

PARTNERSHIP FOR RESEARCH EXCELLENCE IN SUSTAINABLE SEAFOOD (PRESS)

Request for Proposals (RFP) *Funding available 2023-2026*

Background

The goal of the Partnership for Research Excellence in Sustainable Seafood (PRESS) initiative is to provide a mechanism of funding allowing a nimble and rapid response to critical issues in the seafood sector *through interdisciplinary collaborative research* encompassing the seafood industry, academic institutions, state and federal agencies, and nongovernmental organizations.

The PRESS initiative will consider proposals with the potential to *positively impact the Rhode Island seafood system* by identifying and addressing emerging and pressing issues affecting that system. The goal of the funding is to complement, build upon, or enhance (not duplicate) other sources of federal, state, or private funding. Therefore, priority will be given to projects that provide a strong rationale of need and address urgent concerns facing the Rhode Island seafood system but are challenged to find funding elsewhere. Two types of funding requests will be considered:

- **Feasibility Projects**—Projects that seek to provide a proof of concept and/or will open the possibility for access to other funds. Project duration is limited to one year with a budget not exceeding \$30,000. Funded projects will be able to apply for a one-time, one-year no-cost extension if needed. Projects showing proof of concept will be considered for additional funding. No project end date can extend beyond September 30, 2026.
- **Operational Projects**—Projects targeted at implementation or more thorough study of issues or problems to develop solutions. Project duration will be one to three years with a budget not exceeding \$50,000 per year. Larger requests (up to \$100,000 per year) will be considered but must provide strong reasoning and show broad partnerships to support the need of the project. Funded projects will be able to apply for a one-time, one-year, no-cost extension if needed. No project end date can extend beyond September 30, 2026.

Eligibility

The PRESS initiative recognizes and respects that many different individuals and groups utilize, depend upon, contribute to, function within, and interact with the many unique components of the seafood system in Rhode Island. Proposals will be considered from all seafood system stakeholders, from producers to consumers. Examples of individuals and entities eligible for funding include, but are not limited to:

- Seafood industry members, including aquaculture, wild harvest, processing, marketing, shoreside, and customer-facing entities.
- Seafood-focused organizations, community groups, and nonprofits across Rhode Island.

- Research, academic, outreach, and extension professionals focused on seafood system topics, including graduate and undergraduate students in Rhode Island academic institutions under the supervision of an academic advisor.

The PRESS initiative will consider proposals with the potential to positively impact the Rhode Island seafood system by identifying and addressing emerging and pressing issues impacting that system. Successful funding requests will be:

- Collaborative projects involving partnerships from different sectors and with different stakeholders in the RI seafood system, such as between industry, academia, government, non-government, community groups, and/or consumer groups; AND
- Projects with strong outreach and extension components ensuring the translation of findings to the industry through training and/or education of different stakeholder groups.

Project leads or Principal Investigators (P.I.s) must have their place of business located in Rhode Island, have the organizational ability to manage project activities and funding, and at a minimum have a **UEI number (Unique Entity Identifier)**. Project partners can include experts from outside Rhode Island, however. It is encouraged that researcher/academic partners be the project leads on proposals to simplify the distribution of funds and management as well as to ensure robust research elements of the work being proposed.

Assistance is available to applicants from the PRESS Team to help match applicants up with potential partners, as well as directing applicants to other resources that can assist them in project development.

Funding Priorities

The following funding priorities have been developed based on feedback from stakeholders most familiar with and engaged in the RI seafood system. Examples of projects are included under each category as guidance/inspiration to potential applicants. Other areas will be considered for funding, provided a strong rationale for need is demonstrated as well as support from stakeholders in the Rhode Island seafood system.

ACCESS AND POLICY - Fostering diversity, equity, inclusion, access, and justice in the Rhode Island Food System

- Research that identifies mechanisms to increase access to affordable seafood to low-income populations in Rhode Island.
- Research and innovation that produces options for preserving commercial shoreside access and infrastructure.
- Research that leads to the development of materials and processes to better understand and apply for various crop insurance programs (e.g., Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program, Farm Service Agency, and Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees, and Farm-Raised Fish Program).
- Research on processes and plans for the succession of vessels, licenses and permits such that the fishing and aquaculture industry remains viable and sustainable, and that aspiring young fishermen have access to the same quality opportunities as those who came before them.

SUSTAINABLE HARVESTING AND GROWING - Research and technical assistance to support development and adoption of more environmentally sustainable and effective practices for aquaculture and fisheries

- Research that develops and/or pilots novel or alternative types of fishing gear and aquaculture technology.
- Research into the impacts and effects of marine debris on Rhode Island seafood production.
- Research and technical assistance to support adoption of more environmentally sustainable and efficient fishing gear, monitoring equipment, and/or operating practices.
- Research and technical assistance to support increased seed production, improved monitoring systems, development and adoption of more environmentally sustainable and/or labor-saving equipment and growing/harvesting processes for aquaculture businesses.
- Research on innovative methods that balance more efficiency in maintaining aquaculture operations with preserving scenic coastlines through low-profile aquaculture gear.
- Research on novel water treatments and biofouling control in aquaculture operations (e.g., nanobubbles, protein skimmers, and intake modifications to mitigate rust tide impacts).

FOOD SYSTEM RESILIENCE - Diversification in aquaculture and fisheries across the state as an adaptive strategy to challenges to seafood production

- Research that can lead to diversification of aquaculture crops and fishing portfolios as an adaptive strategy to climate change.
- Research on the adoption of polyculture techniques for application in Rhode Island (e.g., use of slower growing species mixed in with faster growth crops).
- Research on emerging species to diversify wild harvest fisheries.
- Research into the impacts of climate change on resource species and fishing communities, with focus on developing tools to mitigate impacts.
- Research that develops ecosystem-based fisheries management approaches or adaptive management tools.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS TO FOOD SYSTEMS - Evaluation of the impact of environmental change on local seafood production and development of methods, approaches, and policies to mitigate those impacts

- Research that investigates effects of pollutants on Rhode Island species.
- Research that develops hands-on or policy-oriented climate/pollution mitigation projects.
- Research on temperature-resistant shellfish strains (e.g., blue mussels) or emerging species suitable for wild harvest.
- Research the impact of storm events on the productivity, harvest, and quality of seafood.
- Research focused on reduction of energy use in all aspects of seafood production, harvesting, and processing.
- Research into the production of a sustainable, dependable supply of oyster seed to address hatchery challenges and production bottlenecks.
- Research into novel gear and management approaches to manage impacts of pollutants/diseases/toxins.

PROCESSING - Development, evaluation and implementation of environmentally sustainable processing equipment and operating practices

- Research and technical assistance to support adoption of more efficient processing equipment and operating practices.
- Research into improving yields and reducing costs to process currently underutilized local fish (scup, etc.).
- Research into and piloting of processing techniques for species not currently processed in RI, as well as in urban areas that do not currently have processing infrastructure.
- Research and technical assistance on organic waste disposal at fish processing plants to utilize different waste streams to: (1) alleviate the economic burden for companies sending waste to the landfill and (2) develop a desired soil fertilizer/additive for industrial agriculture purposes.

MARKETING - Development, evaluation, and/or implementation of novel marketing approaches geared to increase the resilience of the RI seafood system

- Research on processing (including value added) and marketing that increases the value of seafood caught or farmed in Rhode Island.
- Research on processing and marketing in underserved communities that represent untapped markets for processed local seafood species.
- Research into improved methods (higher quality, longer shelf life, lower cost) for processing seafood for wholesale and end-user markets.
- Research into mechanisms for improving consumer awareness about shared use of the coastline and the benefits of seafood to consumers and the Rhode Island economy.
- Development of marketing strategies that improve small seafood business viability.
- Research on market development for green crab and other non-native and underutilized species.
- Research on effective ways of treating shell waste from aquaculture operations to move it from the waste stream into secondary income streams.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT - Identifying and addressing gaps in resources supporting the viability and growth of seafood businesses in Rhode Island

- Providing opportunities to address the training needs of seafood businesses, including new employee training.
- Projects that identify trade skills and education required for success in seafood related businesses, including the training of hatchery workers/technicians.
- Projects that address educational gaps in K-12 to help ensure a future workforce in fisheries and aquaculture.
- Projects that create professional development opportunities relating to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, such as cultural awareness training, customer service, identifying and addressing microaggressions in the workplace, etc.

Application Process

PRESS is partnering with Rhode Island Sea Grant in using the eSeaGrant web-based software for all preproposal and full proposal development. Applicants must establish

new accounts or activate existing accounts in eSeaGrant by contacting Alan Desbonnet (aland@uri.edu); put “PRESS Application” in the Subject Line.

When requesting access to create a proposal, be sure to identify if you are applying to the **Feasibility** or **Operational** funding opportunity.

The PRESS Initiative is intended to be a mechanism to address urgent issues that arise in the RI seafood sector. As such, proposals for project work can be submitted at any time. The PRESS Coordinating Committee, composed of representatives from different sectors of the Rhode Island seafood system, will meet at least quarterly to evaluate and rank preproposals and full proposals based on the criteria described below.

A Preproposal is required - Preproposals will help to ensure project ideas fit the eligibility criteria before applicants invest significant time in developing a full proposal. It is also strongly encouraged that individuals reach out to the PRESS Team to discuss ideas before submitting a preproposal. This will help ensure best fit as well as allowing the opportunity to explore possible partnership strategies for the project. For instance, if you do not have academic and/or industry partners in mind, the PRESS Team can help you identify potential partners.

Schedule for the first round of funding proposals:

- March 27, 2023 – Preproposal submittal deadline.
- April 14, 2023 — Applicants notified of decision to submit a full proposal.
- May 26, 2023 — Full proposal submittal deadline.
- June 16, 2023 — Applicants notified of funding decisions.

Schedule for the second round of funding proposals:

- June 23, 2023 – Preproposal submittal deadline.
- July 14, 2023 — Applicants notified of decision to submit a full proposal.
- August 25, 2023 — Full proposal submittal deadline.
- September 15, 2023 — Applicants notified of funding decisions.

In general, preproposals will be accepted at any time and will be evaluated by the Coordinating Committee at their next scheduled proposal review meeting, to be held on a quarterly basis. A full schedule of targeted dates for applications, by quarter, is available at the PRESS website.

Preproposals

1. Reach out to the PRESS Team to discuss your idea. Contact Azure Cygler, RI Sea Grant Extension at acygler@uri.edu or (401) 874-6197.
2. Log in to your eSeaGrant account to develop a preproposal—details are available in eSeaGrant. Contact Alan Desbonnet (aland@uri.edu) to activate or create an eSeaGrant account.
3. Provide the requested information in the forms provided in the eSeaGrant application portal regarding yourself and the partners engaged in the proposed work.
4. Develop Project Concept (not to exceed 750 words, about 1 page). You may enter text directly in the eSeaGrant application portal or (recommended) work on your text in a

separate word processing document and copy and paste it into the eSeaGrant application portal. The Project Concept should include:

- a. Brief introduction of your organization or entity. Include a list of partners.
- b. Description of the problem or issue and the need for it to be resolved.
- c. Description of the activities you propose to undertake, how they address the problem or issue, and the methods proposed to address or resolve the issue. The reviewers should be able to understand what the problem is, why it should be addressed, and how you intend to address it.
- d. Description of the outcomes or what will result from your proposed project work. What impact will it have for resolving the issue, as well as how it will help the RI seafood system as a whole.
- e. Statement of the amount of funding being requested and a brief description of the budget categories (i.e., salaries, supplies, etc.). A full budget with detailed breakdown is not required in the preproposal, but reviewers must be able to understand what the funding will be used for. Include a brief rationale of why this project is an appropriate use of PRESS funding and why funds are not readily available from other programs for this work.

Considerations when writing your preproposal:

- Project leads must have their place of business located in Rhode Island.
- Participation and/or support from one or more sectors of the RI seafood system is required. For example, if you are an industry member, you need a research partner, and vice versa.
- Evidence of a strong outreach/technical transfer plan and demonstrated partnerships to move findings into application is required.
- Project duration of up to 3 years (starting in 2023) will be considered, but ALL projects must end by September 30, 2026.
- High-risk, innovative projects will be considered, but there should be reasonable potential for high reward to the Rhode Island seafood system.
- There is an expectation that project impacts will be realized in the short or mid-term (within 2-3 years of the end of the project).

Preproposals not selected for further development are eligible to re-apply provided they address issues and/or shortcomings provided as feedback from the reviewers. It is encouraged that these applicants reach out to the PRESS Team to discuss feedback before re-submitting.

Full Proposals

Applicants with successful preproposals will be encouraged to write a full proposal. The Coordinating Committee will provide feedback on the preproposal for consideration when preparing full proposals. The full proposal is developed in your eSeaGrant account and builds upon materials submitted in the preproposal. The full proposal will have a detailed budget, complete with justifications of expenses. While some deviation in project details and budget is to be expected, wide deviation between the preproposal and full proposal content and/or cost is discouraged.

Full proposals must include:

Cover Page (1 page max; template provided in eSeaGrant):

1. Project lead and partners with full contact information.
2. Type of project (Feasibility / Operational).
3. Proposed duration (anticipated start and end dates).
4. Abstract of the proposed work which includes rationale for the proposed work, description of the methods/process of conducting the proposed work, objectives of the proposed work, and anticipated outcomes for the broader RI seafood system.
5. Total funds requested.

Project Narrative (5 pages max, not including items 7 - 10, single spaced, 11/12 point font):

1. Description of the problem or issue to be addressed; relevance to the RI seafood system should be clearly articulated.
2. Project objectives.
3. Background information and context.
4. Approach and methods to be used.
5. Expected outcomes and impacts, including a description of the sectors and/or communities of the Rhode Island seafood system that would benefit from this project. The impact, including who is impacted and how, should be clearly articulated.
6. Team member roles in the project.
7. Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Justice, and Accessibility (DEIJA) Statement. Provide evidence on how the organizations involved in the project provide employment opportunities to Black, Indigenous and people of color (BIPOC) communities (not part of the 5-page limit).
8. Timeline with milestones (template provided in eSeaGrant, not part of the 5-page limit).
9. References cited (not part of the 5-page limit).
10. Biosketches (2 pages max per person; required for PI and co-PIs only; not part of the 5-page limit).

Budget Development

Budgets will be developed in eSeaGrant. Budgets for full proposals will be detailed and will require detailed justification for each expense listed. NO INDIRECT costs are allowed.

- Projects of any length will be considered, but no project end date can extend beyond September 30, 2026. Funded projects will be able to apply for a one-time, one year no-cost extension if needed.
- Each budget year begins October 1 and ends September 30 of the following year (e.g., 10-1-23 to 9-30-24). Your project Year 1 budget does not have to begin on October 1st but must have an end date of September 30th the following year. Earliest start date is July 1, 2023. Further detail is provided in the eSeaGrant budget module.

Proposal Evaluation

Full proposals will be evaluated and ranked by the PRESS Coordinating Committee. *Members with a conflict of interest will be excluded from all evaluation and ranking processes.* The following criteria will be considered in the review process:

RELEVANCE to the Rhode Island seafood system and **FIT** with PRESS goals **(25%)**

Does the project address a pressing issue affecting the Rhode Island Seafood System?

How critical and/or time sensitive is the issue?

Is PRESS the only available source for potential funding for this project? For example due to the project's subject matter, size, or applicant capacity or entity type?

How does your project center Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion?

IMPACT to the Rhode Island seafood system **(25%)**

What is the potential for positive impact to the Rhode Island seafood system?

Would those impacts be realized in the short to mid-term (2-3 years)?

Are the sectors of the Rhode Island seafood system that will benefit from the project those which are most negatively or positively impacted by the pressing issue?

Is the extension plan described in the stated outcomes? How will the impacts be measured?

Does the team provide a strong DEIJA statement? (i.e. - providing employment opportunities for BIPOC communities, etc.)

SCIENTIFIC/TECHNICAL APPROACH AND MERIT (25%)

Is the approach rigorous and well-designed?

Are the methods suitable for achieving the project objectives?

Is the project innovative (in the sense that it does not duplicate previous efforts)?

PROJECT FEASIBILITY (25%)

Is the team qualified to implement the methods and achieve the project objectives?

Does the team have, or have a plan in place to acquire, all the necessary resources, facilities, and permits if the project is funded?

Is the timeline adequate to complete the work described?

Funded Proposals

Successful full proposals will need to complete the following prior to award of funding:

- **National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Questionnaire**—All applicants must complete an abbreviated NEPA questionnaire which must be reviewed and approved prior to award of funding.
- **State and/or other permits**—Permits, such as state scientific collector permits or any necessary URI Institutional Review Board (IRB) or Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) approvals, must be in place prior to the start of a project. Those proposals that are selected for funding will need to have copies of any required permits and approvals; funding will not be released until copies of all required permits are in-hand.
- **Data Sharing**—A data sharing plan is required for all funded research except where limited by law, regulation, policy, or security agreement. Data, along with accompanying metadata, must be available to general users, free of charge and in a timely manner, generally no later than two (2) years after the project end date. Further details on Data Management Plan development are provided in eSeaGrant.

All funded investigators must complete annual progress reports and a project completion report within 3 months of the end of project funding. All reporting will be done through eSeaGrant; guidance will be provided to funded investigators. A NOAA data sharing plan will be required according to the schedule developed.

Partnership Opportunities in Research and Outreach

Graduate and Undergraduate Students—Graduate and undergraduate students enrolled in a degree program can be engaged in your project, giving them the opportunity to gain meaningful, practical research experience while developing valuable workforce development skills. Students may be the lead P.I. on a project provided they do so under direct supervision and mentorship of their faculty advisor.

Sea Grant Law Fellows—The Rhode Island Sea Grant Legal Program, located at Roger Williams University School of Law, can engage a Law Fellow to support legal or policy research questions related to your research project. For instance, a Law Fellow may be used to research regulatory, policy, or legal challenges to future multi-use of Rhode Island waters. Law Fellows are current law students with an interest in marine law and policy and strong writing and research skills. Legal Program staff work with researchers to identify and select projects, and they hire and oversee the Law Fellows and their work product. The cost of Law Fellow projects does not need to be included in your research project budget. If your research could benefit from inclusion of legal and/or policy research, or if you want to explore this opportunity further, contact Julia Wyman (jwyman@rwu.edu, (401) 254-4613).

Outreach, Communications and Workforce Development—Rhode Island Sea Grant extension, outreach, communications and workforce development specialists may be available to assist in moving project findings into practical application as well as informing the public. Contact information is provided below should you decide to explore the opportunity to engage Sea Grant professionals in your project.

Contact Information and the PRESS Team

Azure Cygler, RI Sea Grant Extension, (acygler@uri.edu) (401) 874-6197

Marta Gomez-Chiarri, URI Professor in Fisheries, Animal & Veterinary Sciences, PRESS Initiative coordinator, (gomezchi@uri.edu), (401) 874-2917

Alan Desbonnet, RI Sea Grant Assistant Director, (aland@uri.edu) (401) 874-6813

Monica Allard Cox, RI Sea Grant Communications, (allard@uri.edu) (401) 874-6937

Kim Ohnemus, RI Sea Grant Workforce Development, (kohnemus@uri.edu) (401) 874-6846

Julia Wyman, RI Sea Grant Legal Program, (jwyman@rwu.edu) (401) 254-4613

For more information about PRESS, links to this RFP and resources, and a list of PRESS Team and Coordinating Committee members, visit: <https://web.uri.edu/cels/press/>