



# REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS:

## Optimizing Green Infrastructure and Low Impact Development to Mitigate Impacts on Freshwater Systems

**FUNDING PERIOD: 1 DECEMBER 2023 TO 31 MAY 2025**

### **AWARD INFORMATION**

For this solicitation, NJS GC anticipates funding:

Up to 3-5 projects with a maximum budget of \$160,000 per project for 18 months.

Total funding available combined is \$480,000.

### **DEADLINES FOR APPLICATIONS:**

Letters of Intent: March 24, 2023, by 11:59 pm ET\*

Full Proposals: June 9, 2023, by 11:59 pm ET. Note that the deadline will be strictly enforced.

*\*PLEASE NOTE: The opportunity to submit a full proposal is contingent on the timely receipt of a letter of intent.*

### **Eligibility:**

This competition calls for research projects on green infrastructure and low impact development techniques in metropolitan areas of the Mid-Atlantic coastal states (NY-NJ-DE-PA-MD-VA-NC). All fieldwork must take place within the watersheds of this region. A significant part of the Sea Grant's capabilities and place-based engagement in the coastal environments along the East Coast involves partnering with State and local agencies and academic institutions to conduct coastal management-related research. Continued engagement with Sea Grant partners will be an important aspect of this competition, and engagement with Sea Grant programs will be valued in the review process.

### **Award Time Frame:**

The proposed start date should be December 1, 2023, with completion no later than May 31, 2025.

The applicants may have up to eighteen months to complete the projects, however the projects selected as a part of the competition cannot be extended past the end date of the proposed project period.

### **Funding Availability:**

Approximately \$480,000 will be available to support the research projects that enhance and optimize the deployment of green infrastructure and low impact development techniques to mitigate runoff impacts on freshwater systems in the Mid-Atlantic coastal region. Each application may request up to \$160,000. This regional competition anticipates supporting 3-5 awards. It is also required that all

applications shall have at least the standard 50% of non-federal match for their request. The non-federal matches must be clearly documented and may include in-kind support of project partners in terms of materials and labor's indirect costs. For this funding opportunity, indirect costs are limited to 10% of the direct cost, however unrecovered indirect costs can be used as match.

## **ABOUT NEW JERSEY SEA GRANT CONSORTIUM**

New Jersey Sea Grant Consortium (NJS GC) brings together the region's colleges, universities, and other entities with expertise in marine, coastal, and estuarine science and an interest in the policies that govern New Jersey's coastal environments and assets. Collectively the organization works to advance knowledge and wise utilization of New Jersey's marine, coastal and estuarine resources and make a positive impact on marine and coastal policy for the region. For more information about NJS GC, its programs, and its current [Strategic Plan](#), please visit <http://njseagrant.org/>.

NJS GC is also the host institution for the National Sea Grant College Program (NSGCP) in New Jersey and is part of a network of 34 programs administered by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) dedicated to wise utilization and well-informed management of the Nation's coastal and Great Lakes resources. NJS GC is funded by NOAA and the NSGCP through a four-year grant to provide research, education, and outreach programs informed by sound science that promote sustainable use of New Jersey's coastal and marine resources. Funding for this grant opportunity is coming from the National Sea Grant Office, award number NA21OAR4170479.

## **BACKGROUND AND JUSTIFICATION OF RESEARCH NEED**

Stormwater runoff carries pollutants, such as particulates, nutrients, pesticides, other synthetic organic chemicals, toxic metals, pathogens, and contaminants of emerging concern into water bodies degrading water quality and resulting in damages to both freshwater and marine ecosystems. Impairments to these ecosystems cause significant negative economic, social, and environmental impacts on communities. Green infrastructure (GI) and low impact development (LID) techniques are types of stormwater best management practices (BMPs) to address issues related to both quantity and quality of stormwater runoff. GI is stormwater management practices that protect, restore, or mimic the natural hydrological process and cycle. GI uses existing natural landscapes (e.g., wetlands and forests) and nature-based features (e.g., vegetated rooftops, rain gardens, pervious surfaces, native landscaping, and broader habitat restoration) to reduce runoff and trap and/or abate runoff pollutants. LID emphasizes the use of small-scale, decentralized stormwater control measurements to preserve or closely mimic the localized, pre-development hydrologic responses to storms such as infiltration. Examples of GI/LID techniques include bioretention cells, rain gardens, bioswales, permeable pavements, infiltration basins and trenches, and green roofs. Challenges to the optimization and deployment of GI/LID techniques include uncertainties on their long-term performance, implementation and maintenance costs, and community understanding and acceptance.

The purpose of the competitive grant program is to fund 3-5 research projects that will enhance and optimize the deployment of GI/LID techniques to mitigate stormwater runoff and reduce negative impacts on freshwater systems by expanding research to address the identified challenges and knowledge gaps. The utilization of GI/ LID in freshwater watersheds will have profound and positive benefits on the health of our coastal ecosystems, a primary goal of the National Sea Grant Program.

The research projects conducted under this competition are expected to enhance the effective implementation of sustainable and resilient GI/LID techniques to manage and treat stormwater runoff into freshwater systems under a variety of future conditions and improve the integrity of freshwater and ultimately marine ecosystems.

## RESEARCH PRIORITIES

For this competition, NJSGC is seeking proposals that address its current [Strategic Plan](#) and the specific research needs and challenges identified in a recent strategic scoping document entitled, “Optimizing Green Infrastructure and Low Impact Development to Mitigate Impacts on Freshwater Systems: A Strategic Framework for The Sea Grant Network.”

The [Strategic Scoping Document](#) was developed through a strategic scoping process involving subject matter experts and a diverse group of stakeholders and identified the research needs and challenges that best reflect the current science and policy needs of the coast, estuaries, and watersheds in the Mid-Atlantic region. These research priorities are divided into the four strategic focus areas, which are listed below in detail.

In the interest of a balanced research portfolio and a research program that best supports NJSGC’s Strategic Plan, please note that, in consultation with NJSGC’s Director of Research and Extension and the members of a Technical Advisory Panel, NJSGC’s Executive Director reserves the right to distribute fundable projects across the identified four strategic focus areas.

Proposals must address, but are not limited to, one or more of these strategic focus area priorities. Proposals shall build upon and extend existing knowledge and efforts related to GI/LID; make that information available to communities and stakeholders; include Sea Grant education and extension professionals, community representatives, government, academic, nongovernmental, and industry partners, as appropriate; and proactively incorporate principles of diversity, equity, inclusion, justice, and accessibility at every level of the work. The participation and involvement of community, government, academic, non-government, and industry stakeholders in the projects are strongly encouraged.

The following strategic focus areas are being given priority under this competitive grant program:

### ***1. Sustainable design, installation, and maintenance***

To ensure the optimization of GI/ LID projects they must be designed, installed, and maintained through their lifespans in such a way as to protect the environment, consider economic feasibility, and current and future societal concerns and needs. To surmount the current knowledge gaps and challenges we are looking for projects that will develop and evaluate the performance of innovative GI/LID design including retrofits, media mixes and reuse thereof, plant-soil combinations, and hybrid designs of green-gray infrastructure. The performance of GI/LID projects should be evaluated in long-term field evaluations, for both wet and dry seasons, in different ecoregions, and under varying climatic conditions, in addition to lab studies. As far possible, these research projects should:

- Investigate designs in ultra-urban areas, especially retrofits,
- Document hydrologic performance,
- Document pollutant fate, transport, and removal efficiencies, especially of CECs,
- Document long-term water quality and groundwater impacts at the watershed scale.

### ***2. Relevant and credible cost-benefit information***

To improve the acceptance of GI/LID it is essential to communicate the direct benefits, co-benefits, and avoided costs associated with GI/ LID compared to costs in a way that is relevant and meaningful to all stakeholders. Priority will be given to research projects that: Identify, quantify, and monetize long-term costs, co-benefits, and avoided costs of GI/LID and compared to gray infrastructure at the community or watershed scale, especially in underserved, environmentally overburdened communities. These analyses should be performed over a long-term temporal and spatial horizon and address socioeconomic and geographical differences. Analysis may include quantifying the benefits

to public health, property values, reduction in urban heat islands, improvement of air quality, job creation, improved passive recreation/ provision of open space, community safety, pollution load reduction, improved regional climate resilience, and flood risk reduction.

### *3. Accelerated resilience and adaptation to climate change impacts*

Most GI/LID systems are dynamic due to intermittent inundation with stormwater, variations in stormwater chemical composition, fluctuating weather conditions, and climate change related shocks (e.g., hurricanes and floods) and stressors (e.g., sea level rise and land subsidence). To address the knowledge gaps and challenges with GI/ LID projects in relation to resilience and adaptation to climate change impacts, we are prioritizing research that will develop and evaluate optimized GI/LID designs and retrofits to handle different climate change challenges, e.g., droughts, dry periods, sea-level rise, and an increased frequency and intensity of storm events and demonstrate how hydrodynamic stormwater aspects, such as the changes of flow within a storm event and changes in dry periods between storms, including pollutant loading and water quantity, affect GI/LID performance. These projects should assess how design standards might be adapted to deal with these challenges and how they could vary between geographic regions.

### *4. Efficient and inclusive planning and management*

To assure that GI/LID projects are most effective at addressing the environmental, economic, and social needs of a community and region there must be inclusivity in the planning for and management of these projects. There is an evidenced need to enhance this inclusivity. Priority will be given to projects that investigate communities' level of awareness, understanding of, and perceptions and attitudes towards different types of GI/LIDs. Projects should demonstrate how these attitudes may vary across demographic regions, especially under-served and environmentally overburdened communities, and strategize how the information can be used to foster public acceptance of GI/LID projects amongst communities. Priority will also be given to projects that examine and assess the effectiveness of existing incentives and programs to plan and organize GI/LID initiatives in different socio-economic, urban, suburban, and rural settings at the watershed scale and investigate how incentives can be enhanced in regulatory or financing programs.

## **APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS**

Each application (letter of intent and full proposal) must be prepared using the following formatting: Single-spaced, 8.5" x 11" page size, 1" margins, 12-point type, Times New Roman preferred.

### **I. LETTER OF INTENT**

#### **A. LETTER OF INTENT GUIDANCE**

##### **Dates:**

- Letter of intent due **March 24, 2023** by 11:59 pm ET
- PIs notified of status: **April 14, 2023**.

Each PI must submit a letter of intent (LOI) in order to submit a full proposal. Interested applicants that 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 tweak details of their project before submitting the full proposal as their research to application plan evolves. LOIs are meant to provide Sea Grant with metrics on the scope and size of the application pool to assist with reviewer recruitment and review event planning.

Letter of intents should present a succinct but sufficiently detailed synopsis of the project that will enable reviewers to evaluate the relevance of the research project to NJSGC's research priorities and Strategic Plan, its technical feasibility, and the PI's qualifications. Letter of intents undergo an extensive review, after which a subset will be encouraged for submission as full proposals.

The letter of intent should be no longer than 2 pages and shall include:

- Working project title
- PI Name(s)
- PI Position(s) and Affiliation
- Partnering Sea Grant Programs or other Federal Partners
- PI Contact Information
- Brief discussion of the focal topic and approach and how it will meet the RFP goals
- The approximate funding to be requested with brief budget justification

## **B. HOW TO SUBMIT YOUR LETTER OF INTENT**

You must submit your completed Letter of Intent (LOI) electronically as one (1) electronic file (single, PDF format only) to Research Associate [Dr. Hadeer Saleh](#) by March 24, 2023 at 11:59 pm ET. Following your submission, you will receive an email confirmation from Dr. Saleh for your records. Please contact Dr. Saleh if you do not receive confirmation by 12:00 pm ET on March 25, 2023.

## **C. LETTER OF INTENT EVALUATION AND NOTIFICATION**

Letter of intents will be reviewed by project team members that are subject matter experts. NJSGC's grant team will also conduct a review of all letters of intent to ensure completeness and compliance with proposal formatting and other preparation and submittal instructions. If a letter of intent does not adhere to these instructions, it may not move forward to full review.

The project team members will meet to review letters of intents based on the evaluation criteria listed below. Please note that project team members operate within procedures that strictly avoid any conflict of interest. Based on project team members evaluations, investigators may be asked to modify objectives, work plans, or budgets for full proposals.

The LOI review criteria will be:

1. Responsiveness to RFP's the research priorities described above (40 pts)
2. Technical and Scientific Merit (30 pts)
3. Professional Qualifications of the Investigators (20 pts)
4. Budget Justification (10 pts)

Additionally, projects will be reviewed on:

- Geographic diversity
- Diversity of research areas to be studied
- Diversity of proposed approaches
- Involvement of Sea Grant Consortium programs and partners

## **II. FULL PROPOSAL**

### **A. FULL PROPOSAL GUIDANCE**

#### **Dates:**

- Notification of response letter of intent: April 14, 2023.
- Full proposals due: June 9, 2023 by 11:59 pm ET.
- Final selection, all PIs notified: On or before October 2, 2023.
- Funded projects begin: December 1, 2023 (contingent on receipt of federal funding)

**PLEASE NOTE:** All prospective applicants must have submitted a letter of intent to submit a full proposal. Letter of intents undergo an extensive review with a subset encouraged for submission as full proposals. However, even if a letter of intent was not encouraged by NJSGC and its review team for full proposal submission, the PI may still prepare and submit a full proposal which will be reviewed and evaluated by NJSGC and its independent review team in the same manner as those encouraged to submit after the letter of intent phase.

### **B. WHAT TO INCLUDE**

Include each of the following elements in the order listed below:

#### **1. Cover Page:**

Include: project title; the names, titles, affiliations, and contact information (email and phone) of co- PIs; and a budget overview (the total cost and annual breakdown of requested funding by partner, is warranted). Cover page should be signed by the Principal Investigator (PI) and an Authorized Institutional Representative.

#### **2. Abstract Page:**

On a separate page, include a project title (16 words or less), the name, position, and affiliation of the PI and each Co-PI involved in the project, and an abstract that clearly and concisely describes your project in terms that would be understandable by individuals who are not expert in your field. State the short- and long-term project objectives, methodologies, and rationale of the proposed project. Emphasize the importance, relevance to RFP priorities, application, and value to Sea Grant constituents (expected benefits). (1 page maximum.)

#### **3. Project Narrative:**

The project narrative contains the description and any graphical components of the proposal. Your proposal should follow and fulfill the following headings in the order listed. These headings reflect NJSGC and NSGCP/NOAA requirements. **A 10-page limit** applies to the narrative which includes tables and figures. Failure to adhere to these guidelines is grounds for return without review. Project narrative must include:

##### ***a. Project Title***

##### ***b. Project Background***

Explain the specific problem(s) this project seeks to address and its importance, provide specific alignment of the topic with the priorities of this RFP.

**c. *Project Objectives***

Provide a list of clearly defined objectives. For each objective, provide a concise statement explaining how it is aligned with one or more of the four major research themes described in this funding opportunity's Program Description.

**d. *Research Plan*** (include each subsection below with header)

● **Methods:**

Provide a careful explanation of the conceptual and methodological approaches you will use to address your project objectives.

*\* Applicants submitting proposals that involve the use of human test subjects and/ 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) and/or Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) before such research can proceed. Applicants are responsible for obtaining IRB and/or IACUC approvals from their institution and providing that documentation to NOAA once the approval is obtained and prior to any NOAA-funded human subject testing. Proposals intending to use human test subjects and/or animal use/test should specify clearly in the timeline approximately when IRB and/or IACUC approval will be obtained and when the testing is expected to occur.*

● **Expertise and educational impact:**

Explicitly explain how this project leverages the expertise of both researchers and stakeholders. Include a description of the involvement in the proposed work by graduate/undergraduate students and/or by undergraduate or high school faculty.

● **Extension of Research Results:**

Specifically identify the end users of the research results and explain their role in the project and the nature of the benefits and impacts they will receive. Describe how public outreach and engagement through Sea Grant programs in partnership with academic community members will expand the reach of impacts, as well as assure that the work reaches appropriate target audiences and accelerate technology transfer when relevant.

**e. *Anticipated outcomes and results:***

Provide a statement/explanation of the outcomes and results related to the creation of data products, tools, technologies, and management practices.

**f. *Outreach and technology transfer plan:***

Describe the extension activities necessary to transfer the research results to end users. Provide a strategy that details how end users, beyond those who actively participate in the proposed work, will learn about the project's outcomes and results.

**g. *Project timeline:***

Provide a timeline for accomplishing the proposed work, which covers the entire duration of the project. Include approximate dates for key milestones related to the proposed work, including the accomplishment of anticipated outcomes and release of results.

**h. *Diversity statement:***

The National Sea Grant Office (NSGO) recognizes it has a particular and unique opportunity to support NOAA's commitment to diversity and inclusion by taking an intentional step that encourages applicants to consider diversity and inclusion as part of their scientific projects. This

action has the potential to make an impact on not only the diversity and inclusion in science at NOAA, but also in the equity of services provided by NOAA.

The NSGO champions diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) by recruiting, retaining, and preparing a diverse workforce, and proactively engaging and serving the 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. Therefore, we encourage research projects to reflect diverse participation with regards to age, race, ethnicities, national origins, gender identities, sexual orientations, disabilities, cultures, religions, citizenship types, marital statuses, education levels, job classifications, veteran status types, income, and socioeconomic status.

The goal of this diversity statement is to embrace DEI to proactively engage, reflect the viewpoints, and serve the diverse populations that are most severely impacted by the continuous degradation of our freshwater resources due to runoff and pollution. Most of these people are marginalized individuals or residents of underserved or under resourced, economically disadvantaged, and/ or environmentally overburdened communities.

We encourage research proposals from or meaningful partnerships with Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs), such as Historically Black Colleges and Institutions (HBCUs), Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs), and others.

In this section, describe how the proposed research includes the participation of underrepresented groups (e.g., race/ethnicity, gender identities, sexual orientation, disability, geography, etc.) and environmentally overburdened communities, and how these groups and communities may benefit from the research outcomes.

*\*Applicants are encouraged to review [Sea Grant's vision and priority action plan for advancing Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice](#).*

4. **Additional Required Materials** (do not count towards Project Narrative limit):

- a. Project Milestone Chart*
- b. Literature Cited*
- c. Data Management Plan*

All applications must include a Data Management Plan that is compliant with NOAA's Public Access to Research Results Plan. The Data Management Plan should not exceed 2 pages. The Data Management Plan should include descriptions of the types of metadata and data expected to be created during the course of the project, plans for disseminating the metadata and data to the broader community, and plans for long-term archiving of the metadata and data. The Data Management Plan is not included in the Project Description page limit. Guidance on presenting Data Management Plan can be found in the [Sea Grant Application guide](#).

If proposed activities will not generate any environmental data, such as the scoping activities and research competition, please include the following statement at the end of your proposal: "Because this project will not generate environmental data, a Data Management Plan is not required."

**d. Biosketch for each co-PI**

- Curriculum Vitae – Not to exceed two (2) pages per Investigator..

**e. Current and pending support**

- Current and pending federal and non-federal grant support from all sources (complete and include NJSGC's [Current and Pending Support Form](#)).

**f. Letter(s) of Support (optional)**

Letter(s) of support should be concise, and may include:

- Background information on the letter writer's relationship to the research project and the applicant
- Potential impact of research findings to the letter writer's institution or community
- Description of any in-kind involvement and/or monetary support to be provided
- Role the letter writer will fulfill in the project
- Familiarity with the credentials, work, and goals of the applicant
- History of prior work or collaborations with applicant and/or the team
- Status of any ongoing partnerships

**g. Budget Narrative and Justification**

Submitted on separate Sea Grant [Budget Form 90-4](#). The budget should be written as 12 months (December 1, 2023 to November 30, 2024) + 6 months (December 1, 2024 to May 31, 2025). The budget must include the required 2-to-1 match (for every \$2 requested of federal Sea Grant funds, \$1 in non-federal matching funds must be provided by the proposer). Indirect costs are limited to 10% of the direct cost, however unrecovered indirect costs can be used as match.

All awards are contingent on the availability of federal funds to NJSGC through NOAA/NSGCP award number NA21OAR4170479.

Federal law requires that NJSGC provide a non-federal cost share (match) of at least 50% or \$1 for every \$2 of federal funds it receives. Please note that the first year could be overmatched and undermatch the second year but not the opposite (must have cumulative 50% throughout). For all awards made through this solicitation, cost share is the applicant's responsibility. Cost share sources must be clearly identified, and projects selected for funding will be required to provide documentation supporting the funds claimed on each invoice submitted. Cost share must be expended during the same time period as the project and may be provided as cash or from acceptable in-kind resources. Examples of cost share or matching sources include: non-federally supported salaries wages and benefits of those working on the project; expendable supplies and equipment; ship time; donated volunteer time, calculated at a reasonable hourly rate; supplies; space or equipment; tuition waivers for students involved in the project; and unrecovered indirect costs. Matching funds do not necessarily have to come from the PIs' home institution. Foundation, state or local grants, and other non-federal funds, including funds from private and/or industry sources, are eligible sources of matching funds if documented approval is provided at the time of application from those sources.

**h. Abbreviated Environmental Compliance Questionnaire**

A separate [Abbreviated NEPA Questionnaire](#) must be completed for each relevant project in the application, following further details below. The Applicants must ensure that the questionnaire is completed in full and includes detailed information regarding project location, methodology, and permits. Copies of all permits required for project activities should be included with application materials. If a permit is pending or planned, please provide this information.

Guidance on how to complete the Questionnaire and example Questionnaires for different types of projects can be found [here](#).

The Abbreviated NEPA Questionnaire is required for ALL research projects (those whose project ID starts with “R/”) even if the project is fully lab-based or relies on social science. The Abbreviated NEPA Questionnaire is also required for any project that meets the following criteria:

- Environmental permits, authorizations, or waivers
- Biological take and/or release
- Environmental sampling
- Hazardous or toxic substances and waste
- Permanent or temporary environmental effects
- Endangered or threatened species and/or protected areas
- Known or unknown risks to human health or the environment
- Controversial environmental subject matter

The NEPA Statement can be used instead of the Abbreviated NEPA Questionnaire for certain low- impact projects. If none of the project’s activities will take place in the environment and the project is not research, you may include the NEPA Statement in place of the NEPA Questionnaire. However, NOAA has final responsibility to determine whether a project or action requires environmental compliance review. If NOAA determines that the NEPA Statement is not sufficient, staff may request that an Abbreviated NEPA Questionnaire be provided instead. Please use the following format for the NEPA Statement:

*“This project’s activities include [list the activities]. Because no part of this project will take place in the environment or involve the collection of environmental data, the NOAA environmental compliance questionnaire is not needed.”*

## I. DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY OF PROPOSAL TEAM

\* Per US Department of Commerce Requirements Sea Grant is required to ask the below **VOLUNTARY** demographic question. Responses, or non-responses, have no relation to or bearing on the proposal review process or evaluation.

Please provide the following information for all named collaborators on your proposal. (2022, OMB approved for PRA under DOC generic clearance information collections, 0690-0030 and 0690-0035)

If you choose to respond, please use this [optional form](#) for collecting the information and **do not include it as part of your application package.**

Do you or your organization identify with any of the following groups that the federal government, in Executive Order 13985, has identified as underserved? Check all that apply.

- a) Black
- b) Latino
- c) Indigenous and/or Native American
- d) Asian American
- e) Pacific Islander
- f) Other person of color
- g) Members of religious minorities
- h) Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) persons
- i) Persons with disabilities
- j) Persons who live in rural areas
- k) Persons otherwise adversely affected by persistent poverty or inequality
- l) No, I do not identify with any of these groups

## SUBMISSION OF FULL PROPOSAL

The Principal Investigator must submit all components of the full proposal by email to [GI-LID@STEVENS.EDU](mailto:GI-LID@STEVENS.EDU). Proposals must be sent as ONLY ONE PDF file, for receipt no later than 11:59 pm ET June 9, 2023.

## FULL PROPOSAL REVIEW AND EVALUATION PROCESS

### Administrative Review

Project team members will conduct an administrative review of all full proposals to ensure completeness and compliance with proposal preparation and submittal instructions. Projects will be recommended for funding only if they have a complete application package. If a full proposal does not adhere to these instructions, it may not move forward to the technical review.

### External Peer Review

Each full proposal will be reviewed for scientific merit and strategies for outreach and extension of the research results, by at least three scholars or specialists with expertise relevant to the proposed research. Their written reviews will be provided to the Technical Advisory Panel (TAP). Like the TAP, external peer reviewers must operate within procedures that strictly avoid any conflict of interest.

## Technical Review

The Technical Advisory Panel will be made up of experts with both collective knowledge on the topics of all reviewed proposals and of regional research trends and needs. The panel will consider and discuss all aspects of each proposal, followed by a general review of the peer reviews and panel rankings of all proposals to inform the final decisions by the Project PIs. Panelists will be free from any conflicts of interest and will provide a proposal ranking order based on the evaluation criteria described below.

- 1. Importance/relevance and applicability of proposed projects to the program goals (25 pts)**  
This criterion ascertains whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and/or relevance to NOAA, federal, regional, state, or local activities. For this competition, this includes addressing the Project Description's four research areas described in this funding opportunity (and the Sea Grant scoping document from which they were derived).
- 2. Technical/scientific merit (25 pts).** This criterion assesses whether the approach/es are technically sound and/or innovative, if the methods are appropriate, and whether there are clear project goals and objectives. For this competition, this includes assessing the degree to which the goals, objectives, and deliverables are clearly stated and described; the methods are novel or creative; the technical approach is clearly explained; the technical approach efficiently and effectively transfers knowledge; and the proposal explains the technical approach to be taken that will advance previously funded science to a point that it is translatable into natural resource management actions.
- 3. Community Outreach and Education, including efforts to ensure inclusive and equitable engagement (25 pts).** This criterion assesses whether the project provides a focused and effective education and outreach strategy regarding NOAA's mission to protect the Nation's natural resources. For this competition, this means the degree to which the outcomes of the proposed work, specifically the knowledge and products that are responsive to U.S. East Coast stakeholders, will be shared beyond the project team (i.e., to other coastal stakeholders). This also includes identifying a strategy to work with stakeholders throughout the entire duration of the proposed work.

*The point scale is as follows for criteria 1,2,3 (25 pts): the application is unclear and does not adequately address the expectation outlined above (0-6 points); the application adequately addresses expectations outlined above (7-15 points); the application exceeds expectations outlined above (16-25 points).*

- 4. Overall qualifications of applicants (15 pts).** This criterion ascertains whether the applicant/s possess the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the research project. For this competition, this includes demonstration of the appropriate experience, qualifications, and skill for successful completion of the project; the capacity necessary to complete the work, and the meaningful collaboration and partnerships with previously funded activities, if applicable.

*The point scale is as follows: the qualifications are unclear and do not adequately address the expectation outlined above (0-5 points); the qualifications adequately address expectations outlined above (6-10 points); the qualifications exceed expectations outlined above (11-15 points).*

5. **Project costs (10 pts).** This criterion evaluates the budget to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time frame and provides a clear description of budget items.

*The point scale is as follows: the proposal is unclear and does not adequately address the expectations outlined above (0-3 points); the proposal adequately addresses expectations outlined above (4-6 points); the proposal exceeds expectations outlined above (7-10 points).*

\* *Written and panel reviews will adhere to [NOAA's policy on Conflicts of Interest](#)*

## **Selection criteria**

Following the review process according to the evaluation criteria described above, the Project team members will further consider the following factors in selecting proposals for funding:

1. Geographic diversity
2. Diversity of research areas to be studied
3. Diversity of proposed approaches
4. Involvement of Sea Grant programs and partners

Please note, in the interest of a diverse and balanced research portfolio that corresponds to and supports NJSGC's current Strategic Plan, in consultation with NJSGC's Director of Research and Extension, project team members and the members of the Technical Advisory Panel, NJSGC's Executive Director may distribute fundable projects at their discretion. Final selection of proposals is subject to the approval of NJSGC's letter of intent by NJSGC's federal program officer.

## **II. NOTES FOR FUNDED PROJECTS**

PIs of successful proposals will be required, when relevant, to submit documentation of approval for any Institutional Review Board (IRB) compliance and all funded projects that involve animal use/testing will require proof of Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) approval.

All proposals recommended for funding will require completion of a [90-2 Project Summary Form](#) prior to submission by NJSGC to NSGO. Please note: this document will be submitted as a worksheet.

All funded projects will be required to include acknowledgment of NJSGC support and resources which contributed to the final project.

## **CONTACTS FOR QUESTIONS AND ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE:**

For general submission questions: Dr. Hadeer Saleh, Research Associate, Stevens Institute of Technology, [GI-LID@stevens.edu](mailto:GI-LID@stevens.edu)

For questions on collaborations, priorities, evaluation criteria, data management: Dr. Peter Rowe, Executive Director, Director of Research and Extension, NJSGC 732-872-1300, ext. 31, [prowe@njseagrant.org](mailto:prowe@njseagrant.org)