



# **Request For Proposals 2014 Special Competition for the Resilient Communities and Economies Focus Area**

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## **Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium**

**Funding Source:** The Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium (MASGC)

**Funding Opportunity Title:** FY 2015 Special Resilient Communities and Economies Research Funding

**Announcement Type:** Notice of request for proposals

**Release Date:** July 3, 2014

**Deadlines:** Proposals are due by 4 p.m. Central Time on Thursday, August 7, 2014. Submissions after the deadline will not be reviewed or considered for funding. Working title of proposals are due July 31, 2014.

**Funding Opportunity Description:** This notice advises the public that the MASGC is accepting one- or two-year proposals to participate in innovative research to address resilient communities and economies along the five counties adjacent to the Alabama and Mississippi coast. Federal funding requests cannot exceed \$65,000 per year. A non-federal match of 1 dollar for every 2 dollars of federal funding is required. Project initiation is scheduled for December 1, 2014. Project applicants must reside in Alabama or Mississippi and project implementation must occur in Alabama and/or Mississippi. Projects that seek funding to sustain long-term data sets are a low priority.

### **Full Announcement**

MASGC is a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) sponsored partnership with nine state institutions in Mississippi and Alabama engaged in research, communications, education, extension service and legal advisory activities to enhance the value and sustainability of the nation's ocean and coastal resources for the benefit of the public. MASGC requests proposals for research projects addressing its Resilient Communities and Economies (RCE) Focus Area. Required administrative forms for proposals are available at: <http://masgc.org/funding/RCErfp2014>.

### **Eligibility**

MASGC welcomes proposals from individuals, institutions of higher education, nonprofit organizations, businesses, and tribal, state and local governments located in Alabama or Mississippi. Federal partners may participate as uncompensated collaborators. No person shall be excluded on grounds of race, color, age, sex, national origin or disability from participation in,

denied benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving financial assistance from MASGC. However, failure to submit required progress reports, data management plans, extension, outreach and education plans and fiscal reports on or before deadlines under prior MASGC awards will result in an application being disqualified for this biennial funding cycle.

### **Research Priorities**

MASGC will fund projects that address research priorities that directly address the goals, outcomes and performance measure listed below, which are also part of MASGC's Resilient Communities and Economies Focus Area. Proposals must identify the specific research priority(ies), goal(s) and outcome(s) that will be address.

#### **Research Priorities**

1. Integrated assessments of the social, natural, and built environment leading to increased community resilience.
2. Multidisciplinary environmental, social, and economic research to identify internal and external mechanisms to prepare for, respond to, and recover from disasters and other environmental stressors.
3. Innovative approaches to raise community awareness of the interdependence among the health, economic, ecological, natural, and cultural systems, and approaches that involve communities in the process of strengthening and sustaining resilience.
4. Develop and validate new indicators of resilience for use in in the Coastal Community Resilience Index.

#### **Goal 1: Communities use comprehensive planning to make informed strategic decisions.**

##### **Outcome**

1. Communities make use of tools and information to explore the different patterns of coastal development, including community visioning exercises, resource inventories and coastal planning.

#### **Goal 2: Resilient coastal communities adapt to the impacts of hazards and climate change.**

##### **Outcomes**

1. Residents and decision-makers are aware of and understand the processes that produce hazards and climate change and the implications of those processes for them and their communities.
2. Decision-makers are aware of existing and available hazard- and climate-related data and resources and have access to information and skills to assess local risk vulnerability.
3. Communities have access to data and innovative and adaptive tools and techniques to minimize the potential negative impact from hazards.
4. Communities apply best available hazards and climate change information, tools and technologies in the planning process.
5. Decision-makers apply data, guidance, policies and regulations to hazard planning and recovery efforts.

6. Residents take action to reduce the impact of coastal hazards on their life and property.

### **Performance Measure**

1. Number of communities that implemented hazard resilience practices as a result of Sea Grant activities to prepare for, respond to or minimize coastal hazardous events.

### **Funding Levels**

MASGC anticipates approximately \$130,000 in total federal funding for this competition. The funding level for an individual project must not exceed \$65,000 per year in federal support, including all facilities and administrative costs (F&A). **A 50-percent match of the federal funds (i.e., 1 dollar of non-federal match for every 2 dollars of federal money) is required for this competition.** One-year projects and projects requesting lower annual amounts of funding are also eligible for funding.

### **Requirements Post Project Selection**

PIs of selected project(s) will be required to submit additional materials prior to project initiation. These include:

1. Applicant response to any significant review comments.
2. Letter of commitment from the institutions involved in the project. Letters of commitment will also be required for each sub-award recipient, co-sponsor and unfunded collaborator identified within the proposal. Letters of commitment from sub-award recipients must be signed by the appropriate institutional authority.
3. Consent Form - Intellectual Property.
4. Form CD-512 or CD-511 (Certification Regarding Lobbying).
5. Standard Form 424B (Assurances – Non-Construction Programs).
6. Additional materials may be requested as needed.

Two other required documents are described below and are: 1) extension, outreach and education (EOE) plan and 2) NOAA data sharing plan. More detail about EOE and NOAA data sharing plans and the post-project selection forms will be provided in the selection letter to successful applicants. Final funding will be contingent on acceptable submission of post-project selection materials.

### **Extension, Outreach and Education Plan**

Successful applicants must develop an extension, outreach and education plan (EOE plan) in collaboration with extension, outreach and education professionals during meetings convened after the initial project selection notification. The EOE plan will be reviewed by the MASGC Director and must be approved prior to funding.

### **NOAA Data Sharing Plan**

Environmental data and information collected and/or created under NOAA grants/cooperative agreements must be made visible, accessible, and independently understandable to general users, free of charge or at minimal cost, in a timely manner (typically no later than two years after the data are collected or created), except where limited by law, regulation, policy or security

requirements. PI's of selected project(s) will be required to submit an acceptable Data Sharing Plan prior to funding.

### **Timetable**

The following dates refer to the RFP process milestones:

Funding announcement released	July 3, 2014
Working title of proposals due	July 31, 2014
Proposals due	August 7, 2014
Notification of funding decisions	October 3, 2014
Development of EOE Plans and other materials	October 24, 2014
Project initiation	December 1, 2014

### **Proposal Submission**

Detailed proposal guidance and forms can be found at: <http://masgc.org/funding/RCErfp2014>. Electronic mail submissions are preferred and should be addressed to "Research Coordinator" ([rc@masgc.org](mailto:rc@masgc.org)). If an electronic mail submission is not possible, please contact Loretta Leist at the email address provided below for instructions for submitting a hard-copy. The electronic submission must contain separate files for each of the five sections described under "proposal development instructions" in this request.

### **Contacts for Additional Information**

For additional information, contact LaDon Swann ([swanndl@auburn.edu](mailto:swanndl@auburn.edu) or 251-648-5877), Stephen Sempier ([stephen.sempier@usm.edu](mailto:stephen.sempier@usm.edu)) or Loretta Leist ([loretta.leist@usm.edu](mailto:loretta.leist@usm.edu)) for proposal guidance or Devaney Cheramie ([devaney.cheramie@usm.edu](mailto:devaney.cheramie@usm.edu)) on fiscal matters.

## Proposal Development Instructions

### Required Proposal Elements

Each of the following sections and sub-sections are required proposal elements. Omission of any element from I-V will result in the proposal being disqualified.

- I. MASGC Project Summary Form 90-2 (MS Word)
- II. Completed and unsigned copy of the cumulative MASGC Title/Cover Form (MS Word)
- III. In a single file (Adobe PDF)
  - A. Signed MASGC Title/Cover form (signed by institutional authority)
  - B. Abstract
  - C. Project Narrative (maximum of 12 pages)
    1. Rationale
    2. Scientific and Professional Merit
      - a. Hypotheses
      - b. Objectives
      - c. Approach
      - d. Links to Other Projects
    3. Expected Benefits
      - a. Impacts
      - b. Application of Results
      - c. Performance Measures and Targets
    4. End-users, Partners and Co-Sponsors
  - D. Literature Cited (no page limit)
  - E. Curriculum Vitae (2 pages per investigator)
  - F. Current and Pending Support for Each Investigator (NSF, NIH or USDA formats are acceptable)
  - G. Letters of Support (no page limit)
  - H. Project Schedule
- IV. MASGC Budget Form 90-4 (MS Excel)
- V. MASGC Budget Justification (MS Excel)
- VI. (Optional) List of people that should not review the proposal (MS Word)

### Description of Each Proposal Element

#### I. MASGC Project Summary Form 90-2 (MS Word)

We suggest completing this form as the final step in writing the proposal to concisely summarize what is stated in the project narrative.

#### II. MASGC Title/Cover Form

Submit one cumulative, non-signed, original MS Word file of the MASGC Title/Cover Form with all the investigators listed and their contact information. In addition, an original, signed MASGC Title/Cover Form must be post-marked no later than August 7, 2014 and mailed to:

Research Coordinator  
Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium  
703 East Beach Drive  
Ocean Springs, MS 39564

### **III.B. Abstract (Maximum length, 300 words, single-spaced)**

The abstract describes the research and conveys all of the essential elements of the proposed work. The abstract must include a project title, summary of the hypotheses, objectives, approach, and expected benefits, including impacts and application of results.

### **III.C. Project Narrative (Maximum length, 12 pages)**

Maximum length is 12 pages and single-spaced on 8.5" x 11" paper with one-inch margins. Times New Roman or an equivalent serif typeface with a 12-point or larger font should be used. Tables and figures are included in the page limit. Paginate the narrative with page numbers right-justified in the footer. Literature citations, CVs and letters of support are not included in the 12-page limit. No appendices are permitted. Citations in the narrative should follow your disciplinary literature format.

#### **1. Rationale**

Use the research literature and/or preliminary research to describe the problem or opportunity at hand. List the research priority(ies), goal(s) and outcome(s) identified in the "Research Priorities" section of the RFP that the proposal will address and describe explicitly how the work will contribute to them. Document the magnitude of the situation and the relevance of the issue or problem to coastal Alabama and/or Mississippi. Describe how this work would add to the body of knowledge in the research area.

The rationale section needs to address both the scientific rationale for the project and quantify from a practical standpoint why the issue is a high priority. Describe what makes this project innovative and why this topic is important. The goal of the proposal should flow logically from this discussion.

#### **2. Scientific and Professional Merit**

Describe in detail the overall project design and include enough detail to demonstrate the technical qualities of the proposed approach so that the salient features can be quantitatively assessed by those who review the proposal. This section must include subsections for hypotheses; objectives; approach; and links to other projects. In the proposal provide a subheading for each of the following:

- a. Hypotheses: Include all hypotheses related to the proposed work. These must be presented in bulleted format. Include the null and alternative hypothesis for each test. At least one testable hypothesis must be included in the proposal.
- b. Objectives: The objectives should be a numbered list and each objective should begin with the word "To" followed by a verb. The most appropriate verbs are: test, develop, provide, determine, isolate, characterize, identify, restore, implement, etc. Less desirable, but sometimes appropriate, are verbs such as:

conduct, analyze, apply, and describe. Some verbs, such as study, consider, and continue should not be used since failure to do these is not determinable. Do not list methods or say the aim is to "get a better understanding." Be specific and brief. Proposals that state objectives in a way that is specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and time-bound will fare best during the review process. Be realistic and do not list more objectives than can be accomplished.

- c. Approach: Provide specific details on the methods, approaches and techniques that will be used to meet the stated objectives and test the hypotheses. Proposals should describe major aspects of the project such as controls, replication, sampling, surveys, etc. Include information about facilities, equipment, personnel, management, and interactions with other institutions or other resources that are directly applicable to the proposed project. Include the permits required for the proposed work, including the agency and the time-frame and/or status of permit applications.
- d. Links to Other Projects: Describe how this project will interface with other related research or similar projects that you or others are leading. The links to other projects may be local, statewide, regional or national in scope. Multi-disciplinary efforts are encouraged. Please be specific in identifying and explaining these links. Clearly distinguish how the proposed work relates to or is associated with any current or pending funding.

### **3. Expected Benefits**

Impacts and the application of the results are critical to the success of research. Under this section describe how the proposed work will benefit Alabama, Mississippi, the region and/or the nation. Focus on how the results of the project can be applied to improve governmental and other management decisions, improve technological or economic efficiency and/or benefit community members, industry or others. Be as specific as possible. In the proposal provide a subheading for each of the following:

- a. Impacts: An impact is defined as an impelling or compelling effect. Impacts are higher order, usually long-term results that have significant scientific, economic, or social benefits. Impacts may involve behavioral, policy, or economic changes. For example seminal contributions to science are considered impacts especially if the research findings lead to major progress in a particular field, implementation of new technologies, or have a substantive bearing on an economic or societal issue.
- b. Application of Results: Describe the expected (1) scientific/academic **and** (2) applied results of the project including potential economic impact. Describe how the results of the proposed work will be directly applied and used in the short, medium and long term.
- c. Performance Measures and Targets: Proposals must identify at least two performance measures from the following list and list targets for each that will be

completed within the project's timeframe. Performance measure number 1 must be addressed by the proposed work.

1. Number of communities that implemented hazard resiliency practices to prepare for, respond to or minimize coastal hazardous events as a result of Sea Grant activities.
2. Economic (market and non-market; jobs and businesses created or retained) benefits derived from Sea Grant activities.
  - a. Economic benefit in dollars
  - b. Number of jobs created
  - c. Number of jobs retained
  - d. Number of businesses created
  - e. Number of businesses retained
3. Number of peer-reviewed publications produced.

#### **4. End-users, Partners and Co-Sponsors**

Successful application of the research results will depend on the inclusion of end-users, partners and in many cases co-sponsors. This section should identify the specific technical or lay interests (e.g., business, agency) that would participate in or benefit from the project. Also, describe their role and how they have been part of the planning of the project, will be brought into the execution of the project and/or will use the results. Examples of how partners can be involved include providing matching funds, equipment and personnel. Proposals must explicitly identify any extramural co-sponsors and clearly describe their commitment to funding and participation.

Strong proposals will go beyond listing groups such as decision makers, resource managers, community leaders, emergency responders, or other groups as end-users. Proposals that provide the names of the individuals who directly use the results of the proposed work are more informative than those that provide vague statements of end-user groups. Letters of support (III.G.) from end-users are required.

#### **III.D. Literature Cited (no page limit)**

Provide complete reference information, per your disciplinary literature format. Citations should include author, date, title, source, page number. Up-to-date citations are expected.

#### **III.E. Curriculum Vitae**

Up to a two-page CV that includes evidence of each investigator's position, education, qualifications, and experience in the field.

#### **III.F. Current and Pending Support for Each Investigator**

For all investigators on the project, include current and pending extramural sponsored research projects using NSF, NIH or USDA formats that include the title, sponsor, total budget, FTE devoted to the project and duration for each entry.

### **III.G. Letters of Support (no page limit)**

Letters of support should be included from non-funded collaborators and end-users who will benefit from the proposed research (Expected Benefits section, III.C.3).

### **III.H. Project Schedule Form**

Milestones are specific actions that will be undertaken to accomplish the objectives whereby progress toward the goals and/or outcomes is realized. Examples of milestones are data collection, analyzing samples, engagement with end-users and presentation/publication of results. Mark with an “X” the appropriate year(s) and month(s) expected for individual milestones identified for the proposed work.

### **IV. MASGC Budget Form 90-4 (MS Excel)**

Please note: A 50% non-federal match is required. Complete one budget for each year of the project, and one cumulative budget page for each year of the project. Sub-award recipients will need to complete a budget form for each year. Submit this as one MS Excel Workbook with tabs labeled by year and sub-award recipient. Label each budget form where indicated to appropriately describe the budget year and sub-award recipient.

### **V. MASGC Budget Justification Form (MS Excel)**

Investigators must use the MASGC Budget Justification Form. Complete one overall MASGC Budget Justification form for each year of the project and one cumulative MASGC Budget Justification form for all years of the project. Sub-award recipients will only need to complete a budget justification form for each year. Submit this as one MS Excel Workbook with tabs labeled by year and sub-award recipient. Label each budget justification form with the budget year and sub-award recipient.

### **VI. (Optional) List of people that should not review the proposal (MS Word)**

Although not required, investigators are welcome to submit a list of people that should not review their proposal for any reason. This list will be kept confidential. Also consider including scientists and other people with whom you would have a conflict of interest in reviewing the proposal.

## Evaluation of Proposals

Proposals are expected to be highly integrated, multidisciplinary projects that must address one or more of the research priorities identified in this request. Bi-state, multi-institutional/agency and interdisciplinary projects are strongly encouraged, but not required.

Proposals will be reviewed using a three step process.

The first step in the review process consists of a programmatic review by the MASGC Management Team to ensure the proposal met all requirements outlined in this Request for Proposals. This is limited to:

1. PI's and Co-PIs involved in previous MASGC supported projects met all reporting requirements within the given deadline,
2. proposal is within funding request limits and meets the match requirements and
3. all required elements in the RFP are addressed in the proposal.

The second step consists of external merit reviews from national experts, followed by a review by a Research Technical Review Panel (TRP). The TRP recommends placement of each proposal into one of three categories ("fundable", "maybe fundable" and "not fundable") based on their reviews and the merit reviews. The funding request will be closed in the event no proposals are identified as "fundable" by the TRP. The TRP includes scientists from universities outside Alabama and Mississippi and federal employees who have expertise in the RCE focus area.

The third step consists of a review by the MASGC Advisory Council of blinded abstracts of projects that the TRP recommended as "fundable". The MASGC Advisory Council members will make recommendations based on their determination of the proposal's relevance to MASGC's strategic plan for each TRP-recommended "fundable" project. The MASGC Advisory Council includes scientists, resource managers, representatives of private industry, educators and others who are experienced and familiar with current coastal issues in Alabama and Mississippi.

The top ranked proposal(s) based on the cumulative results of the programmatic review, external merit reviews, the TRP review and Advisory Council relevancy review will be recommended for funding and will be funded as resources permit. The minimum requirements are: projects satisfactorily pass the programmatic review; projects in the "fundable" category based on the TRP review; and projects are considered relevant by the Advisory Council. The final funding decision will be made by the MASGC Director in consultation with the NOAA National Sea Grant Office.

### Evaluation Criteria

All proposals will be evaluated by external reviewers and the TRP based on the following criteria:

1. **Rationale (10%)** – Evaluates how well the proposed project addresses one or more goals and one or more outcomes stated in this RFP. The goal(s) and outcome(s) to be addressed should be clearly stated in this section.

2. **Scientific and Professional Merit (35%)** – Assesses whether there is a clearly stated testable hypothesis, if the approach is technically sound and/or innovative, whether there are clear objectives, if methods are appropriate, and whether the research will advance the state of the science or discipline. Determines the degree to which approaches are used to solve problems or focus on new resources, timely issues, or opportunities. Proposed budgets will also be evaluated under this criterion.
3. **Expected Benefits (35%)** – Evaluates the overall impact of the completed project; whether results can be immediately applied to improve governmental or other management decisions; and potential to improve technological and economic efficiency or benefit community members, industry or others. Evaluates the likelihood that the proposed project will attain the stated objectives. Determines if performance measures and target values are appropriate and realistic.
4. **End-users, Participants and Co-Sponsors (15%)** – Assesses the degree to which users or potential users of the results of the proposed project have been brought into the planning and funding of the project, will be brought into the execution of the project, and will use the results. Incorporating support from local, state or federal agencies in real or in-kind funding will enhance the project. Funding from other federal agencies will be a plus, but cannot count toward any non-federal match requirement.
5. **Investigator Qualifications (5%)** – The degree to which the applicant and identified collaborators possess the necessary education, training and/or experience to execute the proposed activity. This assessment will be primarily based on the investigator(s) curriculum vita(s). This criterion will also assess the stage of career development and record of productivity with previous funding (if applicable).