

LOUISIANA SEA GRANT COLLEGE PROGRAM



Request for Proposals 2018-2020 Competitive Research Program

Funding Cycle: *Two-year funding period from February 1, 2018 to January 31, 2020. About \$700,000/yr available for research projects.*

Statements of Interest (Sol): Sol is required and due by 5 pm on Friday, March 3, 2017.

Full Proposals: Full Proposals will only be accepted if a Sol was submitted. Full Proposals due on May 22, 2017.

Sea Grant RFP Information Webinar:

An information webinar will be held on January 25, 2017, from 1:30-3:00 p.m. CST to discuss the Sea Grant research funding opportunity. Please visit the LSG funding webpage (www.laseagrant.org/research/rfp) for instructions on how to participate in the webinar. The webinar will also explain the use of the new eSeaGrant proposal submission system. The webinar will be recorded and a link will be posted on the LSG funding webpage.

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COMPETITIVE RESEARCH PROGRAM SUMMARY

Program Title: Louisiana Sea Grant 2018-2020 Competitive Research Request for Proposals

Synopsis of Program: The environmental crises of Louisiana's deltaic plain—which includes the Mississippi River Delta and Chenier Plain—include some of the most challenging coastal issues in North America. With the highest rates of relative sea level rise in the world and exposure to a changing climate, coastal communities remain vulnerable to extreme events such as coastal flooding. This is occurring while our working coast contributes to the nation's economy with the largest fishery (commercial and recreational) in the contiguous U.S., the nation's largest supply of domestic energy, and is in the Top 10 largest port complexes (by tonnage) in the world.

This request for competitive research proposals by Louisiana Sea Grant (LSG) seeks to promote interdisciplinary solutions using university research to address complex and often interrelated ecological, economic, and social challenges that affect the state's adaptation strategies. The magnitude of the challenges in this dynamic, and more recently disturbed, natural and social landscape requires that limited resources available to LSG be distributed utilizing practical and well-defined approaches that are linked to community engagement through our outreach program.

The landscape of coastal Louisiana is a natural laboratory for research given nearly 25 years of different restoration and protection projects, a highly engineered coastal landscape, an extensive observation network (e.g. CRMS, <https://lacoast.gov/crms2/home.aspx>), and communities facing different environmental and economic challenges. This research competition challenges the university community to develop integrated research teams to explore and discover innovative best management practices for more resilient ecosystems, fisheries, communities, and economies (see our [focus areas](#)).

Research projects within Louisiana's coastal region should focus on discovery that integrates knowledge across disciplines that can be applied to one or more of three focus areas of LSG's Strategic Plan that are eligible for the research competition: 1) Healthy Coastal Ecosystems; 2) Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture and 3) Resilient Communities and Economies. This RFP contains a listing of relevant research questions, and information about the format and timetable for submitting proposals. Proposals must have clear **relevancy to Louisiana Sea Grant's research priorities** ([see Research Priorities in section III of this document](#)) and must include a clear **outreach plan** for disseminating the results to targeted audiences. All Louisiana public institutions of higher education and those independent institutions of higher education which are members of the Louisiana Association of Independent Colleges and Universities are eligible to compete under the Louisiana Sea Grant Competitive Research Program.

Louisiana Sea Grant is initiating a new program to support integrated research teams, while also continuing a limited investment in traditional research projects during this funding period:

- ***Integrated Research (IR&E) and Engagement Project(s)***: This is a new research competition to fund research teams that build integrated approaches across social, engineering, design, and ecological disciplines that address the complex environmental and social issues affecting coastal Louisiana.
 - Contingent on the availability of funds, and quality of proposals, LSG anticipates funding up to four projects at the upper limit of \$180,000 per award per year;
 - Teams should consider 3-4 researchers representing interdisciplinary approaches to problem solving;
 - Research teams are encouraged to support 2-4 LSG Graduate Research Fellowships per year of funding;
 - The research proposal must contain a clearly defined outreach program.
- ***Core Research Projects***: These are traditional research projects on issues currently affecting coastal Louisiana's ecosystems, fisheries and seafood production, and community resilience. Core research proposals are projects that focus on one or more of the following three priority areas: (1) Healthy Coastal Ecosystems; (2) Resilient Communities and Economies; and (3) Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture.
 - Contingent on the availability of funds, and number of IR&E projects funded, LSG anticipates funding up to four projects at about \$75,000 per award per year;
 - 1-2 researchers representing traditional approaches to problem solving;
 - Research teams are encouraged to support 1 LSG Graduate Research Fellowship per year of funding;
 - The research proposal must contain a clearly defined outreach program.

Eligibility Information: All Louisiana public institutions of higher education and those independent institutions of higher education which are members of the Louisiana Association of Independent Colleges and Universities are eligible to compete under the Louisiana Sea Grant Competitive Research Program. Other institutions are encouraged to collaborate with university researchers by supporting internship opportunities for students that may be supported by LSG funds. Such persons and institutions may be listed as Co-PI of LSG research projects. Single investigators and multiple investigator research teams from different institutions are encouraged to apply. Louisiana Sea Grant encourages participation from the broad science and social science research community within Louisiana.

Only PIs that submit a Statement of Interest (Sol) will be eligible to submit a full proposal, but all investigators who submit a timely and complete Sol will be welcomed to submit a full proposal regardless of the recommendation made following the Sol review.

Sol Preparation and Submission Instructions:

A. Statement of Interest Preparation Requirements and Due Dates

- **Sol Submission:** Required, due March 3, 2017, by 5:00 PM CST
- **Application Instructions:** This solicitation contains specific instructions on the format and content that must be adhered to in each Sol. Failure to follow the instructions outlined in the full text below is grounds for rejection without review.

B. Budgetary Information

- **Cost Sharing Requirements:** 50 percent non-federal cost match is required for each proposal (\$1 non-federal match for every \$2 of Sea Grant funding). Principal Investigators are not required to document the source of the project match until submitting a full proposal.
- **Indirect Cost (F&A):** Proposals from LSU use the off-campus rate of 26 percent MTDC. Proposals from other institutions should use their respective F&A rates.

Statement of Interest (Sol) Processing: Statements of Interest will be subject to external panel reviews. Statements of Interest that receive favorable reviews will be encouraged to submit a full proposal (although all investigators who submit a timely and complete Sol are welcome to submit full proposals). There is approximately \$700,000 annually available for this research competition, which will fund a combination of IR&E and/or Core research proposals.

Principal Investigators Please Note the Following:

- Funding of all proposals is contingent upon Louisiana Sea Grant's allocation from NOAA in the FY2018 federal budget. Modification in the number of and funding for individual proposals may be made based upon the final omnibus budget to Louisiana Sea Grant from NOAA.
- PIs must provide a strong rationale for how their proposed research will be applied to solving complex coastal issues of coastal Louisiana by affecting an informed public, design applications, strategic adaptations, policy and/or management decisions, and how that information will be communicated to end users.
- Louisiana Sea Grant encourages Principal Investigators (PIs) to read this document carefully and direct questions concerning the RFP or eSeaGrant to the Louisiana Sea Grant Office early in the Statement of Interest development process ([contact information listed in Section VIII](#)). LSG has implemented an online project management system called eSeaGrant. This system requires an applicant to register before submitting an Sol. You can register to use eSeaGrant at: www.laseagrantedb.org.

GUIDELINES FOR COMPETITIVE RESEARCH PROPOSAL PREPARATION: Statements of Interest

I. Introduction

II. Types of Awards

- A. Integrated Research & Engagement (IR&E)
- B. Core Research

III. Louisiana Strategic Research Priorities

- C. Healthy Coastal Ecosystems and Habitats
- D. Resilient Communities and Economies
- E. Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture

IV. Schedule and Deliverables

- A. Preliminary and Full Proposal Timetable
- B. Statement of Interest Deliverables

V. Instructions for Preparing a Statement of Interest

- A. Statement of Interest Outline
- B. Formatting
- C. Explanation of Statement of Interest Components

VI. Statement of Interest Review Process

- A. Statement of Interest Review

VII. Question and Answer Webinar

VIII. Contacts for Additional Information

I. INTRODUCTION

Since its establishment in 1968, the Louisiana Sea Grant College Program has worked to promote stewardship of the state's coastal resources through a combination of research, education and outreach programs critical to the cultural, economic and environmental health of Louisiana's coastal zone.

Louisiana Sea Grant, based at Louisiana State University, is part of the National Sea Grant Program, a network made up of 33 programs located in each of the coastal and Great Lakes states and U.S. territories. Sea Grant Programs work individually and in partnership to address major marine and coastal challenges.

For this funding opportunity, Louisiana Sea Grant seeks responsive research that provides scientific and socioeconomic information, design innovation, as well as policy guidance, for fisheries management, climate change adaptation, resilient communities, and ecosystem restoration in coastal systems and communities in Louisiana. Coastal

Louisiana offers a laboratory of restoration, protection, and adaptation projects that together with laboratory studies, field investigations, models, and/or socioeconomic tools and synthesis products, offer innovative opportunities for research projects that should improve understanding of coastal ecosystem function and help predict the responses of ecosystems and communities to a changing climate and/or planning activities. Sols must include an outreach plan that demonstrates a connection with user groups, such as resource managers, communities, and/or informal and formal learners. Proposed projects should be for a 24-month maximum duration (but may be less than 24 months). PIs should focus on outcomes that can be achieved during this timeframe.

II. TYPES OF AWARDS

A. Integrated Research and Engagement (IR&E)

Louisiana Sea Grant will support up to four Integrated Research and Engagement (IR&E) projects that tackle important ecological and social issues in coastal Louisiana that inform planning, policy and natural resource management and lead to creative problem-solving. Academic, as well as local, state and federal management agency partners, have helped identify several research topics that focus on particularly challenging coastal resource management and policy issues.

For example, there is interest in community collaborative research that brings together local knowledge and observation with academic rigor of university researchers. That combination, along with strong field research, should result in recommendations that provide adaptation strategies to resource managers, industry leaders, government officials, and other groups. Such research projects should strive to promote discovery that integrates one or more of LSG's four focus areas: Healthy Coastal Ecosystems; Resilient Communities and Economies; Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture; and Environmental Literacy and Workforce Development

Other potential IR&E projects might address community adaptation to climate change, supply chain management of fisheries (from the marsh to market applications), fisheries ecology and allocation, water resources engineering and law, economic resilience and insurability, regional planning alternatives, and tradeoffs involving coastal restoration and protection design options.

Successful IR&E proposals will incorporate multiple disciplinary approaches to address the complex dynamics of coastal issues. When developing IR&E proposals, investigators are encouraged to look for synergies with other research and outreach activities that may provide data, infrastructure support, and/or outreach linkages.

Researchers must work closely with local stakeholders and/or decision-makers to conduct a comprehensive analysis of relevant natural and social scientific information. The purpose is to ultimately develop information, tools and partnerships that will help decision-makers better address the focal issue.

B. Core Research

Louisiana Sea Grant intends to fund up to four Core Research projects. Core research projects investigate issues and seek to further knowledge in areas that affect Louisiana's coastal and nearshore ecosystems, fisheries, and human communities. University-based researchers are encouraged to submit research projects that fulfill critical research needs for coastal Louisiana — and that fit within LSG's strategic research priority areas (Section III below). LSG also seeks to bring together innovative research teams from Louisiana universities, and where possible, leverage active research programs conducted by federal and state agencies. Appropriate activities for Core Research projects include, but are not limited to, field and laboratory studies, computer modeling, archival research, surveys, data analysis, and synthesis. In the case of proposals involving multiple organizations, a single organization must be identified as the lead.

PIs should clearly state in the heading of the Sol which type of award (IR&E or Core) is being applied for.

III. LOUISIANA STRATEGIC RESEARCH PRIORITIES

Louisiana Sea Grant is soliciting research proposals in IR&E and Core approaches that integrate across the following three of our focus areas:

- A. [Healthy Coastal Ecosystems](#)
- B. [Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture](#)
- C. [Resilient Communities and Economies](#)

LSG's fourth focus area, Environmental Literacy and Workforce Development is considered a cross-cutting theme for all of our research projects as reflected in required outreach activities and graduate student involvement.

A. Focus Area: HEALTHY COASTAL ECOSYSTEMS

The maintenance and restoration of healthy ecosystems is fundamental to life along Louisiana's coast. Development, overfishing, sea level rise, subsidence, loss of barrier islands, and other factors have resulted in water quality degradation and hypoxia, a decline of fisheries, wetlands loss, proliferation of invasive species, reduced storm and surge protection, and a host of other challenges. Louisiana's invaluable coastal wetlands and forests have suffered severely from the combined effects of man's activities and nature's whims.

To help inform projects that may restore the state's coastal ecosystems, LSG will promote innovative research and outreach that increases our understanding of ecosystem function and implementation of appropriate designs for restoring lost function. LSG emphasizes three topics under the Healthy Coastal Ecosystem focus area: water quality, coastal restoration, and coastal ecosystem services in the context of anticipated climate change impacts. Research goals, outcomes and objectives in this area relate to protecting, restoring and conserving natural resources and developing

mechanisms to help natural resource managers make optimal decisions. **LSG encourages Healthy Coastal Ecosystems research with emphasis on the following areas:**

- Develop and share scientific understanding, decision-support tools, technologies and approaches to protect, restore, and improve water quality in Louisiana's wetlands, rivers, and estuaries.
- Advancing and developing practices, technologies, and systems designed to sustain the habitat, diversity, and the abundance of coastal ecosystems in Louisiana that are being affected by changes from relative sea-level rise and restoration activities.
- Investigate adaptation strategies to enhance resilient ecosystems in the context of changing conditions to include the effects of increased river flow on food webs in receiving basins, climate fluctuations and restoration activities on animal migrations in estuaries utilizing coastal habitats, etc.
- Develop and share improved predictions of coastal processes (e.g. interior ponding, subsidence, sand shoreline dynamics, and shore edge erosion of the marsh platform) under normal and storm conditions, factoring in projected sea-level rise scenarios and other climate change-related effects on these processes over time.

Outcomes may include but are not limited to: Greater scientific understanding and technological designs to inform and improve restoration and management of Louisiana's water resources; improved coordination of Louisiana coastal and river watershed research to fill information gaps needed for decision-making; development of a framework to help guide coastal protection and restoration efforts that support sustainable estuaries given anticipated climate and land use changes; development of natural and/or bioengineered reef and shoreline protection techniques that enhance coastal restoration and protection project efforts; and improved capability of predictive models that establish the relative contribution of factors, including physical climatic processes, which drive coastal change; and adaptation strategies of site selection for restoration activities.

B. Focus Area: SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE

Louisiana has one of the largest commercial and recreational fishery in the United States, occurring in a coastal landscape that is experiencing one of the highest rates of wetland habitat loss. Simultaneously seafood consumption nationwide has been on the rise, but global markets and workforce issues present risks to an important part of our economy and culture. LSG, through its research, extension, and education activities, and work with industry partners, has helped to stabilize and improve many sectors of the state's fisheries seafood producing industries. **LSG encourages research in Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture with emphasis on the following areas:**

- Identify ways to maximize quality, sustainability, value, safety, and use of Louisiana seafood, including harvesting, aquaculture opportunities, processing,

marketing strategies, and development of underutilized fisheries, as well as local micro-processing capabilities.

- Develop and promote understanding of: the effects of increased river flow on food webs in receiving basins; new fishery adaptation strategies and aquaculture opportunities that could arise from coastal restoration (e.g., river diversions); and climate change impacts (e.g., ocean acidification).

Outcomes may include but are not limited to: the Louisiana seafood industry employs technologies and reinforces marketing strategies to ensure safe and sustainable seafood and products; consumers have access to and purchase safe and sustainable seafood products; increased understanding and technological solutions aid aquaculture management and production; innovative solutions that increase understanding of climate impacts on fisheries and aquaculture are available and accessible to resource managers and fishing and aquaculture supply chain management; resource managers and fishing and aquaculture communities have access to science and tools to increase their capability to adapt to future resource management needs.

C. Focus Area: RESILIENT COMMUNITIES AND ECONOMIES

Louisiana Sea Grant's resilient communities and economies efforts focus on four topic areas: climate change adaptation, community sustainability, pollution prevention, and water resources. The anticipated outcomes will result in increased availability of tools and information, and local and state implementation of related best management practices. Climate change is among the top environmental challenges facing coastal Louisiana and impacts both aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems. It also poses threats to human lives, environments and economies. LSG will continue to help communities and individuals plan for and adapt to projected climate changes, taking into account the vulnerability and extent of uncertainty in many of the projections. **LSG encourages Resilient Communities and Economies research with emphasis on the following areas:**

- Research innovative designs that aid comprehensive planning and adaptive management strategies to enhance community resilience, and improve outreach that increases understanding of how these strategies are communicated between local community residents and policy makers; identify best practices and improved methods for facilitating the reciprocal exchange of knowledge among residents, community leaders, researchers, and policy makers.
- Research adaptation capacities and mitigation strategies that promote community resilience to climate-related coastal hazards and restoration activities with a focus on incorporating traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) to enhance community resiliency and adaptive capacity with approaches that take into consideration impacts on diverse, underserved and underrepresented populations.
- Research relationships between ecosystem services, quality of life, and community resilience within coastal habitats, particularly pertaining to habitat

changes and shifts due to projected climate change and/or restoration project impacts.

- Investigate existing water policy and explore more beneficial alternatives that include issues of ownership in changing environments and conditions, and planning and implementation related to public safety and risk.
- Develop and share best management practices (BMPs) and measures to protect and manage water resources.

Outcomes may include but are not limited to: resources are available to coastal residents to be able to prepare, respond, and adapt to changing environmental conditions and coastal hazards; coastal residents and leadership employ adaptive management strategies and apply tools to engage diverse members of the community to improve resilience and community sustainability; resources are available to help coastal residents and leadership better understand ecosystem services and associated values of coastal habitats in areas experiencing ongoing or predicted habitat shifts and coastal restoration activities; information is available that clarifies the linkages and feedbacks between the natural and human components to evaluate long-term coastal resilience; improved outreach and decision-support tools will help guide planning processes related to the state's water resources; sound science, data, tools, and services are available to coastal residents to better design adaptation strategies, develop informed decisions, and anticipate changes in water quality and quantity; and communities have access to science, tools, and technologies to protect and sustain water resources and make informed decisions.

IV. SCHEDULE AND DELIVERABLES

A. Statement of Interests and Full Proposal Schedule

- *Early January, 2017* — Request for Statements of Interest issued
- *January 25, 2017* – Question and Answer Webinar
- *March 3, 2017* — Statements of Interest are due
- *Early April 2017 (approximate)* — Statements of Interest reviewed; PIs notified; Guidelines for full proposals available
- *May 22, 2017* — Full proposals due
- *Late-July 2017 (approximate)* - Final proposal selection; PIs notified
- *Mid October, 2017 (approximate)* - Omnibus proposal to NOAA
- *February 1, 2018 – January 31, 2020* – *Start date and duration of funding cycle*

B. Statement of Interest (Sol) Submission

LSG has implemented an online project management system called eSeaGrant. This system requires an applicant to register before submitting a Sol. You can register to use eSeaGrant at www.laseagrantdb.org.

After submitting your Sol through eSeaGrant you will receive a confirmation email. If you do not receive a confirmation email, please contact Katie Lea (klea@lsu.edu or 225-578-6445). Changes can be made to the Sol until the closing date and time. If an electronic submission through eSeaGrant is not possible, please contact Katie Lea.

You must submit one electronic version of the complete Statement of Interest via the eSeaGrant system.

The deadline for Sol submission is March 3, 2017 at 5:00 pm CST. Statements of Interest not received by the deadline will not be accepted. Researchers are reminded to conform to the submission policies of their host institutions particularly with regard to obtaining institutional endorsements and requirements.

V. STATEMENT OF INTEREST PREPARATION INSTRUCTIONS

A. Statement of Interest Outline

PIs must follow the instructions regarding the Sol format as explained in this document or risk Sol rejection.

PIs are required to use the sections below in the body of the Sol and a Sol [budget form](#).

Each Sol must include the following sections in this sequence:

1. Body of the Sol (major headings), 2 pages single-spaced limit:
 - 1.1 Title (including whether submission is for IR&E or Core funding type) and Lead Principal Investigator and other co-PI's
 - 1.2 Problem Statement
 - 1.3 Objectives
 - 1.4 Methods
 - 1.5 Rationale and Anticipated Benefits
 - 1.6 Outreach plan
 - 1.7 Personnel Description
2. References
3. The Sol [budget form](#)
4. 2-page Curriculum vitae of the PI and each co-PI
5. List of [Current and Pending Support](#)
6. A list of recommended [peer reviewers](#) (at least 3)

B. Formatting

Use Times New Roman font type, size 11-point or greater. Left justified only, and one carriage return between paragraphs. All margins should be 1 inch. The body of the Statement of Interest should be typed continuously (that is, do not start a new page for each new section). *References, Statement of Interest budget form, Curriculum Vitae's, list of Current and Pending, and Recommended Reviewers* should each start on new pages and are **not** included in the 2-page single-spaced limit required for the narrative body of the Statement of Interest. Please save the completed Sol in PDF format and upload it using the eSeaGrant system.

C. Explanation of Sol Components

Statements of Interest should present a succinct but sufficiently detailed synopsis of the project in order to evaluate its **relevance** to the Louisiana Sea Grant Strategic Research Priorities, its technical feasibility, and the PIs' qualifications.

BODY OF THE Statement of Interest

The body of the Sol is limited to **two pages of single-spaced text**. Write your Statement of Interest using the headings in the sequence listed previously in this document and following the formatting instructions above.

1.1 Title (Begin title with type of award – IR&E or Core)

1.2 Problem Statement

Indicate the specific problem addressed by the proposed effort and provide sufficient background information to allow a preliminary assessment of the relationship of the problem to the research questions posed in this RFP.

1.3 Objectives

State the objectives of the research effort as they would appear in a full proposal. Research hypotheses should be clearly stated.

1.4 Methods

Describe the proposed methods so that reviewers are able to make a preliminary determination of the appropriateness of the proposed approach, including statistical analyses, for achieving the stated objectives.

1.5 Rationale and Anticipated Benefits

Briefly explain the anticipated results and potential implications of those results in relation to Sea Grant program objectives.

1.6 Outreach Plan

Sea Grant is a program with its base in the academic sector and its roots in extension, education, and outreach. Thus, student participation and outreach components in Louisiana Sea Grant funded research is strongly recommended. Sols that do not demonstrate student contributions will be given low priority.

There are several options available in achieving effective outreach components to your proposal, and Louisiana Sea Grant strongly encourages you to have had some contact with an outreach partner prior to the submission of your Statement of Interest. Outreach partners may include [Louisiana Sea Grant's Extension Agents & Specialists](#). Other outreach partners might include state and federal outreach committees, education specialists, NGOs, local authorities, etc. These outreach partners possess both important technical expertise on a wide range of subject matter and knowledge of local geographic, social, and governmental circumstances; and they can prove invaluable to the successful planning and development of your project. Alternatively, when used to their fullest capabilities,

partnerships with private businesses, non-governmental organizations, or state agencies can also contribute greatly to the impact and outreach potential of your project. **Outreach partners should be engaged early in the proposal development process and identified in the Statement of Interest.** Proposals that do not demonstrate a plan to develop impacts through extension and outreach utilizing any of these potential partnerships to develop outputs to constituents and stakeholders will be given very low priority for funding.

LSG is particularly interested in receiving proposals for this opportunity that include citizen science initiatives that contribute to improving knowledge with respect to Louisiana's coastal ecosystems as part of their outreach plans.

1.7 Personnel Description

List names of PI(s), senior technical staff, and students (if appropriate) and briefly outline their roles in the project.

REFERENCES

List references on a separate page. Reference pages are not included in the two-page maximum for the project description.

STATEMENT OF INTEREST BUDGET FORM

Fill out the budget form, making sure that the project is no more than \$180,000/year for IR&E proposals and no more than \$75,000/year for Core Research proposals.

CURRICULUM VITAE

Provide a **2-page** (maximum) curriculum vita for each of the professional personnel. Include all applicable sections (Education, Experience, Research Interests, and Professional Activities) and recent publications.

LIST OF CURRENT AND PENDING SUPPORT

This list specifies projects in which PIs are currently involved that are funded by LSG and other agencies or are under consideration for such funding. Please provide Sponsoring Agency, Project Title, Months of effort, Duration and Amount

LIST OF (3) RECOMMENDED PEER REVIEWERS

VI. STATEMENT OF INTEREST REVIEW PROCESS

A. Statement of Interest Review

Louisiana Sea Grant will conduct an extensive Statement of Interest review to determine those submissions best qualified to compete for inclusion in the 2018-2020 Louisiana Sea Grant College Omnibus funding request to NOAA. Reviewers will be asked to critique and evaluate the following criteria:

- 1) Relevance and/or importance and applicability of proposed project to Louisiana Sea Grant's Strategic Research Foci for this RFP (**relevance will be 50 percent of the criteria evaluated at the Sol stage**)
- 2) Technical/scientific merit
- 3) Outreach and education
- 4) Overall qualifications of applicant
- 5) Project costs

Statements of Interest will be evaluated by:

- External Review Panel
- Louisiana Sea Grant's Extension agents and specialists

All Statements of Interest received by the submission deadline will be evaluated individually in accordance with the above evaluation criteria by an independent peer panel review. Both Federal and non-Federal experts may be used in this process. The peer panel will be comprised of individuals having expertise in a separate area so that the panel, as a whole, covers a range of scientific and resource management expertise related to this opportunity.

The Louisiana Sea Grant program officer will neither vote or score applications as part of the independent peer panel. Once proposals are scored by the reviewers, the Louisiana Sea Grant program officer, with guidance from the panel and from LSG's Marine Extension Program, will create a ranking of the applications to be recommended for a full proposal. After the Sol review process is completed, Louisiana Sea Grant will contact all PIs who have submitted Statements of Interest to provide them their review results.

VII. QUESTION AND ANSWER WEBINAR

One webinar will be held to discuss the LSG research funding opportunity on January 25, 2017, from 1:30-3:00 p.m. CST. Please visit the LSG funding webpage (www.laseagrant.org/research/rfp/) for instructions on how to participate in the webinar. The webinar will be recorded and posted on the LSG funding webpage after January 25.

VIII. CONTACTS FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

If you would like further information about this request for proposals, please contact either Matthew Bethel (mbethe3@lsu.edu) regarding research priorities, Judy Johnson (judyjohnson@lsu.edu) regarding budget requirements, or Katie Lea (klea@lsu.edu) regarding formatting.

Louisiana Sea Grant's mailing address is:
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