

LOUISIANA SEA GRANT COLLEGE PROGRAM



Announcement of Competitive Research Program Funding Opportunity for 2024–2026

**Due date for Letters of Interest (LOIs): February 28, 2023
(11:59 PM CST)**

**Due date for Full Proposals: June 6, 2023
(11:59 PM CDT)**

PROGRAM BACKGROUND

Since its establishment in 1968, the Louisiana Sea Grant College Program has worked to promote stewardship of the state’s coastal resources through a combination of research, education and outreach. Louisiana Sea Grant is an integrated program of extension, education, law and policy, communications, research and management. These core functions carry out the program’s mission.

Louisiana Sea Grant, based at Louisiana State University (LSU), is part of the National Sea Grant College Program, a network made up of 34 programs located in each of the coastal and Great Lakes states, Puerto Rico and Guam. Sea Grant programs work individually and in partnership to address major marine and coastal challenges.

The National Sea Grant College Program and Louisiana Sea Grant champion diversity, equity, inclusion, justice and accessibility (DEIJA) by recruiting, retaining and preparing a diverse workforce, as well as proactively engaging and serving diverse populations of coastal communities. Sea Grant is committed to building inclusive research, extension, communication and education programs that serve people with unique backgrounds, circumstances, needs, perspectives and ways of thinking. We encourage eligible faculty from all backgrounds to apply for this competitive research opportunity.

PURPOSE

This document describes the process to apply for Louisiana Sea Grant funding for two-year applied and actionable research projects beginning in Spring 2024. It provides an overview of the

proposal eligibility requirements, defines priority areas and interventions, presents guidelines for the preparation of Letters of Interest (LOI) and full proposals and details the review criteria.

Louisiana Sea Grant (LSG) supports a multidisciplinary, integrated program of applied research, outreach and education that addresses coastal and marine issues important to the State of Louisiana in four focus areas: Healthy Coastal Ecosystems; Resilient Communities and Economies; Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture; and Environmental Literacy and Workforce Development.

On average, LSG receives about 36 LOIs, about 20 full proposals and funds six to eight projects for this opportunity every two years.

PROPOSAL INFORMATION

Research projects are funded for up to two years. Proposed projects should be for the time period beginning Feb. 1, 2024, to Jan. 31, 2026. Funds are awarded on a yearly basis, depending upon the availability of federal funds, which have not yet been appropriated.

The maximum two-year award that LSG will provide is \$200,000 (i.e., a maximum of \$100,000 in each budget year). For each Sea Grant dollar, a 50 percent matching fund commitment is required for the amount requested (i.e., if you request \$200,000 of federal dollars, you must provide \$100,000 of non-federal match). The match must be made in each year (i.e., if you request \$100,000 in Year 1 and \$50,000 in Year 2, you must match with \$50,000 in Year 1 and \$25,000 in Year 2). Externally sponsored projects are ineligible to serve as a match.

For non-LSU A&M led projects, the maximum available funding is currently \$193,500 over two years (due to incurred F&A charges on subawards). LSG through its host institution (LSU A&M) will issue a separate subaward to the lead participating institution.

Key Dates:

Early January 2023	Request for Letters of Interest issued
Jan. 18, 2023	RFP Question and Answer Webinar
Feb. 28, 2023	Letters of Interest due
April 15, 2023	Letters of Interest reviewed; Principal Investigators (PIs) notified
June 6, 2023	Full proposals due
Early August 2023	Recommendations for funding; PI notified
September 2023	Final research proposals submitted to the NSGO for awards
Feb. 1, 2024	Start date of research project funding cycle
Jan. 31, 2026	End date of research funding cycle

Proposed work must clearly align with one or more of LSG’s focus areas (Healthy Coastal Ecosystems, Resilient Communities and Economies, Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture, and Environmental Literacy and Workforce Development); be based within Louisiana; and target issues important to Louisiana’s coastal region. Please refer to [LSG’s Strategic Plan for 2024–2027](#)

to help ensure your project ideas align with these focus areas. For help with ideas, please refer to [LSG's identified research needs](#).

In addition to supporting research projects that are scientifically excellent and societally relevant, LSG is committed to projects that engage and inform relevant communities and user groups with an emphasis on benefitting underserved communities in Louisiana (even if the expected outcome will require additional work to achieve impacts). Underserved communities may be underserved because of geographic location, racial and ethnic status, socioeconomic status, and/or other special needs (such as language barriers, disabilities, alienage status or age). Proposed projects should address coastal challenges and opportunities that are important to the State of Louisiana and fit within LSG's [Strategic Plan](#). We also encourage aquaculture research project proposals for this opportunity as the National Sea Grant Office (NSGO) has prioritized aquaculture in recent and anticipated strategic research investments.

Successful LSG projects are based on **clear, testable questions/hypotheses**. Inventory, monitoring-only projects, and methods development projects are not appropriate for this funding.

LSG continues to place a strong emphasis on **student education** as part of our competitive research program. Proposals submitted to LSG's competitive research program must include meaningful funding for student support. This could include support for graduate students as part of their thesis or dissertation or meaningful undergraduate support could be demonstrated in the production of an honors thesis or final report. Each student will have the opportunity to participate in professional development opportunities. LSG encourages applicants to recruit and engage with students from underrepresented racial and ethnic groups, first-generation college students, individuals with disabilities, tribal communities, those that possess diverse ways of knowing (i.e., traditional ecological knowledge), and/or individuals from economically or educationally disadvantaged backgrounds that have inhibited their ability to pursue a career in STEM.

Projects must include a detailed **outreach plan** (see below) describing how results will be transferred to appropriate stakeholders. Projects that do not clearly identify end-users will not be competitive. Outreach partners should be engaged early in the proposal development process and identified in the LOI. Note: It is essential that projects engage end-users and yield tangible benefits that are measurable, adapted/applied and valued. Examples of expected benefits to be measured and valued as part of projects are included in Appendix A of the Louisiana Sea Grant Strategic Plan. A few examples include

- Acres of coastal habitats enhanced or conserved
- Value of products (i.e., tools, technologies and information) generated and used in decision-making
- Business or industry benefits realized
- Communities that implement sustainable economic and/or environmental development activities and policies

- People engaged or positively impacted by the project, including educators and PK-12 students
- Economic benefits: jobs created/sustained, businesses created/sustained, value of benefits generated
- Ecosystem services provided (quantification and valuation)
- Value/benefits to commercial and recreational fisheries or aquaculture
- Degrees earned by postsecondary students (undergraduate, graduate, postdoc) who are financially supported by the project and become employed in a job related to their degree or have decided to pursue an advanced degree

Eligibility Information

- Investigators may submit only one LOI as Principal Investigator (PI) but may be listed as a Co-PI on as many LOIs as they desire.
- PIs must be affiliated with an accredited academic institution of higher education in Louisiana. Co-PIs and project collaborators can have any affiliation and can be based either within or outside Louisiana. Postdoctoral researchers and federal employees are not eligible to apply as PIs but can be project participants. Single investigators and multiple investigator research teams from different institutions are encouraged to apply.
- LSG encourages broad participation from the natural and social sciences, engineering, design, policy and education research communities within Louisiana.

LSG encourages proposals from investigators at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) and/or from traditionally underserved and underrepresented academic institutions. We also encourage research teams that include co-leadership and strong collaboration with investigators affiliated at HBCUs, MSIs, and/or underrepresented and underserved institutions, as well as projects that include training for undergraduate and/or graduate students at HBCUs, MSIs, and/or provide training for or serve underrepresented and underserved communities.

Application Process

LSG requires the submission of all LOIs and full proposals through our proposal management system [eSeaGrant](#). Any emailed, faxed and mailed proposals will be rejected.

LSG uses a **two-stage process** for our Biennial Competitive Research Funding Cycle. Although brief, the LOI is the basis for LSG to decide whether to encourage or discourage submission of a full proposal. Full proposals will only be accepted from PIs who submit a LOI. The PIs of top-rated LOIs will be encouraged to submit a full proposal based on evaluation criteria described in the Review Criteria section below. PIs who submit a LOI that is not encouraged may submit a full proposal at their discretion. PIs who submit a LOI that is not encouraged but who plan to submit a full proposal must notify LSG of this Interest by May 5, 2023.

Letters of Interest

Letters of Interest - Due Feb. 28, 2023, at 11:59 pm CST. The system will shut down automatically at the deadline time, locking out any late submissions. LOIs received after the deadline will be rejected.

The LOI application period is open to any eligible investigator. University signatures are not required during the LOI stage, nor does LSG accept letters of support at this stage. However, LOIs should identify key partners and/or end-users. All form templates can be found in LSG's eSeaGrant system. To complete these required forms, all eligible investigators must register through the [eSeaGrant link](#) and click "Add Proposal" to access all required forms and instructions for submission.

A complete LOI application package includes:

- 1. LOI Project Cover Page** - The Project Cover Page identifies the project title, the Principal Investigator and Co-Principal Investigators, affiliations, e-mail addresses and the total anticipated budget (federal request and non-federal match) for each year. The LOI Cover Page should also indicate the number of students to be supported by the proposed work.
- 2. Body of the Letters of Interest** - The body of the LOI is limited to **two pages single-spaced**. Font must be at least 11-point type size. All margins should be one inch. Each LOI narrative must include the following sections in this sequence in a combined PDF document that is uploaded in eSeaGrant:
 - *Problem Statement*

Indicate the specific problem addressed by the proposed effort and provide sufficient background information to allow a preliminary assessment of the relationship of the problem to the research questions posed in this RFP. This will be used to help define the relevance of the project to Louisiana Sea Grant's strategic plan.
 - *Objectives*

State the objectives of the research effort. **Research hypotheses** should be clearly stated.
 - *Methods*

Describe the proposed methods so that reviewers can make a preliminary determination of the appropriateness of the proposed approach, including statistical analyses and design approaches, for achieving the stated objectives.
 - *Rationale and Anticipated Benefits*

Briefly explain the anticipated results and potential for the proposed work to have broader impacts in both scientific communities and society in relation to

LSG program objectives. Please see Appendix A in Louisiana Sea Grant’s strategic plan for specific metrics.

- *Outreach Plan*

There are several options in incorporating effective outreach components in your proposal, and Louisiana Sea Grant strongly encourages you to have some contact with an outreach partner prior to the submission of your LOI. PIs may engage Louisiana Sea Grant’s Extension, Communication, Education and Law & Policy faculty and staff but are not limited to those extension partners. Other outreach partners might include state and federal outreach committees, education specialists, NGOs, local authorities, etc. These outreach partners can prove invaluable to the successful planning and development of your project.

Outreach partners should be engaged early in the proposal development process and identified in the LOI. Partners **MUST** be contacted before being included in the LOI.

3. References - List references cited in the narrative body of the LOI via the appropriate form in eSeaGrant.

4. List of (4) RECOMMENDED PEER REVIEWERS

5. Optional Demographics questionnaire

The deadline for LOI submissions is **11:59 pm CST on Feb. 28, 2023**. Please do not wait until the last minute to start the process and/or submit your materials; we are unable to extend the deadline for any reason.

Only investigators who submit LOIs will be eligible to submit full proposals.

Full Proposals

Applicants will submit full proposals through the same [eSeaGrant](#) portal they used during the LOI stage. To access all materials, PIs who successfully submitted an LOI to this opportunity will be able to login to eSeaGrant and click “Add Proposal” to access all required eSeaGrant forms and instructions for submission.

A complete full proposal application package includes:

- 1. LSG Project Cover Page**

- PROJECT TITLE
- PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR(S): Provide faculty name, academic department and institution
- CO-PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR(S): Provide faculty name, academic department and institution
- ASSOCIATE INVESTIGATOR(S): Provide faculty name, academic department and institution
- PROPOSED BUDGET:

YEAR 1 -- SEA GRANT: \$ _____, MATCH YEAR 1: \$ _____.
YEAR 2 -- SEA GRANT: \$ _____, MATCH YEAR 2: \$ _____.

2. Abstract (refer to eSeaGrant for details)

3. Technical Narrative (not to exceed 10 pages)

- RELEVANCE: Describe the problem or opportunity using quantitative information. This section should document the magnitude of the situation and the relevance of the issue or problem to the Louisiana Sea Grant priorities.
- GOAL AND OBJECTIVES: In one sentence, concisely state the overall goal of the proposed project. Then, number and list the objectives. Proposers are encouraged to state objectives in a way that illustrates a logical flow and enables measurable comparison to expected project results and benefits. Objectives and results must be attainable within the two-year project timeframe. Make sure to include a research question.
- METHODS: Describe or diagram the overall project design. What are the main technical, analytical or outreach components? Describe the meaningful role of students.
- END-USER PARTICIPATION/OUTREACH PLAN: Identify the end-users that will participate in your project. Describe their confirmed role. Describe the specific approach that will be taken to transfer the new information, tools, technologies, policies or products to end-users, and how you plan to update them on project findings and outcomes. This may involve coordinating the project with a state or local resource management agency, a governmental organization or/and private industry sector. The proposed project must develop linkages with the agency, industry or community for the dissemination and practical application of results. See the LOI section for more information.
- DIVERSITY STATEMENT: Describe how the proposed activity serves and/or broadens the participation of underrepresented groups and how they benefit from its outcomes. Underrepresented groups may include but are not limited to a diversity of races/ethnicities, gender identities, sexual orientations, disabilities, geographies, tribes, first-generation college students, socioeconomic statuses, and those with diverse ways of knowing.

Applicants are encouraged to review the resources and best practices compiled by the NSGO related to diversity, equity, and inclusion:

<https://seagrant.noaa.gov/insideseagrant/Implementation/Network-Visioning/DiversityInclusion>

- ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND DELIVERABLES including QUANTIFYING/VALUING BENEFITS AND IMPACT: How will the proposed interventions be adapted and applied by project end-users. Explain the methods you will use to measure and value derived environmental, social or economic benefits. If applicable, orient this valuation around one or more of the Methodology Guides that have been developed by the National Sea Grant Office: <https://seagrant.noaa.gov/insideseagrant/economic-impacts>.
- PROJECT TIMELINE with Milestone Chart: Please 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 deliverables.

4. Supporting Documents

- REFERENCES
- ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF PARTNERSHIP ENGAGEMENT: Letter(s) of support from key partners and/or end-users that are engaged in the project.
- SUMMARY OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS of previously funded Sea Grant projects (if applicable)
- DATA MANAGEMENT PLAN - guidance for developing data management plans is provided on the National Sea Grant Program website:
<https://seagrants.noaa.gov/insideseagrants/Implementation>
- CURRICULUM VITAE - Provide a two-page (maximum) curriculum vitae (CV) for each PI and Co-PI. An NSF-type biosketch format is recommended that includes the following sections: education, professional experience, five recent publications relevant to proposed research and synergistic (professional) activities. The CVs will be uploaded via the appropriate tab in eSeaGrant.
- List of CURRENT AND PENDING SUPPORT
- PROJECT BUDGET AND BUDGET NARRATIVE: The PI will submit project budgets, one for each year of funding requested and their budget narrative in [eSeaGrant](#) via the budget module in the system. The maximum two-year award that LSG will provide is \$200,000 (i.e., a maximum of \$100,000 in each budget year). For non-LSU A&M led projects, the maximum available funding is \$193,500 over two years. LSG through its host institution (LSU A&M) will issue a separate subaward to the lead participating institution.
- FRINGE AND F&A RATE AGREEMENT

We are unable to consider proposals that do not adhere to the formatting instructions provided in eSeaGrant and that lack campus approvals and signatures.

Applicants submitting full proposals that involve the use of human test subjects (including surveys) or animal use/testing should state so clearly in their application. These proposed research activities require approval of the applicant's Institutional Review Board (IRB) or animal care and use committee (IACUC) before such research can proceed. Applicants are responsible for obtaining IRB or IACUC approval from their institution and providing that documentation to LSG prior to any Sea Grant-funded human subject or animal testing. Proposals intending to use human or animal test subjects should clearly specify in the timeline approximately when IRB or IACUC approval will be obtained and when the testing is expected to occur.

The anticipated deadline for full proposals is **11:59 pm CDT on June 6, 2023**. This date and time will be confirmed/adjusted as needed when the encouragement/discouragement e-mails are disseminated. The portal will automatically close at the deadline. Please do not wait until the last minute to start your application process and/or submit your materials. Technical support for the eSeaGrant submission system will not be available after regular business hours on the due date. We are not able to extend the deadline for anyone for any reason.

If your proposal is recommended for funding, contingent on approval from the NSGO, the following items will also be required:

1. Response to any significant review comments.

2. A completed [NEPA Abbreviated Questionnaire Form](#) for the project with all necessary permits and certifications that may be needed.
3. Additional materials as needed.

Review Criteria

Sea Grant uses a five-point rating system for all proposals: Excellent: 5 (exhibits outstanding quality/relevance); Very Good 4: (above average quality/relevance); Good: 3 (routine/average quality/relevance); Fair: 2 (marginal quality/relevance); Poor: 1 (missed the mark, has major deficiencies, low relevance).

Letters of Interest are reviewed based on three aspects:

- Relevance and/or importance and applicability of proposed project to Louisiana Sea Grant's strategic goals and priorities for this RFP. 50 percent;
- Approach: Is there evidence that the approach is technically sound and innovative, are the methods appropriate, and are there clear project goals and objectives? 20 percent;
- Outreach & Education: Is there evidence of a focused and effective education and outreach strategy; is it clear the results of the work will be provided to end-users and do they want them? 30 percent.

Reviewers of LOIs often include representatives of state and federal agencies, LSG advisory board members, LSG staff and other coastal stakeholders. Based on their review, we will encourage a subset of investigators representing the most highly competitive LOI submissions to submit full proposals.

Only investigators who have submitted LOIs are eligible to submit full proposals. Researchers who submit an LOI but were *not* encouraged to submit full proposals still can do so. However, this discouragement represents the collective opinion of LSG and our advisors that those proposals have a low probability of being funded.

Full Proposals are evaluated against the following criteria, using the same five-point rating system as the LOIs:

- **Scientific merit:** Are the proposed methods appropriate and scientifically valid to complete the work? Are clear objectives/hypotheses present? Is the project innovative? 25 percent
- **Applicability** of proposed project to Louisiana Sea Grant's strategic goals and priorities for this RFP: Will the project help address a high priority coastal issue? Is this work needed? 20 percent
- **Outreach and education plan:** The degree to which end-users of the results of the proposed project have been brought into the planning of the project, will be brought into the execution of the project, and will apply and help evaluate the results during the two-year project. 20 percent

- **Quantifying benefits and impact:** The degree to which the proposed project integrates measures and methods to yield and quantify significant environmental, societal or economic benefits as outcomes of the project. 15 percent
- **Budget:** Are the requested funds appropriate for completion of the proposed work? 10 percent
- **Qualifications** of the applicants: Is the project team qualified to do the work? 10 percent
- **Diversity statement:** Does the statement address how the proposed activity serves and/or broadens the participation of underrepresented groups and how they benefit from its outcomes. Scored separately using the five-point rating system.

A technical review panel (TRP) consisting of external researchers and other subject matter experts with expertise in disciplines broadly represented by the proposals under consideration will evaluate proposals and peer reviews, then make a ‘fundable’ or ‘not fundable’ determination for each proposed project to LSG’s leadership team. At least three peer reviews will be obtained for each proposal prior to convening the TRP. LSG will submit a final list of projects that includes those recommended for funding to the NSGO based on the full review process, panel recommendations, available funding, and current program priorities. The NSGO reviews and provides final approval on the projects to be funded.

LSG may forward (or not forward) a proposal for funding out of scoring rank based on the following criteria:

- balance/distribution of funds across academic disciplines, RFP focus areas and geography of work location;
- availability of funding;
- program-specific objectives; and
- poor performance of a PI in completing progress and final reports on previous LSG-funded projects.

Not all highly rated projects will be funded. LSG does not have enough funding to cover all the outstanding proposals that we receive.

Available Funding

LSG expects to fund six to eight two-year projects in this Biennial Competitive Research Funding Cycle. The maximum federal request per project is \$200,000 (for non-LSU A&M led projects, the maximum available funding is currently \$193,500) over the two-year project period. PIs do not have to request the maximum amount.

All funding is reliant upon LSG receiving federal funds that currently have not yet been appropriated. As such, no funding can be guaranteed.

All funding levels, including the maximum amount per project and the number of projects, are subject to change. Applicants may be asked to revise scopes of work, start date and budgets so

that their projects align with available funding levels. If federal funding is not received, LSG may not fund any proposals out of this RFP.

Reporting Requirements - As part of all award agreements, LSG requires yearly reports and semi-annual updates of project progress. PIs will be expected to report on the project performance measures and metrics as applicable to their project (Appendix A in the [Strategic Plan](#)):

Grant funds may be withheld pending completion of reports as outlined in the project terms and award conditions.

Additional Information and Contact for Submissions - An informational webinar will be held on January 18th at 11am CST to discuss this funding opportunity. Please visit Louisiana Sea Grant's funding webpage (www.laseagrant.org/research/rfp) for instructions on how to participate in the webinar. The webinar will also explain the use of the [eSeaGrant](#) proposal submission system. The webinar will be recorded and a link to this recording will be posted on Louisiana Sea Grant's funding webpage.

This RFP is available at www.laseagrant.org/research/rfp/.

A FAQ is available at www.laseagrant.org/research/rfp/faqs/

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