



Request For Proposals 2014-2016 Research Program

Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium

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

Funding Opportunity Title: 2014-2016 Resilient Communities and Economies Research Funding

Announcement Type: Notice of request for proposals

Release Date: December 13, 2014

Deadline: Proposals are due by 4 p.m. Central Time on Friday, February 28, 2014. Submissions after the deadline will not be reviewed or considered for funding.

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 Alabama and Mississippi coast. Federal funding requests cannot exceed \$60,000 per year. A non-federal match of 1 dollar for every 2 dollars of federal funding is required. Project initiation is scheduled for July 1, 2014.

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>. Goals, outcomes and performance measures for RCE can be found in MASGC's 2014-2017 Strategic Plan (http://masgc.org/assets/uploads/publications/550/12-059_2014-2017_masgc_strategic_plan.pdf)

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 annual progress reports, data management plans, extension, outreach and education plans and fiscal reports on or before

deadlines under prior biennial (2012-13) MASGC awards will result in an application being disqualified for this biennial funding cycle.

Research Priorities

MASGC will fund projects that address research priorities in the Resilient Communities and Economies Focus Area through this research funding opportunity. Proposals will only be accepted that address one or more of the following priorities:

- Determine the impact of the Biggert-Waters Flood Insurance Reform Act of 2012 (reauthorization of the National Flood Insurance Program) on coastal communities and economies.
- Compare the economic impact of gas/oil rigs on recreational fishing and diving in the state waters of Alabama and Mississippi.
- Compare the market and non-market benefits for Alabama and Mississippi communities participating in the Federal Emergency Management Agency's Community Rating System with the communities who are not participating.
- Conduct a cost/benefit analysis of implementing housing retrofits to increase resilience and determine these costs and benefits to homeowners, contractors, insurance providers and communities.
- Identify the market and non-market costs and benefits and determine the return on investment for individuals, businesses, and communities that adopt wind hazard mitigation strategies and/or green building techniques (e.g. Smart Home America and Insurance Institute for Business and Home Safety). Include variables such as change in risk exposure, insurance costs, estimated time out of home or business and peace of mind.
- Examine economic and non-economic tradeoffs between different waterfront uses.
- Determine market and non-market valuation of coupling maintenance dredging for navigation channels with coastal restoration.
- Examine legal questions related to beneficial use of dredge material crossing state lines into or out of Alabama and Mississippi.
- Predict changes in land-use patterns after significant storm events and drivers of those changes based on historical land-use changes.

Project implementation must occur in Alabama and/or Mississippi. Projects that seek funding to sustain long-term data sets are a low priority.

Funding Levels

MASGC anticipates approximately \$120,000 in total federal funding in 2014 and 2015. The funding level for an individual project must not exceed \$60,000 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.

Evaluation Procedure for 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 merit reviews from national experts, followed by a review using 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 one or more of the MASGC focus areas.

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 will make a recommendation 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, 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 of the research priorities stated in this RFP. The research priority 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 provide other benefits to users. Evaluates the likelihood that the proposed project will attain the stated objectives. Determines if performance measures and target values are 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).

Proposal Development Instructions

Detailed proposal guidance, tips 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). If an electronic mail submission is not possible, please contact Loretta Leist for guidance on submitting a hard-copy. The electronic submission must contain the five sections described below as individual files.

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 February 28, 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. This section must clearly identify one or more of the research priorities stated in this RFP, describe explicitly how the work will contribute to one or more research priorities, document the magnitude of the situation, and the relevance of the issue or problem to coastal Mississippi and/or Alabama. 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. The approach must include sub-sections for hypotheses; objectives; approach; and links to other projects.

- 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

Outcomes, 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. 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. [The 12 performance measures tracked by MASGC can be found in the 2014-2017 MASGC Strategic Plan.]
 - 1. Number of communities that implemented sustainable economic and environmental development practices and policies (e.g., land-use planning, working waterfronts, energy efficiency, climate change planning, smart growth measures, green infrastructure) as a result of Sea Grant activities.
 - 2. 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.
 - 3. Economic (market and non-market; jobs and businesses created or retained) benefits derived from Sea Grant activities.
 - a. Economic Impact
 - b. Jobs created
 - c. Businesses created
 - d. Jobs retained

- e. Businesses retained
- 4. 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.

Additional Requirements Post Project Selection

PIs of selected project(s) will be required to submit additional forms prior to funding. Two documents that will be required are highlighted below and are: 1) extension, outreach and education plan and 2) NOAA data sharing plan. More details about these two documents and other required forms and information will be provided in the selection letter. Final funding will be contingent on development of acceptable extension, outreach and education plan, NOAA data sharing plan and other materials.

Extension, Outreach and Education Plan

Successful proposals 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.

Additional Materials

If your proposal is selected for funding the following items will also be required:

1. Response to any significant review comments.
2. Letter of commitment from the institutions involved. Letters of commitment will 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.

Timetable

The following dates refer to the RFP process milestones:

Funding announcement released	December 13, 2013
Proposals due	February 28, 2014
Notification of funding decisions	May 1, 2014
Development of EOE Plans and other materials	May 16, 2014
Project initiation	July 1, 2014

Contacts for Additional Information

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