



Special Projects Competition

Sea Grant Contaminants of Emerging Concern (FY22)

SPECIAL PROJECTS "G" ANNOUNCEMENT

Competition:

FY 2022 Sea Grant Emerging Contaminants

Closing Dates and Deadlines:

June 15, 2022 at 11:59 PM Eastern Time.

Eligible Sea Grant Programs:

This competition is open to all Sea Grant programs. All fieldwork must take place within the United States or territories or their respective waterways.

Award Time Frame:

The proposed start date should be September 1, 2022, with completion no later than August 31, 2025.

An application may be up to three years in length, however projects selected as part of a proposed competitive research program can not extend past the end date of the overall proposal.

Funding Availability:

The National Sea Grant Office (NSGO) anticipates that approximately **\$1,000,000** in FY 2022 federal funds will be available to execute a regionally-focused competitive research program to address contaminants of emerging concern. Each application may request between \$200,000 and \$600,000.

The NSGO anticipates providing at least two awards. Applications require the standard 50% non-federal match for Sea Grant projects.

Description:

Contaminants of emerging concern (CECs) are increasingly detected in surface water and groundwater, posing risks to the Nation's drinking waters and aquatic life. This broad class of chemicals and materials is characterized by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for their perceived, potential, or demonstrated threat to human health and/or the environment, but are often excluded from monitoring programs and suffer from a lack of published health and/or water quality standards ([EPA 2008](#)). CECs include, but are not limited to: pharmaceuticals, personal care or household cleaning products, industrial chemicals (e.g., per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFASs)), lawn care and agricultural products, and microfibers.

In recognition of Sea Grant's capabilities and place-based engagement in coastal and Great Lakes environments, in FY2021 Congress directed Sea Grant (Pub L. 117-103) to "partner with State agencies and academic institutions to research and monitor contaminants of emerging concern that may cause

ecological or human health impacts, including PFAS, in coastal and estuarine waters.” In response to Congress’s initial direction and appropriations (FY2021 Consolidated Appropriations Act, Pub. L. 116-260) combined with additional Sea Grant investment, Sea Grant performed a nation-wide scoping campaign to identify how the National Sea Grant College Program’s expertise in CEC’s can be most effectively leveraged along with an initial regional research competition supported with FY2021 appropriations.

In FY2022, Congress has provided an additional \$1 million to expand Sea Grant’s effort towards mitigating the impacts of CECs. The objectives of this funding opportunity are supported by: insights from Sea Grant’s national scoping campaign, as well as reports that address alignment between CEC research gaps and governmental mandates ([ACWA and ASDWA 2019](#); [NSTC 2021](#)), and Congressional direction.

To carry out a successful competitive research program, the selected project(s) will be expected to integrate the following three major objectives:

1. Regional research and monitoring efforts, which may:
 - Focus on species of ecological importance, particularly those with strong socio-economic and/or human health dimensions (e.g., subsistence, recreational, or commercial shellfish and/or finfish);
 - Focus on the prevalence, transportation, and biogeochemical transformations of CEC’s across a watershed or ecosystem, especially those with pathways that involve drinking water and/or wastewater;
 - Consider the *in-situ* multi-stressor and/or interactive effects of CECs that organisms likely experience in their natural environments;
 - Perform short-term monitoring assessments to help steer more-focused, long-term monitoring initiatives.
2. Partner with state agencies, so that projects are:
 - Tailored to outcomes that lead to enhanced management (regulatory and/or non-regulatory) of CEC’s;
 - Tailored to the most appropriate discipline(s) whether it be a specific or blend of: natural, social, behavioral, or economic sciences, as well as policy and/or legal analysis;
 - Complement existing research initiatives, such as those described in “Appendix A: Federal and State Research Activities and Programs” within the *Update to the Plan for Addressing Critical Research Gaps Related to Emerging Contaminants in Drinking Water* ([NSTC 2021](#)). The plan includes initiatives with a scope that is more expansive than just drinking water.
3. Collaborate and engage with underserved communities, for the purpose of:
 - Community outreach and engagement, so that project scoping, information generation, and dissemination have clear throughlines for the application of research.
 - Ensuring that appropriate priority is assigned to mitigating exposure risks in underserved communities, due to current and legacy industrial pollution that impact various waterbody designated uses (e.g., recreation, fish consumption), as well as aging wastewater and stormwater infrastructure.

Applicants should not be dissuaded from pursuing the priority needs of its stakeholder community, however, given the three main drivers of scope for these competitive research programs, the following areas of research may be better suited to address through other Sea Grant funding mechanisms or by other federal funding sources:

- Individual chemical constituent studies (e.g. risk, screening, toxicity).
- Marine debris (including microplastic), due to Sea Grant's upcoming investment from Provision 8 of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) Spend Plan.

Any proposed future competed research in response to this funding opportunity must adhere to the National Sea Grant College Program's [National Competition Policy](#) to ensure compliance with federal review processes as well as a robust and efficient review process.

Future competed research funding will result in a special award condition (SAC) on the grant and will require that selected projects undergo environmental compliance review before funding can be spent on those projects. The recipient program will need to submit an award action request to satisfy that special award condition which will need to be approved by NOAA's Grants Management Division before funding can be expended.

Application Requirements:

Consult the NOFO **NOAA-OAR-SG-2022-2007012**, available at [Grants.gov](#), for eligible applicants, required elements of the application, how to submit, general programmatic priorities and selection factors, and other necessary information. Submit your application to **SPECIAL PROJECTS "G"** under this opportunity in Grants.gov.

Discrepancies between this special project announcement and the NOFO may exist. Specific application details and instructions outlined in this special project announcement take precedence over guidelines in the NOFO.

Applications must include the following elements. Failure to adhere to these provisions may result in a delay in award processing or rejection of the application, based on the extent of the noncompliance.

1. Project Narrative. *The Project Narrative must include the following elements:*

- a. Project Description. The total number of pages in the project description should not exceed **10** pages. Excess pages will not be included in the review. Applicants do not need to use the entire 10-page maximum for each project. Depending on the complexity of the proposed activities, a shorter description may suffice. The works cited, CVs, letters of support, and current and pending support sections do not contribute to the page limit.
 - i. Cover page
 - Project title and names, titles, affiliations, and contact information (email and phone) of co-PIs.
 - Budget overview - Total cost and annual breakdown of requested funding by partner.
 - ii. Project Abstract (1 page maximum)
 - iii. Project background
 - Explain the specific problem(s) this project seeks to address and justify its importance.
 - iv. Project objectives
 - Provide a list of clearly defined objectives. For each objective, provide a concise statement explaining how it is aligned with the three major activities described in this funding opportunity's Project Description.

- v. Project details
 - Provide an explanation of the methods you will use to address your project objectives. Explicitly explain how this project leverages the expertise of both researchers and stakeholders, and how the research program will be structured to successfully integrate the three major objectives described in the funding opportunity's Project Description.
 - Given the nature of this overarching project as a competitive research program, the narrative should articulate:
 - a. How competitively selected projects will be integrated with other program elements and existing strategic plans.
 - b. How the program will proactively engage minority serving institutions, underrepresented researchers, and other groups that have historically been excluded from competitive opportunities.
 - c. How the program will recruit diverse review panelists.
- vi. Anticipated outcomes and results
 - What are the expected outcomes and results related to the creation of data products, tools, technologies, and management practices?
- vii. Outreach and technology transfer plan
 - Provide a strategy that details how end users, beyond those who actively participate in the proposed work, will learn about the project's outcomes.
- viii. Project timeline
 - Provide a timeline for accomplishing the proposed work, which covers the entire duration of the project. Include approximate dates for key milestones related to the proposed work, including the accomplishment of anticipated outcomes and release of results.
 - Applicants submitting proposals that involve the use of human test subjects should state so clearly in their application. These proposed research activities require approval of the applicant's Institutional Review Board (IRB) before such research can proceed. Applicants are responsible for obtaining IRB approval from their institution and providing that documentation to NOAA once the approval is obtained and prior to any NOAA-funded human subject testing. Proposals intending to use human test subjects should specify clearly in the timeline approximately when IRB approval will be obtained and when the testing is expected to occur.
- ix. If funds are to be used for competitive research, the program may use a Future Competed Projects placeholder project.
 - Projects selected as part of any future competed research within the proposal must have end dates that do not extend past the end date of the overall proposal.
- x. Diversity statement
 - NSGO recognizes it has a particular and unique opportunity to support NOAA's commitment to diversity and inclusion by taking an intentional step that encourages applicants to consider diversity and inclusion as part of their scientific projects. This action has the potential to make an impact on not only the diversity and inclusion in science at NOAA, but

also in the equity of services provided by NOAA. In this section, describe how the proposed activity broadens the participation of underrepresented groups (e.g., race/ethnicity, gender identities, sexual orientation, disability, geography, etc.) and how they benefit from its outcomes. Applicants are encouraged to review Sea Grant's vision and priority action plan for advancing Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice: https://seagrant.noaa.gov/Portals/1/Network%20Visioing/DEI_VisionActions_2_0_Sea%20Grant.pdf

- xi. Works cited (does not count towards page limit)
 - All in-text citations should be listed here.
 - xii. Curriculum vitae (CV) for each co-PI (does not count towards page limit)
 - Each person's CV should not be longer than **2** pages. Excess pages will not be included in the review.
 - xiii. Letters of support (OPTIONAL; does not count towards page limit)
 - xiv. Current and pending support (does not count towards page limit)
 - Describe any current or pending sources of support if applicable.
- b. Abbreviated Environmental Compliance Questionnaire (OMB Control No. 0648-0538)
- i. A separate NEPA Questionnaire must be completed for each relevant individual project in the application, following further details below. The Questionnaire can be found here: <https://seagrant.noaa.gov/insideseagrant/Implementation>. Applicants must ensure that the Questionnaire is completed in full and includes detailed information regarding project location, methodology, and permits. Copies of all permits required for project activities should be included with application materials. If a permit is pending or planned, please provide this information. Guidance on how to complete the Questionnaire and example Questionnaires for different types of projects can be found here: <https://seagrant.noaa.gov/insideseagrant/Implementation>.
 - ii. The NEPA Questionnaire is required for ALL research projects (those whose project ID starts with "R/") even if the project is fully lab-based or relies on social science. The NEPA Questionnaire is also required for any project that meets the following criteria:
 - Environmental permits, authorizations or waivers
 - Biological take and/or release
 - Environmental sampling
 - Hazardous or toxic substances and waste
 - Permanent or temporary environmental effects
 - Endangered or threatened species and/or protected areas
 - Known or unknown risks to human health or the environment
 - Controversial environmental subject matter

- iii. The NEPA Statement can be used instead of the NEPA Questionnaire for certain low-impact projects. If none of the project’s activities will take place in the environment and the project is not research, you may include the NEPA Statement in place of the NEPA Questionnaire. However, NOAA has final responsibility to determine whether a project or action requires environmental compliance review. If NOAA determines that the NEPA Statement is not sufficient, staff may request that a NEPA Questionnaire be provided instead. Please use the following format for the NEPA Statement:
 - “This project’s activities include [list the activities]. Because no part of this project will take place in the environment or involve the collection of environmental data, the NOAA environmental compliance questionnaire is not needed.”
- iv. Some examples of projects that can use the NEPA Statement are:
 - Program management (i.e., any projects be assigned the “M/” project ID)
 - Placeholder projects (e.g., "Future Competed Projects"; these projects will have a Special Award Condition on the grant and undergo environmental compliance review at that time)
 - Workshops or conferences that do not involve the above list of actions in the previous section
 - Communication activities that do not involve the above list of actions in the previous section
 - Fellowships where the Sea Grant Program does not have discretion over the fellow’s externally funded research

Data Management Plan

- v. All applications **must** include a Data Management Plan that is compliant with NOAA’s [Public Access to Research Results](#) Plan. The Data Management Plan should not exceed 2 pages. The Data Management Plan should include descriptions of the types of metadata and data expected to be created during the course of the project, plans for disseminating the metadata and data to the broader community, and plans for long-term archiving of the metadata and data.
- vi. If proposed activities will not generate any environmental data, such as the scoping activities and research competition, please include the following statement at the end of your proposal: “Because this project will not generate environmental data, a Data Management Plan is not required.”

2. Budget Narrative and Justification. *The Budget Narrative **must** include the following documents (Sea Grant 90-4 Forms and Budget Justification) in that order and format. Additional budget narrative guidance can be found [here](#).*

- a. Sea Grant 90-4 Form (OMB Control No. 0648-0362) - Sea Grant 90-4 Forms are required to provide budget breakdowns and budget justifications by year and object class for each project within the proposal. A completed Sea Grant 90-4 Form should be completed for each project year as well as a total budget for the entire project duration (i.e., Year 1, Year 2, Year 3, and Years 1-3). Guidance on filling out these forms is located in the [Sea Grant General Application Guide](#).
- b. Budget Justification - For each year of the project, a Budget Justification is required. Each Budget Justification should explain the budget items in sufficient detail to enable

review of the appropriateness of the funding requested. Each Budget Justification should be attached as a PDF to each Sea Grant 90-4 Form, as appropriate. Guidance on completing the Budget Justification is located in the [Sea Grant General Application Guide](#).

- 3. Overall Application.** *In addition to the forms required above, standard Federal Forms and Assurances are required for the overall application and can be found with the application package on Grants.gov or on the Sea Grant website (links found below). These include:*
- a. SF-424 Form ([Grants.gov](#), OMB Control No. 4040-0004)
This form, titled “Application for Federal Assistance,” **must** identify the entire funding period, as well as the federal funding amount being requested by the applicant and the non-federal matching fund amount. The form must be completed with the institution’s accurate EIN and DUNS and Point of Contact, and signed by the institution’s authorized representative or designee.
 - b. SF-424A Form ([Grants.gov](#), OMB Control No. 4040-0006)
This form, titled “Budget Information - Non-Construction Programs,” should describe the entire funding period in federal and non-federal dollars, for the entire application. Fill out Section B of this SF-424A form to show the overall budget breakdown by object class by year. Each federal and match year should have its own column. If there is insufficient space, an additional SF-424A Form, Extra Section B should be used (see below).
 - c. Additional SF-424A Form, Extra Section B (<https://seagrants.noaa.gov/insideseagrants/Implementation>, OMB Control No. 4060-0006)
The SF-424A Form described above only includes space to report the applicant’s yearly federal and non-federal dollars over two years. If the application covers more than two years of federal and non-federal dollars, then please complete the Additional SF-424A, Extra Section B to report the yearly non-federal matching fund budget of the grant. Guidance on filling out the form is located in the Sea Grant [How to Use Form “424A Extra Section B” Document](#). This form is an outlier and will be added to the “Budget Narrative Attachment” section on Grants.gov, as described in Section IV. C. 2 of the NOFO.
 - d. SF-424B Assurances ([Grants.gov](#), OMB Control No. 4040-0007)
The form, titled “Assurances – Non-Construction Programs,” should be completed and signed by the institution’s authorized representative or designee.
 - e. CD-511 ([Grants.gov](#), US Department of Commerce)
The form, titled “Certification Regarding Lobbying,” should be completed and signed by the institution’s authorized representative or designee. In some instances, the SF-LLL Disclosure of Lobbying Activities form may also be required. See the instructions on the CD-511 for further information.
 - f. SF-LLL ([Grants.gov](#), OMB Control No. 0348-0046) if applicable
The form, titled “Disclosure of Lobbying Activities,” should be completed and signed by the institution’s authorized representative or designee, if appropriate.

Application Evaluation Criteria:

The following criteria will be used to evaluate proposals. Note that the weights of each criteria are different from the Evaluation Criteria laid out in the Special Projects NOFO announcement. Proposals submitted to this competition will be evaluated by at least three independent written reviews based on the following criteria:

1. Importance/relevance and applicability of proposed projects to the program goals (25 pts). This criterion ascertains whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and/or relevance to NOAA, federal, regional, state, or local activities. For this competition, this includes addressing the Project Description's three major activities of the funding opportunity, and the degree to which the proposal connects to societal needs.
 - a. The point scale is as follows: the application is unclear and does not adequately address the expectation outlined above (0-6 points); the application adequately addresses expectations outlined above (7-15 points); the application exceeds expectations outlined above (16-25 points).
2. Technical/scientific merit (25 pts). This criterion assesses whether the approach is technically sound and/or innovative, if the methods are appropriate, and whether there are clear project goals and objectives. For this competition, this includes: assessing the degree to which the goals, objectives, and deliverables are clearly stated and described; the methods are novel or creative; the technical approach is clearly explained; the technical approach efficiently and effectively transfers knowledge; and the proposal explains the technical approach to be taken that will advance previously-funded science to a point that it is translatable into natural resource management actions.
 - a. The point scale is as follows: the application is unclear and does not adequately address the expectation outlined above (0-6 points); the application adequately addresses expectations outlined above (7-15 points); the application exceeds expectations outlined above (16-25 points).
3. Community Outreach and Education, including efforts to ensure inclusive and equitable engagement (25 pts). This criterion assesses whether the project provides a focused and effective education and outreach strategy regarding NOAA's mission to protect the Nation's natural resources. For this competition, this means the degree to which the outcomes of the proposed work, specifically the knowledge and products that are responsive to U.S. coastal and great lakes stakeholders, will be shared beyond the project team (i.e. to other coastal stakeholders). This also includes identifying a strategy to work with stakeholders throughout the entire duration of the proposed work.
 - a. The point scale is as follows: the application is unclear and does not adequately address the expectation outlined above (0-6 points); the application adequately addresses expectations outlined above (7-15 points); the application exceeds expectations outlined above (16-25 points).
4. Overall qualifications of applicants (15 pts). This criterion ascertains whether the applicant possesses the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project. For this competition, this includes: demonstration of the appropriate experience, qualifications and skill for successful completion of the project; the capacity necessary to complete the work, and the meaningful collaboration and partnerships with previously funded activities, if applicable.

- a. The point scale is as follows: the qualifications are unclear and do not adequately address the expectation outlined above (0-5 points); the qualifications adequately address expectations outlined above (6-10 points); the qualifications exceed expectations outlined above (11-15 points).
5. Project costs (10 pts). This criterion evaluates the budget to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time frame, and provides a clear description of budget items that are flexible or in-flexible in nature (e.g., the Future Competed Research portion can be increased or decreased).
 - a. The point scale is as follows: the proposal is unclear and does not adequately address the expectations outlined above (0-3 points); the proposal adequately addresses expectations outlined above (4-6 points); the proposal exceeds expectations outlined above (7-10 points).

Additionally, projects will be recommended for funding only if they have a complete application package and if funds are available.

Other Information:

Reporting:

This will be a stand-alone (i.e., non-omnibus) award for which annual progress reporting in the form of the [Research Performance Progress Report](#) will be required.

Once applications have been selected for funding, applicants must submit a Sea Grant 90-2 Project Summary Form (for each project within the application) through the [90-2 Webform portal](#). This is due within 30 calendar days after the applicant has been notified via email that their application has been awarded. A detailed step-by-step guide for completing the web-based 90-2 Form is available on [Inside Sea Grant](#). Once the project is approved and funded, that information will be publicly available and searchable on the [National Sea Grant College Program public website](#).

Recipients are required to use the National Sea Grant Planning Implementation and Evaluation Reporting (PIER) project database to communicate with the National Sea Grant Office on activities relating to this award. This includes tracking progress and impacts, in addition to performance metrics.

All public-facing products produced with funding from the award(s)/project(s) must ensure compliance with Section 508 of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Agency Contacts:

Questions about this competition or the Special Projects Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) may be sent to sg.grants@noaa.gov. Please specify that your question is related to this Special Projects Competition in the subject line.

Fillable versions of required Sea Grant forms can be found here:
<https://seagrant.noaa.gov/insideseagrant/Implementation>

Guidance for completing these forms is located in the Sea Grant General Application Guidance Document: <https://seagrant.noaa.gov/Portals/1/Guidance/SeaGrantGeneralApplicationGuide.pdf>