

## 2019 RFP (for Projects Being Completed 2020 – 2022) Comparison Summary

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\*In 2020, Washington Sea Grant's Deborah Purce worked with student Abby Rogerson to explore how different Sea Grant programs approached their competition processes. Information below was gleaned from past Requests for Proposals (RFPs) that could be found. This document is for comparison purposes only and does not constitute official guidance from the National Sea Grant Office (NSGO). Moreover, some of the information below may not be allowed under NSGO policies as of 2021. Programs should always consult with their Program Officer before issuing an RFP, to ensure compliance with NSGO requirements.\*

### I. Approaches to the RFP

Approach means how the program explained what research they're interested in funding, taking into account the level of specificity and structure of research priorities and focus areas.

#### A. General approach: 10/23

Broadly based around focus areas, with general research priorities often provided under each focus area.

#### B. Targeted approach: 13/23

Provide specific research priorities/questions, either categorized by focus area or program goals

Examples:

- South Carolina is very comprehensive, with 7 pages dedicated to research priorities for each focus area (pg. 12-19)
- California required research to pertain to sustainable fisheries and aquaculture and prioritized projects focused on job creation and/or projects quantifying economic impacts of research (pg. 3)
- Common level of specificity: example research questions under Hawaii's Resilient Communities & Economies focus area: "*What new technologies, construction products, planning tools and guidelines, or model policies can be used by local governments to increase resiliency to coastal natural hazards (e.g., water level changes)?*" and "*Are there engineering and community solutions from other parts of the country or the world that could inform beach management in Hawai'i?*" (pg. 5)
- Ohio outlines 7 specific OSG research priorities and 12 research priorities identified by natural resource state agencies (pg. 1-2)
- Wisconsin provide research questions under their unique research priority areas (e.g. Green Bay restoration research, emerging contaminants) and standard focus areas (pg. 12-19)

#### C. Two tier approach: 3/23

Research projects are split into two categories: 1) Traditional, single-discipline projects and 2) Interdisciplinary, or integrated outreach-research projects.

- Delaware
  - Traditional max budget = 80K/year

- Interdisciplinary max budget = 120K/year
- Louisiana
  - Traditional max budget = 70K/year
  - “Integrated research and engagement projects” max budget = 210K/year (**prioritized**)
- Michigan
  - Traditional max budget = 100K/year
  - “Integrated assessment” max budget = 75K/year

#### **D. Other trends**

- Programs specifically encouraged aquaculture projects (Connecticut, Georgia, Oregon, California)
- Maryland excluded Environmental Literacy & Workforce Development and Florida designated it as a “cross-cutting” focus area (Florida). Wisconsin capped Env Lit projects at 25K/year.

## II. Trends and Variations in RFP Components

### **Additional funding for aquaculture**

- GA (pg. 6) and CT (pg. 2) anticipate more federal funds for aquaculture so encourage aquaculture projects be submitted to the omnibus RFP
- MD says they have more funding available for aquaculture projects through the Aquaculture Strategic Initiative (pg. 3, RFP)
- SC emphasizes aquaculture projects because National Sea Grant will provide up to 50% co-funding of highly ranked aquaculture proposals (pg. 3)

### **Appendices**

Multiple programs use appendices to explain forms such as the 90-4 budget and 90-2 project summary forms and NOAA’s data sharing directive.

### **Applicant-Sea Grant outreach team relations**

- SG outreach team designates 5 days for applicants to schedule meetings to co-develop engagement plans (OR, pg. 6)
- SG outreach team holds office hours by appointment in Spring 2019 to help applicants create a framework for developing, implementing, and assessing outreach plan (HI, pg. 10)
- Each project has a SG liaison to help with research/outreach integration (NJ, pg. 3)
- Host webinar to discuss expectations for RFP and outreach (MD RFP, pg.2)
- Applicants submit a letter of support from SG outreach specialist to confirm collaboration (DE, pg. 4/11)
- Applicant must obtain explicit permission from SG specialists to be included in proposal (ME, pg. 5)

### **Budget**

- AK only requires applicant to categorize the funding as 0-50K/2 years, 50-100K/2 years ... greater than 150K/2years in pre-proposal (pg. 4)
- Provide definitions for personnel types and who can/can't be funded (OH, pg. 4-5)

- Budget cannot increase from that stated in the Letter of Intent to the full proposal (FL, pg. 2)

### **Conflicts of interest**

- When providing name and contact info for potential peer reviewers, applicant must also state any potential conflict of interest in FL (pg. 9) and OR (pg. 9)
- AK requires the following in pre-proposal: "Include one alphabetical list of individuals with conflicts of interest, including name and current institution. Be sure to include thesis or postdoctoral advisees, graduate and postgraduate advisors, and all coauthors and collaborators within the past four years. This information is used to help identify potential conflicts in the selection of reviewers." (pg. 6)
- Appendix defining relationships that may qualify as a conflict of interest (Lake Champlain, pg. 11)

### **Contact list**

Some programs provide a contact list at the end of the RFP. California is particularly effective, with a short "Who to contact" section and one-pager of helpful contacts (pg. 13-14)

### **Data sharing explanation**

Some RFPs had a more extensive explanation of NOAA requirements, definition of environmental data, and/or typical data sharing plan components, e.g. NJ (pg. 4), DE (pg. 9-10), AK (pg. 9-10).

- CA includes NOAA instructions (pg. 7) and two coastal observing systems that may be used to fill requirement (pg. 10)
- Sea Grant Data Management Plan form as an appendix (GA, pg. 18; Lake Champlain, pg. 12)

### **DEI**

- Under DEI heading, CT includes 1. National Sea Grant statement, 2. Encouragement for applicants to engage underrepresented student groups and 3. Encourages research that will serve underrepresented/served communities (pg. 3-4)
- CA encourages applicants to evaluate if project will benefit disadvantage communities and provides disadvantaged community mapping tool (pg. 3)
- See "Evaluation criteria - other unique criteria"

### **Electronic submission instructions**

Some programs provide detailed instructions on the electronic submission process in the RFP or proposal guidelines. For example:

- CA explains eSeaGrant registration and how to submit proposal (pg. 9-10)
- GA urges people to set up eSeaGrant ASAP because registration may take up to 2 weeks (pg. 8)
- Link to an illustrated eSeaGrant PI Manual and provide in-text instructions (TX, pg. 9-10) - [link to manual](#)

### **Evaluation criteria - data sharing plan**

- 5% of technical review panel evaluation (NJ, pg. 9)
- 5% of peer review (DE, pg. 13)
- Georgia considers it in their merit review process (pg. 12)

### **Evaluation criteria - other unique criteria**

- Extent to which full proposal incorporated feedback from pre-proposal, 5% weight (DE, pg. 13)
- Value to graduate and/or undergraduate education (HI, pg. 10) and student involvement (PA, pg. 19)
- Student involvement esp. of diverse and/or under-represented student populations (NJ, pg. 9)
- DEI, 10% of technical peer reviews and general review panel, based on how researchers will engage with stakeholders from diverse backgrounds and how research will benefit underserved populations (Lake Champlain, pg. 9)
- Integrated interdisciplinary projects prioritized over traditional research projects (LA, pg. 6)
- Leveraging of SG resources through coordination or collaboration with other programs and funding sources (MD RFP, pg. 12)
- Appropriateness of SG support relative to support from other sources (MD RFP, pg. 12)
- Innovativeness, with regard to approach, public outreach, or focus on novel issues/resources (MA, pg. 16; MN, pg. 2; TX, pg. 8; WI, pg. 1)
- Identification of relevant data sources for integrated projects designed to support analysis or communication of existing data, in contrast to collecting new data (MI, pg. 3)
- Dissemination of results, i.e. degree to which project includes strategies for delivering info and products to targeted users (SC, pg. 31)
- Merit reviews based off of National Science Foundation's model, which considers intellectual merit and broader impacts (TX, pg. 8; GA, pg. 12)
- Investigator record of achievement with previous funding (TX, pg. 9; WI, pg. 1)
- Provide link to rubric the advisory team uses to judge societal relevance (OR, pg. 10)

### **Informational resources about RFP**

- Scheduled shortly after RFP release (GA; LA, pg. 2; CA, pg. 2)
- Two webinars held, one before pre-proposal due date and one before full proposal due date (WI, pg. 1)
- Host a prospective researchers workshop and research symposium shortly after invitation for full proposals are sent (GA, pg. 15)
- RFP question/answer process: Applicants must submit questions regarding the proposals by a date, then responses are posted - I assume publicly and anonymously. There's a month and two weeks, respectively, between when the answers are posted and the due date for the pre- and full proposals (MI)
- Q&A for first-time applicants held in December (MN, website)

### **Institutional sign-off**

- CA requires sign-off from institutional representative on template-format title page (pg. 6)
- Requires full proposals (not pre-proposals) to be reviewed and approved by the appropriate University (or institutional) sponsored programs office prior to submission (CT pg. 6; Lake Champlain pg. 4/6)
- DE requires non-University of DE applicants to obtain necessary institutional endorsements before submission (pg. 12)

### **Investigator eligibility section**

- Include DEI or inclusivity statement in eligibility section (CA, pg. 4; NJ, pg. 2; DE; LA, pg. 4; PA, pg. 5)

E.g. *“Pennsylvania Sea Grant is committed to building an inclusive program that serves all people including those with unique needs, circumstances, perspectives, and ways of thinking. Eligible applicants*

*of all ages, races, ethnicities, national origins, gender identities, sexual orientations, abilities, cultures, religions, citizenship types, marital status, job classifications, veteran status types, and socioeconomic status are encouraged to apply.*" (pg. 5)

- LA states "Applicants with poor prior performance in completing progress and final reports on previous LSG-funded projects may be deemed ineligible even if their current submission receives favorable reviews" (pg. 4)

### **Outreach products (non-academic)**

- Applicants must explain the informational products they plan to use to communicate findings to audiences beyond academia (i.e. scientific journals, seminars) (SC, pg. 25)

- FL requires publications for lay audiences, e.g. executive summaries, web pages, blogs, zines (pg. 4)

### **Outcomes and objectives guidance**

- Provide specific outcomes they'd like to see, e.g., cost savings, revenue generation, jobs created, policy or management changes (pg. 5) and require multi-year project to have annual objectives (SC, pg. 24)

- Particular guidance on how objectives should be written (MN, pg. 7; MA, pg. 7)

Example: "*Objectives: In no more than 10 lines address the objectives of the research as related to anticipated results. Start with the word "To" followed by a verb, such as: develop, provide, determine, isolate, characterize, identify, restore, implement. The verbs "study," "consider," and "continue" should not be used since failure to do these cannot be determined.*" (MN, pg. 4)

### **Peer reviewers**

Most programs require applicants to provide 5-10 out-of-state or out-of-region peer reviewers.

- Applicants provide at least 10 peer reviewer suggestions in pre-proposal (AK, pg. 4)

- Applicants provide 5 reviewers in full proposal (Lake Champlain, pg. 8)

- Applicants have option to include up to 10 competent reviewers in full proposal (DE, pg. 12)

- GA has a section dedicated to explaining how reviewers are selected (pg. 13)

### **PI/co-PI submission limits**

Programs diverge with their rules about how many proposals one person can be involved with. Examples:

- Georgia allows people to submit max two applications as either PI or co-PI (pg. 8)

- Investigators can only participate in one RFP (PR)

- "Applicants may submit more than one letter of intent and full proposal but if selected, only one award will be made to the PI." (CA, pg. 4)

### **Proposal formatting guidelines**

Most specify that proposals be single-spaced.

### **Proposal ranking**

- MA ranks proposals on a numeric scale (1-5, poor-excellent) after reviewing evaluation criteria performance (pg. 16)

### **Reporting requirements and rationale**

Many programs explain reporting requirements and/or rationale (NJ, pg. 4; AK, pg. 12; DE, pg. 14; GA, pg. 17; Woods Hole, pg. 9)

### **Review panels**

- GA (pg. 14) and NJ (pg. 11-12) have a subheading for each review panel to explain their make-up and role, which makes it easy to understand.
- Lake Champlain has an outreach review panel, made up of outreach staff, who judge proposals on ability to reach and benefit stakeholders (pg. 8)
- TX (pg. 8) convenes two Technical Review Panels to which proposals may be sent - one for the natural and physical sciences and a second for the social, behavioral, and economic sciences, law, policy and planning

### **Stakeholder involvement guidelines**

- Introduce the RFP with a "Statement of Research Kuleana," which includes standards centered around respect, reciprocity, self-awareness, etc. (HI, pg. 2)
- Strongly encourage applicants to communicate with targeted stakeholders prior to submitting Concept Letters to seek their participation in project design and implementation (SC, pg. 21)
- WI encourages proposals that "engage stakeholders and end users throughout all phases of a research study, including the pre-proposal stage when defining the question to be addressed." (pg. 11)
- Integrated project description (goals, project trajectory, and stakeholder engagement) as appendix (MI, pg. 12)
- Require applicants to state a) target audience, b) rationale for choosing audience, c) planned activities with audience, and d) how outreach effectiveness will be evaluated (NJ, pg. 3)

### **Miscellaneous components other RFPs include**

- RFP FAQ link, [linked here](#) (DE, pg. 3)
- In previous SG support section, AK requires applicants to report current status of any funded students (pg. 5/9)
- List of outreach team's services, e.g. web development, educational products (AK, pg. 5)
- Related funding opportunities section (CT, pg. 7)
- Quarterly invoice requirements explanation (PA, pg. 19)
- Structure the fellowship as an RFP for which there are separate application guidelines (MI, pg. 10)