

SEAGRASS RESTORATION TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Open: December 13th, 2024 – January 31st, 2025

Background

Seagrass is critically important to the ecology and economy of coastal ecosystems, serving vital functions for various fisheries, nursery habitats for a variety of keystone species, shoreline/sediment stabilization, absorbing nutrients, carbon storage, and coastal resilience. Unfortunately, seagrasses are being rapidly lost due to both indirect and direct anthropogenic impacts, including the broader effects of global climate change. A science-based restoration effort is needed to address diminishing seagrass habitat, distribution, and diversity.

The Florida Legislature and Governor, in recognizing the need for innovative seagrass research to guide coastal restoration, passed the Seagrass Restoration Technology Development Initiative (Initiative, [403.9334 Florida Statutes](#)). Under this statute, it is the intent of the Legislature to establish a collaborative and coordinated effort among public and private research entities to develop restoration technologies and approaches to address the loss of seagrass and the cascading ecological and economic impacts of that loss to communities across Florida.

The goal of the Initiative is to develop, test, and implement innovative, effective, cost-efficient, and environmentally sustainable technologies and approaches for restoring coastal seagrass ecosystems. The Initiative is established within the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) as a partnership between the [Florida Aquatic Preserve Program](#), [Mote Marine Laboratory](#) (Mote), and the [University of Florida](#) (UF). The legislation requires the Department to award funds to Mote to function as the lead administrative component to achieve the goals of the Initiative.

Initiative Objectives

- (1) Develop and operate a seagrass research nursery with various statewide seagrass populations at [Mote's Aquaculture Research Park](#) for this Initiative. Develop and grow partnerships to establish additional seagrass nurseries across the state to further this Initiative's research goals.
- (2) Test the resilience of different statewide seagrass populations to multiple environmental stressors in controlled lab and nursery settings to determine the most genetically resilient seagrass. Collaborate with coastal restoration practitioners to develop sustainable sources of the resilient seagrass.
- (3) Develop and maintain a genetic library of Florida seagrass to utilize statewide restoration efforts.
- (4) Facilitate engagement with other pertinent marine science and technology development organizations to pursue applied research and technology for the successful restoration of seagrass ecosystems.
- (5) In collaboration with the Florida Aquatic Preserve Program, Mote and UF shall create a [10-year Florida Seagrass Restoration Plan](#) to implement tools and technologies developed under the Initiative.

- (6) Leverage state-appropriated funds with additional funds from private and federal sources to further the goals of the Initiative.

As stated in 403.93344 Florida Statutes, Mote may, with the concurrence of DEP, use a portion of the awarded funds to facilitate additional engagement with other pertinent marine science and technology development organizations in Florida and around the world to pursue applied research and technology development for the restoration of seagrass. Thus, the focus of this Initiative grant funding is directed toward the development of innovative applied science technologies and approaches to restore seagrass communities.

Funding Priorities

Year 2 of the Initiative will focus on:

- **identifying the genetic diversity of seagrass populations and associated environmental stressors across Florida;**
- **developing a genetic library of Florida seagrass;**
- **testing the resilience of different statewide seagrass populations to multiple environmental stressors in controlled lab and nursery settings;**
- **testing for specific genes that confer resilience to multiple environmental stressors within statewide seagrass populations**
- **examining existing seagrass restoration technologies and planting techniques, and/or conduct planning efforts and pursue regulatory approval for testing novel seagrass restoration technologies;**
- **organizing and encouraging collaboration among the scientists and restoration practitioners working on Florida seagrass genetics to achieve the goals of the Initiative (this will be partially accomplished through this RFP and Initiative Technology Advisory Council meetings).**

Please refer to [DEP's Statewide Ecosystem Assessment of Coastal and Aquatic Resources \(SECAR\)](#) database to review habitat data and determine potential environmental stressors in your geographic research area.

No funding match is required, but proposals that request funds as a portion of a larger project budget or activity must be clearly defined. Use of Mote facilities and infrastructure developed as part of the Initiative is encouraged as capital requests for lab-based equipment or infrastructure will not be funded – field testing and field research/pilot implementation equipment and capital requests are allowable. Funded projects may utilize the Mote seagrass facilities at no charge, according to the Facility Use Agreements provided during the funding/contracting process. Coordination, collaboration and/or partnership of proposed projects with DEP, Mote, and UF scientists is encouraged, but not required.

Required Recognition of the Initiative

All publications, presentations, and field testing resulting from funded projects must include a specific acknowledgment of the Seagrass Restoration Technology Development Initiative funding and partnership with the DEP, UF, and Mote. Additional contract conditions and requirements may apply.

Eligibility

This Request for Proposals is open to any and all organizations, but shall be subject to laws of the United States and Florida and contracting requirements and conditions of DEP and Mote. Please also see the Florida Sunshine/Public Records Law section below.

Funding Availability

The second year of funding for proposals is estimated at ~\$1 million to primarily focus on new and novel approaches to seagrass restoration, with an emphasis on genetic research and its incorporation into the restoration process.

It is anticipated to be awarded in \$50,000 to \$250,000 amounts to 4 to 8 organizations for support of a not to exceed 12-month project period. Based on outcomes of these one-year projects, current and future awardees may subsequently request a second year of funding through the Request for Proposals.

Process

Mote is administering the Initiative funds from the State of Florida through a DEP Contract for this partner-led granting opportunity. Mote will make the final decision as to which proposals will be funded and the related grant conditions.

Proposals

The first page of the proposal should be the completed “Checklist” (attached), which is designed to help proposers make certain that they have complied with all of the requirements of the Request for Proposals.

The proposal should also consist of a cover letter (one page maximum) that briefly introduces the principal investigator, institution/organization, proposed project and how it will address the intent of the Initiative, funding requested, and designates a contact person including contact information, and is signed by the Project Leader.

The project description (five pages maximum) should describe the critical restoration technologies being researched. The description should include the objectives of the proposal, the scope of work proposed, the goals to be achieved, the proposed deliverables and the deliverable timelines. Please include a one paragraph, short summary of the scope of work to be used for future communications purposes. In addition, the roles and qualifications of all team members should be described. If applicable, the description should also include a detailed discussion of the scientific methods and procedures to be employed.

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 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. 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. Any non-Federal entity that has never received a negotiated indirect cost rate, except for those non-Federal entities described in 2 C.F.R, may elect to charge a de minimis rate of 10% of modified total direct costs.

Proposals will be evaluated based on criteria directly relevant to seagrass restoration and technology development. This will include: Rationale- how well the proposal addresses the project goals and objectives; Merit- how well the project advances the state of seagrass restoration and technology implementation; Feasibility- ability of the project to be successfully completed within time and/or other constraints; Qualifications- demonstrated ability of the Project Leader and/or team to integrate and complete the project successfully; Budget- is the proposed budget reasonable and adequate to complete the proposed project.

Proposal Deadline

In order to be considered, a proposal must be submitted as a single PDF file named as: Principal Investigator_Project Title. Please submit proposals via email at proposals@seagrassinitiative.org by 5:00 P.M. EST, January 31st, 2025. Please include the Principal Investigator and Project Title in the subject line of the e-mail. Award notification is projected for 60 days after the proposal submittal deadline.

Mote requires the submission of one electronic copy of the proposal. Risk of delivery by the time and date required will be the sole responsibility of the applicant.

Program 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. All funded applicants will be required to make a presentations at the Initiative [Technology Advisory Council](#) meetings and/or Initiative Workshops.

Payment Schedule

The final payment schedule will be determined upon review of the proposals recommended for funding. However, 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.

Florida Sunshine/Public Records Law

Article I, section 24, Florida Constitution, guarantees every person access to all public records and Chapter 119, Florida Statutes, provides a broad definition of public records. All proposals are public records and available for public inspection unless specifically exempt by law.

If a proposer believes that any portion of the documents, data or records submitted in a proposal are exempt from Florida's Public Records Laws, the proposer must

(1) clearly segregate and mark the specific sections of the document, data or records as “Confidential,” (2) cite the specific Florida Statute or other legal authority for the asserted exemption, and (3) provide Mote with a separate redacted copy of its proposal (the “Redacted Copy”). The cover of the Redacted Copy shall reference the Initiative, and shall be clearly titled “Redacted Copy.” Only those portions of records that are claimed as specifically exempt from disclosure under Florida’s Public Records Laws should be redacted. If a Redacted Copy is not provided then Mote is authorized to produce all documents, data and other records submitted in a proposal in response to a public records request for such information.

If a Redacted Copy is provided, then in the event of a public records or other disclosure request under Florida’s Public Records Laws or other authority to which the proposal documents, data or records are responsive, Mote will provide the Redacted Copy to the requestor. If a requestor asserts a right to any redacted information, Mote will notify the proposer that such an assertion has been made. It is the proposer’s responsibility to respond to the requestor to assert that the information in question is exempt from disclosure under applicable law. If Mote becomes subject to a demand for discovery or disclosure of the redacted information under legal process, Mote shall give the proposer notice of the demand prior to releasing the redacted information (unless otherwise prohibited by applicable law). The proposer shall be responsible for defending its determination that the redacted portions of the information are not subject to disclosure.

The proposer shall protect, defend and indemnify Mote from and against all claims, demands, actions, suits, damages, liabilities, losses, settlements, judgments, costs and expenses (including but not limited to reasonable attorney’s fees and costs) arising from or relating to the proposer’s assertion that all or any portion of its information is not subject to disclosure.

If a proposer is successful and is funded, the proposer shall:

(a) Keep and maintain public records that pertain to carrying out the project;

(b) Provide the public with access to public records on the same terms and conditions that Mote would provide the records and at a cost that does not exceed the cost provided in Chapter 119, Florida Statutes, or as otherwise provided by law;

(c) Ensure that public records that are exempt from public records disclosure requirements are not disclosed except as authorized by law; and

(d) Meet all requirements for retaining public records and transfer, at no cost, to Mote all public records in possession of the proposer upon completion of the project or the discontinuation of funding. All records stored electronically shall be provided to Mote in a format that is compatible with the information technology systems of Mote.

Questions

Any questions about the Seagrass Restoration Technology Development Initiative should be directed to Kevin Claridge at kclaridge@mote.org or 941-388-4441 ext 275 and Eve Iavarone at eiavarone@mote.org or 941-388-4541 ext 138.

Seagrass Restoration Initiative Partner Led Grant Proposal Checklist

Please complete this form and check the appropriate boxes to help 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 Title
 - Principal Investigator
 - Institution/Organization
 - Brief Project Overview and Why Project Addresses Initiative Focus
 - Funding Amount Requested
 - Agreement to Terms and Conditions
 - Contact Person and Contact Information
 - Project Leader Signature
- Project Description (5 pages max)
 - One paragraph project overview
 - Research Description
 - Proposal Objective
 - Scope of Work
 - Deliverables to Achieve Initiative Goal
 - Deliverable Timelines
 - Team Roles and Qualifications
 - Scientific Methods, if applicable
- Project Budget (2 pages max)
 - Salaries
 - Fringe Benefits
 - Equipment
 - Materials/Supplies
 - Travel
 - Budget for any Consultants/Subcontractors
 - Indirect/Overhead Costs
- Additional Consideration
 - Matching Funds or In-Kind Work
 - Partnerships
- CV's or References (do not count in page count)

Proposal Title: _____

Principal Investigator(s): _____

Institution/Organization(s): _____

Project Lead Signature: _____ Date: _____

Institutional Signature: _____ Date: _____