estimate should include indirect costs and a separate estimate of match. A detailed budget and budget justification are not required at the pre-proposal stage. See the “Award Information” section of this RFP for additional guidance.
 - c. Abstract. Briefly describe the proposed work, with emphasis on the importance, relevance, application, and value to Sea Grant constituents (300 word maximum).
 - d. Background/Rationale. Describe the need for the proposed project, any relevant background information, and how the proposed project addresses regional-scale issues. The rationale should clearly describe the societal needs being addressed by the research and the relevance to the involved states and the region as a whole, if applicable. This section should also clearly outline how the project will be responsive to the RFP (e.g., regional in scope, integrative and cross-cutting) and reference the specific regional priorities and the state Sea Grant strategic plan priorities being addressed by the proposed work.
 - e. Objectives. List the objectives of the proposed project, including the unique integrative and synergistic components of the project, and briefly describe how the project advances the state of knowledge in the field. Be careful to state the purpose of the work rather than list project activities or tasks.
 - f. Approach. Describe the general approaches, techniques, and methods that will be used to meet the stated objectives. The approach section must also include a description of how project management and implementation will advance integration. A detailed description

of methods would be encouraged in a full proposal and should not be a significant portion of the Approach section of a pre-proposal.

- g. Anticipated Synergistic Benefits. Describe the results to be achieved by the project and how these results relate to current knowledge of the proposal topic. This section should illustrate both the additional synergistic benefits achieved by conducting an integrated, multi-disciplinary research project, as well as any discipline-specific advancements in the state of knowledge.
- h. Information Transfer and Adoption. Discuss how the information generated or technology developed will be transferred to and adopted by a broader community, including government policy makers and resource managers, industry members, citizens, and educators, and how the broader community will benefit. Specific information about the outreach, education, and dissemination strategies to be used to reach end-users should be included.
- i. Partners and Research Team. Briefly list the research team and their roles and responsibilities. This should include both the roles of the members from each state and how the team will coordinate.
- j. Literature Cited. Not included in the page maximum.

4. Suggested Reviewers (optional). Investigators may provide the names and contact information for suggested reviewers.

Pre-proposals must be submitted to Virginia Sea Grant via eSeaGrant (<https://evaseagrant.vims.edu/RFP/proposals/>). Detailed submission instructions can also be found on eSeaGrant. All pre-proposals must be submitted by 5:00 p.m. EDT on Friday, March 15, 2013. The eSeaGrant system will shut down automatically at the deadline, locking out any late submissions; investigators must hit "Submit Proposal" before the deadline for the proposal to be processed. Incomplete or late pre-proposals will not be accepted; no exceptions will be made.

PRE-PROPOSAL REVIEW PROCESS

Pre-proposals will be reviewed primarily for their relevance to the involved states and the Mid-Atlantic region as a whole, and their responsiveness to the regional RFP. All pre-proposals will be reviewed by the individual states for relevancy following the state's standard relevancy review procedures. A regional panel consisting of Mid-Atlantic Sea Grant directors (and appropriate staff) will also review the pre-proposals according to the evaluation criteria below. The Sea Grant directors will meet to consider their relevancy reviews and make decisions on pre-proposals to encourage for full proposal. The regional panel review aims to identify promising proposal concepts with high likelihood of success in the full proposal review process. It is anticipated that 3-5 pre-proposals will be encouraged to submit full proposals, although any pre-proposal can be submitted as a full proposal. Virginia Sea Grant employs a stringent conflict of interest policy throughout the review process. The criteria for review are:

- Relevance and potential for impact across the region and in the states (to be evaluated by each state). Each state will conduct a relevancy review following their state process (e.g., review by state stakeholders) for the pre-proposals involving their own states. While the specific review

may vary by state, the criteria will focus on whether the pre-proposal addresses a societal problem that has a clear significance to both the Mid-Atlantic region and participating states, and is responsive to the RFP. Does the proposal address large-scale regional questions? Does the rationale address identified needs of the states and the region, and are the outcomes likely to help address those needs? Will addressing the problem have a real and synergistic/multiplier impact in the involved states and the region? Will the anticipated benefits likely improve the effectiveness of coastal and marine resource decision-making by end-users? Are there clear deliverables of importance to end-users? What is the likelihood that the proposed information transfer and adoption strategies will broaden the impacts beyond immediate partners? Reviewers may also consider the innovativeness of the project, including the degree to which novel approaches are proposed to solve problems or to focus on new opportunities; it is anticipated that novel strategies and new research teams will be formed to meet the integrative research funding priorities of this RFP. The Mid-Atlantic Sea Grant Directors will conduct a relevancy review across all pre-proposals, emphasizing the regional dimensions of the proposed project. In addition to achieving expectations of individual states (e.g., state-specific strategic plan priorities and performance measures), the project should demonstrate broader synergistic benefits and relevance across the Mid-Atlantic region.

- Integration. The proposal should illustrate integration across disciplines (i.e., teams that cross social and natural science boundaries), across functions (i.e., teams that include expertise in research, extension, education, and communication), and/or across expertise (i.e., teams that include investigators or collaborators with expertise in outreach or who are end-users). How effectively does the proposed project demonstrate a cohesive and novel collaboration that crosses geopolitical boundaries, disciplines, and functions? Does the integrative research project illustrate synergistic benefits greater than the sum of their parts? Do the investigators clearly describe how they will coordinate and integrate their efforts? Will there be future opportunities for expanded collaboration and synergistic impacts? Does the integration advance fundamental understanding or solve problems whose solutions are beyond the scope of a single discipline, area of research, or functional area (i.e., research, outreach, communication)? The extent of leveraged expertise, capacity and resources through partnerships and collaborative efforts with end-users will be considered. Reviewers may also consider the degree to which the project will advance the state of the science.
- Appropriateness of scientific and technical approach. A pre-proposal will not contain sufficient detail to make a full scientific and technical merit determination; thus this pre-proposal review criteria aims to identify any significant concerns that could fundamentally undercut the viability of the project. Are the objectives clear and attainable from the general research design in the pre-proposal? In addition, the proposal should have an effective approach to the transferability of knowledge or findings to other systems within the region.

Based on these evaluation criteria, the regional panel will decide which investigators are encouraged to submit a full proposal; regardless of the recommendation, any investigator team that has submitted a pre-proposal is eligible to submit a full proposal. Virginia Sea Grant will notify the principal investigator regarding the outcome of the pre-proposal review and will provide review comments, as appropriate; it will be the PI's responsibility to notify all collaborating partners. Instructions for preparations of full proposals will be provided at that time.

QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSIONS

Virginia Sea Grant will host two informational webinars to answer questions regarding this new competition. In addition to contacting their state Sea Grant programs, investigators who are interested in this RFP are encouraged to participate in one of the scheduled sessions to hear an overview of the RFP goals, priorities, and submission and evaluation process, as well as to ask questions.

Webinar information

Webinar 1: January 28, 2013, 2 p.m. EST

Webinar 2: February 5, 2013, 10 a.m. EST

Webinar link: <http://vims.adobeconnect.com/regionalrfp/>

Audio will not be broadcast over the Adobe Connect website. Call-in information for audio will be provided once you log in to Adobe Connect.

TIMELINE

RFP Release.....	January 15
Pre-proposal Discussion with Sea Grant Programs.....	As soon as possible
Q&A sessions.....	January 28 (2:00 p.m. EST) February 5 (10:00 a.m. EST)
Pre-proposal Deadline.....	March 15 (5:00 p.m. EDT)
Notification of Pre-Proposal Panel Results.....	~April 15
Full Proposal Deadline.....	July 1 (5:00 p.m. EDT)
Notification of Full Proposal Panel Results.....	~September 15
Award Period.....	February 1, 2014—January 31, 2016

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Investigators should contact their state Sea Grant programs for more information.

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