

**FLORIDA SEA GRANT COLLEGE PROGRAM
Priorities & Funding Opportunities for 2020-2022**



**Call for Letters of Intent
for Proposed New Applied Research Projects**

**Deadline: February 14, 2019
(3:00 PM Eastern Standard Time)**

This document includes an overview and three sections:

- A. Funding and Proposal Information**
- B. Priorities for Applied Research Projects**
- C. Letters of Intent Guidelines**

**This document is available online from:
January 7 to February 14, 2019 at
www.flseagrant.org**

Science Serving Florida's Coast

Florida Sea Grant is a university-based program that supports research, education and extension to conserve coastal resources and enhance economic opportunities for the people of Florida. We are a partnership between the State University System of Florida, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and Florida's citizens and governments.

January 7, 2019

FLORIDA SEA GRANT RESEARCH COMPETITION

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

To have your Letter of Intent (LOI) considered in the review process, all of these criteria must be met, with no exceptions:

1. All required materials identified in the call for LOIs must be submitted using our online system on or before 3 PM Eastern Standard Time on February 14, 2019.
2. The topic of the proposed project must match a priority identified in section B.
3. The PI must agree in writing that they will comply with the NOAA data sharing requirement – see page 4, Section A-7 below.

OVERVIEW

This is a solicitation for Letters of Intent (LOI) for two-year coastal and ocean applied research grants. Each LOI submitted to Florida Sea Grant that meets the 3 criteria listed above will be reviewed and scored based on criteria in Section A-6 and A-7 below. The principal investigators of approximately 20 top-rated LOIs will be encouraged to submit a full research proposal following specific guidelines that will be released in April 2019. Principal investigators who are not encouraged to submit full research proposals may do so at their discretion.

- Priorities identified in Section B were developed from the 2018-21 Florida Sea Grant [strategic plan](#), and address three of our focus areas: Healthy Coastal Environments; Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture; and Resilient Communities. There also is a cross-cutting priority that spans multiple focus areas.
- This is an open state-wide competition for any Principal Investigator who can meet the previously described eligibility criteria.
- A strong LOI is the first step to securing Florida Sea Grant funding.
- The maximum Florida Sea Grant award is \$200,000 for two years, with no more than \$100,000 in each individual budget year.
- A 50% match is required – i.e., \$100,000 match of non-federal funds if \$200,000 of federal funds is requested.
- In the LOI phase, a panel will carefully examine and rate LOIs based on end-user engagement, anticipated outcomes and impacts, and technical merit.
- We will ask the review panel to put forward approximately 20 LOIs that will be encouraged for full research proposals.
- At the full research proposal stage, the same evaluation criteria will be used, however, considerably more weight will be placed on technical merit.

PURPOSE

This document describes the process to apply for Florida Sea Grant funding for two-year applied research projects beginning in Spring 2020. It provides an overview of the Florida Sea Grant proposal and review process, defines priority areas, and presents guidelines for the preparation of Letters of Intent.

A. Florida Sea Grant Funding and Proposal Information 2020 - 2022

1. Sea Grant Funding Cycle

Florida Sea Grant research projects are normally funded for two years. Thus, projects proposed should be for the period February 1, 2020 to January 31, 2022.

Key dates:

2019

January 7	Call for Letters of Intent
February 14	Letters of Intent Due by 3 PM EST (no late Letters of Intent will be accepted)
April 16-17	Technical Review Panel Meets to Review Letters of Intent
April 19	Faculty Notified of Results
April 19-May 28	Invited Research Proposals Written
June 3	Research Proposals Due by 3 PM EDT (late proposals will not be accepted)
June-July	Peer Review Conducted
August 6-7	Technical Panel Meets to Review Research Proposals
August 12	Faculty Notified if Proposal Successful
September 4	Letter Response to Peer Reviews Due
October 6	Omnibus Florida Sea Grant Proposal Submitted to National Sea Grant Office, NOAA

2020

New projects start. The date when funds are released depends on when they are provided to Florida Sea Grant by NOAA, and this in turn depends on Federal appropriations.

2. Letter of Intent Defined

The LOI identifies a topic and describes a project relevant to coastal and ocean needs in Florida and the nation.

It describes the scope of the need, problem or opportunity, and how the results achieved under a grant would address a particular problem identified by an end-user and relevant to the goals and objectives of the FSG strategic plan.

As outlined in the Department of Commerce Grants Manual, the LOI can assist potential applicants by giving them realistic feedback on whether their project ideas / proposals align with the goals and objectives of a particular program and therefore may be considered competitive for federal funding and to discourage applications that have little or no chance of funding. Such pre-application review is intended to allow applicants to avoid incurring significant expenditures in preparing applications that are not consistent with Florida Sea Grant's program goals and objectives. Regardless of any feedback that a potential applicant may receive in response to a LOI, the applicant still has a right to submit a full research proposal under this process.

The five-page (maximum) LOI format is described and included in this document. Although brief, the LOI is the basis for Florida Sea Grant deciding on whether to encourage or discourage submittal of a full research proposal. Preparation should be done thoughtfully.

Letters of Intent must indicate the total amount of funding needed, a justification for request of that level of funding, and an indication of how a 50 cent non-federal per 1 dollar federal fund match will be made. At this stage, a detailed budget is not required. However, plan carefully because the amount of funds requested at the full research proposal stage CANNOT exceed what is indicated in the LOI.

3. Participation

Any Principal Investigator who meets the aforementioned eligibility criteria may apply. Principal Investigators may be employees of universities, agencies, non-profits or private corporations. Because we are by nature a college program, one of our preferences is support of students. For principal investigators not employed by a university, an effective way to address this criterion is to team up with a faculty member at one of Florida's many universities.

Investigators may participate on no more than two Letters of Intent, and as PI on just one.

On average, we receive about 70 Letters of Intent, ask for 20 research proposals, and fund 9 projects. The objective is to fund approximately 45% of research proposals, so much of the screening happens at the LOI stage. Thus, while Letters of Intent are of a short length, it is critical that in a concise manner you carefully describe the importance of the work, the specific approaches/methodology that will be taken, and the specific nature of the partnership with a defined end-user. Details regarding how you are working with the end-user are very important both at the LOI and the research proposal stages.

4. Size of Grant Award

The maximum two-year award that Florida Sea Grant will provide is \$200,000, with a maximum of \$100,000 in each budget year. For each Sea Grant dollar, a 50% matching fund commitment is required (i.e., if you request \$200,000 of federal dollars, you must have \$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).

5. Student Involvement Is Encouraged

Sea Grant is a college program and student participation in Sea Grant funded research is encouraged.

6. Criteria for Reviewing Letters of Intent

Florida Sea Grant will obtain reviews from a panel of broadly-experienced out of state professionals who are recognized for both their disciplinary and program leadership experience. They will recommend to FSG which Letters of Intent should be encouraged for development into full research proposals, and they will base that input on the following criteria.

- A. **Technical Merit (35%)** -- the technical merits of the proposal in the context of state-of-science in the particular subject area. In considering technical merit, the panel will evaluate whether the research plan that is put forward is likely to provide a rigorous and scientifically-valid test of hypotheses or new approaches designed to solve an identified problem. This includes experimental design, data analysis, modeling approaches, and other attributes of research methodology.
- B. **End-User Engagement (35%)** -- 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 use results. Professional colleagues are not considered as end-users. An end-user is an industry, local government, organization or agency partner that makes use of a research product to address some coastal or ocean or coastal issue. If the end-user is in the private sector, there must be evidence that the results are of value to the broad industry sector.
- C. **Anticipated Outcomes and Impacts (30%)** -- the degree to which the project is expected to create new commercial opportunities, improve technological and economic efficiency, promote environmental sustainability, increase community resilience, or improve management decisions, in Florida or possibly nationally.

The same three criteria will be used to evaluate full research proposals, however, the percentages will be weighted more heavily towards technical merit.

7. Compliance with NOAA Data Sharing Requirement

Once a research project is complete, all data collected or created with funding from the NOAA award must be made visible, accessible, and independently understandable to general users, free of charge or at minimal cost, in a timely manner. This includes field data, data from experiments, data from surveys, calibration and verification data for models, model output, spatial data, physical, chemical and biological data. Spatial data are challenging but can be provided as GIS shape files. We require that no later than two years after completion of a Florida Sea Grant-funded research project, your data are uploaded to a publicly accessible data portal, and that Florida Sea Grant be provided with an email that references the project number, title, the nature of data that were uploaded, and a link to the portal. We will maintain a table on our website with links to all data collected in research projects. The data portal that you select must be one with documented longevity, and there must be both metadata and data available to prospective users. A good example is provided from a study in the Everglades that placed data onto a NSF Long-Term Ecological Research data portal: <https://portal.lternet.edu/nis/mapbrowse?scope=knb-lter-fce&identifier=1220>.

For the LOI, the Principal Investigator must simply agree in writing that they and any other investigators/sub-contractors will comply with NOAA's data sharing policy should their project involve the collection of data.

For the full proposal, the Principal Investigator must explain how the data and metadata will be developed, described and archived for public access. Funds may be budgeted in the project full-proposal for this task.

8. Environmental Compliance

At the full proposal stage, principal investigators will be required to submit a completed National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) form for review to ensure that the project complies with established federal policies.

9. Diversity

Florida Sea Grant values diversity, equity and inclusion in both our program and the people we serve. We will strive to make access to research funds equally available to everyone, regardless of race, color, religion, place of origin, gender, sexual orientation, age, socio-economic status, disability or veteran status.

10. Outreach

For the funded project, we require that in addition to the traditional journal articles, and the PI's direct interactions with end-users, a user-friendly executive summary document be prepared that is readily understood by educated lay audiences. We encourage PIs to use innovative approaches including web pages, blogs and zines. An example is provided here: [Example Zine](#).

Where such cooperation is feasible and logical for a particular project, PIs are encouraged to work with local Florida Sea Grant extension faculty – recognizing that if they are asked to do outreach work for the project, their time, travel and other costs must be included in the budget.

11. Submitting Your Letter of Intent:

2020-2022 Florida Sea Grant Letters of Intent must be submitted online through the Florida Sea Grant website <http://seagrants.ifas.ufl.edu/CallForProposals/index.php>. (PAPER COPIES ARE NOT ACCEPTED). Please read and follow directions carefully. You will receive a confirmation by email when your LOI has been successfully submitted.

Deadline for receipt is February 14, 2019 by 3:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time (No extensions.)

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B. Florida Sea Grant College Program Priorities for 2020 to 2022

The following research priorities, taken from our new strategic plan, have been identified for the 2020 to 2022 funding cycle.

Healthy Coastal Environments

- **Acquire new actionable information about how altered freshwater flow affects estuaries and their ecosystem services.**
- **Develop and test innovative new approaches for restoring coastal habitat, especially approaches that increase habitat resilience to storms and sea level rise.**

Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture

- **Develop new models, tools and technologies for sustainably managing fisheries resources or more effectively protecting at-risk species.**
- **Develop new tools, technologies, methods and approaches to support cost-effective, sustainable and environmentally-friendly aquaculture and the harvest, processing and sale of wild aquatic products.**
- **Develop an unbiased, efficient and effective approach that could be used on a recurring basis by resource management agencies to estimate the full economic value of commercial vs. recreational marine fisheries in a particular region.**

Resilient Communities and Economies

- **Quantify the socio-economic impacts resulting from Florida cyanobacteria blooms. We are particularly interested in how the workforce in water-dependent communities around the St Lucie and Caloosahatchee Estuaries are affected by these events.**
- **Estimate the future impacts that sea level rise could have on nutrient export from septic tanks into estuaries and other coastal ecosystems.**
- **Quantify the efficacy of new and existing approaches for increasing the resilience of coastal communities to extreme weather, storm surge and sea level rise.**

Cross-Cutting

- **Develop new tools or methods that will more rapidly detect harmful organisms or materials in water or seafood products, or that will allow for rapid identification or authentication of species or origin of products. Past examples have included a rapid test for brevetoxin in coastal waters, DNA fingerprinting of illegally harvested shark fins, and a rapid test to determine if seafood is properly labelled.**

C. Guidelines for Preparation of a Letter of Intent

INSTRUCTIONS: Letters of Intent **MUST BE SUBMITTED ONLINE** through the Florida Sea Grant web site using the **“Submit a Letter of Intent”** link located on the ‘Faculty Funding’ page. You are allowed a maximum of **five, single-spaced pages for the LOI narrative**, not counting the pages that provide literature citations, your biosketches, letters of support, and other forms identified below. Use 11-point font. Figures, images, mathematical notations and symbols, and tables can be used, however they must be embedded within the narrative and they count towards the five page narrative limit.

From the Florida Sea Grant ‘Faculty Funding’ page click the link to **“Submit a Letter of Intent.”** This will take you to a webpage that will allow you to download and use the Microsoft Word formatted worksheets to prepare your LOI and biosketches. Convert the completed LOI and biosketch forms to PDF files using Adobe Acrobat, and use the “upload” button on the Florida Sea Grant “Faculty Funding” webpage link **“Submit a Letter of Intent”** to submit your LOI. **NO PAPER COPIES OR EMAIL SUBMISSIONS WILL BE ACCEPTED DIRECTLY BY THE FLORIDA SEA GRANT OFFICE. LETTERS OF INTENT RECEIVED AFTER 3 PM ON FEBRUARY 14, 2019 WILL NOT BE CONSIDERED FOR REVIEW, AND THERE ARE NO EXCEPTIONS TO THIS GUIDELINE, SO PLEASE PLAN AND SUBMIT EARLY.** We are not responsible for the internet being down or other things happening just before the deadline.

Important: Prior to submitting your LOI you will navigate to the **“Submit a Letter of Intent”** web page and be required to enter the Project Title, the Principal Investigator, the Co-principal Investigator(s), the Associate Investigator(s), and the Proposed Budget into the Sea Grant LOI Project Entry Form. Once you have completed the LOI Project Entry Form and submitted your LOI you will receive a LOI number that you and your project associates will use when submitting biosketches.

Each LOI must address each of the following headings.

1. LOI NUMBER. This is the number that you will receive after completing the first page of the on-line submission process. Write this number down and save it because you will need it for submitting the LOI and the biosketches.
2. PROJECT TITLE: (Make this succinct while also reflecting the anticipated application, opportunity or need to be addressed, or problem to be solved. It should clearly relate to a Florida Sea Grant priority listed in Section B of the call for LOI.)
3. LOI PRIORITY. Identify the priority in section B that your project addresses.
4. PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR(S): (Provide faculty name, academic department, and institution)
5. CO-PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR(S): (Provide faculty name, academic department, and institution)
6. ASSOCIATE INVESTIGATOR(S): (Provide faculty name, academic department, and institution)
7. PROPOSED BUDGET: YEAR 1 -- SEA GRANT: \$ _____, MATCH YEAR 1: \$ _____.
(No commas) YEAR 2 -- SEA GRANT: \$ _____, MATCH YEAR 2: \$ _____.

One non-federal dollar match -- "hard" or "in-kind" -- must be provided by the grantee for every two dollars requested from Sea Grant; round to the nearest \$1000 (no commas). Prepare the budget estimate thoughtfully. (A research proposal budget request exceeding the LOI budget request is NOT ALLOWED).

8. 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 Florida Sea Grant priorities. Describe what makes this project innovative. Why is this topic important? As warranted or required discuss pilot data that establish a basis for this line of research.
9. OBJECTIVES: Number and list the objectives. Objectives must be attainable within the two-year timeframe of your project.
10. METHODS: Describe the overall project design. How will the problem be tackled with rigorous research? How will the efficacy of new tools, technologies, policies or products be evaluated? Identify specific methodology and major aspects such as replication, sampling, surveys, modeling approaches, statistical methods, etc.
11. END-USER PARTICIPATION AND DELIVERY OF RESULTS: Identify the specific end-users that will participate in your project. Describe their specific confirmed role. Describe the specific approach that will be taken to transfer the new information, tools, technologies, policies or products to end-users. This may involve coordinating the project with a state or local resource management agency, a governmental organization or and private industry sector. While we are not taking LOIs for extension work at this time, the proposed project must develop linkages with the agency, industry or community for the dissemination and practical application of results. If there is a clear opportunity to involve a Florida Sea Grant Extension Agent in the project, this is encouraged but not required. If you take this

opportunity, be sure to include funds in the budget for their time, travel and supplies that are directed towards the project.

12. **EXPECTED RESULTS, APPLICATIONS AND BENEFITS:** Describe the expected outcomes of the project. If the objectives are attained, how would the problem to be solved create new commercial opportunities, improve technological and economic efficiency, improve management decisions, etc.? What Florida, regional or national impact is envisioned? We recognize that some research initiatives take considerably longer than two years to provide a solution to an identified problem. We want to know that your project is moving the level of understanding or utility of tools or models in a direction toward issue resolution.
13. **AFFIRMATION OF COMPLIANCE WITH NOAA DATA SHARING GUIDELINES:** In the LOI, the PI only needs to affirm that he/she will comply with the NOAA data sharing guideline if selected to write a research proposal and if funded by Florida Sea Grant.
14. **LITERATURE CITATIONS:** Limit this section to no more than 10 highly relevant references.
15. **REVIEWERS / CONFLICTS:** Please provide the names, addresses, telephone, and email of three potential reviewers. Please also tell us if particular persons may have a conflict of interest in reviewing your proposal and in those cases, provide an explanation.

BIOSKETCH: The principal investigator, co-principal investigators and other collaborators to the project must each provide a one-page biosketch. Include professional positions from current to past, education from most recent to past, and other information you consider relevant to defining a level of expertise that is aligned with the project being proposed.

SUBMISSION: To submit a LOI, go to the Florida Sea Grant home page at <http://www.flseagrant.org> and follow the links to "Funding" and 'For Faculty' to '**Submit a Letter of Intent.**' Read all of the instructions and follow them carefully. You will establish a password and receive a confirmation LOI number when you begin the submittal process. You will need this number to submit the LOI and Biosketches. DO NOT wait until the last day to submit your LOI or Biographical Data forms; the process may take longer than you anticipate, and if you miss the deadline, even by one minute, you will be locked out of the on-line system.

The steps to completing an LOI are:

1. Read all (A) funding and proposal information; (B) priorities for 2018-2020 and (C) guidelines for preparation of a LOI and biosketches.
2. Download the LOI and biosketch forms and complete them off-line.
3. Access the LOI submission web page <http://seagrant.ifas.ufl.edu/CallForProposals/index.php> fill out the required data fields and click submit. You will then receive your unique LOI number.
4. Enter the LOI number on your LOI (first heading on the form) and the biosketch pages that you and your colleagues completed off-line. The Principal Investigator should have all biosketches prior to accessing the LOI submission process web page. Additional biosketches may be uploaded **prior to the February 14, 2019 3 PM deadline** using a password that the PI creates during the initial submission. However, your LOI will not be considered if all biosketches have not been submitted by the deadline.
5. Convert the LOI and biosketches to a PDF format using Adobe Acrobat.

6. Select the option for “This is a biosketch” and click “attach PDF.” Repeat for multiple biosketches.
7. After you have attached your LOI and all biosketches click “finish” to complete the submission process.
8. You will receive an email confirming our receipt of your LOI .

Deadline for receipt of Letters of Intent with all required information included is February 14, 2019 by 3:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time (no extensions).