Special Projects Competition
FY 2022 Aquaculture Information Exchange (AIE):
Host Program

SPECIAL PROJECTS "E" ANNOUNCEMENT

Competition:
FY 2022 Aquaculture Information Exchange (AIE): Host Program

Closing Dates and Deadlines:
June 21, 2022 at 11:59 PM Eastern Time

Eligible Sea Grant Programs:
This competition is available to Sea Grant programs. Programs must partner with one or more U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Regional Aquaculture Center (RAC) institutions. The five RACS are: the Center for Tropical and Subtropical Aquaculture (CTSA), North Central Regional Aquaculture Center (NCRAC), Northeastern Regional Aquaculture Center (NRAC), Southern Regional Aquaculture Center (SRAC), and the Western Regional Aquaculture Center (WRAC). All projects must take place within the United States or territories, or their respective waterways.

Award Time Frame:
The proposed start date should be no earlier than September 1, 2022 with projects to be completed on August 31, 2026. The successful applicant may also be eligible to receive future institutional funding, without further competition, to continue hosting the AIE after the initial four-year project period.

Funding Availability:
The National Sea Grant Office (NSGO) anticipates that up to $200,000/year will be available each year for four years **($800,000 total)** to fund one project through this competition. Matching funds will not be required for this competition.

Project Description (program priorities):
The goal of this funding opportunity is to establish a partnership of one or more Sea Grant Programs with one or more USDA Regional Aquaculture Centers to host the **Aquaculture Information Exchange (AIE)**. Establishing the AIE represents a joint effort of NOAA Sea Grant, NOAA Fisheries Office of Aquaculture, NOAA Office of Education, NOAA National Center for Coastal Ocean Science, USDA-ARS, and USDA-NIFA. The AIE is anticipated to be an online community and associated distributed team involving individuals from both the public and private sector with interests in U.S. aquaculture and related topics. The AIE should be both a communications platform, actively being moderated to facilitate discussions about the latest research and developments in aquaculture, and a space where experts from across the nation can connect with like-minded collaborators to work on specific deliverables.

Community involvement in the AIE will range from engagement in open topic-based discussions to participation in open or closed working groups focused on varied but specific outcomes and deliverables that may or may not be funded separately by agencies or other funders. The mission of the AIE is to create a long-term continually evolving online community built on trust, expertise, and common vision; and to facilitate the formation of distributed teams of experts to work on specific deliverables. The AIE should be a place where members feel empowered to ask, answer, and learn from one another, make connections to experts with specific skill sets, and create the science needed for responsible aquaculture development.

Development of the AIE is in response to a long-standing community need to facilitate knowledge sharing and collaboration and interagency discussions of aquaculture science needs. For example, findings from the NOAA aquaculture science program review (2016-2017) highlighted that the demand for scientific information currently exceeds the capacity to supply it. Despite interconnectivity, overlapping interests, and similar needs, expertise is concentrated by geography, scientific expertise, and species focus. The review exposed barriers to leveraging existing resources and illustrated a strong need for strategies to (1) facilitate knowledge sharing and collaboration, (2) establish credible, up-to-date information about key topical areas nationally, and (3) encourage dialogues across disciplines to meet common needs and goals. The AIE can serve a vital role in the community by establishing a platform for knowledge sharing, leveraging, and collaboration.

Multiple successful models exist for remotely-based, 'distributed teams' whereby participants with diverse expertise and related disciplines can each provide a unique and relevant skill set in order to contribute towards a common set of objectives, outputs, or outcomes (e.g., synthesis science review, public outreach, and messaging strategies). One recent and powerful example is the 'Ocean Acidification Information Exchange' (OA-IE), an online community developed for individuals involved with. or interested in, the topics of ocean and coastal acidification. OA-IE curates information through a web portal that enhances collaboration and dissemination of ocean acidification data and information across the spectrum of education, outreach, and research applications. An additional relevant and successful model includes the International Council for Exploration of the Seas (ICES), which uses a 'working group' approach to bring together international experts to work towards essential science information products that address real management needs and challenges.

Governance of the AIE may utilize best practices and approaches used by these two successful models and will be the responsibility of the Federal partners. This competition is focused on the program priorities listed below.

This investment is consistent with Sea Grant's focus area of Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture (SFA) and the Sea Grant Network 10-year Aquaculture Vision and in support of NOAA and Department of Commerce aquaculture goals.

Specifically, this competition seeks to establish a partnership of one or more Sea Grant Programs with one or more USDA Regional Aquaculture Centers to host the AIE with the following goals (**program priorities**):
1) Establish/Host the online AIE web portal using appropriate resources (ie., off-the-shelf software).
2) Identify a Community Moderator who will work with a Steering Committee to manage content and user interactions and develop community and workgroup processes/rules.
3) Maintain the AIE platform.

4) Work collaboratively with the National Sea Grant Office and other funding agencies/offices to ensure ongoing goals of the AIE are realized, including promotion and outreach associated with initiation of the AIE as well as ongoing activities. A small advisory committee should be established by the lead Sea Grant Program - whose members are drawn from the NSGO and other funding agencies/offices.

Standard limitations to the use of Sea Grant funds apply (e.g. funds cannot be used for construction or the purchase of boats, etc.). Note: equipment costing over $5,000 will require a lease vs purchase analysis.

Application Requirements:
Consult the NOFO **NOAA-OAR-SG-2022-2007012**, available at Grants.gov, for required elements of the application, how to submit, general programmatic priorities and selection factors, and other necessary information. Submit your application to **SPECIAL PROJECTS "E"** under this opportunity in Grants.gov.

Due to recent updates to 2 CFR 200, please be sure to download all new standard forms from Grants.gov when preparing your application package.

Discrepancies between this special project announcement and the NOFO may exist. Specific application details and instructions outlined in this special project announcement take precedence over guidelines in the NOFO.

Applications must include the following elements. Failure to adhere to these provisions may result in a delay in award processing or rejection of the application, based on the extent of the noncompliance.

1. **Project Narrative.** *The Project Narrative should include the following documents:*
   a. Project Description. The total number of pages in the application description should not exceed five (5). The narrative format should use a 12-pt font with 1" margins. Applicants need not fill the entire 5-page maximum for the application description. References, CVs, and letters of support do not contribute to the page limit.
      i. Cover page
         ● Sea Grant Program and affiliated USDA Regional Aquaculture Center, Project title(s) and names, titles, affiliations, and contact information (email and phone) of PI(s) and co-PI(s).
         ● Budget overview - Total cost and annual breakdown of requested funding by project.
      ii. Description of proposed activities and approach to realize project goals described above, including background and qualifications of proposed Community Moderator, and proposed resources to be utilized.
      iii. Anticipated outcomes and deliverables.
      iv. Project timeline
         ● Please provide a timeline for accomplishing project goals. Include approximate dates for key milestones related to the proposed work, including the accomplishment of anticipated outcomes and release of deliverables.
      v. Diversity statement (for overall application)
         ● 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. In this section, describe how the proposed activity broadens the participation of underrepresented groups (e.g., race/ethnicity, gender identities, sexual orientation, disability, geography, etc.) and how they benefit from its outcomes. Applicants are encouraged to review Sea Grant's vision and priority action plan for advancing Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice: https://seagrant.noaa.gov/Portals/1/Network%20Visioing/DEI_VisionActions_2_0_Sea%20Grant.pdf

vi. References (does not count towards page limit)

vii. CVs (two page limit per each CV) of principal and co-principal investigators (does not count towards page limit).
- CVs of other investigators and partners are optional.

viii. Letters of support (optional, does not count against page limit).

b. Abbreviated Environmental Compliance Questionnaire (OMB Control No. 0648-0538)

i. This announcement is not seeking proposals that will have an environmental impact. Therefore, an Abbreviated Environmental Compliance Questionnaire is not required as part of the proposal.

c. Data Management Plan

i. All projects included in the application **must** include a Data Management Plan that is compliant with NOAA's Public Access to Research Results Plan **or** if proposed activities will not generate any environmental data, 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." For reference, including a definition of environmental data go to: https://nosc.noaa.gov/EDMC/documents/Data_Sharing_Directive_v3.0.pdf

ii. 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.

2. **Budget Narrative.** *The Budget Narrative must include the following budget documents (Sea Grant 90-4 Forms and Budget Justification) in the following order and format. Additional budget narrative guidance can be found here.*

a. Sea Grant 90-4 Form (OMB Control No. 0648-0362)

Sea Grant 90-4 Forms are required to provide budget breakdowns and budget justifications by year and object class for the proposal. A completed Sea Grant 90-4 Form should be completed for each project and each project year, as well as a total budget for the entire project duration (i.e., Year 1, Year 2, Years 1-2). Guidance on filling out these forms is located in the Sea Grant General Application Guide.

b. Budget Justifications

For each year of each project, a Budget Justification is required. Each Budget

Justification should explain the budget items in sufficient detail to enable review of the appropriateness of the funding requested. Each Budget Justification should be attached as a PDF to each Sea Grant 90-4 Form, as appropriate. Guidance on completing the Budget Justification is located in the [Sea Grant General Application Guide](#).

3. **Required Forms.** *In addition to the budget forms required above, standard Federal Forms and Assurances are required for the overall application and can be found with the application package on Grants.gov or on the Sea Grant website (links found below). These include:*

   a. SF-424 Form ([Grants.gov](#), OMB Control No. 4040-0004)

      This form, titled "Application for Federal Assistance," <u>must</u> identify the entire funding period, as well as the federal funding amount being requested by the applicant and the non-federal matching fund amount. The form must be completed with the institution's accurate EIN and DUNS and Point of Contact, and signed by the institution's authorized representative or designee.

   b. SF-424A Form ([Grants.gov](#), OMB Control No. 4040-0006)

      This form, titled "Budget Information - Non-Construction Programs," should describe the entire funding period in federal and non-federal dollars, for the entire application. Fill out Section B of this SF-424A form to show the overall budget breakdown by object class by year. Each federal and match year should have its own column. If there is insufficient space, an additional SF-424A Form, Extra Section B should be used (see below).

   c. Additional SF-424A Form, Extra Section B (https://seagrant.noaa.gov/insideseagrant/Implementation, OMB Control No. 4060-0006)

      The SF-424A Form described above only includes space to report the applicant's yearly federal and non-federal dollars over two years. If the application covers more than two years of federal and non-federal dollars, then please complete the Additional SF-424A, Extra Section B to report the yearly non-federal matching fund budget of the grant. Guidance on filling out the form is located in the Sea Grant [How to Use Form "424A Extra Section B" Document](#).
      This form is an outlier and will be added to the "Budget Narrative Attachment" section on Grants.gov, as described in Section IV. C. 2 of the NOFO.

   d. SF-424B Assurances ([Grants.gov](#), OMB Control No. 4040-0007)

      The form, titled "Assurances – Non-Construction Programs," should be completed and signed by the institution's authorized representative or designee.

   e. CD-511 ([Grants.gov](#), US Department of Commerce)

      The form, titled "Certification Regarding Lobbying," should be completed and signed by the institution's authorized representative or designee. In some instances, the SF-LLL Disclosure of Lobbying Activities form may also be required. See the instructions on the CD-511 for further information.

   f. SF-LLL ([Grants.gov](#), OMB Control No. 0348-0046) if applicable

      The form, titled "Disclosure of Lobbying Activities," should be completed and signed by the institution's authorized representative or designee, if appropriate.

Application Evaluation Criteria:

The following criteria will be used to evaluate proposals. Note that the weights of each criteria are different from the Evaluation Criteria laid out in the Special Projects Funding Opportunity

announcement. Proposals submitted to this competition will be evaluated by at least three independent written reviews based on:

1. Importance/relevance and applicability of the proposed work relative to program priorities (25%)
   This criterion ascertains whether the proposed work is relevant to the program priorities described above.
2. Technical merit (25%)
   This criterion assesses whether the approach is technically sound and/or innovative, if the approach is appropriate, and whether there are appropriate resources proposed.
3. Overall qualifications/expertise of applicants (25%)
   This criterion evaluates whether applicants possess the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project.
4. Project costs (10%)
   This criterion analyzes the budget to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time frame.
5. Outreach and Education (15%)
   This criterion reviews whether the project provides a focused and effective education and outreach strategy regarding NOAA's mission to protect the Nation's natural resources, Sea Grant's strategic focus areas, and the goals of the individual competition announcement to the aquaculture community. For this competition, this includes promotion and outreach activities associated with the AIE.

Please note that selected projects will be recommended for funding only if they have a complete application package and if funds are available.

Other Information:

Reporting:
This will be a stand-alone (i.e., non-omnibus) award for which annual progress reporting in the form of the Research Performance Progress Report will be required.

Once applications have been selected for funding, applicants must submit a Sea Grant 90-2 Project Summary Form (for each project within the application) through the 90-2 Webform portal. This is due within 30 calendar days after the applicant has been notified via email that their application has been awarded. A detailed step-by-step guide for completing the web-based 90-2 Form is available on Inside Sea Grant. Once the project is approved and funded, that information will be publicly available and searchable on the National Sea Grant College Program public website.

Recipients are required to use the National Sea Grant Planning Implementation and Evaluation Reporting (PIER) project database to communicate with the National Sea Grant Office on activities relating to this award. This includes tracking progress and impacts, in addition to performance metrics.

All public-facing products produced with funding from the award(s)/project(s) must ensure

compliance with Section 508 of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Agency Contacts:
Questions about this opportunity should be directed to NSGO Aquaculture Managers Chuck Weirich or Mark Rath at oar.hq.sg.aquaculture@noaa.gov. Please specify that your question is related to the *FY 2022 Aquaculture Information Exchange: Host Program* in the subject line.

Fillable versions of required Sea Grant forms can be found here:
https://seagrant.noaa.gov/insideseagrant/Implementation

Guidance for completing these forms is located in the Sea Grant General Application Guidance Document: https://seagrant.noaa.gov/Portals/1/Guidance/SeaGrantGeneralApplicationGuide.pdf