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**OCEAN
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Monitoring, Research, and Modeling to Support Ocean Acidification, Hypoxia, and Marine Harmful Algal Bloom Management in California

FAQ Document

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General Grant Program Information

Question	Answer
The LOI template asks to select 'Track 1' or 'Track 2'. Is it permissible to submit an LOI for a project that selects both Track 1 and Track 2?	Yes, it is acceptable to combine the topics of Ocean Acidification and Hypoxia (OAH) and harmful algal blooms (HABs) in one proposal if it is an integrated project. If they are separate projects, they should be submitted separately.
Will projects be scored higher if they combine tracks 1 and 2?	No, they are both important water quality concerns on their own.
Could you speak more to the level/approach to community engagement to make for a competitive proposal for this Request for Proposals (RFP)?	<p>The outreach and community engagement approach is flexible.</p> <p>See scoring criteria for letter of intent (LOI) (Section III.C) and scoring criteria for full proposals (Section III.E) for information on how community engagement will be scored.</p>
How would the evaluation criteria weigh the relative importance of original and novel science versus 'management actionable" science?	Management actionable science is a key piece of scoring criteria for full proposals (Section III.E). The Ocean Protection Council (OPC) supports both novel ideas and those building off prior work.
How important is demonstrating a pathway to scalability for statewide management efforts?	Regional studies are valuable given the heterogeneity of California's coastal and marine environments. However, we also value information that is applicable statewide. Both types of proposals are acceptable.
Is there a prioritized list of organisms/ecosystems that OPC is interested in understanding the impacts of OA?	No, OPC is interested in all organisms impacted by OAH.

<p>If a proposal includes three objectives that are well linked to each other, but only one of them is strongly tied to solicitation priorities, would that proposal meet LOI scoring criteria?</p>	<p>All project objectives should be closely tied to RFP priorities. OPC may provide brief comments on LOIs that are invited for full proposals, which could include suggestions for better alignment with priorities.</p>
<p>How is the RFP considering federal efforts that seem duplicative with the stated RFP priorities? There seems to be overlap with ongoing activities at the federal level (e.g., the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration; NOAA)</p>	<p>This RFP is meant to be synergistic with NOAA activities, complimenting and augmenting federal efforts, especially for CA specific needs.</p>
<p>The RFP states that Projects collecting in situ monitoring data should submit data for consideration in the State Water Resources Control Board Integrated Report, which requires a Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP; see Section II.C). Do QAPPs need to be mentioned in the LOI?</p>	<p>No, but they should be included as a deliverable for the full proposal phase.</p>
<p>In Section III.D (Full Proposal Phase) the RFP says that projects must provide proof that environmental requirements and permitting requirements will be met. Is this just recognizing that we are aware of the necessary permitting requirements and that we have plans to get them, or do we need permits in hand?</p>	<p>Permits do not need to be in-hand by the full proposal phase. If invited to submit a full proposal, applicants must include a list of all state and federal permits/authorizations required to complete the project, including whether these permits/authorizations have already been acquired. All projects must provide CEQA compliance or exemption documentation prior to project start date.</p> <p>If selected for funding by OPC staff, permits must be acquired by Council meeting (September 22, 2026).</p>

Eligible Applicants & Partners

Question	Answer
Can you work with out of state contractors or co-co-principal investigators (PIs)?	Out of state applicants are eligible; however, it is encouraged that out-of-state PIs or institutions partner with a California PI or institution. Out of state applicants may experience higher scrutiny, and at a minimum, all selected projects must benefit the state of California.
Can you work with international contractors or co-PIs?	Decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis. OPC funds can generally be disbursed to an international entity, so long as the project and all subcontractors comply with Executive Order N-6-22 (Sanctions against Russia). However, strong justification should be provided for including the contractor/co-PIs. International applicants are subject to higher scrutiny, and at a minimum, all selected projects must benefit the state of California.
Are there any restrictions on who the primary applicant can partner with (e.g., CA state agencies)?	Partnership with other state agencies is allowed (see Section III.A. Grant Eligibility).
Is there a preference for which type of institution a lead PI is from (e.g., nongovernmental organization vs academia)?	No, this is flexible and does not factor into the scoring at all as long as your organization is eligible.
Can post-docs be the PI on a proposal if their university approves?	Yes.

Funding & Availability

Question	Answer
How many projects does OPC anticipate funding?	OPC has not committed to a particular number of projects we intend to fund. A total of \$6M is available, and projects may request funding amounts between \$200,000 and \$3M. The number of projects funded will depend on how much funding the top ranked projects are requesting.

Application Process & Timing

Question	Answer
Do all partnerships have to be finalized at the time of the LOI submittal? Recognizing that presumably the total budget and funding categories submitted in the LOI are set.	We understand that partnerships are often fluid and forming at the LOI stage and will take that into account.
How many LOIs will move on to the full proposal phase?	All LOIs that score full points will move on to the full proposal phase. There will not be a competitive selection process, and proposals will be reviewed individually with respect to scoring points.
How strict are we adhering to the LOI template guidelines? Can we cut the header to make room?	Please adhere to the template as it, without alternation of headers, as this allows all applicants the same amount of space to provide their information.
Do tables and references count towards the page limit?	No.

Eligible Project Types & Activities

Question	Answer
Are studies within freshwater ecosystems/wetlands that flow into marine/marine influenced areas within scope of the RFP?	Studies of the impacts of freshwater HABs on marine ecosystems are within scope. Purely freshwater studies are not within the scope of the RFP.
If an OAH project develops a tool that could be applied to biological systems in the future (though not in the current proposed project), does it align with RFP priorities?	OPC is prioritizing project outcomes that directly analyze/enhance understanding of impacts to biology. It is preferred that there is a clear biological connection, rather than theoretical or potential impacts.
Can a person apply as a PI on two different projects?	Yes.
Through this solicitation, is it possible to request equipment (e.g., atmospheric CO2 monitoring devices) for an existing project?	This solicitation will not fund projects that only propose purchasing equipment for existing efforts. If equipment purchases are tied to a qualified research project, they will be considered.
Is marine carbon dioxide removal (mCDR) within the scope of this solicitation?	No.

Grant Administration & Budget

Question	Answer
What was the total funding for Track 2, HABs?	\$6M is available for the entire solicitation, with no specific allocation for each track.
Can you please confirm the max indirect/overhead rate allowed for this RFP?	<p>Applying IDC (overhead) is optional (meaning no IDC may be applied). Although, the general OPC IDC rate is 15%. OPC has approved IDC rate of 25% upon discretion of the Executive Director, for entities with justification (such as significant field programs).</p> <p>Please note that OPC/California Natural Resources Agency will not pay an IDC rate over 25%. However, OPC does not control the rate applied to subcontractors managed by a grantee.</p> <p>When creating a project budget, IDC (overhead) is typically not applied to subcontractors (meaning, OPC will not pay overhead to a grantee to manage their subcontractors) or equipment (materials valued over \$5,000 per item). However, this may be approved on a case-by-case basis with strong justification.</p>
Can this grant cover salaries? If so, how much/what proportion	Yes, full salaries may be covered.
OPC General Grant Guidelines state “Grantees are responsible for project maintenance and operation for at least 10 years, and in many cases 20-30 years, as specified in the grant agreement” (see Section 5.3). What does this entail?	This clause states that project outcomes must have long-term benefit to the state.

<p>Can grant funds be used to purchase equipment (e.g., long-term monitoring equipment)?</p>	<p>OPC considers an item “equipment” if the value is greater than \$5,000. Equipment may be leased, rented, or purchased – whichever is most economical. If purchased, the equipment’s residual market value must be credited to the project costs upon completion. Equipment owned by the grantee may be charged to the project for each use.</p>
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