



ANNOUNCEMENT
December 18, 2017

FLORIDA “PROTECT OUR REEFS” GRANTS PROGRAM
FUNDING FOR RESEARCH – EDUCATION – CONSERVATION

Scope

In general, Protect Our Reefs Grant priorities are similar to a number of coral reef research priorities such as those outlined by the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary Science Plan, the Water Quality Protection Program, the NOAA-Coral Reef Conservation Program, and other existing agencies/non-government organizations coral reef research program priorities. Because of the need to strategically focus the Reef Plate’s somewhat limited resources on critical challenges coral reef ecosystems are facing now and in the coming decades, priority for funding in all categories of POR proposals (research, education and conservation) are now on coral reef restoration, including the development of new coral restoration methods and technologies, along with maintaining coral genetic diversity and protecting resiliency in the restoration of coral reef ecosystems.

Priority focus will be on projects that significantly enhance the capabilities of coral reef ecosystem resource managers to more effectively use science-based information in promoting and implementing the restoration and long-term sustainable use of coral reef ecosystems using the outcomes of POR-funded projects.

It was expected that POR would focus on the priorities for the science of coral restoration for at least a five-year period beginning in 2017. Hurricane Irma resulted in significant devastation to Florida’s primary land-based and off-shore coral restoration research infrastructure of Mote Marine Laboratory in the Florida Keys. This land-based and off-shore infrastructure is a State asset utilized each year by hundreds of scientists and students from throughout the State of Florida, and from around the world.

In order to ensure that Florida-based scientific, conservation and education organizations are able to continue utilizing this critical land-based and off-shore coral restoration research infrastructure for the collection, analyses and distribution of scientific, education and conservation information to the research community; federal, state and local government agencies; education institutions; and the public, the POR program will temporarily suspend its regular annual competitive small grant program for a period of one (1) year in order to focus on the recovery efforts of this critical coral research and restoration research infrastructure. However, currently funded multi-year POR grants (PI must have stated in original proposal that the project was a two year proposal) in the first year of the grant cycle will remain eligible for proposal submission in 2018 in order to consider possible second year funding as originally proposed.

POR will resume its regular annual competitive small grant program in 2019. Priority focus will remain on projects that significantly enhance the capabilities of coral reef ecosystem resource managers to more effectively use science-based information in promoting and implementing the restoration and long-term sustainable use of coral reef ecosystems using the outcomes of POR-funded projects.

General guidelines

Significant consideration will be accorded to proposals that involve partnerships or collaboration with Mote Marine Laboratory facilities on Summerland Key, as well as the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission.. Evidence of any identified partnerships/collaborations with these institutions must be specifically detailed and documented with letters of commitment from the partnering/collaborating institution. While not required, significant consideration will be accorded to proposals that leverage Reef Plate funding with matching funds or the donation of in-kind services. Evidence of any identified matching funds or in-kind services must be specifically detailed and documented with letters of commitment from the providing institution.

The new facilities that comprise Mote's International Center for Coral Reef Research and Restoration on Summerland Key will offer a unique research opportunity for investigators, scientists and students. Contact Center Director, Dr. David Vaughan (DVaughan@Mote.org) for more information. In addition, housing is available and information about rates and availability can be made via our housing manager (Retti@Mote.org). For Vessel and Dive Operations contact Erich Bartels (EBartels@mote.org).

The IC2R3 ocean acidification experimental system is also available for researchers to carry out temperature and pH controlled research projects. Please contact Dr. Emily Hall (emily8@mote.org) for capabilities, scheduling and rates prior to submitting proposals.

Program funds may not be used in any way for lobbying as defined by the Internal Revenue Service or applicable Florida statutes or for development activities by the applicants.

Proposal Eligibility and Submission Deadline

Currently funded multi-year POR grants (PI must have stated in original proposal that the project was a two year proposal) in the first year of the grant cycle will remain eligible for proposal submission in 2018 in order to consider possible second year funding as originally proposed. Potential applicants should contact Bryan Davis (bdavis@mote.org) to confirm eligibility prior to submitting proposal for second year funding consideration. In order to be considered following confirmation of eligibility, proposals must be submitted as single PDF files to the following email address by 5:00 P.M. (ET) on March 1, 2018: by email to Bryan Davis (bdavis@mote.org). Please include the words "POR Proposal" in the subject line of the e-mail. Award notification is projected for mid-end-April 2018 and funds will be available as early as May 1, 2018.

Additional Guidelines

Based on our years of experience in evaluating proposals and overseeing projects, along with a more recent strategic thematic approach to more effectively target limited funds, the POR program has developed more specific guidelines to further assist potential proposers and reviewers. The following guidelines should be considered in the context of the overarching priority focus for funding projects that significantly address the restoration of coral reef ecosystems:

- Reef Plate grants are for special projects only and are not intended to fund the proposer's core operations.
- Research start-up grants should be used to initiate new and novel ideas that can assist our reef managers in the very near future and may not be eligible under traditional funding programs.
- When Reef Plate funds requested are only a portion of a larger project budget the activities they will directly support must be clearly defined.
- Given the high likelihood of longer-term funding needs to follow POR start-up grants, a detailed description of probable future sources and uses of the funds required must be provided.
- Additional consideration will not be given to matching funds where the request has been made but the potential commitment is pending.
- Projects that include volunteers or "citizen scientist" will only be considered if the participants are thoroughly trained and supervised by qualified individuals.
- Research projects must have the potential to produce tangible benefits in less than five years.
- Start up grants must have the potential for other funding in the future.
- Research projects must also have the potential for peer-reviewed published results.
- Capital requests for items such as mooring buoys and equipment won't be funded.
- Projects will only be considered for species that are more than simply transient users of the reef.
- Education projects must have clearly defined and appropriately targeted audiences, demonstrable needs, and measurable outcomes.
- All proposals must include a clear statement as to how specifically the proposed activities will significantly enhance the capabilities of coral reef ecosystem resource managers to more effectively use science-based information in promoting and implementing the restoration and long-term sustainable use of these ecosystems in an increasingly high temperature and more acidic marine environment.
- All publications and presentations resulting from POR funded projects must include a specific acknowledgement of the POR funding that enabled the project to be conducted.