

Request for Proposals

National Sea Grant Law Center 2024-2027 Program Development Funds

Executive Summary

Funding Source: National Sea Grant Law Center, University of Mississippi using federal funds from NOAA Sea Grant

Funding Opportunity Title: National Sea Grant Law Center 2024-2027 Program Development Funds

Announcement Type: Notice of Request for Proposals

Timetable: LOIs for one-year projects will be accepted on a rolling basis through August 1, 2026. Full proposals for one-year projects will be accepted on a rolling basis through October 1, 2026. Currently, the latest possible end date for any proposed project is January 31, 2028. Applicants must take this into consideration in their proposal timelines and allow for at least two months for full proposal review and award prior to implementation. For example, the recommended project period for a full proposal submitted on July 1, 2024 would be September 1, 2024 to August 31, 2025.

Funding Opportunity Description: The purpose of this notice is to advise the public that the National Sea Grant Law Center (Law Center) is accepting proposals for small-scale research projects that seek to address timely or pressing legal questions related to ocean, coastal, or Great Lakes law. This funding is intended to support emerging research needs or innovative pilot research projects that may eventually develop into larger, full scale research projects. They are also intended to help a Sea Grant program build legal capacity by generating legal research findings that can be incorporated into extension, education, and communication programming. Requests for Program Development (PD) funds are limited to a maximum request of \$10,000 and a one-year project period. Matching funds are not required.

Full Announcement

The Law Center is part of the National Sea Grant College Program, and is housed at the University of Mississippi School of Law. Established in 2002, the Law Center is a nationally recognized and respected resource for information on ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes law. One of the major responsibilities of the Law Center, as set forth by the National Sea Grant Office in its original request for proposals to create a law center, is to promote the growth and development of a Sea Grant Legal Network (SGLN).

As part of its effort to fulfill this responsibility, the Law Center requests proposals to further support the efforts of Sea Grant programs to build or strengthen their capacity to address legal research, extension, and education needs in their respective states by awarding Program Development (PD) funds for small-scale research projects. PD funds may be requested for small-scale research projects that seek to address timely or pressing legal questions related to ocean, coastal, or Great Lakes law. This funding is intended to support emerging research needs or innovative pilot research projects that may eventually develop into larger research projects. They also are intended to help a Sea Grant program build legal capacity by generating legal research findings that can be incorporated into extension, education, and communication programming. The proposed outcomes of PD projects may include the generation of new research findings on a critical ocean, coastal, or Great Lakes legal topic, new or strengthened partnerships among Sea Grant programs and legal researchers, or submission of larger grant proposals building on PD research findings or partnerships. For more information about the Law Center and its work, please visit our website at <http://nsglc.olemiss.edu/>.

This announcement provides the following information:

1. Eligible Applicants
2. Funding Priorities
3. Funding Levels
4. Letters of Intent Format
5. Proposal Format
6. Proposal Submission Instructions
7. Evaluation Procedure
8. Evaluation Criteria
9. Deadline and Submission Information
10. Timetable

Eligible Applicants

The Law Center is accepting applications from Sea Grant programs, institutes of higher education, or legal research organizations. Institutes of higher education and legal research organizations must have documented partnerships with Sea Grant Programs. Eligible applicants may request PD funds for small-scale research projects that seek to address timely or pressing legal questions related to ocean, coastal, or Great Lakes law, and have the potential to develop into larger research efforts or collaborations among institutes of higher education, legal research organizations, and Sea Grant partners.

Sea Grant champions diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) by recruiting, retaining and preparing a diverse workforce, and proactively engaging and serving the diverse populations of coastal communities. Sea Grant is committed to building inclusive research 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 opportunity.

Funding Priorities

The Law Center is soliciting proposals for Sea Grant programs, institutes of higher education, or legal research organizations to conduct small-scale research projects that aim to build or strengthen the capacity of Sea Grant programs to address legal research, extension, and education needs in their respective states. It can be difficult for Sea Grant Programs without legal capacity to develop new partnerships with institutions of higher education or legal research organizations in their states to obtain answers to critical ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes legal issues without additional resources; thus, funding is vital to helping Sea Grant programs build new partnerships, increase knowledge of legal issues, publish journal articles and outreach materials, organize workshops, and contribute to legal reform efforts on a range of topics.

Projects solicited through this announcement should address timely or pressing legal questions related to ocean, coastal, or Great Lakes law. This funding is intended to support emerging research needs or innovative research projects that may eventually develop into larger research projects, efforts, or collaborations among institutes of higher education, legal research organizations, and Sea Grant partners. The outcome of PD projects may include generation of new research findings on a critical ocean, coastal, or Great Lakes legal topic, new or strengthened partnerships among Sea Grant programs and legal researchers, or submission of larger grant proposals building on PD research findings or partnerships.

To be eligible for funding, projects must demonstrate a high likelihood that the investment will help establish a long term research and outreach collaboration among the partners. This funding is not intended to support one-off projects, but rather to seed long-term efforts to build the legal capacity of the Sea Grant program.

Applicants may not request funding for activities that relate to litigation or advocacy work. Additionally, due to the funding source, proposed projects that directly involve NOAA issues (e.g., federal fisheries management, coastal zone management programs) may be subject to consultation with NOAA Office of General Counsel to avoid duplication of efforts or potential conflicts of interest.

Funding Levels

Requests for PD funds are limited to a maximum request of \$10,000 and a one-year project period. Matching funds are not required.

Letters of Intent Format

To be eligible to submit a full proposal, a Letter of Intent (LOI) is required.

The LOI (max. 2 page not including CVs) shall consist of the following:

1. Anticipated title of the proposed project.
2. Expected project duration (All projects should show a 12-month timeline; start dates will vary based on proposal submission dates; latest possible end date for any proposed project is January 31, 2028).
3. Total budget request estimate.
4. Lead Principal Investigator: Name, Title, Institutional Affiliation, Contact Information, two-page Curriculum Vitae or Biosketch.
5. Sea Grant Program partner, if lead principal investigator is not affiliated with a Sea Grant Program: Name, Title, Institutional Affiliation, Contact Information
6. Brief summary of the proposed research project that clearly identifies a timely or pressing legal question(s) related to ocean, coastal, or Great Lakes law, the study objective and rationale, and how it supports emerging research needs or innovative research projects that may eventually develop into larger research projects, efforts, or collaborations among institutes of higher education, legal research organizations, and Sea Grant partners.
7. Brief statement of the applicant's qualifications to conduct the proposed research.

Please combine all LOI documents (i.e., project description and CV) into one PDF file. The proposal should be submitted to Lauren Fremin, Project Coordinator for the National Sea Grant Law Center, via email, lrfremin@olemiss.edu. If you encounter technical difficulties during submission or do not receive an email response acknowledging receipt within one business day, please contact Lauren Fremin at (662) 915-7187. LOIs for one-year projects will be accepted on a rolling basis through August 1, 2026.

LOIs will be reviewed by the Law Center Director for alignment with funding objectives upon submission. Generally, decisions on LOIs are made within two weeks of submission. If funding is available, LOIs that align with funding objectives will be encouraged to submit a full proposal. Applicants who submit LOIs for projects that are not aligned with funding objectives may not submit full proposals.

Proposal Format

Proposals are to be submitted as a single file in pdf format via email. The instructions provided below for submitting proposals must be followed. Information requested for each of the following sections must be included in the proposal. Incomplete or inappropriately prepared proposals will not be considered and may be returned.

Cover Page

The proposal should include a cover page listing the title of the proposal, PI and Co-PI names, titles, affiliations, and contact information of the PI and any Co-PIs.

Project Narrative

The maximum length for the narrative is 5 pages using a minimum of 12-point font (1-inch margins). Additional pages will not be considered, and the entire proposal rejected if the stated number of pages is exceeded. The project narrative must include the following subsections:

1. **Project Abstract.** Provide a general summary of the purpose of the project, activities to be performed, expected outcomes, and intended beneficiaries (limit 250 words).
2. **Project Background.** Explain the specific ocean, coastal, or Great Lakes legal research opportunities and challenges this project seeks to address and justify its importance. Applicants should clearly identify:
 - a. The need for the proposed project.
 - b. How the proposed research project addresses a timely legal question related to ocean, coastal, or Great Lakes law.
 - c. How the proposed work will advance the applicant's efforts to build the legal capacity of the Sea Grant program to address legal research, extension, and education needs in their state.
 - d. The need for the proposed work, including how it will stimulate and foster the expansion of Sea Grant legal programming.
 - e. The relevance of the proposed work to this RFP.
3. **Project Objectives.** Provide a list of clearly defined objectives and how those objectives align with goals and priorities of this RFP. Include a brief statement on the context of the proposed activity in relation to other related work or programming.
4. **Project Details.** Provide an explanation of the methods, approaches, and techniques that will be used to meet the stated objectives. Applicants must clearly describe the research methodology that will be used and how any related activities will be carried out. Applicants must detail the anticipated engagement and outreach approach, including key audiences you plan to work with and specific outreach strategies to share results. The Law Center requires active sharing of extension and educational efforts and outputs resulting from the award of program development funding. All results are subject to NOAA data sharing policies and must be made freely available to the public.
5. **Anticipated Outcomes and Results.** Detail the anticipated results of this project and how it will have a measurable impact on the legal capacity of Sea Grant programs, such as the generation of new research findings on a critical ocean, coastal, or Great Lakes legal topic, new or strengthened partnerships among Sea Grant programs and legal

researchers, or submission of larger grant proposals building on PD research findings or partnerships.

6. **Project Timeline.** All projects should show a 12-month timeline. The start dates will vary based on proposal submission dates. Currently, the latest possible end date for any proposed project is January 31, 2028. Funded projects would be eligible to submit requests for no-cost extensions (up to six months), provided the requested end date is no later than January 31, 2028. Such requests are subject to review and approval by the Law Center director based on project progress and compliance with reporting requirements.

Curriculum Vitae

The maximum length is two pages for each principal and co-principal investigator. The vitae must provide evidence of the investigator's education, qualifications, and experience in the field.

Literature Cited

References required if used in the proposal; citation of literature is important to establish the familiarity and expertise of the PI to the subject in the proposal. Include full citation: name of author, title, and location in the literature (no maximum length, single-spaced).

Letters of Commitment and Support

The Law Center requires letters of commitment from any stated collaborators or partners providing services, funding support or implementing aspects of the proposed project. The Law Center also encourages up to two additional letters of support from potential partners or end users that may benefit from the proposed work.

Applicants from institutes of higher education or legal research organizations must provide a letter of support from the Sea Grant Program partner, demonstrating the collaboration and engagement in the proposed work.

The Law Center encourages up to three letters of support from interested parties, potential partners or stakeholders that may benefit from the proposed work.

Data Management Plan & Abbreviated Environmental Compliance Questionnaire

To be recommended for funding, applicants must provide a valid environmental data management plan (or alternative statement if no data management plan is needed), as well as a completed Abbreviated Environmental Compliance Questionnaire (and copies of associated permits, if applicable). The Data Management Plan and Abbreviated Environmental Compliance Questionnaire are not required at the time of submission of the proposal. Additional guidance about how to provide this information will be provided to successful applicants upon notice of selection for funding.

Budget and Justification

A Budget and a Budget Justification are required. The Budget should be prepared using the standard Sea Grant 90-4 budget form available at <https://seagrants.noaa.gov/funding/implementation/>. The narrative Budget Justification should itemize and explain all budget items in sufficient detail to enable reviewers to evaluate the appropriateness of the funding requested. Please pay special attention to any travel, supply, or promotional budgets and provide details. Subcontracts, if any, should have a separate budget page and justification.

Applicants may include indirect (F&A) costs in their budget at their institution's federally negotiated appropriate rate for the activity proposed.

Applicant Demographics Questionnaire

After submission of full proposals, all PIs and co-PIs will be asked to fill out a questionnaire in order to help us assess the demographics of applicants to this research competition. Any PI responses will be anonymous with no linkage to their proposal submission. A response to the questionnaire is voluntary and will play no role in the funding decision-making process. Any responses received will be shared with the National Sea Grant Office.

Proposal Submission Instructions

Please combine all proposal documents into one PDF file. The proposal should be submitted to Lauren Fremin, Project Coordinator for the National Sea Grant Law Center, via email, lrfremin@olemiss.edu. If you encounter technical difficulties during submission or do not receive an email response acknowledging receipt before the closing time of the competition, please contact Lauren Fremin at (662) 915-7187 as soon as possible. Full proposals for one-year projects will be accepted on a rolling basis through October 1, 2026.

Evaluation Procedure

Each full proposal received will involve an internal review by the Law Center as well as an external review by three peer reviewers in compliance with the *National Sea Grant Competition Policy*. Proposed projects will be assessed based on standard evaluation criteria, such as alignment with Sea Grant priorities, timeliness and urgency of the proposed research, soundness of project approach, expertise and qualification of investigators, and degree to which the project is likely to foster legal partnerships and build the legal capacity of the applying state program. The Law Center will strive to complete the review process within two months from application submission.

Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated based on the following seven criteria.

1. **Project Objectives & Relevance (25%).** This criterion assesses whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and whether the stated project objectives are aligned with the overall goals of the research competition. Specifically, this criterion assesses the degree to which the proposed activity addresses the stated funding priorities; the degree to which the need for the proposed activity is demonstrated; the degree to which the proposed research relates to a timely, pressing, or emerging ocean, coastal, or Great Lakes legal need; and the degree to which the project has potential to develop into larger research efforts or collaborations among institutes of higher education, legal research organizations, and Sea Grant partners.
2. **Objectives, Methods, and Feasibility (20%).** This criterion assesses whether the project's proposed approach is technically sound, if the methods, timeline, and budget are appropriate, and the likelihood that the proposed project will achieve its stated goals and objectives.
3. **Anticipated Outcomes & Evaluation (20%).** This criterion assesses whether the proposal has clearly stated the anticipated outcomes of the project and provided a detailed plan for assessing progress towards the achievement of these outcomes. This criterion also assesses the significance of the expected outcomes and whether the proposed outcome measures are appropriate for the activities proposed.
4. **Societal Impact and Diversity (10%).** This criterion assesses the degree to which the proposed research will have a positive impact on society, specifically through the advancement of ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes legal research while considering diversity, equity, inclusion, justice, and/or accessibility. This criterion also assesses the extent to which the project provides opportunities for law student or other graduate student involvement.
5. **Qualifications and Past Record of Investigators (10%).** This criterion assesses whether the applicant and partners possess the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the proposed activities. This criterion also evaluates whether researchers previously funded by the National Sea Grant Law Center were successful in accomplishing their prior projects.
6. **Enhancement of Sea Grant Legal Capacity (15%).** This criterion assesses the degree to which the proposed project has the potential to improve the Sea Grant Program's long-term ability to address law and policy issues within their respective state.

Deadline and Submission Information

LOIs for one-year projects will be accepted on a rolling basis through August 1, 2026. Full proposals for one-year projects will be accepted on a rolling basis through October 1, 2026. Currently, the latest possible end date for any proposed project is January 31, 2028. Applicants must take this into consideration in their proposal timelines and allow for at least two months for

full proposal review and award prior to implementation. submitted to Lauren Fremin, Project Coordinator for the National Sea Grant Law Center, via email, lrfremin@olemiss.edu.

General questions about the funding opportunity and the scope of projects considered should be directed to Stephanie Otts, Director of the National Sea Grant Law Center, via email, sshowalt@olemiss.edu, or phone, (662) 915-7714. General questions about the application process should be directed to Lauren Fremin, Project Coordinator for the National Sea Grant Law Center, via email, lrfremin@olemiss.edu.

Timetable

Proposals for PD funds will be reviewed and selected on a rolling basis. The timeline for each submission therefore will vary. Generally, decisions on proposals are made within two months of submission and disbursements are made as soon as possible based on institutional requirements.