



## MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

From: Jonathan R. Pennock, Director  
National Sea Grant College Program

Date: October 26, 2022

Subject: Sea Grant Competitive Research Allocation Policy

As a result of the existence of varying policy documentation concerning expectations for the allocation of competitive research and education funds, in November 2020 the Director of the National Sea Grant College Program requested that the National Sea Grant Advisory Board (Board) establish a subcommittee, including members from the Board, National Sea Grant Office (NSGO) and Sea Grant Network, to review and make recommendations on what the allocation policy should be moving forward.

The National Sea Grant Advisory Board (Board) established a subcommittee to address this request. The subcommittee provided a thorough analysis and [report](#) on “*The 40% Competitive Research and Education Policy for Base Funding.*” It was evident by the report, board conversations, and the webinar presentation, that the team thoroughly assessed existing and historical documentation and examined the many ways in which Sea Grant programs receive and commit funds towards competitive research. As noted in the report, the competitive investment in research projects is a central and prominent part of the Sea Grant model’s focus on research, extension and education. The report provides a clear recommendation that articulates the implementation and evaluation governing the allocations of these competitive funds. Based on recommendations provided by the subcommittee, the National Sea Grant Office will implement the following policy:

### **Sea Grant Competitive Research Allocation Policy**

**The state Sea Grant Programs are expected to direct 30 to 50 percent of the omnibus budget (base + merit + match) towards managing rigorous, peer-reviewed research competition(s), as defined by the Sea Grant National Competition Policy, that address stakeholder needs through the creation of new scientific knowledge.**

- The formula to calculate the percentage of omnibus funding (base+merit+match) directed towards managing rigorous, peer-reviewed research competition(s) will be:

$$= \frac{(\text{Competitive research funds from omnibus [base+merit+match]})}{(\text{Total omnibus [base+merit+match]})} \times 100$$

- Rigorous, peer-reviewed research competition(s) are to be conducted as described in and conform to the National Sea Grant Competition Policy.
- This policy pertains to all projects selected via the competitive process that result in the creation of new scientific knowledge. The programs may denote these projects as Research (R/), Education (E/) or Extension (A/). However, Research (R/) projects that are not selected via

competition (i.e., in-house research programs or non-competitive R/Program Development awards) do not count towards this policy.

- This calculation excludes amendments to the omnibus that are not designated as base, merit or match (e.g., pass throughs, National Strategic Investments, and similar amendments).
- Base funding may change over the lifespan of the omnibus. If the NSGO issues funds that could potentially become part of future base funding, programs will be advised of this possibility. Each program can then effectively plan to allocate those funds in such a way to meet this policy.
- Program Development funds may also be included in the calculation of omnibus funding directed towards research if such funds are awarded subsequent to a peer reviewed, competitive process following the National Sea Grant Competition Policy

The NSGO will initiate the following steps to establish, implement and evaluate this policy:

- Establishing the policy-- This memo will be appended to the current National Sea Grant Allocation Policy and hereafter replaces all previous iterations denoting requirements for a fixed percentage allocated to competitive research projects.
- Implementing the policy-- Each Sea Grant program must demonstrate they are implementing the proposed Policy including achievement of the recommended levels of rigorous, peer-reviewed research competition(s) through their omnibus proposals' budget and scope of work. The state Sea Grant programs should submit 2024-2027 omnibus application packages according to this Sea Grant Competitive Research Allocation Policy and work with their program officers if there are concerns with meeting the Policy at this time.
- Evaluating the policy-- This memo will be appended to the Planning, Implementation, and Evaluation (PIE) policy with the following instructions:
  - For the upcoming 2018-2023 PIE process, the site review teams and the programs should discuss how each program currently stands with regard to the Sea Grant Competitive Research Allocation Policy; however, this will not be evaluative for the 2018-2023 cycle recognizing that the Policy has been established near the end of the evaluation period. As such, the teams should discuss the Policy with the programs and only provide 'suggestions' that will help the program move towards compliance with the Policy for the next PIE cycle as necessary.
  - For all future site reviews (starting with the 2024-2027 evaluation period), site review teams are to assess adherence to Sea Grant Competitive Research Allocation Policy (noting that the policy is only applicable to the omnibus base+merit+match), as well as the entire portfolio managed by the state Sea Grant program when determining if a program has met the standards of excellence. It is the responsibility of the program to justify their investment at the site review, and showcase how they have been able to maintain a balanced portfolio, which includes managing rigorous, peer-reviewed research competition(s) that address stakeholder needs through the creation of new scientific knowledge.