

MOTE MARINE LABORATORY AQUACULTURE TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER INITIATIVE REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Opening date: July 24, 2026 - Mote has received significant interest in the Aquaculture Technology Transfer Request for Proposals (RFP) and is therefore extending the proposal submission period such that review of all proposals will now begin on September 14, 2026 and award decisions expected by September 30, 2026. This RFP has also been revised to include additional information for clarification. Applicants who have received a confirmation of submission do not need to resubmit, unless any changes or additional information is being provided.

Background

The Mote Marine Laboratory Aquaculture Technology Transfer Initiative (Initiative) was established to accelerate the adoption and implementation of innovative technologies that advance sustainable land-based marine aquaculture throughout the State of Florida's farms and ranches. Through strategic investments in technology transfer, workforce development, commercial demonstration, and industry partnerships, the Initiative seeks to strengthen Florida's agricultural economy while expanding domestic production of safe, sustainable, and locally produced seafood.

Florida possesses significant natural, scientific, and agricultural resources that position the state as a national leader in land-based marine aquaculture innovation. Over the past several decades, advances in recirculating aquaculture systems (RAS), water treatment technologies, environmental monitoring, and production management have demonstrated the potential to sustainably produce a diverse range of aquatic products including seafood, and other high-value marine products using environmentally responsible land-based production systems. Despite these advances, adoption by commercial producers has been constrained by technical, financial, and workforce barriers that limit broader implementation across Florida's agricultural sector.

Recognizing these opportunities and challenges, the Florida Legislature provided funding to establish the Aquaculture Technology Transfer Initiative. The Initiative is administered by Mote Marine Laboratory (Mote) in partnership with the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS) to facilitate the transfer of proven technologies and best management practices from research and demonstration environments into commercial agricultural operations.

The Initiative is intended to serve as a catalyst for sustainable industry growth by supporting Florida farmers and ranchers interested in implementing innovative marine aquaculture. Through competitive grants, technical assistance, workforce training, and industry collaboration, the Initiative will reduce barriers for innovative technology adoption while improving operational efficiency, environmental sustainability, and economic competitiveness. The Initiative highlights the demonstration, validation, commercialization, and transfer of technologies that are capable of near-term implementation within Florida's agricultural community. Projects funded under this Request for Proposals should demonstrate clear potential to improve commercial production, enhance business viability, increase workforce capacity, and/or accelerate the adoption of sustainable aquaculture technologies throughout the state.

Mote is administering this competitive funding opportunity on behalf of the Initiative and will coordinate program implementation, technical oversight, reporting, and technology dissemination activities in collaboration with FDACS and participating project partners.

Funding Priorities

The first year of the Initiative will focus on projects that demonstrate the implementation and transfer of commercially applicable technologies capable of advancing sustainable marine aquaculture production on farms and ranches in Florida.

Priority funding areas include, but are not limited to:

- Construction and/or optimization of marine finfish production with recirculating aquaculture systems

(RAS) by existing farms and ranches.

- Development and validation of innovative water treatment, filtration, biofiltration, solids management, or water reuse technologies.
- Automation technologies that improve production efficiency, reduce labor requirements, or enhance operational reliability.
- Remote monitoring, sensor integration, or data management systems that improve production performance and operational decision-making.
- Technologies that improve oxygen management, water quality, energy efficiency, or environmental performance.
- Marine finfish grow-out technologies that improve production capacity or animal performance.
- Innovative production systems that improve environmental sustainability while increasing commercial productivity.
- Business development activities that improve commercialization, operational planning, investment readiness, or long-term financial sustainability of aquaculture enterprises.

No funding match is required. However, applicants proposing projects that leverage additional financial resources, property or existing infrastructure, private investment, or in-kind contributions, are encouraged to identify those contributions within their proposals.

Capital expenditures that directly support implementation or demonstration of proposed technologies may be considered when adequately justified within the proposal budget. Funding may also support equipment, materials, personnel, contractual services, training, and other project-related expenses necessary to achieve the objectives of the Initiative.

Mote shall provide industry-need driven science and best management training to support the project awarded farmers and ranchers at both Mote Aquaculture Research Park, and subsequently at the participating facilities. Mote shall also conduct all fish spawning and fry production at Mote Aquaculture Research Park for subsequent transfer to participating farm and ranch aquaculture grow out operations facilities. Additional collaborations with Mote scientists and utilization of Mote's Aquaculture Research Park facilities are encouraged where appropriate but are not required for eligibility.

Required Recognition of the Initiative

All publications, reports, presentations, outreach materials, training programs, demonstration activities, and other products resulting from projects funded through this Initiative shall acknowledge support provided by the Aquaculture Technology Transfer Initiative and its partnership with Mote and FDACS.

Additional acknowledgement requirements and contract conditions may apply and will be incorporated into award agreements.

Eligibility

This Request for Proposals welcomes submissions from Florida farmer and rancher operations capable of successfully implementing projects that meet the Initiative's objectives of marine finfish production within the available timeframe (May 31st, 2027).

All applicants shall be subject to applicable federal, State of Florida, and contractual requirements established by Mote and FDACS.

Funding Availability

Funding for the initial year of the Aquaculture Technology Transfer Initiative is anticipated to total up to **\$600,000**, subject to annual legislative appropriations and execution of funding agreements. Individual awards

are expected to range from **\$100,000 to \$500,000**, although Mote reserves the right to make awards outside this range when determined to be in the best interest of the Initiative. 50% of award funding will be discharged at contract execution, 25% at achievement of initial proposal goals, and the final 25% based upon project progress.

Projects are expected to have been fully expended and invoiced by May 31st 2027, with final reporting due up to 30 days after final expenditures.

Mote reserves the right to recommend full funding, partial funding, or no funding for any proposal received and may negotiate project scope, deliverables, budgets, and award conditions prior to execution of grant agreements.

Process

Mote is administering the Aquaculture Technology Transfer Initiative funding on behalf of FDACS. Mote will oversee the proposal solicitation, review, selection, contracting, and administration processes for this competitive grant program. Funding recommendations will be based upon the merit of submitted proposals, available funding, alignment with Initiative priorities, and the potential of proposed projects to accelerate technology transfer and commercial adoption of land-based RAS marine finfish production within Florida's farming and ranching industry. An independent Technical Review Committee will evaluate proposals and provide funding recommendations to Mote.

Consistent with the Initiative's emphasis on technology transfer and commercial adoption, the Committee will include representatives from the commercial aquaculture industry, technology developers, equipment manufacturers, and other private-sector stakeholders with experience implementing innovative production agriculture and aquaculture technologies. Additional subject matter experts from academia, government, or nonprofit organizations may also participate as needed to provide technical expertise. Mote will make the final determination regarding awards, funding levels, project scope, and associated grant conditions.

Proposals

The first page of each proposal shall consist of the completed **Proposal Checklist** provided as Appendix A of this Request for Proposals. Proposals shall be submitted as a single PDF document and shall include the following components:

Cover Letter (One Page Maximum) shall briefly introduce the applicant organization, Project Leader, and proposed project. The letter should summarize how the proposed work supports the goals and objectives of the Aquaculture Technology Transfer Initiative and identify the total amount of funding requested.

The cover letter shall also include: Project title, Name of the Project Leader, Organization name, Designated project contact, Mailing address, Telephone number, Email address, Requested funding amount, Signature of the Project Leader or Authorized Representative.

Project Description (Five Pages Maximum) should provide a clear and concise description of the proposed project and its anticipated benefits to Florida's aquaculture industry. The narrative should include the following sections:

Project Summary - Provide a brief summary describing the proposed project and its anticipated outcomes. This summary may be used by Mote for public communications should the proposal receive funding.

Scope of Work - Describe the activities that will be completed during the project period, including implementation methods, technology deployment, operational procedures, training activities, demonstration efforts, or other proposed work.

Applicants should clearly identify: Major project tasks, Milestones, Responsible personnel, Expected

completion schedule. Please describe any existing infrastructure which may be used for executing the project (i.e. fresh or saltwater access, building structure, existing permits, available land, etc.).

Expected Outcomes - Describe the anticipated technical, operational, environmental, workforce, and economic outcomes expected from completion of the project. Where appropriate, applicants should identify measurable performance indicators, such as:

- Workforce trained
- Producers engaged
- Technology adoption
- Commercial implementation
- Other measurable project outcomes

Project Team - Describe the qualifications, experience, and responsibilities of the Project Leader and all key personnel participating in the project. Resumes or curriculum vitae may be included as appendices and will not count toward the page limitation.

Project Budget (One Page Maximum)

Applicants shall submit a detailed budget describing all proposed project expenditures. The proposal should describe, in detail, all proposed expenditures over the life of the project. Personnel expenditures in particular should be sufficiently documented 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 (including the presentation to the Initiative Technical Advisory Council described in the Program Deliverables below); consultants and/or subcontractors; other direct costs; and indirect or overhead costs.

Proposal Deadline

To be considered for funding, proposals must be submitted electronically as a single PDF document. The file name should follow the format:

ProjectLeader_ProjectTitle.pdf

Proposal review will begin September 14, 2026 and award decisions are expected by September 30, 2026

Proposal Submission

Completed proposals shall be submitted electronically to: [eiavarone@mote.org] and CC [nrhody@mote.org] The email subject line should include:

Aquaculture Technology Transfer Initiative Proposal – Project Leader – Project Title

Questions regarding proposal preparation or submission should be directed to the above contacts.

Site Visits

Mote will conduct a minimum of three (3) on-site visits over the course of the project to provide technical assistance, assess project progress, and offer recommendations to support successful implementation.

Appendix A - Aquaculture Technology Transfer Initiative Proposal Checklist

Please complete this checklist and include it as the first page of your proposal submission.

- ☐ Cover Letter (1 Page Maximum)
 - Project Title
 - Principal Investigator / Project Leader
 - Institution or Organization
 - Brief Project Overview
 - Description of How the Project Supports Initiative Objectives
 - Funding Amount Requested
 - Designated Contact Person
 - Contact Information
 - Authorized Signature
- ☐ Project Description (5 Pages Maximum)
 - Executive Summary
 - Scope of Work
 - Technology Description
 - Project Timeline
 - Milestones
 - Expected Outcomes
 - Technology Transfer Plan
 - Performance Metrics
 - Team Roles and Qualifications
- ☐ Project Budget (1 Page Maximum)
 - Personnel
 - Fringe Benefits
 - Equipment
 - Materials and Supplies
 - Construction/Infrastructure (if applicable)
 - Travel
 - Consultants or Subcontractors
 - Other Direct Costs
 - Indirect Costs
 - Matching Funds (if applicable)
 - In-Kind Contributions (if applicable)

Additional Information

- Letters of Support (Optional)
- Curriculum Vitae or Resumes (Excluded from Page Count)
- Other Supporting Documentation (Optional)

Project Title: _____

Project Leader: _____

Institution/Organization: _____

Authorized Signature: _____