



**FLORIDA RESTORE ACT CENTERS OF EXCELLENCE PROGRAM**

**REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS IV**

**FUNDING OPPORTUNITY NUMBER: FLRACEP-2022-01**

**Release date:** July 6, 2022

**Letters of intent due:** August 15, 2022

**Full proposals due:** October 17, 2022

**Contact Information**

Send questions, LOIs, and applications to: [flracep@usf.edu](mailto:flracep@usf.edu)

Prepared by the Florida Institute of Oceanography, Gulf Coast State Entity for Florida's RESTORE Act Centers of Excellence Research Grants Program



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## Background

The Florida RESTORE Act Centers of Excellence Program (FLRACEP) is issuing its fourth request for proposals (RFP IV). FLRACEP grants are awarded via a competitive, peer-reviewed process and subject to available funds. FLRACEP's vision is for sustainable Gulf Coast Region ecosystem goods and services, including living resources, fisheries and wildlife habitats, beaches, wetlands and coastal communities. Our mission is to engage a broad base of non-governmental participants, including institutions of higher education, with interest and expertise in science, technology, and monitoring to support a healthy Gulf of Mexico environment and economy.

Please see the FLRACEP Rules and Policy Document available at <https://www.fio.usf.edu/programs/flracep/> for additional detail.

## Opportunity overview

**A total of \$2 million is available for Center of Excellence (CoE) grants addressing RESTORE Act eligible disciplines.** The collaborative grants are expected to address disciplines 1 and 5 for projects up to three years. It is anticipated that each awarded grant will address both of these disciplines:

**Discipline 1:** Coastal sustainability, restoration, and protection, including solutions and technology that allow citizens to live in a safe and sustainable manner in a coastal delta in the Gulf Coast Region

**Discipline 5:** Comprehensive ecosystem observation, monitoring, and mapping

**Project Length:** 24-36 months

**Available funding:** \$2,000,000

**Anticipated number of awards:** 1-3

## Needs description: Restoration Impacts

As billions of dollars have been invested in Gulf-wide coastal restoration efforts since the Deepwater Horizon Oil spill, there is a need to understand their ecological, economic, and social impacts, so that we can collectively learn from their successes and failures, and prepare for the next 30+ years of restoration projects.

Proposals should address the impacts of new, current, or recent coastal restoration efforts (e.g., oyster, submerged aquatic vegetation, wetlands, etc., see Brooks and Alfasso, 2022; NOAA Gulf Spill Restoration; NAS, 2022). Teams are encouraged to include members with expertise across sectors in areas including ecosystem science, restoration and resource management, modelling, experimental design, monitoring and mapping, economics, and social sciences. Successful proposals will address the long-term effects of restoration projects in a changing environment (e.g., sea level rise, tropicalization, increased frequency and severity of storms). Collaborative,



transdisciplinary, multi-agency proposals are encouraged to address a combination of the following questions:

- How effective are current environmental restoration efforts?
- What are the cumulative effects of multiple restoration projects conducted within a geographic area (e.g., impacts beyond the project scale)? What are the synergistic and antagonistic effects between and among multiple restoration projects?
- What is the value of restoration (ecosystem, economic, socio-economic)?
- What are the ecosystem functions of existing restored sites vs. natural areas?
- What can be learned from the results of restoration projects across different spatial scales or geographic regions?
- What are the ecosystem benefits 10-15 years after one or more restoration projects are complete? What are the long-term (multidecadal) benefits of restoration efforts?
- What does the future environment look like with or without restoration?
- How can restoration efforts adapt to changing environmental conditions and have improved outcomes over time?

## Eligible Entities

The lead institution of a FLRACEP grant must be a Florida-based (i.e., headquartered and primarily operating in Florida), non-governmental public or private institution of higher education (lead Principal Investigator (P.I.) from same) or other not-for-profit institution. The Florida-based headquarters must primarily operate in Florida in the area of ocean and coastal research, support an established infrastructure capable of receiving and administering a federal grant, and have a history of successful grant management. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) with national headquarters elsewhere may utilize their Florida offices that meet these conditions. Other partnering entities (including non-profit or for-profit entities, government agencies, and public or private companies) from in or outside Florida are encouraged.

**Successful applications will have diverse teams with complementary skillsets and include student, early career researchers, and end-users. Women, minorities, and underrepresented groups are strongly encouraged to apply.** Applicants should list the members of their team with a clear delineation of each person's role(s) and responsibilities.

## Project Locations

As required by the RESTORE Act, field efforts must be located in the Gulf Coast Region (as defined at 31 C.F.R. §34.2), which includes oceans and coasts off coastal counties that border the Gulf of Mexico, from 25 nm inland from the coastline to the offshore boundary of the Exclusive Economic Zone. FLRACEP prioritizes projects occurring between Escambia and Monroe counties in Florida.



## Submission Procedures and Timeline

Please review the FLRACEP Rules and Policies document for all programmatic requirements before submitting an application (<https://www.fio.usf.edu/programs/flracep/>). Pre-proposal LOIs and full proposals should be submitted electronically in Adobe PDF format to the FLRACEP program team at [flracep@usf.edu](mailto:flracep@usf.edu). Please note all projects should plan April 7, 2023 as a start date, the anticipated date of sub-agreement execution.

## Key Activities & Dates

RFP IV Release	July 6, 2022
RFP IV Webinar	July 15, 2022, 2 p.m. Eastern Time
Letter of Intent	August 15, 2022, 5 p.m. Eastern Time
Letter of Intent feedback to P.I.s	September 6, 2022
Full proposal	October 17, 2022, 5 p.m. Eastern Time
External science review of proposals	October 31-November 7, 2022
Program Management Team review and decision	November 28-December 2, 2022
Decision letters sent	December 5, 2022
Project sub-agreements executed/project start date	April 7, 2023

## Evaluation criteria & funding decisions

Funding made available through this solicitation will depend upon the quality of proposals received and the budgets proposed by successful applicants. FLRACEP reserves the right to select for negotiation all, some, one, or none of the proposals received in response to this solicitation.

Category (weight)	Criteria
Project Management (10%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expertise and track record of P.I.</li> <li>• Realistic and reasonable timeline, tasking, and budget</li> <li>• Collaboration with a diverse team of researchers and existing programs</li> </ul>
Project Design and Responsiveness to Research Priorities (50%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The importance of the project in terms of addressing critical information gaps</li> <li>• The quality and viability of the research project proposed to address it</li> <li>• The technical and scientific merit of proposed methods and project design</li> </ul>
End-user Collaboration (30%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engagement with appropriate end-users in all aspects of the proposal preparation, research, and publication of results</li> <li>• Partnership with a management authority on the project team (Letter of participation from end-users)</li> </ul>
Broader Impacts (10%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The project directly contributes to knowledge or understanding of habitat restoration practices and impacts</li> </ul>



## Pre-Proposal Letter of Intent Requirements

**All applications are required to submit a pre-proposal Letter of Intent (LOI) not to exceed three pages using 12-point font.** Each LOI must include a title page that will NOT count toward the 3-page limit. The title page should include the title of the proposal, a list of any co-PIs, and PI contact information: name, title, affiliation, mailing address, e-mail addresses, phone numbers, and web page (if any).

The 3-page limit for the rest of the LOI includes literature cited, photos, figures, and all supporting information. The LOI should clearly articulate a problem statement, methods to address the issue, including sources of restoration project information proposed for inclusion in the assessment, anticipated outcomes, project timeline, and budget information (including any matching funds).

Applicants should submit a brief CV (2 pages or less) for the PI as an appendix to their LOI (not included in the 3-page limit).

LOIs will be reviewed by the Program Management Team to assess fit for the program and feedback provided (e.g., full proposal encouraged/discouraged) to the applicant by September 6, 2022. Full proposals can be submitted regardless of the LOI feedback. LOIs allow FLRACEP to begin identifying appropriate reviewers.

**LOIs missing required information or exceeding the page limitations will be returned without review.**

## Full Proposal Requirements

The body of the proposal **must not exceed ten pages**, using no smaller than 10-point font, exclusive of cover page, bibliography, budget pages, curricula vitae (CV), and supporting materials.

### Cover Page (limit 1 page)

- **Title:** The full title of the proposal
- **Principal Investigator (PI) information:** Please list only one (corresponding) principal investigator, affiliation, address, phone, website, and e-mail
- **Team information:** Names and institutions of other team members
- **Financial & Administrative Point of Contact (POC):** An individual within the institution responsible for contractual and fiscal matters, address, phone, and e-mail
- **Requested award amount:** Total amount requested for the project

### Proposal Body (limit 10 pages)

- **Project Summary:** Provide a project description including identifying the research goals and objectives, the methods to be used to address the problem/knowledge gap(s),



potential scientific impact, and the utility or application of the work. Please limit the summary to 300 words.

- **Project Narrative:**

- **Knowledge Gap:** Provide a brief review of the specific question(s) this proposal is seeking to address and any past or related efforts by the research team or others. Indicate knowledge gaps, shortfalls of prior efforts, successes in other regions, etc., and describe how the applicant(s) will incorporate this information into the proposed work. Cite relevant literature, studies, and datasets.
- **Goals and Objectives:** Provide clear statements of both the general goal of the proposed project and the specific objectives that will be addressed within the scope of this proposal to make progress toward that goal. Provide a discussion of the importance or significance of the project, and how it relates to addressing the RFP topic area, proposal problem statement, and anticipated outcomes related to conservation, management, restoration, and/or strategic planning.
- **Approach:** Provide a detailed description of the methods, including procedures for evaluating the effectiveness of the measures proposed and a detailed timeline of activities. Applications must include a timeline and milestone chart in this section. Specify the role(s) of key personnel within the research project, and the number of postdoctoral researchers and graduate students involved.
- **Permits:** Please describe the permits required, process and timeline to obtain these, or submit copies of permits already received to support this research. Applicants must have all necessary federal, state, and local government permits by April 7, 2023 and must be able to provide a copy of required permits prior to starting field research.
- **Data Management:** A strong commitment to data management and sharing is required. Provide a description of data and sample types and a plan for data management, storage, sharing, and dissemination. Note that all datasets must be archived in GRIIDC (Gulf of Mexico Research Initiative Information and Data Cooperative) regardless of other data management plans.
- **Anticipated Outcomes:** Describe the short-term outcomes anticipated to occur within the scope of effort and time span of the proposed project (e.g., one or more peer-reviewed journal articles, publication of a science framework, regional workshops) and how these support management, conservation, restoration, and/or strategic planning in the topical area.



- **Application:** Describe the how the research need was identified and fits the needs of the end-user, and how proposed work temporally and spatially aligns with decision-makers' needs and will better inform future restoration activities.

## Budget

Provide an annual budget for each of the years of proposed research and a summary budget, as well as a detailed budget narrative. Follow the categories from the required FLRACEP annual budget sheet (available at <https://www.fio.usf.edu/programs/flracep/>). The budget should be consistent with the needs and complexity of the proposal and clearly link spending to different objectives or tasks from the proposal body. FLRACEP funds may not be used for the acquisition or construction of physical infrastructure (including, but not limited to ships, autonomous underwater vehicles, or laboratories), except where specifically pre-authorized by FLRACEP.

Budgets must include travel expenses for at least one P.I. to attend the annual 2-day FLRACEP All-Hands meetings to be held in the St. Petersburg, Florida area.

**The use of Florida Institute of Oceanography vessels is encouraged and vessels are available without additional cost to the project.** The desired number of FIO vessel days must be detailed in the narrative. Please see <https://www.fio.usf.edu/research-vessels/> for more information. The use of non-FIO vessels must be included in the project budget.

## Policy on Indirect Costs

Due to the limited funding available, FLRACEP limits indirect costs (IDC) for all Centers of Excellence research grants and contracts to ten percent of the direct costs, and IDC may not be charged on either tuition or ship time.

## Curricula Vitae and Research Team Qualifications (limit 2 pages each CV)

Provide a biographical sketch and short curriculum vitae **of no more than two pages** for each of the key members of the proposal team (those individuals whose background and experience are essential to completion of the project), including their relevant expertise, experience, and publications and archived datasets related to the proposal. Although there can be only one corresponding principal investigator, multiple co-investigators can be included in this portion of the proposal. These are not counted in the page total. Please provide a letter of support from the end-user team member.

**Proposals missing required sections or exceeding the page limitations will be returned without review.**

## References

Brooks, S. and A. Alfasso, 2022. An Accounting and summary of oyster restoration projects in the Gulf of Mexico funded by Deepwater Horizon oil disaster funds. Report to: Florida Wildlife Federation Inc.





NAS (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine), 2022. An Approach for Assessing U.S. Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration: A Gulf Research Program Environmental Monitoring Report, Washington, DC: The National Academies Press.  
<https://doi.org/10.17226/26335>.

NOAA Gulf Spill Restoration. <https://www.gulfspillrestoration.noaa.gov/>

## Florida RESTORE Act Centers of Excellence Application Conditions

Principle investigators submitting proposals in response to this RFP (FLRACEP-2022-01) agree to the following conditions:

1. By applying in response to this RFP, each lead PI, institutional partner, and co-PI agrees to be bound by all terms and conditions of the FLRACEP Rules and Policies; applicable terms and conditions are not negotiable, but may be updated as needed.
2. All proposals will be treated as new efforts; each proposal must be a stand-alone document without need to review or consider linked materials.
3. As required by the RESTORE Act, field efforts must be located in the Gulf Coast Region (as defined at 31 C.F.R. §34.2), which includes oceans and coasts off coastal counties that border the Gulf of Mexico, from 25 nm inland from the coastline to the offshore boundary of the Exclusive Economic Zone. For this RFP, emphasis will be placed on fieldwork in waters off Florida from Monroe County (Gulf-side only in the Florida Keys including Florida Bay) north to Escambia County.
4. Grants must be hosted by a Florida-based (i.e., headquartered and primarily operating in Florida) non-governmental public or private institution of higher education (lead PI from same) or other not-for-profit institution. The Florida-based headquarters must primarily operate, or have a regional office in Florida, in the area of ocean and coastal research, have an established infrastructure capable of receiving and administering a CoE grant for the full project length, and have a history of successful grant management.
5. Other partnering entities (including non-profit or for-profit entities, government agencies, and public or private companies) from in or outside Florida are encouraged. Personnel from any of the partnering institutions should be reimbursed appropriately for their time commitment to the research program based on the salary structures at their home institutions/organizations. The tasks that they lead will be open in nature and may include work by undergraduate or graduate students, and postdoctoral research associates as appropriate.
6. All research staff conducting activities financed, directly or indirectly, wholly or in part, by the FLRACEP are subject to, and must comply with, the terms of the FLRACEP Rules and Policies. All activities must be carried out under professional standards of responsible conduct in research [e.g., as defined by the best practices outlined and described in the U.S. National Academy of Sciences “On Being a Scientist: A Guide to Responsible Conduct in Research. Third Edition” (2009), National Academies Press].
7. An individual may only be the lead Principal Investigator (PI) on one CoE grant proposal, but may participate in others in any other capacity. It is the responsibility of the submitters to confirm that each member of the entire team is within the eligibility guidelines.



8. Each PI, co-PI and anyone being paid salary from a CoE grant will be required to submit a Conflict-of-Interest Disclosure Statement form, available on the FLRACEP website.
9. For grants that involve fieldwork and sampling, lead PI is responsible for submitting an Environmental Checklist form, available on the FLRACEP website.
10. Cost sharing or matching is not required for CoE grants.
11. Consistency and uniformity standards for allowable costs, and audit standards requirements for non-profit organizations expending federal awards, including their grant recipients, are defined in the federal Uniform Grant Guidance (2 CFR 200).
12. Protocols for monitoring, sampling, observations, measurements collection and processing, and related record-keeping must be consistent with requirements of the Natural Resource Damage Assessment under the Oil Pollution Act of 1990, as described in the Guidance Document for Natural Resource Damage Assessment Under the Oil Pollution Act of 1990- Appendices G and H (NOAA, 1996). PIs are responsible for compliance with local, state, or federal requirements related to their research program, including ensuring they have any permits required to conduct their research; if applicable, copies must be provided to FLRACEP.
13. Intellectual property funded by a FLRACEP grant will reside with the responsible investigator's home entity. FIO, in consultation with PIs, may at any time use photos, data, results, and appropriate documentation to highlight and publicly share FLRACEP accomplishments and outcomes. Whenever possible, work conducted under FLRACEP grants is expected to result in publications in peer-reviewed (refereed) journals, or equivalent media. Publications and datasets that contribute to the published work must be assigned a Digital Object Identifier (DOI) to facilitate public access.
14. All data and derived data products and metadata must be made publicly available within one year of data acquisition, before publication that relies on the data, or before the end of the grant, whichever is soonest. FLRACEP will utilize the Gulf of Mexico Research Initiative Information and Data Collaborative (GRIIDC) to archive metadata records. Metadata records submitted to GRIIDC must be accompanied by the related datasets, regardless of if they are also permanently archived elsewhere. These requirements are intended to promote reproducibility, integration with other oil spill response and restoration programs, and advancement of knowledge and utility to engineers, researchers, and managers.
15. CoE grant recipients will be required: to submit quarterly progress reports with financial statements (in order to justify cost-reimbursable quarterly payments) in a specified format as defined in grant sub-agreement terms and conditions; and to participate in FLRACEP all-hands meetings (2 days in St. Petersburg, FL, area; costs to be included in proposal budget). The FLRACEP program office will coordinate with grantees to fulfill reporting requirements, and will maintain records for all grants, publications, presentations, reports, and activities of each grant.