

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

January 4, 2021

Background

There is significant concern for the health of Florida’s coral reefs, particularly in the face of recent natural disasters, disease, ocean acidification, and changes in water temperatures. The scientific community considers coral reefs around the world to be threatened and those of Florida to be at great risk. In addition to their environmental and biological importance, Florida’s reefs also contribute considerably to the State’s economy. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration suggests that coral reefs in southeast Florida have an asset value of \$8.5 billion, generating \$4.4 billion in local sales, \$2 billion in local income, and over 70,000 jobs. Coral reefs are not only a major economic driver, but a foundation of history, culture, and resiliency of Southeast Florida and the Florida Keys. Yet funding to help utilize the best available science and technology to restore and maintain the vitality of this critical ecosystem is limited.

Mote Marine Laboratory has been successfully leading the “Protect Our Reefs” (POR) specialty license plate for many years to help supplement traditional coral reef research and restoration funding sources. Since its launch, the plate has been extremely well received by the citizens of Florida. Mote makes a substantial proportion of the proceeds from the sale of these plates available through POR grants to build partnerships that support research, education (and outreach), and conservation efforts focused on the restoration and sustainable use of Florida’s coral reefs. During the fifteen years of the Mote POR Grant Program, Mote has received and reviewed 433 proposals, and grants have been awarded to 245 projects totaling over \$5.2 million.

Eligibility

Eligible organizations shall be based in Florida and engaged in coral reef research, education or conservation. Applicants must be a public agency, educational institution, or non-profit entity as designated by the IRS.

Funding Availability

The current 2021 funding cycle will represent approximately twelve months of Reef Plate revenue from 2020. Most awards this year will be between \$10,000 - \$15,000 with fewer medium-sized grants of approximately \$25,000-\$30,000. No more than two “Young-Investigator” awards (up to \$10,000 each) may be awarded to PI’s who are either within one year prior to receiving their PhD or within two years after receiving their PhD.

Process

In order to be considered, proposals must be submitted as a single PDF file to Kevin Claridge (kclaridge@mote.org) with copy to Bryan Davis (bdavis@mote.org) by 5:00 P.M. (ET) on February 26, 2021. Please include the words “POR Proposal” in the subject line of the e-mail. Award notification is projected for April 2021 with funds potentially available in May 2021.

A Proposal Review Committee of individuals with broad and diverse backgrounds in coral reef research, education, conservation and management has been organized to assist with grant applications. The Committee will be facilitated by Mote and charged with the review, evaluation and ranking of each accepted proposal. Outside experts will also be consulted to review the

proposals as may be necessary. The Committee will make recommendations to the Mote President & CEO for a final decision regarding which proposals should be selected and in what amounts.

Guidelines

Proposals must be related to Florida coral reef or coral reef ecosystem restoration and/or research of new restoration methods that further the enhancement of coral genetic diversity and resiliency.

- Highest priority will be given to proposals that involve collaboration with or use of Mote's Sarasota Coral Gene Bank or Elizabeth Moore International Center for Coral Reef Research and Restoration on Summerland Key (including the Climate and Ocean Acidification Ocean Simulator, more info is available on the Mote website at: <https://mote.org/locations/details/international-center-for-coral-reef-research-and-restoration>). Partnership with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, and other relevant Florida coral reef restoration organizations is also encouraged. Evidence of any identified partnerships/collaborations with these entities must be specifically detailed and documented with letters of commitment from the partnering/collaborating institution.
- Projects should have clear deliverables that can be completed within one year of funding.
- Multi-year projects may be considered, but each subsequent year will compete for funding as a new proposal on an annual basis.
- Research projects must have the potential for peer-reviewed published results.
- Education and public outreach proposals directly related to science-based restoration of coral reef ecosystems will be considered. Education projects must have clearly defined and appropriately targeted audiences, demonstrable needs, and measurable outcomes.
- Scientists that meet "Young-Investigator" criteria should note that on their application.
- While not required, consideration will be accorded to proposals that leverage POR funding with existing (not pending) matching funds or 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, and will be subject to possible Mote audit of grantee financial records to demonstrate evidence of such matching funds or in-kind services.
- 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.
- POR grants are for special projects only and are not intended to fund 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 POR 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.
- Conservation and restoration projects that include volunteers or “citizen/community scientists” will only be considered if the participants are thoroughly trained and supervised by qualified individuals.
- Capital requests for items such as mooring buoys will not be funded.
- Projects will only be considered for species that are more than simply transient users of the reef.
- 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.

Protect Our Reefs Proposals

Mote requires the submission of one electronic copy of the proposal in pdf format including:

The first page of the proposal will be the completed **Proposal Checklist** (attached below), which is designed to help the proposers make certain that they have complied with all of the requirements of the RFP.

Page two of the proposal should be a **Cover Letter** (one page maximum) that:

- briefly introduces the proposed project
- states the amount of funding requested
- establishes the applicant as a Florida based public agency, educational institution or non-profit entity
- agrees to the Grant terms and conditions
- designates a contact person including contact information
- is signed by the Project Leader

The **Project Description** (five pages maximum) should describe:

- critical research, educational or conservation areas to be explored
- project significance - how the proposed activities will enhance the restoration and/or sustainable use oversight capabilities of resource managers
- objectives of the proposal
- scope of work proposed
- deliverables
- deliverable timelines
- roles and qualifications of all team members
- scientific methods and procedures to be employed, if applicable

The proposed **Project Budget** (two pages maximum) should describe in detail all proposed expenditures over the life of the project. Personnel expenditures in particular should be sufficiently documented to enable the Review Committee to determine whether the resources will be

efficiently and cost-effectively utilized. The expenditures should include, but not necessarily be limited to:

- salaries
- fringe benefits
- equipment
- materials and supplies
- travel
- consultants and/or subcontractors
- other direct costs
- indirect or overhead costs - if indirect or overhead costs are proposed they should be no higher than the applicant's reasonable, usual and customary rates. An explanation of the rates should also be included as well as the identification of the applicant's cognizant agency, if applicable.

Supplemental documents that may be included are: references cited (one page maximum), CVs for each PI (2 page maximum per person), letters of support (one page maximum per letter) and in kind or matching funds commitment letter (one page maximum).

Proposals will be evaluated based on criteria relevant to coral reef restoration research, education (and outreach), and conservation. This will include:

- Rationale: how well the proposal addresses the project goals and objectives.
- Merit: how well the project advances the state of coral reef restoration research, education, or conservation initiative identified within the strategic priorities.
- Feasibility: ability of the project to be successfully completed within time and/or other constraints.
- Deliverables: the tasks of the project have clearly obtainable deliverables that can be readily accomplished.
- Qualifications: demonstrated ability of the Project Leader and/or team to integrate and complete the project successfully.
- Budget: the proposed budget must be reasonable and adequate to complete the proposed project.

Risk of delivery by the time and date required will be the sole responsibility of the applicant.

Required Deliverables

A detailed Interim Progress Report and a detailed Interim Financial Report will be due at the mid-point of the project year and no later than six months into the award period. A detailed Final Technical Report and a detailed Final Financial Report will be due at the end of the project and no later than twelve months into the award period. The acceptability of the Reports will be at the sole discretion of Mote Marine Laboratory. The POR Logo shall be prominently displayed on all Reports.

In addition, all successful applicants will be required to make a formal presentation of their project and the results it achieved. The Presentation may be made virtually or in-person at an Annual Meeting to members of the Grants Review Committee, other grant recipients, and interested members of the public. In addition to describing the project results achieved, the presentation should address how those results can be effectively utilized by resource managers.

Lastly, all successful applicants will be required to prominently display Protect Our Reefs license plate marketing materials when referencing any activities related to their funded POR projects. Computer-ready marketing materials can be obtained from the Mote Communications Team (acrabtree@mote.org).

Payment schedule

The final payment schedule will be determined upon review of the proposals recommended for funding. In general, successful projects will receive 50% of the awarded funds upon contract execution, 25% upon approval of the Interim Report and the remaining 25% upon approval of the Final Report. Payments at each increment will be based on spending to date.

Any questions about the Protect Our Reefs Grants Program should be directed to Kevin Claridge (kclaridge@mote.org) or Bryan Davis (bdavis@mote.org).

Proposal Checklist

Please complete this form and check the appropriate boxes to help you make certain that you have fully complied with the requirements of the RFP. Sign and return the form with your proposal.

- Page 1 Proposal Checklist

- Page 2 Cover Letter (1 page max)
 - Project Introduction
 - Amount Requested
 - Public Agency, Educational Institution or Non-Profit Credentials
 - Agreement to Terms and Conditions
 - Contact Person
 - Project Leader Signature

- Project Description (5 pages max) Page Number
 - Areas to be Explored _____
 - Project Significance _____
 - Proposal Objective (s) _____
 - Scope of Work _____
 - Proposed Deliverables _____
 - Deliverable Timelines _____
 - Team Roles and Qualifications _____
 - Scientific Methods, if applicable _____

- Project Budget (2 pages max)
 - Salaries _____
 - Fringe Benefits _____
 - Equipment _____
 - Materials/Supplies _____
 - Travel _____
 - Consultants/Subcontractors _____
 - Other Direct Costs _____
 - Indirect/Overhead Costs _____

- Additional Consideration
 - Matching Funds _____
 - In Kind Donations _____
 - Partnerships or Teaming _____

Printed Proposal Title: _____

Printed Lead Agency: _____

Printed Project Leader: _____

Project Leader Signature: _____ Date: _____

Institutional Signature: _____ Date: _____