

Fishing for Good Ideas: Writing a Fishery Resource Grant

The North Carolina legislature created the Fishery Resource Grant Program in 1994 to help protect and enhance coastal marine resources and the state's fishing heritage. Legislative leaders were concerned about the growing demands on our state's coastal waters, and they felt members of the fishing community have good ideas about managing coastal assets.

The Fishery Resource Grant Program (FRG), the first of its kind in the nation, was started to provide coastal residents and members of the fishing community with funds to test their ideas for improving or protecting limited marine resources.

FRG funds research in four areas:

- New Fisheries Equipment or Gear
- Environmental Pilot Studies
- Aquaculture/Mariculture
- Seafood Technology

Each year, the FRG Committee approves funding priorities within each of these areas.

The committee has 11 members: three from North Carolina Sea Grant, two from the N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries, two from the Marine Fisheries Commission, and one from each of the commission's four regional advisory councils.

Grant applications can be obtained from North Carolina Sea Grant offices in Raleigh, Manteo, Morehead City or Wilmington. They are also available online at www.ncsu.edu/seagrant. Follow links to the research pages.

Sea Grant calls for proposals annually and conducts workshops so that applicants can discuss their ideas. The deadline for submitting proposals is usually about two months after the call for proposals.

How Grants are Awarded

To be eligible for funding, applicants must be significantly involved in a fishing industry, such as commercial or recreational fishing, aquaculture,

mariculture or the handling of seafood products. Proposals submitted by those not involved in these industries will be considered only if they include co-investigators who are engaged in fishing industries.

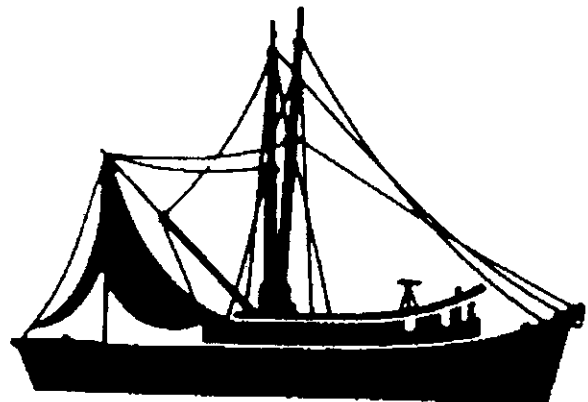
Sea Grant sends proposals to reviewers who are industry and academic experts in each of the four main categories. They evaluate proposals for technical merit.

Sea Grant then considers these evaluations and reviews each project for relevance to the current funding priorities. It then convenes the FRG Committee, which selects the projects to be funded. The committee will fund a project only if it anticipates an applicant can successfully complete it.

Proposals are given one of three ratings:

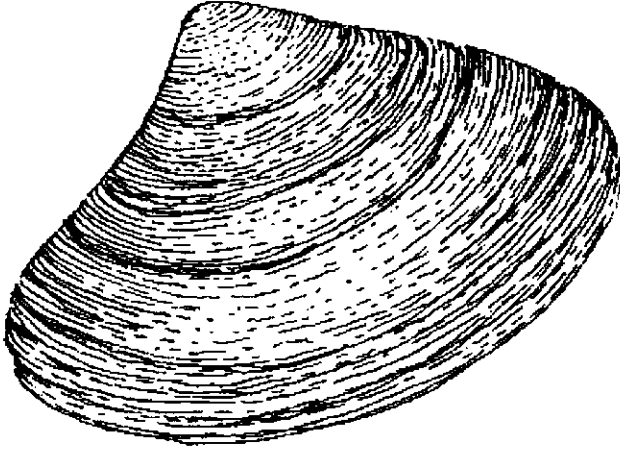
1. The proposal is approved as is, or with minor changes.
2. The idea is sound, but the proposal needs revision or clarification in order to be funded.
3. The proposal is not technically sound and will not be funded.

Proposals that fall into Category 2 are worthwhile but need finetuning, such as a better



description of research methods or a better plan for how the results will be shared with others.

In these cases an applicant may be asked to revise and resubmit the proposal so that it has a better chance of being funded and successfully completed. The FRG Committee wants to give full consideration to all good ideas.



Sea Grant Can Help

You may be thinking, "I'm not much of a writer, so why should I bother trying for one of these grants?" Why? Because you may have an idea worth funding. Good ideas for preserving our coastal resources are likely to come from the people who depend upon the health and viability of the waterways.

Sea Grant staff — at locations in Raleigh and along the coast — are available to help you put your ideas on paper. They know the details needed in a proposal. Also, they can help you to better explain your ideas and design your work so your project has a better chance of succeeding.

All applicants are required to review their ideas with Sea Grant staff members before submitting final proposals. You can hold a presubmission conference by telephone, e-mail or at an FRG workshop. The dates and locations of the workshops are announced in advance of the deadline for submitting proposals.

But for staff members to be of real benefit to you, have your ideas outlined as well as you can before seeking assistance. Have a clear idea about what it is you want to do and how you think it ought to be done. Sea Grant assistance is most useful once you have done some homework on the proposal.

Be sure to contact Sea Grant early in the proposal cycle so there is adequate time to help you develop your ideas. Often there are others ahead of you with requests.

An Opportunity and a Responsibility

An FRG project is a great opportunity to explore ideas that could improve our state's various fisheries. FRG provides funds to develop projects you might not be able to accomplish on your own.

Costs for projects vary considerably depending on the complexity of the work to be done or costs for special equipment or personnel required to do the work.

When your project is accepted, and you sign the award sheet, you are agreeing to do the work you outlined in your proposal.

You will receive 25 percent of your grant award from Sea Grant when you start your project. Each subsequent payment will be sent after you complete and submit a Request for Reimbursement Form. If more than 25 percent is requested at any time, proper justification must be given. The final 25 percent of the grant will be held until the project is completed and your final report is approved by the FRG Committee.

A monitor will be assigned to assist you from start to finish. One of the requirements of the program is that you send your monitor brief quarterly reports discussing your efforts. The person assigned to you will be knowledgeable in your area of work, and may be able to suggest solutions if you run into problems.

Your final report should describe what you proposed to do, what you did and what you discovered. After completing a project, you may find you did not get the results you expected. Unexpected results from your research can provide useful information to resource managers.

Getting Started

Take a look at the FRG application form. Sections 1 through 14 are easy to fill out. You are asked to give a title to your project, some personal information, the county or counties where your work will be conducted, the names of any other participants, the priorities your project will address, and previous FRG projects awarded to you.

A list of current priorities is included with each application. To see a list of completed projects and abstracts, visit the Sea Grant web site at www.ncsu.edu/seagrant. Follow the research links to the FRG pages.

You will need to calculate how much money you will need to carry out your work and how long it will take to complete. The legislature allows funding for projects up to two years long.

In Section 12, the beginning date is the date when funds are needed to begin work. The completion date should reflect the date of submission of the final report plus 120 days. This will allow time for project review and final payment.

Be sure to keep accurate records of expenses and the funds you receive just as you would for any business. Monies received by you or your collaborators are taxable income. NC State University will send you a 1099 form at tax time.

Don't forget to include your Social Security number and, if you fish commercially, your fishing license number as well as your federal identification number.

Writing Your Proposal

Sections 15 through 19 are the heart of the application. This is where you tell what the problem is, what you want to do and how you intend to carry out your project. You can be brief when answering these seven questions, but you should include enough detail to make it clear what you want to accomplish. Your explanations should be understandable even to someone not in your line of work.

Remember, however, that proposals are limited to three pages not including the budget or supplementary information.

In describing the problem you want to address or what you plan to do, you may want to cite data published in books, magazines or fishery publications. Citing publications shows that you are aware of other work being done in your field and also reinforces reasons your proposal is important.

One source for previous studies is the list of FRG projects on Sea Grant's web site at www.ncsu.edu/seagrant. Follow the research links to the FRG pages.

Take a look at Section 15. A project idea could begin as, "Regular trawls accumulate too much bycatch." Explain why this occurs and what benefits might be realized if the situation were resolved.

If you are aware of other work that addresses this problem, you can refer to it here. You may also want to tell what makes your research different or how it could result in new or different information.

That will lead you into Section 16. Describe your objectives and how they will address the problem. For example: "My work is designed to reduce the bycatch in trawling by changing the mesh size of the nets."

Section 17 is very important because what is written here will explain your methods for testing your objectives. You need to show you have thoroughly planned what you are going to do.

Explain what kinds of tests you will do, how they will be performed and how you will evaluate your results. You are laying out a work plan, and it must show that you can generate meaningful results from

your study.

To continue the example, describe in as much detail as possible the mesh size of your nets and how, when and where you plan to test them.

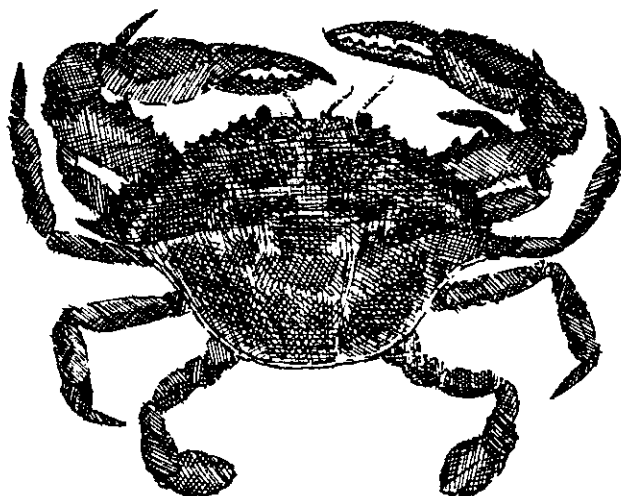
Section 18 asks you to tell how the outcome of your work will resolve the problem you described in Section 15. Using our example, you might write, "Reducing bycatch will allow trawling for a marketable catch while improving profit margins by having less material to sort on board. It will also conserve a nontargeted species."

Generating new information is important, but, to be worthwhile, your findings must be shared with others in related fishing industries.

In Section 19, describe how you intend to publicize your results. Sea Grant staff can help you decide how your work can best be publicized. Industry trade shows, newsletters, workshops and news publications are all acceptable means to promote your work. And you will want to take advantage of more than one of these to reach the widest possible audience.

Some projects might make good Sea Grant publications. Discuss this option with Sea Grant staff during proposal development. Be sure to include publishing costs in your budget.

Sections 20 and 21 ask you to describe the roles of any collaborators, and the personal experiences or education that qualify them to help you with your project. Sea Grant often can suggest an



academic researcher — such as a graduate student, technician or faculty member — who has experience in your field. Letters from collaborators should be attached to your proposal confirming that they intend to participate in your project.

For instance, if you will require the assistance of a biologist from the Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF) to help you evaluate how effective your nets were in reducing bycatch, a letter from the DMF biologist agreeing to perform a statistical analysis must be included with your application.

Section 22 requires you to develop a budget that anticipates expenses for conducting your work. Figures must be rounded off to the nearest dollar, and your numbers *must be reasonable*.

Be sure to include any subcontracts for laboratory support, consultants or other services. You will need to justify your expenses in Section

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23. Make sure that your individual cost estimates add up correctly and that the total amount requested matches the amount entered in item 11.

Finally, be sure to sign and date your application. Applications received without a dated signature will be rejected as incomplete. Mail or deliver your proposal to **Fishery Resource Grant Program, NC Sea Grant, Box 8605, NC State University, Raleigh, NC 27695-8605**. Hand-delivered applications must arrive — or mailed applications postmarked — no later than 5 p.m. on the deadline day. Late proposals will not be considered for the current funding year.

For more information or to obtain the name of a Sea Grant specialist nearest you, contact Bob Hines, FRG coordinator, at the Sea Grant office in Morehead City at 252/222-6312 or by e-mail: rjhines@unity.ncsu.edu.

— J. Barry Nash



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