

Advancing Actionable Social Science Research on Fisheries and Offshore Wind Interactions in the Northeast Region

Guidelines for Preparing Letters of Intent and Full Proposals for 2024-2027

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INTRODUCTION

The Northeast Sea Grant Consortium (NESGC), consisting of the New York, Connecticut, Rhode Island, MIT, Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, New Hampshire, and Maine Sea Grant College Programs, in partnership with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)’s Northeast Fisheries Science Center (NEFSC), is seeking proposals to improve understanding of fishing community interactions with offshore wind development (OWD) in the U.S. Northeast (New York Bight through the Gulf of Maine).

Through this [Request for Proposals \(RFP\)](#), the NESGC and NEFSC are continuing to advance a regional approach and seek to enhance existing and catalyze new human dimensions research in the Northeast that will 1) further understanding of the interactions between fisheries (on-water and shoreside components/commercial and recreational) and OWD, including connections to fishing community resilience and economies, 2) build actionable science that bridges research, fishing community, and management needs, and 3) build capacity for ongoing collaborative, inter- and transdisciplinary human dimensions research. The focus is on advancing needed social, cultural, historical, and economic research to inform communities, developers, and other decision-makers with an emphasis on research that is conducted “with and by” affected communities and not “on and for.” Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches from across the social sciences and humanities are encouraged.

Successful research proposals will undertake collaborative, inter- or transdisciplinary, and/or innovative approaches with results that will be applicable and useful to affected parties and users throughout the Northeast region. OWD and fisheries interactions is an issue of regional importance, and research approaches that incorporate and address specific regional aspects and applicability of the topic are encouraged.

The National Sea Grant College Program (NSGCP), NESGC, and NEFSC champion diversity, equity, inclusion, justice, and accessibility (DEIJA) by recruiting, retaining, and preparing a diverse workforce, and proactively engaging and serving the diverse populations of coastal communities. As part of this request for proposals, applicants should carefully consider how their proposals address the goals outlined in the [NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service Equity and Environmental Justice Strategy](#) and the [NSGCP Strategic Plan](#), including but not limited to efforts to connect with diverse populations in project design and implementation, or to recruit and engage with students, fellows, and research team members from rural areas, underrepresented racial and ethnic groups, individuals with disabilities, or individuals from economically or educationally disadvantaged backgrounds that have inhibited their ability to pursue a career in STEM.

Important Dates and Details

- **Optional Webinar:** 3:00-4:00 p.m. ET on January 24, 2024. Will include an RFP overview, Q&A session, and application portal tips. Register to receive the Zoom link on the Northeast Sea Grant Consortium [website](#).
- **Letters of Intent (LOI) Due: February 15, 2024 by 5:00 p.m. ET** via NH Sea Grant's online portal, [eSeaGrant](#).
- **Full Proposals Due: April 1, 2024 by 5:00 p.m. ET** via NH Sea Grant's online portal, [eSeaGrant](#).
- **Eligibility:** This research competition is open to applicants at any public, private, or higher education institution (including non-profits and industry associations) or tribal, municipal or state government entity, in the United States and its territories who are eligible to submit a proposal according to their home institution guidelines. Project teams do not need to be based in the Northeast but must include at least one Co-PI from one of six states of the NESGC (i.e. NY, CT, MA, NH, ME, RI). International (non-U.S.) partner organizations may receive federal funding as a subcontract. Federal agencies and staff may not receive salary support as part of this competition. However, they can serve as uncompensated partners or co-PIs. 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 matching funds. Sea Grant employees may not receive funding as part of this competition but can be engaged in project activities.
- **Project Team Composition:** To help meet the research application goals of this RFP, each project team is expected to include both research and applied expertise. This can be accomplished in a range of ways, for example: including a representative of a fishing community or group which represents the fishing community as a PI or co-PI; developing a small project advisory group to inform project design, implementation, and outreach; building on existing extension staff engagement efforts; formally engaging extension staff in efforts to ensure authentic involvement by targeted audiences including resource users and decision makers; involving researchers or extension staff with direct roles in management processes; among other approaches. Applicants should demonstrate knowledge of the offshore renewable energy environmental, social, and decision-making landscape in the Northeast U.S. within the project team.
- **Project Duration:** Proposed projects may run between one and three years starting no earlier than September 1, 2024, and ending no later than August 31, 2027. Proposals that build on existing work and request less than three years of support are strongly encouraged and will

receive full consideration.

- **Requested Funding:** Budget requests may not exceed \$400,000 in federal funds throughout the duration of the project. Proposals requesting lower levels of support are strongly encouraged and will receive full consideration. A 25% non-federal match is required for all proposals. Proposal budgets should include all direct and indirect costs.
- **Proposal Submission:** LOIs and proposals must be submitted to NH Sea Grant's [eSeaGrant portal](#); proposals submitted to other Sea Grant programs will not be considered.

Funding Availability

It is anticipated that approximately \$1 million will be available to support these projects contingent on agency funding. Partners reserve the right not to select any proposals if proposals are not responsive to the RFP and Research Priority Areas as deemed by the selection criteria, or to fund additional projects if more funding becomes available.

RESEARCH AREAS

The overarching goal of this RFP is to enhance existing and catalyze new human dimensions research in the Northeast that will 1) further understanding of the interactions between fisheries (on-water and shoreside components/commercial and recreational) and OWD, including connections to fishing community resilience and economies, 2) build actionable science that bridges research, fishing community, and management needs, and 3) build capacity for ongoing collaborative, inter- and transdisciplinary human dimensions research. A fishing “community” defined here refers to the fishing industry sector or a community/town that is dependent on or engaged in fishing. The focus is on advancing needed social, cultural, historical, and economic research to inform communities, developers, and other decision-makers with an emphasis on research that is conducted “with and by” affected communities and not “on and for.” This includes but is not limited to research that advances understanding of attitudes, behaviors, institutional processes, political norms, power dynamics, etc. within the context of fisheries interactions with OWD. Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches from across the social sciences and humanities are encouraged.

Applicants should consider how their work builds on existing efforts in the region and how actionable findings can be made available early in the project performance periods. Applicants should also consider how their projects incorporate students and postdoctoral scholars to build regional social science capacity into the future. Applicants should consider how their work intersects with other efforts in the region to acknowledge and minimize participation fatigue and where possible build or strengthen trusting relationships (see [Relationship to Other Programs / Efforts](#) section on pg. 10 for further guidance). Applicants should also carefully read the following for further context:

- [Science Priorities for Offshore Wind & Fisheries Research in the Northeast U.S. Continental Shelf Ecosystem: Perspectives from Scientists at the National Marine Fisheries Service](#)
- [Fisheries and Offshore Wind Energy: Synthesis of the Science](#)
- [New England Fishery Management Council \(NEFMC\) Research Priorities for 2022-2026](#)
- [Cooperative Research in the Northeast Region: Stakeholder Priorities](#)

The additional detail below provides examples of the types of research the funders are seeking to support. Proposals that address one or more of the topical research areas are encouraged. However, proposals are not limited to the topical examples as long as the research addresses identified RFP goals. Topical research area examples include, but are not limited to:

1. OWD Planning and Engagement:

- 1.1. Apply collaborative and/or regional social, cultural, historical, and economic research approaches and methods (e.g., structured surveys, case studies, predictive models) to identify, characterize, and find solutions to fishing community needs, concerns, opportunities and/or priorities when considering all aspects of offshore wind development, including but not limited to site selection, site characterization/ monitoring, construction, operations and maintenance (O&M), and decommissioning.
- 1.2. Develop and test fisheries specific applications of theoretical approaches to engagement, public participation, and trust in the context of fisheries science and management and OWD interactions with fisheries and fishing communities.
- 1.3. Develop and test approaches to increase capacity of fishing communities to engage in the development of community benefits agreements, compensatory mitigation, and other related programs as they pertain to fishing communities, including approaches to monitor and evaluate effectiveness in the future.
- 1.4. Develop new approaches to multi-criteria design, layout, and operational optimization of offshore wind facilities that account for social and human factors, with consideration of adaptive approaches for co-location, including access to fishing grounds.
- 1.5. Collaboratively develop tools to assist fishing communities to integrate local needs (e.g., infrastructure, business expansion, workforce development, and community engagement) with offshore wind planning and development.

2. Understanding Fisheries and OWD Interactions

- 2.1. Characterize the potential benefits (positive), effects (neutral), and burdens (negative) of OWD on fisheries and fishing communities.
- 2.2. Develop protocols to measure benefits of and impacts on food and energy production at multiple scales, e.g., direct and opportunity, market and non-market, social and cultural.
- 2.3. Advance understanding of theories of justice, power dynamics, social well-being as they pertain to OWD interactions with fisheries and fishing communities.

3. Monitoring of OWD and Fisheries Interactions

- 3.1. Develop and test frameworks for long-term monitoring of socio-cultural and socio-economic data collection to inform multiple management pathways (longitudinal data needs) related to OWD interactions with fisheries and fishing communities.
- 3.2. Develop protocols for and evaluate changes in response to OWD, including, but not limited to changes to fishery operations, shoreside support services, port activity, employment, social demographics, etc.

Engagement

PIs are encouraged to discuss their research focus and objectives with relevant Sea Grant and NEFSC staff and may reach out to Lindsey Williams (Lindsey.Williams@unh.edu), Steve Jones (Stephen.Jones@unh.edu) and/or Katy Bland (Katy@neracoos.org) for initial discussions and/or

to seek advice on others to contact. Because of the regional nature of OWD and the timelines associated with development of OWD within the Northeast, funded Pis will be expected to interact regularly with Sea Grant and NEFSC staff throughout the region to enhance relevance and practical application of the funded research. See Relevance and Potential for Practical Application and Expected Outcomes and Impacts sections below for additional detail.

LETTER OF INTENT (LOI) REQUIREMENTS

A letter of intent (LOI) is required for this competition. Late or incomplete LOIs will not be considered, and full proposals will only be reviewed if an LOI has been submitted. Applicants who do not submit a LOI will not be eligible to submit a full proposal.

Full proposals should not deviate greatly from the LOI. However, LOIs are not wholly binding, and the applicant may alter details of their project before submitting the full proposal as their plan evolves. LOIs are meant to provide NESGC with metrics on the scope and size of the application pool to assist with reviewer recruitment and review planning. The confirmed submission of an LOI is all that is required to submit a full proposal.

The LOI must be single-spaced in Times New Roman 12-point font or equivalent with 1-inch margins and must consist of a single PDF file containing the following information:

- A one-page cover sheet stating:
 - the project title;
 - the names, titles, affiliations, and contact information (email and phone number) of the Principal Investigator (PI) and co-PIs;
 - a total federal request and cost share (overall and per year);
 - (optional) up to three suggested reviewers (name, affiliation, email address), and
- A two-page project description including:
 - brief summary of the project, including general objectives, methodologies, and significance;
 - brief description of relevance to the RFP;
 - brief description of research relevance to affected parties and its potential for practical application and societal benefits;
 - regional impact, specifically how the research would be beneficial on a regional (i.e., Northeast U.S.) scale or beyond.

LOI Submittal and Review

LOIs must be clearly identified as such on the cover page and submitted to NH Sea Grant via the [eSeaGrant](#) online portal by **5:00 p.m. ET on February 15, 2024**. All LOIs will be assessed for compliance with the required elements outlined above. Confirmation of receipt will be provided indicating eligibility to submit a full proposal.

FULL PROPOSAL REQUIREMENTS

Full proposals must be submitted to NH Sea Grant through the [eSeaGrant online portal](#) by **5:00 p.m. ET on April 1, 2024**. Full proposals will not be accepted unless an LOI was previously submitted by 5:00 p.m. ET on February 15, 2024 with a confirmed receipt. Applicants with questions about using the online portal are encouraged to attend the optional webinar (January 24, 2024) and to reach out to NH Sea Grant staff for assistance early.

Full Proposal Components

All documents must be uploaded as PDF files or entered into a text box in eSeaGrant. All uploaded materials must be in Times New Roman 12-point font or equivalent with one-inch margins and may not be more than single spaced. The components are:

- **Sea Grant 90-4 Budget Worksheets and Justifications**
- **Project Summary: Objectives, Methodology, Rationale Summary:** Please enter this section into the eSeaGrant text box.
- **Proposal Narrative:** 12 pages maximum. Figures and tables are included in the page limit. A list of collaborators and references should be included in the narrative but do not count towards the 12-page limit.
- **Data Management Plan (2 pages max)**
- **Curriculum Vitae or biosketch for PI and Co-PIs (2 pages max per CV)**
- **Additional Personnel**
- **Current and Pending Support**
- **Focus Areas and Classifications**
- **Letters of Support and/or Collaboration**
- **Letters of Commitment for Cost Share or Sub-Award**
- **Abbreviated Environmental Compliance Questionnaire / NEPA Short Form**
- **Demographic Information**

The rest of this section describes the requirements for each component listed above. Selected applicants may be required to provide additional documents before funds are awarded.

Sea Grant 90-4 Budget Worksheets and Justifications (Required)

Budget worksheets are required for each year of the project. Separate worksheets are required for each year of every subaward. Budget justifications must provide enough detail to allow NOAA Grants Management personnel to understand how funding will be spent. Applicants are strongly encouraged to begin the budget preparation process early. If the budget is incorrect, it may lead to the proposal being removed from further consideration. The budget must include all direct (including fringe benefits) and indirect costs of the project. Be sure to indicate which salaries and wages are subject to indirect costs, and those not subject to indirect costs on the worksheets. Applicants must budget for all costs of the project, including anticipated salary and wage increases for year two or three (if applicable) and costs of any extension, communications, and publication activities. Budgets should include travel funds to UNH (Durham, NH) in late 2025 / early 2026 for PIs for a one-day meeting (may require one overnight). Further details are described below. Detailed information on how to fill out the budget worksheets can be found on the Budget Instructions tab in eSeaGrant. Applicants will need to fill out an online budget worksheet for each year for the project, and each year of each subaward.

Budget Justifications

Budget justifications must be prepared for each budget category (e.g., Salaries and Wages, Fringe Benefits). This feature is integrated into the eSeaGrant online tool and justifications must be entered as line-by-line descriptions. Failure to include complete budget justifications, or if the budget justifications do not match the budget worksheet, may result in the proposal being removed from the competition.

Subcontracts must have their own budget justifications.

Please refer to the NOAA Grants Management Division's (GMD) [Budget Narrative Guidance](#) and eSeaGrant's budget justification examples for complete guidance on developing the budget section with proper justification. Contact NH Sea Grant Research Program Coordinator (Stephen.Jones@unh.edu) with questions.

Home Institution Approval

Applicants should contact the appropriate office of their home institution to obtain the current rates for fringe benefits and indirect costs. In addition, the PI's home institution must review and approve the proposal's budget, including matching fund estimates, prior to submission.

Matching Funds

A 25% match from non-federal sources is required for this competition. For example, if applicants are requesting \$100,000 in federal funds, then the budget must include at least \$25,000 from qualified, non-federal matching sources. Applicants may not under-match in year one and over-match in year two. Matching funds are difficult to modify later and are a firm commitment. PIs are asked to pay extra attention to match sources and documentation.

The source of matching funds must be specified in the budget. Acceptable matching sources are specific to each submitting institution; however, sources of matching funds often include but are not limited to private foundation grants, state and local government contracts, co-sponsorship by industry, salary, waived tuition, equipment, supplies, cash, and in-kind contributions. Examples of in-kind contributions include salaries, wages / benefits of investigators and students working on the project, expendable supplies and equipment, ship time, and donated supplies, space or equipment. Foreign government funds also qualify, but funds from federal sources cannot be used as matching funds. Note that matching funds from an external source require a letter of commitment as described below.

Matching funds require an authorized letter, certified/signed by the person with authority over the source funds (typically not the PI) and must be clear as to the specific dollar amount of matching funds being provided as well as the source (where the funds are from). Documentation must be consistent with the budget and budget justification. Multiple sources of matching funds will require a separate certification for each source. Applicants may submit these letters on the "Letters of Commitment for Cost Share or Sub-Award" form in eSeaGrant.

Project Summary: Objectives, Methodology, Rationale Summary (Required)

Please provide a brief (1-2 sentence) summary of each of the following: Objectives, Methodology, and Rationale, which will act as an abstract for the proposal. The "Objectives"

section should state concisely what the investigator will undertake to do. Stated objectives should enable later comparison to project results. The objectives should begin with the word “To”, followed by a verb. For the “Methodology” section, in concise outline form, with an optional one or two sentence preface, state the methodology to be used. Specific questions that an interested person would ask should be answered (such as which stressors, what communities, what kind of model?). The “Rationale” section should make a concise statement of why this problem or opportunity is being addressed. The project need not promise to fully solve a problem, but it should be shown as a logical step toward progress to address the issue. Long involved background statements should be avoided. Potential users of the research results, if they have been identified, should be stated here.

Full Proposal Narrative (Required)

The full proposal narrative must be single-spaced using Times New Roman and no smaller than 12-point font or equivalent. Each page should have 1-inch margins all around. Include page numbers. Write out acronyms on first use. The narrative must not exceed 12 pages. This maximum length includes tables and graphics but excludes references.

The full proposal narrative must include the following sections (it is suggested but not required to use section headers identified below):

Problem or Opportunity – Describe the background for the proposal. Evaluate existing knowledge and demonstrate how related work, past and present, supports this proposal. Explain why this is an important topic to research. Refer to supporting information with appropriate citations.

Relevance to RFP Research Area(s) – How does the research align with the outlined research needs? Please be specific. Where appropriate, applicants are encouraged to describe connections to:

- [Science Priorities for Offshore Wind & Fisheries Research in the Northeast U.S. Continental Shelf Ecosystem: Perspectives from Scientists at the National Marine Fisheries Service](#)
- [Fisheries and Offshore Wind Energy: Synthesis of the Science](#)
- [New England Fishery Management Council \(NEFMC\) Research Priorities for 2022-2026](#)
- [Cooperative Research in the Northeast Region: Stakeholder Priorities](#)

Objectives – State the overall purpose of the proposal: What is the question the proposal plans to address or the outcome(s) that will be achieved? Show clearly how the goals of the project are related to the needs described earlier. Be concrete and specific. Clearly state the proposal’s hypothesis(es) or guiding questions. List the project objectives. Present them in the same order in which they appear in the “Objectives” section of the Project Summary.

Approach and Methodology – Describe the overall approach to be taken to address the opportunity or problem identified. Discuss in detail the research design and the procedures that will be used to achieve the specific aims of the project. Identify specific tasks and describe the methods necessary to accomplish each task, including timelines relative to existing OWD activities in the Northeast. Include the means by which the data will be analyzed and interpreted.

Relevance and Potential for Practical Application – Proposals should describe how the research has regional relevance and practical application to a range of affected parties. Applicants should define the affected parties and indicate whether PIs on the project and these individuals or groups have been in communication to develop the project ideas and objectives. Include letters of collaboration where appropriate and be sure to budget for associated engagement plan costs where applicable. State what is the need and potential benefits and application accruing to the identified affected parties as well as other individuals, organizations, or society in general and regionally from the application of the project’s results. Explain the proposal’s approach for engaging with and disseminating findings and/or products to relevant affected parties throughout the Northeast region and outside of the scientific community.

PIs will be required to plan for and budget to participate in annual day-long internal meetings to help enhance connections, relevance and practical application of the funded projects (one in person in New Hampshire in late 2025/early 2026, the others virtual). Key partners may attend these meetings when appropriate. One meeting will be held prior to research initiation, i.e., at the beginning of the funding period, with the others occurring annually thereafter (depending on proposed project length). These meetings will allow the researchers and the funding partners to discuss findings, obstacles, and opportunities for integrating research results into decision making and other appropriate forums. In addition to the planned internal meetings, each proposal must also include two or more timeline milestones that indicate how the team plans to share both preliminary and final findings with anticipated end users of the results – this could include presenting at a community meeting, providing an update to relevant fisheries or coastal management entities, attendance at events like the Maine Fishermen’s Forum, etc.

Expected Outcomes and Impacts, including Broader Societal Benefits – Identify effects or changes that might be expected from the outcomes of the research and when these impacts or outcomes might be expected. Estimate the timeframe in which the results would have an impact, and where this fits within the OWD timeframe in the region. Describe how the results of the project may be used by others. Identify how results serve to advance the NESGC’s mission to improve the translation of scientific information into knowledge for use. State what the project’s potential benefits are with respect to individuals, organizations, and/or society in general. Describe how the proposed research will benefit coastal communities especially focused on affected parties from underrepresented or underserved communities.

Project Management – Describe the steps the project team will take to coordinate within team members and collaborators and with interested parties (including the NESGC).

Relationship to Other Programs / Efforts – Describe the relationship of the proposed research to related projects, programs, or other ongoing activities. Awardees should consider how their work builds on or complements related efforts, but must prevent duplication of efforts of partner activities including but not limited to the projects funded in the “[Advancing Research for the Co-Existence of Fishing, Coastal Communities and Regional Ocean Renewable Energies](#)” competition, BOEM Environmental Studies Program projects (including “[Collecting Fisher’s Ecological Knowledge \(FEK\) for Use in Gulf of Maine Offshore Wind](#)” and “[Baseline Tourism and Recreation Along the Gulf of Maine](#)”), etc.

Data Management Plan (Required)

Data and information collected and/or created under NOAA grants and cooperative agreements, including this RFP, must be made visible, accessible, and independently understandable to general users, free of charge and in a timely manner, except where limited by law, regulation, policy or by security requirements. NOAA grant applications for projects expected to produce environmental data must include a Data Management Plan (DMP) to make the data available. The plan must conform to NOAA's Data Sharing Directive for Grants, Cooperative Agreements, and Contracts. PIs are expected to fully execute the plan.

A typical DMP is no more than two pages long (4,600 characters), and includes the sections listed below:

- Description of data to be generated by the project, including file format, likely size, etc.
- A tentative date by which data will be shared (no later than two years after the data are collected or created)
- Standards to be used for data/metadata format and content
- Policies on data stewardship and preservation
- Procedures for providing access, sharing, and security

If the applicant's university or institution has established data-sharing practices and policies, applicants may base the DMP on their home institution. If the project does not generate datasets, a simple statement to that effect is all that is necessary to satisfy the requirement. Please refer to the "Data Sharing Directive Policy" found on eSeaGrant for more information.

Curriculum Vitae: Principal Investigator and Co-Principal Investigators (Required)

Enter contact information for the Principal Investigator (PI) and Co-Principal Investigators, including name, mailing address, email address, phone number, university/organization, and Department. When entering phone numbers, omit all spaces and non-numeric characters.

Attach a CV/resume (PDF, 2-page maximum, page numbers, headers, or footers) at the bottom of the forms for each. Only CVs submitted as PDFs and that are two pages or less will be accepted. Please note, the CV will not be uploaded until the Save button is clicked.

Curriculum Vitae: Additional Personnel (Optional)

List additional personnel such as sub-awardees, graduate students, post docs, and staff that will work on the project and listed in the budget. While resumes or CVs are not required for these individuals, please include them if they are considered key personnel.

Current and Pending Support (Required)

In the eSeaGrant portal, make sure every field for current and pending is complete for each PI and co-PI. Failure to provide complete information for these sources of support may delay consideration of the proposal application.

Focus Areas and Classifications (Required)

In the form fields in eSeaGrant, please select a Primary Focus Area, Secondary Focus Area, and up to two Sea Grant Classifications. See the eSeaGrant form for more detailed instructions.

Letters of Support and/or Collaboration (Optional)

Letters of support are limited to unfunded collaborators and/or affected parties that will directly participate in and/or benefit from the proposed work. Letters of collaboration from non-academic partners and/or users of the project outcomes are especially encouraged and should describe how the research will have regional relevance and practical application. Do not submit endorsement letters from elected officials or other individuals not listed in the proposal. Upload each letter as a single PDF.

Letters of Commitment for Cost-Sharing and Sub-Awards (Required)

A letter of commitment is required for: a) the contractor of each subaward; b) any external source for cost-sharing (match); or c) institutional approval from those involved in the proposal. Failure to provide letters of commitment for these may impact consideration of the proposal. Please note federal funds, including equipment purchased with federal funds, cannot be used as matching funds.

Abbreviated Environmental Compliance Questionnaire / NEPA Short Form (Required)

Applicants are required to submit a copy of NOAA's Abbreviated Environmental Compliance Questionnaire (aka NEPA Short Form) form in order to receive funding for the research. Please leave the field 'Grant number and/or Project ID' blank.

The "Abbreviated Environmental Compliance Questionnaire", as well as examples of completed forms (including for socio-economic research), can be downloaded [here](#). Address each question as completely as possible. Avoid answering any question with "N/A" or any other version of "Not Applicable". If a question does not pertain to applicant's work, state how the work does not pertain to the question being asked. Detailed responses will help with NEPA evaluations and determinations. Imprecise answers or "N/A" may result in delays in the proposal's review. All Sea Grant funded research projects, including human dimensions projects, require environmental compliance review.

Per NOAA requirements, potential PIs must include with their full proposal a list of all state and federal permits and authorizations (including Institutional Review Board (IRB) documentation) required to complete the project, including copies of the permits that have already been acquired, in the appropriate section of the questionnaire. Pending permits/ authorizations are not required but must be listed as pending. If a partner institution will be responsible for acquiring permits/authorizations/IRB approvals, this should be stated in the application. The responsibility for acquiring permits and authorizations lies with the funded PI, and failure to secure permits may result in delayed receipt of funds or changes to the scope of work proposed.

Funded PIs are required to provide proof that all required permits, permissions, IRB approvals, and other authorizations have been granted prior to expending funds on the work covered by the permit. If permits are still pending, funds may be expended on portions of the project that do not require permitting, such as student support, statistical work, and project planning. Absence of required permits will result in the NSGCP placing restrictions on the award until those permits are provided, and host institutions may have additional restrictions on such funds, per their own policies.

Demographic Information

We request that you provide demographic information using the form link provided in the eSeaGrant submission portal. Using this form decouples any demographic information provided from your proposal submission. Your response is voluntary, however, it helps Sea Grant better understand our applicant pool and helps inform future program design.

FULL PROPOSAL SUBMISSION AND EVALUATION

Full Proposal Submission

Applicants must submit their final application by clicking SUBMIT on the Proposal Summary form. Applicants may submit the proposal at any time and continue to work on elements of the proposal until the stated deadline. This will timestamp the submission and generate an acknowledgement email for your records. If applicants have not pressed the SUBMIT button by the deadline, the full proposal will not be processed. No exceptions can be made. **Full proposals must be submitted no later than 5:00 p.m. ET on April 1, 2024.**

Full Proposal Evaluation

All full proposals will be assessed for completeness. Late or incomplete full proposals will not be considered. Full proposals that are determined to be complete and contain all requested components will be read and evaluated by a Technical Review Panel (TRP). TRP members will be experts in the field(s) that are covered in the proposals and free from conflicts of interests as documented on the required Conflict of Interest forms for each full proposal. TRP members will read all full proposals and rate them using the criteria identified in the Evaluation Criteria section of this RFP. In addition, members will supply written reviews of full proposals such that each full proposal will receive a minimum of three written reviews per the NSGCP National Competition Policy Guidance. The TRP will meet in spring 2024 for extensive discussion of the technical merits of the full proposals.

Evaluation Criteria

The fundamental criteria for full proposal evaluations and their respective weights are:

- Scientific Merit and Rationale (40%)
- Relevance and Potential for Practical Application and Societal Benefits (40%)
- Qualifications of PIs and Project Team (10%)
- Appropriate and Cost-Effective Budget (10%)

Key considerations for proposal evaluation are:

Scientific Merit and Rationale (40%)

- Clarity and attainability of the objectives as detailed in the project description;
- Adequacy of the proposed methodology to test hypotheses or answer research questions, accomplish stated objectives, soundness of the technical approach, scientific design, methods, and data analysis and interpretation;
- The degree to which the proposed activity appropriately employs innovative techniques or uses state-of-the-art methods to address important resource issues.
- Results are generalizable/applicable to the Northeast region (from New York to Maine)

Relevance and Potential for Practical Application and Societal Benefits (40%)

- Degree to which users or potential users of the results of the proposed activity have been brought into the planning of the activity (e.g., collaborative research), will be brought into the execution of the activity, or will be kept apprised of progress and results.
- Degree to which the proposed work will reach practical use or application in resources management, and/or be brought forth to general public or target audiences throughout the

Northeast region, to improve understanding of, and capacity for addressing pertinent coastal marine issues.

- Degree to which investigators have developed an effective engagement/extension plan for the research findings or tools they plan to develop, and the appropriateness and impact of the outreach/education component outlined.
- Broader societal impacts on the coastal community with an emphasis on fishing communities as defined above and with particular focus on affected parties from underrepresented or underserved communities.

Qualifications of PIs and Project Team (10%)

- Past performance in successfully completing projects of similar size, scope, and publication record of findings in the scientific literature; this may include performance on past Sea Grant projects, completeness of annual reporting, and publication record of Sea Grant-funded research.
- PI and team expertise, knowledge, and access to resources to successfully achieve the goals of the project.

Appropriate and Cost-Effective Budget (10%)

- Degree to which the requested funding and matching costs levels are appropriate and reflect reasonable costs for the proposed research.
- Adequacy of the proposed budget to accomplish objectives and of the budget justification in explaining the need for resources.

Project Scoring Scale

Reviewers will use the following scale to rate each of the evaluation criteria above. Those scores will be weighted based on the percentages above and used to develop an overall project score, ultimately resulting in a ranked list of projects for consideration:

- 5 - Excellent: Scientifically and professionally important and well-justified; presents an opportunity for a major contribution to the advancement of knowledge and to the resolution of a problem of practical import, including affected party relevance and engagement; a truly meritorious research project.
- 4 - Very Good: Scientifically and professionally important and well-justified; will make an important contribution to the advancement of knowledge and to the resolution of a problem of practical import, including affected party relevance and engagement; a project that clearly deserves support.
- 3 - Good: Scientifically and professionally competent and well-justified; will make an important contribution to the advancement of knowledge and the resolution of a problem of practical value, but proposal has deficiencies or is somewhat routine; a project that is good enough to be supported, with certain reservations.
- 2 - Fair: Scientifically and professionally satisfactory in part and only marginally justified; possibility for a contribution to the advancement of knowledge and to the resolution of a practical problem appears limited; routine in character; a project about which reservations are so serious that it should be supported only in exceptional circumstances.
- 1 - Poor: Scientifically and professionally unsatisfactory; poorly organized and justified; sub-professional in character; not deserving of support; a project that should not be funded under any circumstances.

Final Funding Determination and Selection Criteria

Funding recommendations to the National Sea Grant Program are made by Directors of the NESGC programs (NY, CT, MIT, WHOI, NH, ME, RI) and the Chief of the NEFSC Offshore Wind Ecology Branch based on TRP rankings, except in instances where the Directors choose to select a meritorious project out of rank order based upon the following selection criteria:

- Availability of funds;
- Balance of selected projects across strategic priorities;
- Balance of selected projects across timeframes and budget scope;
- Prior award performance; and
- Diversity of institutions, geography, career stage, and engaged affected parties and partners.

The NH Sea Grant Program Director will then submit the funding recommendations to the NSGCP Federal Program Officer for final review and approval. NESGC will notify all applicants of the recommendation regarding their proposals in writing after NSGCP concurrence is received.

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Funded researchers are expected to provide:

- Annual progress reports while the project is underway and a final report when completed, both within a reasonable timeframe. The reports should include specific impacts and accomplishments. Details on report formats, impact statements and metrics desired will be provided to researchers upon funding.
- Copies of any publication or product intended for public dissemination produced as part of, or as a result of, the project. This includes peer-reviewed articles from journals, books and proceedings, brochures, pamphlets, news articles, multimedia, etc.
- Acknowledgement of NESGC and NEFSC funding on any publication or product. Text to use that includes funding award number will be provided to selected PIs.
- Participation (including project update presentations) during annual internal one-day coordination meetings. It is anticipated that one meeting will be in person in late 2025/ early 2026 (travel to Durham, NH must be included in the budget), other annual meetings will be virtual.
- Information on project progress and findings to Communications and Extension personnel of the seven programs of the NESGC (i.e. Maine, New Hampshire, MIT, WHOI, Rhode Island, Connecticut, and New York Sea Grant programs).

NOAA requires Sea Grant programs to report the impacts, accomplishments, and metrics of each proposal it funds, and sets strict deadlines and formats for these reports. These products include annual reports and performance measures that are used to review the program and ensure it is meeting the expectations as set forth by Congress. Programs are evaluated in three general areas: 1) on their approach to management; 2) on the scope and success of their engagement with affected parties; and 3) on the impact their program has on society from both an environmental and a socio-economic perspective. In other words, program viability and future funding is based on highlighting the positive impacts funded research is having on the U.S. Northeast region and the nation.

RFP CONTACT INFORMATION

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- Katy Bland – Extension and regional coordination lead (Katy@neracoos.org).