

# FLORIDA SEA GRANT COLLEGE PROGRAM

## FY 2026-2027 Biennial Applied Science Competition

### Request for Proposals



**Deadline for LOI: February 25, 2025  
(3:00 PM ET)**

**Deadline for Full Proposals: June 18, 2025  
(3:00 PM ET)**

**Award Period: February 1, 2026 – January 31, 2028**

**This document is available online:**

<https://www.flseagrant.org/fsg-biennial-rfp-jan2025>

Florida Sea Grant is a university-based program that supports research, extension and education to enhance coastal resources and generate economic opportunities and benefits 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 county governments.

Florida Sea Grant's (FSG) biennial research competition supports applied science and educational opportunities to drive scientific innovation, new knowledge and products that support coastal and ocean resilience and the long-term prosperity of communities and businesses that rely on those resources.

Given the broad scope of the programmatic focus areas outlined in the [Florida Sea Grant 2024-2027 Strategic Plan](#) the research funded through this competition is multi-disciplinary and includes all sciences.

Projects must be **co-produced** (developed, implemented, and evaluated) in partnership with an end-user (i.e., government agency, private sector business/industry/association, non-governmental/non-profit organization) who will apply the results in a manner that generates tangible economic, societal and/or environmental benefit. Collaboration with and budgeting for involvement of an FSG Extension agent to develop and support end-user outreach is encouraged where appropriate.

Research teams must plan projects consistent with the requirements of this call and time frame allotted. Teams must factor in contingencies for NEPA, permitting, IRB, IACUC and other federal, state and local approvals that can delay the initiation and progress of projects. As such, projects that can utilize existing environmental permitting and research approvals are encouraged (where applicable).

#### **A. COMPETITION TIMELINE**

- Announcement release date – January 21, 2025
- Letters of Intent (LOI) due by 3 PM ET – February 25, 2025
- Investigators notified of LOI review results and reviewer feedback – Early April 2025
- Investigators notify FSG with Intention to submit Full Proposals by 3 PM ET – April 18, 2025
- Full Proposals due by 3 PM ET – June 18, 2025
- Proposal investigators conduct peer reviews – June and July 2025
- Technical Review Panel meets to discuss peer reviews and rate projects – August 2025
- Notice of competition results and reviewer feedback – September 2025
- Award period begins – February 1, 2026 (or commensurate with federal funding appropriations)

#### **B. CONTACTS**

- Fiscal/budget questions: Christy Huntley, [chuntley@ufl.edu](mailto:chuntley@ufl.edu) (352-392-5870)
- Proposal preparation questions: Dr. Charles Sidman, [csidman@ufl.edu](mailto:csidman@ufl.edu) (352-392-5870)
- eSeaGrant questions: Taylor Dluzniewski, [tdluzniewski@ufl.edu](mailto:tdluzniewski@ufl.edu) (313-574-6438)

#### **C. ELIGIBILITY AND PARTICIPATION**

Project Principal investigators (PIs) and co-producers must be employed at universities, agencies, local governments, non-profits or industry located in Florida who have access to university affiliated graduate students earning their degree at an academic institution in Florida. Co-PI's and associate investigators may be from outside of Florida. Investigators may participate as PI on just one proposal. The competition is oriented to university-based scientists and graduate students but requires project co-production with end-users, including those that provide match (in kind) support or receive funding for their participation.

To have your LOI and Full Proposal considered in the review process, the following criteria must be met.

1. LOI's and Full Proposals must adhere to the deadlines for submission. Late submissions, for any reason, will be rejected and full proposals will only be accepted from PI's who submit an LOI.
2. The proposed project should align with the [Florida Sea Grant 2024-2027 Strategic Plan](#). Proposals must describe how planned research will address one of the eight identified goals (page 14). Note that regional priority topics are also identified (page 9) and expected outcomes to be measured by at least one, but ideally multiple, National Sea Grant performance metrics (Appendix 1, page 18-20).
3. LOI's and Full Proposals must identify end-users, describe proposed application, and methods for quantifying results and benefits.
4. All required information for the LOI's and Full Proposals must be submitted using the eSeaGrant on-line system.
5. Principal Investigators of Full Proposals are required to carefully review up to three Full Proposals from other submitting teams to have their proposal considered for funding. The scoring rubric is described in Section G, below.

#### **D. SIZE OF AWARDS**

Projects are funded at up to \$100K/year or \$200K over two years. Budgets must be inclusive of indirect costs (IDC) of the submitting organization. For each Sea Grant dollar, a 50% non-federal funded matching commitment is required for the amount requested (i.e., if you request \$100,000 in year 1 and \$50,000 in year 2, you must match with \$50K in year 1 and \$25,000 in year 2). Non-federal match funds can be provided by end-users and co-producers.

Note: The selected two-year projects will be supplemented with \$22K/year or \$44K over the two-year span of projects to support a Graduate Research Fellow. One graduate student award will be issued separately to each project nominated for funding under this competition; following notification of a pending award, PIs will be instructed on next steps for the Fellow awards (e.g., budget, SOW, student CV). The role of students must add value to project research, communications/education and/or evaluative activities.

#### **E. PROJECT PRIORITIES AND OUTCOMES**

Projects must align with a focus area and nationally-aligned goal identified in the [Florida Sea Grant 2024-2027 Strategic Plan](#) (page 14). As a preview, the national focus areas include:

- Healthy Coastal Ecosystems
- Resilient Communities and Economies
- Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture
- Environmental Literacy and Workforce Development

While researchers are encouraged to investigate emerging issues, the following topics were identified as higher priority during the development of the strategic plan (page 9):

Table 1. Florida Sea Grant’s Stakeholder Priorities.

Coastal habitats	Nature-based (living) shorelines	Fisheries management
Excess nutrients	Sea level rise adaptation / planning	Recreational fisheries
Algae blooms	Resource use & tourism	Restoration aquaculture
Ecosystem services	Ports, harbors & marinas	Shellfish & finfish aquaculture
Invasive species	Coral health	Artificial reefs
Marine wildlife	Citizen science & human dimensions	Seafood science & commercial fisheries

It is essential that projects be co-produced (i.e., engage end-users in project development and implementation and yield corresponding outcomes) for maximum benefit from the applied science project. As such, PIs are encouraged to include an objective for developing or achieving the following types of outcomes and impacts:

- National Performance Measures by National Focus Area (Appendix I, page 18),
- Cross-cutting National Focus Area Measures (Appendix I, page 18),
- Cross-cutting National Performance Metrics (Appendix I, page 19-20):
  - Number of volunteer hours
  - Number of post-secondary students and degrees
  - Number of participants/attendees, events, etc.
  - Number of peer reviewed publications.

These are just examples of what outcomes can be counted that should be considered during project implementation – that is impacts on numbers of acres, people, communities; the development of products (presentations, information, tools, etc.), and economic benefits (jobs and businesses sustained, economic impacts).

## F. LETTERS OF INTENT (LOI) AND FULL PROPOSALS

Requested information detailed below is to be submitted directly through the eSeaGrant website either by completing forms, pasting text, or uploading PDFs. Complete LOIs include information in sections 1 through 6. Complete Full Proposals contain information in sections 1 through 14. At the full proposal stage, all LOI information can be updated except the PI.

### LOI Sections to be entered into eSeaGrant Forms:

1. **TITLE:** Be descriptive yet concise (e.g., 25 words or less).
2. **PRIMARY FOCUS AREA AND GOAL:** Identify the primary focus area and corresponding goal to be addressed by the proposal (p. 14 of the strategic plan).
3. **INVESTIGATOR INFORMATION:** Provide the name, title, institution affiliation, and email for the PI and that of all co-PIs and associate investigators. End-users/co-producers can also serve as PIs. The names of all but the PI’s can be changed for the full submission. Note that the National Sea Grant Office has requested demographic information from the PI. The information is only requested of the PI, and the only identifiers associated with this information are the state program and competition. Demographic information cannot and will not be linked to proposals for consideration in the review process.

4. **TOTAL FEDERAL BUDGET REQUEST (FY2026-2027):** Not to exceed \$100,000 per year (\$200,000 maximum), which requires a minimum 50% match of non-federal dollars (i.e., “hard” or “in-kind” support). Please round to the nearest \$1000 for the LOI. Refer to section 10 BUDGET for eligible expenses and guidance on indirect costs for Full Proposals.

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

Funded research principal investigators will be provided additional support for a graduate research fellow at \$22K/year for two years (\$44K total).

5. **PARTICIPANTS AND CO-PRODUCERS:** Identify the specific technical or lay interests (e.g., agency, company, and/or organization) that will collaborate in the project. These should be only those entities that will substantially participate in the project and provide letters of collaboration documenting their role and potential match support for the Full Proposal.
6. **LOI NARRATIVE:** Summarize the proposed project in up to 1,000 words. The summary should provide a brief description of Full Proposal sections 7.2 through 7.5 and contain enough information for reviewers to assess the criteria used for evaluation described in section G below.

**NOTE: Sections 7-14 below are required for Full Proposals, only.**

7. **PROJECT NARRATIVE:** Using the appropriate eSeaGrant form, combine and upload sections 7.1 to 7.6 as a single PDF. The project narrative must not exceed 10 pages (single spaced, 11-point font) for the full proposal. Do not put substantive information in the margins. Reserve margins for page numbers.

**7.1 ABSTRACT:** In less than 250 words describe the overall project, including its rationale, proposed response, scientific merit, measurable outcomes, and the role of co-producing partners/end-users.

**7.2 INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE:** Using quantitative information where possible, describe the problem or opportunity at hand. This section should document the magnitude of the situation, the relevance of the issue or problem to Florida, how it will address an FSG nationally aligned programmatic goal focus area goal, and the project deliverables (i.e., benefits to society and the end-user). Reference pertinent literature.

**7.3 GOAL AND OBJECTIVES:** In one sentence, concisely state the overall goal of the proposed project. Follow the goal with the list of objectives to be addressed. Objectives should be realistic for a two-year project period that includes data collection, analysis, end-user application/outreach, and summary of benefits/outcomes.

**7.4 PROJECT DESIGN:** Describe the overall project design and the methods to be used. Describe the methodology related to data collection, analysis, end-user application and outreach, and measure of benefits. Consider providing a table or list of key project activities and milestones, and the responsible party for each.

**7.5 BENEFITS AND OUTCOMES** Identify and set a numeric target for relevant National Performance Metric and Measure, identified in Appendix 1 (pages 18-20) of the [Florida Sea Grant 2024-2027 Strategic Plan](#), that your project will contribute to. Present the method for quantifying the benefits of the project, according to those metrics identified.

**7.6 LITERATURE CITED:** Provide references using any standard journal citation format.

- 8. LETTERS OF COLLABORATION:** Combine and upload any letters of collaboration from co-producers and/or end users as a single PDF file. Letters should describe the nature of the collaboration, co-producer roles and responsibilities in project implementation, information and product use and/or evaluation. Generic letters of support should not be included.
- 9. INVESTIGATOR BIOGRAPHICAL DATA:** A one-page biographical data form must be downloaded from the eSeaGrant site and completed for each investigator (PI, co-PIs, and associate investigators, excluding collaborators). The form includes professional positions from current to past, education from most recent to past, and other information considered relevant to defining a level of expertise and academic success that is aligned with the project being proposed.
- 10. BUDGET (90-4 forms):** These forms must be completed in the eSeaGrant application submittal portal. Each budget item must include a justification for EACH expenditure category. The justification should be entered in a text box associated with the budget item on the form. Eligible budget items for this federally funded opportunity include but are not limited to salary and fringe; graduate stipend, tuition, fees, and health insurance; travel; data sharing expenses; page charges for publications; workshop expenses (including participant support); materials and supplies; and indirect costs (IDC) using the applicable rate of the submitting institution.
- 11. LETTER OF INSTITUTIONAL APPROVAL/COMMITMENT:** UF requires sub-awardees to upload a letter of commitment signed by an Authorized Fiscal Authority (e.g., representative from the office of research or sponsored programs). There is no template for this letter. UF-based researchers will satisfy this requirement when submitting through UF's UFIRST system.
- 12. DATA SHARING POLICY ATTESTATION:** Once a project is complete, all environmental data collected or created with funding from NOAA must be made visible, accessible, independently understandable to general users, free of charge (or at minimal cost), and in a timely manner. This includes physical, chemical and biological data from all experiments or surveys, including for model calibration and verification. The data portal must also have documented longevity, and there must be both project data and metadata for prospective users. Information about the NOAA data sharing plan requirement can be found at:  
<https://seagrant.noaa.gov/insideseagrant/Implementation>

The PI must attest to knowing and understanding the policy and being willing to, upon notification of award, provide a statement explaining how environmental data will be developed, described and archived for public access.

Note: If funds for data sharing will be required, this may be included in the budget and the budget justification should identify and explain this expense.

**13. ENVIRONMENTAL COMPLIANCE ATTESTATION:** If funded, an Environmental Compliance Questionnaire (NEPA) must be answered to ensure that the project complies with established federal policies. The NEPA compliance form can be found at the following link:  
<https://seagrant.noaa.gov/insideseagrant/Implementation>

The PI must attest to knowing and understanding the policy and being willing to, upon notification of funding award, provide the NEPA and copies of any required permits, such as institutional IRB/IACUC authorizations. Funding will not be released, and work cannot begin on associated components of the project until these conditions are met. To meet two-year implementation requirements, projects that extend current research and build upon existing environmental permitting and research approvals are encouraged.

**14. ETHICAL CONDUCT ATTESTATION:** The PI must attest to acknowledgement of and adherence to applicable institutional codes of conduct. Prompt notification to FSG (i.e., within 10 days of the determination of a finding) must be made should a team member be the subject of or perpetrate an ethical violation, which can take the form of harassment, assault, sexual misconduct or discriminatory behavior. Ethical violations on the part of project investigators can result in the termination of the award.

## **G. REVIEW PROCESS, EVALUATION AND PROJECT SELECTION**

Formal reviews of LOI and Full Proposals will be sought. All reviewers will be provided with access to resources to promote fair and unbiased assessments [Bias Awareness Training - NOAA Sea Grant](#) of the LOI, proposed projects and the research teams. Reviewers will also attest to being free of any conflict of interest with respect to the applications they evaluate and discuss.

At the LOI stage, a relevancy review will be conducted by program staff, extension faculty, and advisors. Reviewers will evaluate and rate LOIs based on the criteria outlined below. LOI investigative teams will either be discouraged or encouraged to develop full proposals. Relevancy reviews will not preclude teams that submitted an LOI from submitting a full proposal, but final project assessment and selection by the Florida Sea Grant Director will consider input from all review stages.

**NEW FOR THIS COMPETITION:** For Full Proposal review, FSG is adopting the methodology of the National Academy of Sciences by requiring that Principal Investigators of Full Proposals thoughtfully peer review up to three Full Proposals from other submitting teams, to have their proposal considered by a Technical Review Panel and the Florida Sea Grant Director for funding.

Evaluation criteria:

1. Priority Needs (25%): From the Introduction and Rationale, does the proposed project address a Florida Sea Grant goal and a pressing issue affecting Florida? The degree to which the proposed project yields (a) broad, (b) transformative and (c) long-lasting impact that supports a safe, resilient and sustainable future.
2. Science and Innovation (25%): From the Goals, Objectives, and Project Design, does the proposed project reflect innovative science? Does it build off of and will it contribute to peer-reviewed literature? Are the methods sound and appropriate?

3. Co-Production (25%): From the Benefits Evaluation, does the project meaningfully engage co-producers (e.g., people, communities, and/or business sectors) as beneficiaries of the proposed science and its application? The strength of the working relationship amongst the investigative team and co-producers. Are the proposed benefits captured in the measures and metrics to be used for evaluation?
4. Feasibility (25%): From the CVs and budget detail. Does the research and budget plan have a high probability of succeeding within the two-year time frame of the award? Is the investigative team qualified (e.g., with the appropriate formal training and academic record appropriate for career stage)? Does the PI have experience in successfully mentoring graduate students and completing research projects?

A Technical Review Panel (TRP) will discuss, categorize, and rank Full Proposals as Fundable, Fund if Possible, or Do Not Fund relying on their additional review, which will include a synthesis of peer reviews.

The Florida Sea Grant Director will have final discretion to recommend projects for funding based on the (a) relevancy reviews, (b) peer reviews, (c) TRP synthesis, (d) past performance; (e) availability of funding; and (f) balance of the award portfolio among program strategic goals and priorities. Applications recommended for funding will be included in a Letter of Intent to fund selected projects that will be submitted to the Federal Program Officer (FPO). PIs will be notified once the applications are approved for funding by the FPO. Funded research teams will then be invited to apply for additional graduate student support discussed in section D, above.

## **H. SUBMITTING THE LOI AND FULL PROPOSAL**

Proposals and supporting materials must be submitted through Florida Sea Grant's eSeaGrant system at <https://eflseagrant.ifas.ufl.edu>. New users to this system will need to first create an account and should do so early in the process to avoid potential problems and risk missing the deadline. If you have any questions about eSeaGrant or issues with your account, please contact Taylor Dluzniewski at [tdluzniewski@ufl.edu](mailto:tdluzniewski@ufl.edu).

### **To establish login credentials:**

1. Go to: <https://eflseagrant.ifas.ufl.edu>
2. Click create account or login.
3. After you create an account, you will receive a welcome email. If you do not receive a welcome email, please contact Taylor Dluzniewski at [tdluzniewski@ufl.edu](mailto:tdluzniewski@ufl.edu).
4. If you are a returning user login using the login button. If you have forgotten your username, contact [tdluzniewski@ufl.edu](mailto:tdluzniewski@ufl.edu).
5. If you have forgotten your password, use the forgot password feature OR login without password. If using login without password feature, please reset your password once you have regained access to your account. To change your password, click your name in the upper-right corner and select "My Profile." Then select change password and follow the prompts provided.

### **To start a LOI or proposal, or revisit/edit an existing LOI or proposal:**

1. Click on "Funding Opportunities" then "All Funding Opportunities" on the banner head and/or on the left side of the screen.
2. Search for and click "add" on the application labeled "FY2026-2027 Biennial Applied Science Competition". Save your proposal at each stage to ensure progress is not lost. DO NOT SUBMIT until all pre-proposal or full proposal components have been met in the eSeaGrant system.



To discourage multiple submissions of the same proposal only the PI has access to the proposal forms in the eSeaGrant system. However, within the system the PI can grant access to others using the “Manage Collaborators” button. Collaborators will need their own account and login; the PI can then invite a user to edit the proposal. For assistance in proposal access for multiple users please reach out to Taylor Dluzniewski [tdluzniewski@ufl.edu](mailto:tdluzniewski@ufl.edu).

**Submission:** You will have the opportunity to view the proposal before you submit. Carefully review all information and when satisfied, click on the SUBMIT button. Proposals are accessible for edit/review and resubmittal (as needed) up until the deadline.