

Request for Research Proposals 2026-2028

The Texas Sea Grant College Program supports integrated research and extension projects that improve the understanding, wise use and stewardship of Texas' coastal and marine resources, from inland areas connected to watersheds, to the deep blue waters of the Gulf of Mexico. The overarching goals of Texas Sea Grant's research program are to support **community-engaged and outcome-oriented research** that spans broad areas of natural, physical, social, behavioral and economic sciences and engineering, and to make research investments that will generate substantial long-term impacts in Texas, and actively engages identified end-users. Outcome-oriented research is defined as research that provides quantifiable evidence for short-term (learning: awareness, knowledge, skills, motivations), medium-term (action: behavior, practice, decisions, policies), and/or long-term (consequences: social, economic, environmental) impacts in Texas, with community engagement.

Texas Sea Grant undergoes a rigorous annual evaluation by the National Sea Grant Office (NSGO) to ensure the greatest benefit from its federal and state investments and to assess the program's progress toward its strategic plan. This annual review includes Texas Sea Grant-funded research outcomes and their contribution toward the program's strategic plan. Therefore, the most competitive research proposals will respond to one or more of the research priorities established for this RFP (see p. 2) and achieve one or more of the goals identified in the Texas Sea Grant Strategic Plan 2024-2027. The Plan can be downloaded here: [Texas Sea Grant Strategic Plan 2024-2027](#).

Approximately \$943,290 per year, for two-year projects, will be available to support 5 proposals, contingent on availability of funds from NOAA. Proposal budgets should be no greater than \$188,650 in combined direct and indirect costs per year. 50% non-federal cost-sharing per year is required.

Timeline:

LOI Webinar: February 7, 2025

- 9:00 AM CST – 10:50 AM CST: LOI Overview and Process;
- 11:00 AM CST – 11:30 AM CST: Introduction to TXSG-Extension Staff

LOI Due Date: March 3, 2025, 5:00 PM CST

LOI Notification Date: March 10, 2025

Full Proposal Workshop Dates: March 11 and 12, 2025

- Full Proposal Submission Process: March 11, 2025, 10:00 AM CST – 12:00 PM CST;
- TXSG Extension Staff Focus Area Meetings with PIs:
 - March 12, 2025, 9:00 AM CST – 11:00 AM CST: Sustainable Fisheries & Aquaculture **SFA**;
 - March 12, 2025, 1:00 PM CST – 3:00 PM CST: Resilient Communities & Economies **RCE**;
 - March 12, 2025, 3:00 PM CST – 5:00 PM CST: Healthy Coastal Ecosystems **HCE**.
- TXSG Extension Team Office Hours through Monday, April 7, 2025:
 - Mondays 3:30 – 5:00 PM CST: February 10 – 24, March 10 – April 7.

Full Proposal Due Date: May 5, 2025, 5:00 PM CST

Notice of Intent to Fund: August 22, 2025

Award Start Date: February 1, 2026

Award End Date: January 31, 2028

Research Priorities

Texas Sea Grant is seeking proposals that address the following research priorities:

Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture:

- Oyster mariculture: nursery and/or hatchery production, or business and/or market analysis, or cultured oyster growth and mortality
- Novel species in Texas Aquaculture: macroalgae or shellfish
- Effects of changes in climate, habitat and/or water quality on the following high priority species: blue crab, southern flounder, and/or spotted sea trout
- Seafood: market and/or supply chain analysis

Healthy Coastal Ecosystems

- Oyster reefs: restoration methods and/or substrate materials
- Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary (FGBNMS): Coral reef climate resilience and intervention strategies: intervention techniques to limit/slow climate change impact, coral resistance/resilience, and supporting coral persistence in a changing environment
- Contaminants of Emerging Concern: PFAS (Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances) in Texas marine environments and organisms

Resilient Communities and Economies

- Coastal Inundation: compound flooding risks, or socio-cultural and economic impacts, or disaster risk perceptions, or early warning systems

Eligible Applicants

- Universities and colleges: Texas universities and two- and four-year colleges (including community colleges) acting on behalf of their faculty members.
- Nonprofit, non-academic institutions: Independent museums, observatories, research laboratories, professional societies and similar organizations in Texas that are directly associated with educational or research activities.
- For-profit organizations: Commercial firms, especially small businesses with strong capabilities in scientific or engineering research or education. Texas Sea Grant is interested in supporting collaborative projects between universities and the private sector.
- State, local and Indian tribal governments.
- Unaffiliated persons: Individuals who have no affiliations with organizations that could act as grantee organizations may receive support for meritorious research if they have the capability and use of facilities needed to perform the work and agree to fiscal arrangements satisfactory to Texas Sea Grant and Texas A&M University.

Investigators may submit no more than two LOIs as PI and/or co-PI. Successful investigators will receive a maximum of one grant, as Lead PI.

The Texas Sea Grant College Program is committed to building inclusive research, extension, communication and education programs that serve people with unique backgrounds, circumstances, needs, perspectives and ways of thinking. We encourage applicants of all ages, races, ethnicities, national origins, gender identities, sexual orientations, disabilities, cultures, religions, citizenship types, marital statuses, education levels, job classifications, veteran status types, and income, and socioeconomic status types to apply for this competitive research opportunity. Texas Sea Grant encourages applicants to clearly identify how their research will have broader societal impacts on the named coastal community-engaged stakeholder(s) and end-user(s).

Competition and Merit Review Process

This competition will include a Letter of Intent (LOI) and a Full Proposal. The first phase will not include a pre-proposal, instead, a brief abstract in the form of a **Letter of Intent (LOI)**. The LOI purpose is to confirm content alignment of the PI's selected Funding Priority with the TXSG RFP Funding Priorities, to coordinate the PI's engagement planning with our TXSG Extension team, and for peer reviewer recruitment for full proposal evaluation. The LOI will not be sent out for review. LOIs must be submitted using the InfoReady Online Proposal System in order to be eligible to submit a full proposal. All PIs who submitted a LOI are eligible to submit a full proposal, regardless of whether encouraged. Notifications to the PIs will be sent by March 10, 2025, as encouraged/not encouraged to submit a full proposal. All PIs intending to submit a full proposal are encouraged to **strongly justify how the project aligns with the selected RFP Funding Priority and must contain the Engagement Plan**, outlining the planning and execution of integrating research results with broader impacts, with the named community-engaged stakeholder(s) and end-user(s). Past experiences reveal LOIs that are not encouraged, are unlikely to be successful at the full proposal stage.

Full proposals are reviewed and scored by out-of-state peer reviewers and reviewed and ranked by a technical review panel, without conflict of interest. All reviews are guided by objective criteria. These scores and ranks substantially inform Texas Sea Grant's decision to "fund/not fund" full proposals.

All PIs who intend to submit a LOI should attend the **LOI Webinar, Friday, February 7, 2025, 9:00 – 11:30 AM CST**, consisting of the LOI overview and submission process. TXSG Extension team introductions will occur at the end of the webinar, for establishing partnerships to assist with the facilitation of the development of the required **Engagement Plan**, to be executed by the PI research team. Please invite Co-PIs and Business Administrators. No registration is necessary; a Zoom link will be sent to our SG-RFP ListServ and will be posted on our webpage as we near the LOI Webinar date.

All PIs who intend to submit a full proposal should attend the **Full Proposal Workshop**, March 11-12; please invite Co-PIs and Business Administrators. No registration is necessary; a Zoom link will be sent to our SG-RFP ListServ and will be posted on our webpage as we near the Full Proposal Workshop dates. PIs should ensure that they have previously connected with a TXSG Extension team member at one of the Extension Focus Area meetings on March 12th, to establish a partnership for assisting with your planning stages for developing your required **Engagement Plan**, to outline the planning and execution by the PI research team, in collaboration with the TXSG Extension team member, of integrating research results with broader impacts with the named community-engaged stakeholder(s) and end-user(s). In order to be prioritized in a timely manner, reach back out to the TXSG Extension team member, to confirm the partnership, input and potential budget items, as you develop your **Engagement Plan** during the full proposal development period, by utilizing the TXSG Extension Team Office Hours through Monday, April 7, 2025. TXSG Extension Team Office Hours: Mondays 3:30 – 5:00 CST PM: February 10 – 24, March 10 – April 7.

RFP Contacts

For questions about proposal development, submission and review or the InfoReady system, please contact Texas Sea Grant's Research Coordinator, Mia Zwolinski, at mzwolinski@tamu.edu or 979-458-0449. For questions about funding priorities, please contact Texas Sea Grant's Interim Director, Laura Picariello, at lpicariello@tamu.edu or 979-218-3023.

Letter of Intent (LOI) Instructions

A Letter of Intent (LOI) must be submitted using the InfoReady Online Proposal System in order to be eligible to submit a full proposal. A Letter of Intent (LOI) submitted in response to this solicitation must be prepared and submitted in accordance with the instructions provided below, including formatting, element inclusion and content and InfoReady Online Proposal System submission.

It is the investigator's responsibility to ensure that the Letter of Intent (LOI) is compliant with all applicable guidelines. If the Letter of Intent (LOI) does not adhere to the instructions, it will not be eligible for review by the TXSG Director for alignment with funding and programmatic priorities.

Format Requirements:

Text must be single-spaced, 12-point minimum font, with 1-inch margins. Content must be written in third person, informative to those working in the same or related disciplines, and understandable to a scientifically literate audience. The LOI Narrative is limited to 1 page. Strict adherence to page limitation is required. Save as a PDF with filename: "LOI_PI Lastname".

Letter of Intent (LOI) Required Elements:

1. Project Title (descriptive of research objective)
2. PI and Co-PI Names and Institutional Affiliation(s)
3. Primary Focus Area and Goal from the Texas Sea Grant Strategic Plan 2024-2027
4. Research Priority Selection
5. List Texas Sea Grant Extension staff partner(s) for the Engagement Plan
6. List other engagement partner(s), if applicable
7. List -End User(s) who will benefit from the Engagement Plan outcomes
8. LOI Narrative project description including Objectives, Rationale, Methodology and Engagement Plan (1 page limit)
9. List of Suggested Reviewers (Optional; 1 page limit)

Element Content:

Project Description: Describe the proposed research with just 4 sections, including **Objectives**, **Rationale**, **Methodology**, and the **Engagement Plan**. Clearly identify how the proposed research will address the selected focus area and goal and research priority. This is considered the Intellectual Merit Statement.

End-User(s): Describe who needs the results of the proposed research, how the results will be used and by whom, which stakeholders or communities will be directly engaged in the project, and what are the likely outcomes and broader societal impacts of the use of the research results. This is considered the Broader Impact Statement, put forth in the **Engagement Plan**.

List of Suggested Reviewers (Optional; 1 page limit): Applicants may include a list of suggested **out-of-state** reviewers who they believe are well qualified to review the proposal, but **without conflict of interest**. Applicants may also list persons they would prefer not to review the proposal.

InfoReady Online Proposal System Instructions

The InfoReady Online Proposal System is the gateway to the competitions managed by the Texas Sea Grant College Program within Texas A&M University's Division of Research. The homepage may be accessed at <https://tamu.infoready4.com/#texasseagrant>.

NOTE: The InfoReady system works best with Firefox and Chrome browsers.

1. Download and read the InfoReady Applicant Guide located on our website at: <https://texasseagrant.org/funding/research-funding/requests-for-proposals/>
2. Applicants may apply by accessing this **Letter of Intent (LOI) competition link**: <https://tamu.infoready4.com/#competitionDetail/1958963> and click on **Apply**. Next, you will then be prompted to login with your NetID credentials if you are internal to Texas A&M University (TAMU). If you are an applicant external to TAMU, at the bottom left of your screen, click on **Register** button, which will allow you to register as a PI applicant. If you have submitted to a prior TXSG Research Competition, you may already be registered in the InfoReady system; do not set up a new account, simply log in with your prior credentials.
3. The Request for Proposals (RFP) and other relevant guidelines and templates are available for download, review, completion and re-upload for submitting a **Letter of Intent (LOI)**.
4. The InfoReady system will walk you through the required fields for completion. **LOI Elements #1-7** are completed within InfoReady in specific form fields, and will be output as a nice, system-generated Cover Page.
5. Save your LOI Narrative with just the 4 sections of **Objectives, Rationale, Methodology**, and the **Engagement Plan**, as a PDF, with filename "LOI_Pi Lastname", upload and click on **Save as Draft**.
6. Download the optional List of Suggested Reviewers, complete, save as "Reviewers_Pi Lastname" and re-upload and click on **Save as Draft**.
7. You may make edits at any time before the deadline, and **Save as Draft** as often as needed.
8. **Prior to submission, preview you draft LOI document**, by clicking on the **PDF** icon, located at the top right of your screen, to download your **Letter of Intent (LOI)** draft preview document. The system-generated file will include the **LOI Elements #1-7**, as a system-generated Cover Page, followed by your LOI Narrative 1-page PDF.
9. **NOTE:** There is only one opportunity to submit the **Letter of Intent (LOI)**. When ready to submit, check the **Acknowledgment of Letter of Intent (LOI) Submission** check box, which activates the system **Submit** button, then click on **"Submit" before the system automatically closes at 5:00 PM CST on March 3, 2025**. Once the **Letter of Intent (LOI)** is submitted, the submission is considered final and no further edits can be made.

Letter of Intent (LOI) Administrative Review Process

Administrative Review

Texas Sea Grant's Research Coordinator will conduct an administrative review of all Letters of Intent (LOI) received, to ensure completeness and conformance with the instructions. If the Letter of Intent (LOI) does not adhere to the instructions, it will not be eligible for review by the TXSG Director for alignment with funding and programmatic priorities.

Priority Alignment Review

The Texas Sea Grant Director will conduct a final review of the Letter of Intent (LOI) and make a final determination to "encourage/not encourage", based on confirmation of content alignment of the PI's selected Funding Priority with the TXSG RFP Funding Priorities and programmatic priorities. There will be no rebuttal or response process. All investigators who successfully submitted a Letter of Intent (LOI) to this RFP are eligible to submit a full proposal, regardless of whether they have been encouraged. Lead PIs will receive notifications by March 10, 2025, of "encouraged/not encouraged" and the Full Proposal InfoReady system link. A Full Proposal Workshop will follow on March 11 and 12, 2025, as noted above on page 1 under **Timeline** and on page 3 under **Competition and Merit Review Process**. Full proposals are due in InfoReady on May 5, 2025.

Full Proposal Instructions

All investigators who successfully submitted a Letter of Intent (LOI) to this RFP are eligible to submit a full proposal, regardless of whether they have been encouraged. The scope of work proposed in the full proposal should not deviate substantially from the Letter of Intent (LOI). If a LOI was not submitted, a full proposal submission will not be considered. Full proposals must be submitted using the InfoReady Online Proposal System utilizing the Full Proposal Element Content guidelines described below, which will be reviewed at the Full Proposal Workshop.

It is the investigator's responsibility to ensure that the full proposal is compliant with all applicable guidelines. If the full proposal does not adhere to the instructions, it will not move forward to ad hoc review or technical panel review.

Format Requirements: Text must be single-spaced, 12-point minimum font, with 1-inch margins. Content must be written in third person, informative to those working in the same or related disciplines, and understandable to a scientifically literate audience. Strict adherence to page limitations, including figures, tables and images, is required. **All documents uploaded to InfoReady must be PDF. Do not use headers/footers**, as the InfoReady Proposal System generates page numbers. **There will only be 2 PDF documents for upload** for the full proposal in InfoReady, the **Project Narrative** and **Budget Narrative**. **NOTE:** When combining documents into 1 PDF, do not use the Portfolio or bundling function. Electronic signatures are unable to be retained in a PDF when combining documents into 1 PDF. Best practice: apply electronic signature in the PDF, then "flatten" the document, by printing the PDF to a PDF, before compiling all documents into 1 final PDF. **Utilize your Sponsored Programs Office Proposal Administrator to assist and finalize all document compilations** into the 2 required PDFs.

Full proposal 2 PDF upload guidelines:

- **Project Narrative:** combine documents for all Proposal Elements #8 through 12, in numerical order, as 1 PDF, save file as “**Narrative_PI Lastname**” and upload in InfoReady;
- **Budget Narrative:** combine all budget information for Proposal Element #13, as 1 PDF, with first, the Lead PI Institution 90-4 Budget and Budget Narrative, followed by any sub-recipient(s) 90-4 Budget(s) and Budget Narrative(s), if applicable, save file as “**BudgetNarrative_PI Lastname**” and upload in InfoReady. See further budget compiling guidance under Element Content for Budget Narrative.

Proposal Elements Required:

1. Proposal Title (descriptive of research objective)
2. PI and Co-PI Names and Institutional Affiliation(s)
3. Primary Focus Area and Goal from the Texas Sea Grant Strategic Plan 2024-2027
4. Research Priority Selection
5. List Texas Sea Grant Extension staff partner(s) for the Engagement Plan
6. List other partner(s), if applicable
7. List-End user(s) who will be engaged with and/or benefit from the Engagement Plan outcomes
8. Project Summary including Objectives, Rationale, Methodology and the Engagement Plan
9. Narrative/Project Description
10. CVs: including PI, Co-PI and Other Key Personnel
11. Literature Cited
12. Letters: including Institutional Letter of Commitment and Cost Share, Support by Collaborator(s), Engagement Partner(s) and End-User(s)
13. Budget Narrative including Sea Grant 90-4 Budget and Budget Justification
14. OMB-approved Demographics Question

Element Content:

Project Summary (1 page limit): The Project Summary consists of 4 sections, **Objectives**, **Rationale**, **Methodology**, and the **Engagement Plan**, to include an overview of the proposed research, the specific aims / objectives, rationale, a statement on the Intellectual Merit of the proposed research, and a statement on the Broader Impacts of the proposed project that includes extension, education, and outreach components. Include a relevance statement to identify the applicable Texas Sea Grant Focus Area(s), goal(s) and research priority selected. The statement on Intellectual Merit should describe the potential of the proposed activity to advance knowledge. The statement on Broader Impacts should describe community and stakeholder engagement activities, how knowledge will be transferred to end-user(s) and stakeholders(s), put forth in the **Engagement Plan**.

Narrative/Project Description (10 page limit): The Narrative/Project Description should provide a clear statement of work that will be undertaken and must include: research need, objectives for the period of the proposed research, expected significance of the research, the proposed research project’s relevance in aligning with one or more of Texas Sea Grant’s strategic plan goals, how it will address one or more of the research priorities, its relation to the present state

of knowledge in the field, and identification of community-engagement activities and end-user(s). The Narrative should outline the general plan of work, including the broad design of research, extension, education, and/or outreach activities to be undertaken and clear methodology and procedures. It must also identify who needs the results of the proposed research, how the results will be used and by whom, and what are the likely outcomes and societal impacts of the use of the research results. The most competitive proposals will have a well-developed plan for extension, education and outreach, put forth in the **Engagement Plan**. This plan needs to be specific and thoroughly describe the proposed extension, education and outreach and identify the societal impacts on the named coastal community stakeholder(s) and end-user(s). The plan should list partner(s) who have agreed to collaborate to integrate the research with outreach, extension and education, specifically, Texas Sea Grant Extension staff, and other partner(s), if applicable. Additionally, provide a **timeline for accomplishing the proposed work** covering the entire project duration. Include approximate dates for key milestones related to the proposed work, **including the accomplishment of anticipated outcomes and release of results**. If subawards are to be included in the applicant's proposed project, the **subrecipient's Statement of Work must be described in the Lead Institution's Narrative/Project Description**.

CV (2 page limit per investigator): A CV is required for each investigator as PI, Co-PI and Key Personnel, compiled in that order. The CV should include the individual's expertise as it relates to the proposed research, extension, education and/or outreach, professional preparation and professional appointments. Include no more than 5 relevant publications and 5 synergistic activities.

Literature Cited (No page limit) Literature citations are required and can follow the format and style of any journal of your choice.

Letters all, including Institutional Letter of Commitment and Cost Share, Support by Collaborator(s) and End-User(s): Include all letters, starting with the Institutional Letter of Commitment and Cost Share, followed by Letters of Support from Collaborator(s) and End-User(s).

- **Institutional Letter of Commitment – Applicant (No page limit):** A letter signed by an institutional representative who has the authority to commit institutional resources and cost share dedicated to the proposed project is required. The institutional letter of commitment for the applicant must be on the institution's standard letter of commitment letterhead stationery.
- **Institutional Letter of Commitment – Subrecipient (If applicable; No page limit):** A letter is required from the subrecipient's institution signed by an institutional representative who has the authority to commit resources and cost share dedicated to the proposed sub-award project. The subrecipient letter of commitment must be on the subrecipient institution's standard letter of commitment letterhead stationery.
- **Support Letters (No page limit):** Letters of support from **collaborator(s)** are required. Letters of support from Stakeholders and named **End-user(s)** of the research results are required. Letter(s) of commitment by **third-party cost share providers** are required. **NOTE: Do not use an image of a letter** – convert image to 8.5 x 11 portrait PDF; see additional guidance above under Format Requirements related to PDFs and signatures.

Budget Narrative (Includes Sea Grant 90-4 Budget Excel template and Budget Justification)

- Applicant must provide a requested Sea Grant budget and cost share commitment budget by year and by total project cumulative budget.
- **Sea Grant 90-4 Multi-year Budget template** is a required **data entry form**, will be accessible within the InfoReady Full Proposal application link and is available at our website at: <https://texasseagrant.org/research-funding/request-for-proposals/>. Convert the excel budget template to PDF by year and by total budget. Retain the completed excel version, (do not have to upload), as we will request it should you be recommended to be funded. The **90-4 Budget** is a **data entry form** required by our sponsor. This form has hidden macros and formulas; read the **Read Me tab** first. Input your budget data from your institution's approved budget form into the 90-4 and confirm generated totals tie back to your institution's approved budget form.
- **Maximum request per project is \$188,650/year** including direct and indirect costs, maximum total request for the two-year project is **\$377,300. Enter whole dollars only in the 90-4 Budget form; in your institution's approved budget form, set formula rounding to whole dollars with zero cents.** Confirm total per year and total project adds to exactly total dollars with zero cents; personnel effort or IDC rounding may affect totals; review those formulas in your institution's approved budget form, to ensure total per year and total project adds to exactly total dollars with zero cents.
- **Mandatory cost share of non-federal funds must be exactly 50.0%** of the requested funds, **for each year of the project** (not just in total). **Enter whole dollars only in the 90-4 Budget form; in your institution's approved budget form, set formula rounding to whole dollars with zero cents.** Cost share per year must equate to exactly **50.0%** of the whole dollar of federal funds request. Confirm total per year and total project of Sea Grant Federal Funds request calculates to exactly 50.0% resultant Cost Share total per year and total project total dollars with zero cents. Do not under-commit less than 50%. Do not over-commit by pledging resources more than the 50.0% requirement, which is Voluntary Cost Sharing; it is not necessary to over-commit and will not be considered.
 - Similar to all federal sponsors, cost share must be from a non-federal source. Cost share is a legally binding commitment proposed to the sponsor at the time of submission. As such, cost share is required to be easily tracked for reporting purposes to the sponsor; for every dollar spent of the sponsor's funds, 50% of like dollar is the committed cost share that is required to be reported to the sponsor.
 - **Examples of easily trackable cost share types** include personnel cost effort and tuition.
 - **Other sources:** may include institutionally approved Waived Indirect Costs. Third party cost share, while not encouraged due to being difficult to document, is acceptable only if proper valuation is provided by detailing in both the budget and budget justification: unit cost, number of units, valuation and source of funds, and **formal letter of cost share commitment** is required with authorizing signature on the 3rd party institutional letterhead stationery, referencing proposal title, principal investigator, period of performance dates, RFP opportunity name, statement of work/services, budget including daily/hourly rate x hours = total budget amount to be committed as cost share from the 3rd party source.

- **If the Lead Institution has a sub-recipient**, they should also budget for 50% cost share of their requested federal budget. Should a sub-recipient be unable to provide all of their cost share, the lead institution may take on more cost share burden, however, this **must be described in both the lead institution's and sub-recipient's budget narrative.**

Budget Justification – Applicant (No page limit): Justify the Sea Grant requested funds **by year and in total**, by cost category line item in detail, utilizing the Budget Justification template provided. Separately, justify the Cost Share commitment **by year and in total**, by cost category line item in detail. **Ensure a minimum cost share of 50.0% is met in each budget year.**

- **Utilize the NOAA Grants Management Division's Budget Narrative Guidance, [gmd_budget_narrative_guidance_-_05-24-2017_final.pdf](https://texasseagrant.org/research-funding/request-for-proposals/)**, accessible at the Full Proposal application link and is available at our website <https://texasseagrant.org/research-funding/request-for-proposals/>. Use the guidance as an example description by cost category.
- **Funding Restrictions - The Sea Grant Act at 33 USC 1124(d)(2) states:**
 "No payment under any grant or contract under this section may be applied to:
 (A) the purchase or rental of any land; or (B) the purchase, rental, construction, preservation, or repair of any building, dock, or vessel; except that payment under any such grant or contract may be applied to the short-term rental of buildings or facilities for meetings which are in direct support of any Sea Grant Program or project and may, if approved by the Secretary, be applied to the purchase, rental, construction, preservation, or repair of non-self-propelled habitats, buoys, platforms, and other similar devices or structures, or to the rental of any research vessel which is used in direct support of activities under any Sea Grant Program or project."
- **Budget Narrative Document Compilation:** The Sea Grant 90-4 Budget Excel template is converted to PDF and combined in one "Budget Narrative" file to display by each year, and in total in the following order as noted below. Save as "BudgetNarrative_PI Lastname".
 - 1) Budget PDF: Convert excel to PDF to display **Year 1** as 1st page;
 - 2) Budget PDF: Convert excel to PDF to display **Year 2** as 2nd page;
 - 3) Budget PDF: Convert excel to PDF to display **All Years** as 3rd page;
 - 4) Budget Justification by **Year 1 Sea Grant Request** and by **Year 1 Cost Share Request**;
 - 5) Budget Justification by **Year 2 Sea Grant Request** and by **Year 2 Cost Share Request**; and
 - 6) Budget Justification by **Total Sea Grant Budget Request** and by **Total Cost Share Request**.
- **Budget – Subrecipient Award (If applicable; Sea Grant 90-4 Budget Excel template required):**
 A separate requested funds budget and cost share commitment budget by year and a total project cumulative budget is required for subrecipients who will receive a portion of the lead applicant's budget. Follow budget guidelines as noted above. **The subrecipient's total project budget must be considered within the maximum budget allowance for the project as described above. Do not exceed the allowance per year or in total.**
- **Budget Justification – Subrecipient Award (If applicable; No page limit):** Provide the **Statement of Work as the first page of the Budget Justification**. Utilize the Budget Justification template provided. Justify the requested funds budget and cost share commitment budget as per guidelines above.
- **Budget Narrative Document Compilation – Subrecipient Award:** The collaborating institution should compile the 90-4 Budget and Budget Justification templates as described

above. 90-4 Budget is converted to PDF and combined in one "Budget Narrative" file to display in total and by each year, in the order as listed above, followed by the justification by year and in total. **This PDF document should be provided to Lead PI for inclusion with and after the Lead Institution's Budget and Budget Justification, for the full proposal's Budget Narrative PDF upload requirement.**

InfoReady Full Proposal Guidance

1. Start your full proposal at the full proposal InfoReady link previously provided in the LOI Notification email and log in to InfoReady. The InfoReady system will walk you through the required fields for completion.
2. Similar to the Letter of Intent (LOI) InfoReady Instructions #4, for the full proposal, Proposal Elements #1-7 are completed within InfoReady in specific form fields, and will be output as a nice, system-generated Cover Page, followed by the Narrative PDF uploads.
3. Upload your proposal Narrative PDF and click on **Save as Draft**.
4. Upload your proposal Budget Narrative PDF and click on **Save as Draft**.
5. **Prior to submission, preview your draft full proposal document**, by clicking on the **PDF** icon, located at the top right of your screen, to download your full proposal draft preview document. The system-generated file will include the **LOI Elements #1-7**, as a system-generated Cover Page, followed by your proposal Narrative and Budget Narrative PDFs.
6. **NOTE:** There is only one opportunity to submit the full proposal. When ready to submit, check the **Acknowledgment of Proposal Submission** check box, which activates the system **Submit** button, then click on **"Submit" before the system automatically closes at 5:00 PM CST on May 5, 2025**. Once the proposal is submitted, the submission is considered final and no further edits can be made.

OMB-approved Demographics Question: This is a federal form that has questions that the Sea Grant Program is required to ask, however, the response by the PI is voluntary. The data collected are anonymous, will not be shared, and is excluded from the proposal application, therefore, will not be a part of the proposal review process. Please respond as PI, by accessing the form, clicking on the link and providing a confidential data response, if willing and able.

Full Proposal Review Process

Merit Review Criteria

Texas Sea Grant modeled the core values of its merit review process after the National Science Foundation's (NSF) gold standard of scientific review. Similar to the NSF, Texas Sea Grant merit review includes two criteria: Intellectual Merit and Broader Impacts. The Broader Impacts criterion is further divided into two sub-categories: Education and Outreach. **Each criterion will be considered during the review and decision-making process.** The Intellectual Merit criterion encompasses the potential of a project to advance knowledge and understanding within its

own field or across different fields. The Broader Impacts criterion includes the potential to prepare the next cadre of scientists by engaging undergraduate and graduate students in research, formal PK-12 education and/or informal education applications, the application of knowledge to action, and the potential to advance societal outcomes by community-engaged outreach and extension activities.

Administrative Review

Texas Sea Grant's Research Coordinator will conduct an administrative review of all full proposals to ensure completeness and conformance with the instructions. If the full proposal does not adhere to the instructions, it will not move forward to ad hoc review or technical panel review.

Ad Hoc Review Process

Each full proposal is required by the National Sea Grant Competition Policy to have three written reviews. Each proposal will be reviewed by at least two out-of-state scholars and/or extension specialists, without conflict of interest, with expertise relevant to the proposed research and outreach to evaluate the Intellectual Merit and Broader Impacts of the proposal. These Ad Hoc reviews will be provided to the Technical Review Panel.

Each proposal will receive an overall score for Intellectual Merit and for Broader Impacts, an average, based on the seven Review Criteria listed below, weighted by the Rating assigned by the reviewer. The review process will be conducted within the InfoReady Proposal Review System. The reviewers will assign a Rating of 1-5 to each of the 7 Review Criteria for each proposal reviewed. The Ratings range from 1, defined as "Poor" to 5, defined as "Excellent". The InfoReady Review System will automatically average the rating assigned by the reviewers to each of the 7 Review Criteria, resulting in one overall score for the proposal.

Rating is defined:

5 = Excellent – Outstanding proposal in all respects; probably will fall among top 10% of proposals; highest priority for support. This category should be used only for truly outstanding proposals.

4 = Very Good – High quality proposal in nearly all respects; probably will fall among top third of proposals; should be supported.

3 = Good – A quality proposal; probably will fall among middle third of proposals; worthy of support.

2 = Fair – Proposal is lacking one or more critical aspects; probably will fall among lowest third of proposals.

1 = Poor – Proposal has serious deficiencies; should not be supported.

Technical Review Process

Following the Ad Hoc Review, each proposal and each of the Ad Hoc reviews will be sent to a Technical Review Panel. Each proposal will receive an overall score for Intellectual Merit and for Broader Impacts, based on the Review Criteria listed below (by the method described above), a designation of "fundable/not fundable" and a written review, satisfying the three-written-review requirement. The Technical Review Panel will be comprised of out-of-state subject matter experts and/or extension specialists, without conflict of interest.

Review Criteria

1. **Rationale** - the degree to which the proposed activity addresses an important issue, problem, or opportunity in development, use, or management of coastal or marine resources.
2. **Scientific or Professional Merit** - the degree to which the activity will advance the state of the science or discipline through use and extension of state-of-the-art methods.
3. **Innovativeness** - the degree to which new approaches to solving problems and exploiting opportunities in resource management or development, or in public outreach on such issues will be employed; alternatively, the degree to which the activity will focus on new types of important or potentially important resources and issues.
4. **Qualifications and Past Record of Investigators** - the degree to which investigators are qualified by education, training, and/or experience to execute the proposed activity; record of achievement with previous funding.
5. **User Relationships** - the degree to which users or potential users of the results of the proposed activity have been brought into the planning of the activity, will be brought into the execution of the activity, or will be kept apprised of progress and results.
6. **Relationship to Texas Sea Grant Priorities** - the degree to which the proposed activity relates to focus area(s), goal(s) from the Texas Sea Grant Strategic Plan 2024-2027 and to research priorities identified in this RFP.
7. **Programmatic Justification** - the degree to which the proposed activity will contribute, as an essential or complementary unit to other projects, to reaching the objectives of the Texas Sea Grant Program, or the degree to which it addresses the needs of important state, regional, or national constituencies.

Final Selection Process

The Texas Sea Grant Director will conduct a final review of the proposals, reviewers' comments and scores, and make a final determination to "fund/not fund" proposals based on the reviews, programmatic priorities and prior performance on Texas Sea Grant-funded research projects. Reviewers' comments (blinded) will be made available to the lead PI. There will be no rebuttal or response process. Lead PIs will receive notifications by August 22, 2025, of recommendation to fund/not fund and blinded reviews. Those PIs recommended for funding will be required to complete additional forms as noted below.

Award Processing

A Texas Sea Grant award consists of an award agreement that includes standard research terms and condition of the award, an itemized budget on which Texas Sea Grant has based its support, and the proposal referenced in the award agreement. Funding is contingent upon Texas Sea Grant's allocation from NOAA. Modification in the number of and funding for individual proposals may be made based upon the final program budget. All proposals recommended for funding will undergo a review by Texas Sea Grant for business, financial and policy implications and the processing and issuance of a grant award by Texas A&M University Sponsored Research Services.

Proposals selected for funding will be required to submit additional documents, including the **90-4 Budget Excel template file** used for the full proposal submission (was not an upload requirement), a **Data Management Plan**, and the **Abbreviated Environmental Compliance Questionnaire (AECQ) with relevant permit documentation, Institutional-approved documentation including IRB for human subject research and/or IACUC animal use protocols.**

Additional guidance and templates will be provided to investigators who are being recommended for funding.

Data Management Plan

All NOAA-funded research projects, data and information collected and/or created under NOAA grants and cooperative agreements must be made visible, accessible, and independently understandable to general users, free of charge or at minimal cost, in a timely manner, except where limited by law, regulation, policy, or security requirements. A Data Management Plan will be required prior to award receipt. Additional guidance and template will be provided.

NEPA Requirement

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) is a United States environmental law that established a national policy promoting the enhancement of the environment. All NOAA-funded research projects must comply with NEPA. **The Abbreviated Environmental Compliance Questionnaire (AECQ) must be completed, with inclusion of a list of relevant permit(s) with date status/PDF copy enclosed, including those by partner institutions/subrecipients. *If a partner institution will be responsible for acquiring permits, this should be stated.* The responsibility for acquiring permits lies with the funded Lead PI; failure to secure permits in a timely manner will likely result in delayed receipt of funds with a special award condition placed on the pending award** which requires satisfying, prior to the start of the project or that part of the scope of work.

The **AECQ** template, step-by-step guidelines and example completed templates are accessible on our webpage at <https://texasseagrant.org/research-funding/request-for-proposals/>. **While the Abbreviated Environmental Compliance Questionnaire is not required at the full proposal submission stage, it is highly recommended that the PI draft this document ASAP after submitting the full proposal, for consideration of timely receipt of permit documentation**. It is the PI's responsibility, as being recommended for funding, to assess the environmental consequences of their research and be proactive in the event that an environmental assessment or formal Environmental Impact Statement, may be necessary prior to funding.

Institutional Approval Documentation for IRB and/or IACUC

IRB approval is required as part of the granting agreement between the Texas Sea Grant College Program's institution, Texas A&M University, and the National Sea Grant Office. Potential PIs who plan to conduct human subjects research must state whether the proposed research is subject to review by the Institutional Review Board (IRB). No work involving human subjects may be undertaken, conducted, or costs incurred and/or charged for human subjects research, until appropriate documentation is approved in writing by IRB. Additionally, Institutional approval documentation from IACUC for animal use protocols is required. Both types of documentation should be presented and described when submitting the additional required **AECQ** documents by the PI who has been recommended for funding.

Reporting Requirements

For all Texas Sea Grant-funded projects, the lead PI is required to submit an Annual Project Report and Final Project Report; see <https://texasseagrant.org/research-funding/award-reporting/> for specific requirements. These Sea Grant Metric and Performance reports collect information about project participants, students supported, research activity updates, highlights, outcomes, publications, tools and technology developed, management and decision-making processes influenced, education products and programs developed, and other metrics, accomplishments and impacts critical to Texas Sea Grant's own annual performance evaluation.