

Tips for Preparing Your Application to an Illinois-Indiana Sea Grant Research Competition

Project Summary

The project summary is intended to present a **concise** description of the funded activity in a form useful to a variety of readers. Some tips to consider for each section are included below.

Title

Project titles should be carefully constructed to give as much information about the project as possible in not more than two lines (about 16 words or less). Longer titles may be truncated. Sea Grant programs are reviewed by various audiences, where some of these may judge the content of a program from scanning a list of titles. The title of the proposed research project should be specific and descriptive of the activity, and should minimize the mention of geographic names.

PIs and Affiliations

For all investigators, the last name should be entered first. Please include the full first name and middle initial, e.g., Smith, Alpha B. Also insert the academic affiliation of the project leaders, (e.g., Northwestern University, Biology; University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Civil Engineering).

Partners

List partner organizations who are crucial to the success of the project but will not receive direct funding.

Abstract

If the competition you are applying to requests an abstract, try to include in that abstract a description of the objectives, methodology, and rationale, as described below.

Objectives

Objectives should preferably be stated such that it can be later determined whether or not they have in fact been accomplished. Objectives should begin with the word "To" followed by a verb stating the specific objectives and the practical ("real world") purpose of the project. In keeping with Sea Grant's mission, the most appropriate verbs are: test (the hypothesis), develop, provide, determine, isolate, characterize, identify, restore, implement. Less desirable but sometimes appropriate are: promote, conduct, analyze, apply, investigate, examine, describe. Some words, such as study, consider, continue, should not be used since failure to do these is indeterminable.

Methodology

Methodology should be relatively brief in the abstract but expanded upon in the plan of work. Specific questions that an interested person would ask about the proposed work should be answered, such as, which heavy metals? Which pollutants? Which pathogens? What species of fish? What kind of a model?

Rationale

The project rationale is a critical component of the summary, as it should explain why the proposed research is an appropriate Sea Grant project and is responsive to the particular RFP that has been issued. While the project need not promise to solve a problem fully, it should be shown that it is a logical step towards solution. Long involved background statements should be avoided, but the strongest projects typically identify the potential or intended users of the research, including how they will be engaged throughout the project.

Plan of Work

Formatting and Page Limitations

Pay close attention to the page limit in the RFP or instructions available in the online submission portal. Generally, projects should use 11-point or larger font. Margins should be 1 inch. Helpful figures should be incorporated throughout the document.

Suggestions for Particular Sections

Introduction, Background, Rationale

Include a clear statement of the question(s) to be addressed. The most significant published work in the field under consideration, including the work of key project personnel on the current application, should be reviewed. The current status of research in this field of science should also be described. Preliminary data pertinent to the proposed research should be included in this section. All work cited, including that of key personnel, should be referenced.

Concisely present the overall rationale, hypotheses and objectives behind the proposed research. The relationship of specific objectives to the potential long-range improvement in and sustainability of Illinois-Indiana Sea Grant and the National Sea Grant College Program, or to one or more of the research purposes, should be shown clearly. Any novel ideas or contributions that the proposed project offers should also be discussed in this section. Carefully review the RFP or RFA and demonstrate in this section how the project is responsive to the RFP/RFA.

Methodology/Approach

Explicitly describe the methodology being applied to the proposed project. Relate the methodology to the defined research questions, objectives and/or hypotheses. Specifically, this section should address the following areas as appropriate:

1. A description of the investigations and/or experiments proposed in the sequence in which the investigations or experiments are to be performed;
2. Techniques to be used in carrying out the proposed project, including the feasibility of the techniques;
3. Facilities and major items of equipment that are available for use or assignment to the proposed project during the requested period of support;
4. Means by which experimental data will be analyzed or interpreted;
5. Results expected;
6. Means of applying results or accomplishing technology transfer, where appropriate;
7. Pitfalls that may be encountered; and
8. Limitations to proposed procedures.

If the nature of the proposed project requires collaboration or subcontractual arrangements with other research scientists, corporations, organizations, agencies, or entities, identify the collaborator(s) and provide a full explanation of the nature of the collaboration. Evidence (i.e., letters of intent) should be provided to assure peer reviewers that the collaborators involved have agreed to render this service.

(Note: The Research Methods section should not necessarily be organized as subsections around these 8 issues. However, as appropriate these 8 issues should be addressed in the Research Methods section).

Anticipated Outcomes

Describe short- and long-term goal(s) of the proposed project, including opportunities for students. These often include presentations and research publications; however, research proposals that perform well through the Illinois-Indiana Sea Grant review process typically have clear and strong potential to

positively affect end users of information, even if impacts take several years to realize. In this section, also identify potential users of the information being developed in the project, how results will be communicated to these users, and how users will be engaged throughout the project. Users (sometimes known as stakeholder groups) are not limited to the following list but might include communities; businesses; local, state, or federal management agencies; educators; or a particular group of individuals who live or recreate in coastal areas. Include a clear plan for integrating research results with outreach efforts. Note that IISG specialists could be approached to help with outreach plans.

References or Works Cited

All references cited should be complete, including titles, and should conform to an accepted journal format.

Vitae

To assist reviewers in assessing the competence and experience of the proposed project staff, all personnel who will be involved in the proposed project must be identified clearly. Include a 2- or 3-page curriculum vitae for each principal investigator and for all senior associates and other professional personnel who expect to work on the project (including subcontractors), whether or not funds are sought for their support.

The curriculum vitae should be limited to a presentation of academic and research credentials, i.e., educational, employment and professional history, and honors and awards. Unless pertinent to the project, do not include meetings attended, seminars given, or personal data such as birth date, marital status, or community activities. NSF and NIH format is acceptable and but not required.

Current and Pending Support

List any other current public or private research support (including in-house support) to which any person who submits a CV for the proposal has committed portions of their time. Non-flexible funds, including PI and support staff salaries, overhead expenses, and square foot charges for greenhouse, laboratory, and office space, may be excluded when these funds are received through a non-competitive process. Analogous information should be provided for any pending proposals, including this proposal, that are now being considered by, or that will be submitted in the near future to other possible sponsors, including other Sea Grant programs. Concurrent submission of identical or similar proposals to other possible sponsors will not prejudice proposal review or evaluation. A proposal that duplicates or overlaps substantially with a proposal already reviewed and funded (or that will be funded) by another organization or agency, however, will not be funded under this program.

Letters of Support

Applicants may submit letters of support from relevant project partners. These will typically not count toward the total page limit. Letters from groups or individuals who will use the information generated are particularly helpful through the review process. In some cases, letters of support can also serve as evidence for a partner providing match (cost share) or otherwise supporting the project.