



Request for Proposals for 2021 Alabama Center of Excellence (ALCoE) Investigators

Release Date: January 6, 2021
Letters of Intent due: February 12, 2021
Full Proposals due: March 19, 2021

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Contents

I. Introduction and Description	3
II. Research Opportunity	6
III. Award Information	6
IV. Eligibility Information	7
V. Evaluation Information	8
VI. Application and Submission Information	9
VII. Significant Dates and Times	18
IX. Links*	18
X. Other Information	19

* Links have been provided throughout this RFP, as important reference material for all applicants. Please review all links when preparing your letters of intent and full proposals.

I. Introduction and Description

The Resources and Ecosystems Sustainability, Tourist Opportunities, and Revived Economies of the Gulf Coast States Act of 2012 (RESTORE Act, P.L. 112-141), established a Gulf Coast Restoration Trust Fund (Trust Fund) in the Treasury of the United States. Eighty percent of the civil penalties paid after July 6, 2012, under the Federal Water Pollution Control Act (33 U.S.C. 1321) in connection with the 2010 *Deepwater Horizon* oil spill will be deposited into this Trust Fund. BP made its first annual payment to the Trust Fund in April 2017 and is expected to continue to make annual payments through mid-2031. The Trust Fund total, currently at \$ 2.1 billion, also includes Transocean and Anadarko civil penalty and penalty interest payments. On December 14, 2015, the U.S. Department of Treasury released the Final Rulemaking for the RESTORE Act (at 31 C.F.R. Part 34). This Rulemaking is available, along with the original RESTORE Act legislation, via [Treasury's RESTORE Act Website](#). RESTORE Act programs consist of five components, including the *Centers of Excellence Research Grant Program* (CERGP) (RESTORE Act regulations, sub-part H, section §34.700), to receive 2.5% of Trust Fund principal plus 50% of the interest accrued, divided equally among the five eligible Gulf Coast state entities specified at 31 C.F.R. § 34.702.

Alabama's Marine Environmental Sciences Consortium d.b.a Dauphin Island Sea Lab (MESC/DISL) is the state's Center of Excellence that was competitively selected by the Alabama Gulf Coast Recovery Council (AGCRC), and is now known as the Alabama RESTORE Act Center of Excellence (ALCoE).

The regulations and Treasury guidelines found in Section 1605 of the RESTORE Act require that the ALCoE seek to engage the broadest cross-section of participants with interest and expertise in science, technology, and monitoring (RESTORE Act regulations, subpart H, section §34.704, also shown below) in *at least one* of the following eligible disciplines:

1. Coastal and deltaic 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;
2. Coastal fisheries and wildlife ecosystem research and monitoring in the Gulf Coast Region;
3. Offshore energy development, including research and technology, to improve the sustainable and safe development of energy resources in the Gulf of Mexico;
4. Sustainable and resilient growth, economic, and commercial development in the Gulf Coast Region;
5. Comprehensive observation, monitoring, and mapping of the Gulf of Mexico.

The ALCoE will fund research in disciplines 1, 2, 4 and 5 above, but not number 3.

This Request for Proposals (RFP) seeks submissions from researchers at the 23 Alabama colleges, and universities who will serve as principal investigators of ALCoE-funded research. A MESC investigator must lead ALCoE-funded projects. Partnering with other MESC institutions and other entities (including non-profit or for-profit entities, government agencies, and public or private companies) from in or outside Alabama is encouraged. An individual may only be the lead Principal Investigator (PI) on one (1) ALCoE grant proposal submitted in response to this RFP, but

she or he may participate in two (2) others' funded projects in any other capacity. As required by the RESTORE Act, all ALCoE-sponsored studies must be conducted in the Gulf Coast Region (as defined at 31 C.F.R. §34.2), which includes the coastal zones defined under section 304 of the Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972 that border the Gulf of Mexico and any adjacent land, water, and watersheds, that are within 25 miles of the coastal zone; and all Federal waters in the Gulf of Mexico that are three to nine nautical miles from shore to the 200 nm offshore boundary of the Exclusive Economic Zone.

Proposals submitted in response to this RFP may request funding for up to 3 years. The total funds available for distribution through this RFP are currently approximately \$4.5 million. Funding for each approved proposal is expected to be between \$100,000 (minimum) and \$500,000 (maximum) per proposal. To learn more about ALCoE research, please review: <https://alcoe.disl.edu/>.

This RFP calls for proposals that address disciplines 1, 2, 4 and 5 listed above. Priority will be given to proposals that investigate the effects of multiple anticipated stressors on the four selected areas as they relate to the northern Gulf Coast in the future, including various aspects of climate change, and have application for the wise stewardship of Alabama's marine resources. The rationale for this suggested emphasis is that the global climate system is changing rapidly and there is growing evidence this is producing rapid and accelerating changes in the world's oceans (IPCC 2014; Byrd et al. 2018). We anticipate that these changes will have important implications for the resilience and health of Alabama's coastal resources in coming years.

Future environmental variability, and current environmental trends, will place multiple stresses on the health of our coastal resources. Examples of such stresses could include, but are not limited to, altered freshwater discharge and elevated nutrient loads to coastal waters owing to changing precipitation patterns and changes in land use in Alabama's coastal watersheds, altered coastal hydrology due to projected changing wind patterns, increased water temperatures and reductions in dissolved oxygen concentrations, changes in pH driven by ocean acidification and coastal biogeochemical processes that could influence mineralization rates in ecologically important taxa, and increased immigration to Gulf waters by tropical species (tropicalization), thereby leading to shifts in plant and animal species composition from warm temperate to tropical. This non-exhaustive list of stressors illustrates some of the many factors anticipated to change, and the potential for present and future multiple interactions among them.

Because multiple factors are changing as the climate system evolves, evaluating the interactive effects of these potential stressors on coastal and nearshore marine ecosystems is of the utmost importance for our scientists, environmental managers, and community and state leaders. Given the extraordinary economic importance of our coastal resources for Alabama's economic health, there is a pressing need to reduce the uncertainty of predictions concerning the magnitude and consequences of these changes on the health of our marine ecosystems and the services they provide (Boyd et al. 2018). Thus, projects that address the multiple factors affecting coastal ecosystems, especially those integrating the effects of multiple stressors, will be most highly rated. Recognizing that there are significant challenges to experimentally investigating multiple drivers of change as multifactor experiments are logistically difficult, time-consuming and expensive (Manning 2019), ALCoE strongly encourages new approaches that include a combination of modeling and innovative experimental designs (Boyd et al. 2018; Rillig et al. 2019).

Submitted proposals must address one of the four eligible disciplines listed above that fall within ALCoE research theme and each proposal should clearly describe how the proposed research will serve to accomplish the long-term goals of the ALCoE. Requests for clarification of priorities from this RFP must be submitted via the ALCoE website:

<https://alcoe.disl.edu/grants/>. Questions cannot be accepted via phone or direct email. Please review the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) posted on the website before submitting a question. The FAQ will be updated regularly with responses to all submitted questions. The deadline for submission of questions is **January 29, 2021 at 5:00pm Central Time**. Any additional pertinent information, including clarification, additions, deletions or other changes to the RFP, will be posted on the [ALCoE website](#) and forwarded to all prospective Principal Investigators (PI) as identified by their submission of a letter of intent. Prospective PIs will be the single point of contact for all correspondence.

If a prospective PI identifies what appear to be errors or omissions in this RFP, we ask that the applicant immediately notify the ALCoE Program Administrators at <http://alcoe.disl.org/>

General Information:

- 1) Funding:** Up to \$4,500,000 available*
- 2) Project Period:** Up to Three (3) years*
- 3) Research Opportunity Number:** RFP-I
- 4) Letter of Intent Submission Date:** February 12, 2021 5:00 p.m. Central
- 5) Full Proposal Submission Date:** March 19, 2021 5:00 p.m. Central
- 6) Award Notification:** Tentative June 2021

*Final funding amount and project performance periods dependent on Treasury approval of ADCNR/ALCoE Amendments

Literature Cited

Boyd et al. 2018. Experimental strategies to assess the biological ramifications of multiple drivers of global ocean change-A review. *Glob Change Biol.* 24: 2239-2261.

IPCC (2014). Summary for policymakers. In C. B. Field, V. R. Barros, D. J. Dokken, K. J. Mach, M. D. Mastrandrea, T. E. Bilir, M. Chatterjee, K. L. Ebi, Y. O. Estrada, R. C. Genova, B. Girma, E. S. Kissel, A. N. Levy, S. MacCracken, P. R. Mastrandrea, & L. L. White (Eds.), *Climate Change 2014: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability. Part A: Global and Sectoral Aspects. Contribution of Working Group II to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change* pp. 1–32). Cambridge, UK and New York, NY: Cambridge University

Manning, P. 2019. Piling on the pressures to ecosystems. *Science* 366: 801.

Rillig, M.G. et al. 2019, The role of multiple global change factors in driving soil functions and microbial biodiversity. *Science.* 366: 686-690.

II. Research Opportunity

Each research proposal shall be led by an MESC PI whose home institution will enter into a grant agreement with the MESC/ALCOE, as well as into sub-grant agreements with home institutions of co-Principal Investigators (co-PIs). The PI and their home institution (the “Lead Research Institution”) shall have responsibilities as outlined in the ALCoE award agreement with The State of Alabama and as specified by the ALCoE Administrators, which shall include actively managing the implementation of research projects funded by the ALCoE through its award with the U.S. Department of the Treasury RESTORE Act and in compliance with the RESTORE Act award, Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions and Program-Specific Terms and Conditions and 2 C.F.R. Part 200 - Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards.

The primary interface for the research program and reporting of results will be with the ALCoE Program Manager (Dottie Byron, dbyron@disl.org).

Research Projects

The essential criterion for selection of Research Projects will be the quality of the proposed work, its significance within one of the four selected RESTORE Act research disciplines and its potential to address the goals of the ALCoE, as outlined in Section I above. Each investigator may submit only one proposal as Lead PI, although individuals can be involved in up to two other proposals as a collaborator (co-PI). In the event that an investigator is involved in more than one proposal, a clear description should be included that explains how the proposed work is complementary, not duplicative, of other proposed efforts and how the participant will budget their time.

Funds to conduct these studies are intended to be distributed to MESC member institutions which may form partnerships with other U.S. entities and research institutions as appropriate to the scientific research success of the ALCoE.

A proposal must include:

- compelling science that is clearly tied to at least one one of the four eligible disciplines (*Priority will be given to those proposals that fall within ALCoE’s overarching multi-stressor research theme);
- a clear description of the project and the key personnel involved;
- a listing of the institutions and individuals who will participate in the project; and
- a description of the allocation of resources.

III. Award Information

Each grant will be awarded for a period of time not to exceed three years, and annual continuation of funding will be subject to acceptable progress as judged by the ALCoE Administration, as well as satisfaction of such additional requirements as may be set forth in the ALCoE funding agreement. Funding is contingent on availability of funds in the Trust Fund. The ALCoE reserves the right to fund only selected parts of any given research proposal and/or to require modifications to the proposed work, personnel, and budget of any proposal.

To learn more about allowable expenses as directed by the State of Alabama and U.S. Department of Treasury, please visit: <https://alcoe.disl.edu/grants/>

The level of funding for each project is expected to be different, concomitant with the requirements of the research to be performed. It should be noted that the RFP, and information in the completed proposal, and subsequent modifications to the proposal, as requested by the ALCoE, shall form the basis of any award that may ensue.

As described in the ALCoE award proposal referred to above, the ALCoE will enter into grant agreements with the lead MESC investigator's home institution. The PI shall execute the grant agreement on behalf of all co-PIs, and shall then enter into subgrant agreements with co-PIs. Both the grant and subgrant agreements shall incorporate the applicable terms of the ALCoE funding award.

The funds distributed by ALCoE cannot be used by any research institution, PI, or co-PI for the acquisition or construction of physical infrastructure (including, but not limited to ships or laboratories).

No ALCoE entity, including any organization providing administrative support to the ALCoE, shall be under any obligation to provide funding to any specific proposal submitted, and shall not be held liable for any expense incurred in preparation or submission of any proposal or any subsequent discussion and /or negotiations.

The ALCoE will coordinate with the PI to fulfill reporting requirements, such as quarterly and annual financial and activities reports. Please note the documentation schedule will be determined during subaward generation. An accounting system will be used to process invoices and to prepare quarterly updates and an annual expenditure report that must be provided to the ALCoE administration. The ALCoE will require full records of the PI and all co-PIs, publications, presentations, reports, data, and activities supported by ALCoE funding. The ALCoE will maintain a website to make such information appropriately available to the public (<http://alcoe.disl.edu>)

By applying in response to this RFP, each PI, research institution and co-PI agrees to be bound by all terms and conditions of the ALCoE and these are not negotiable.

IV. Eligibility Information

This RFP seeks proposals from individual investigators or collaborative efforts involving a principal investigator from an MESC institution; however, research teams may include investigators as co-PIs from institutions outside of Alabama. The lead institution, which will receive the grant, must be an MESC member (the Lead Research Institution).

The collaborating members or institutions may be drawn as needed from US entities (including non-profit or for-profit entities, government agencies, and public or private companies) with unique, world-class capabilities. An investigator may have an existing relationship, or may find it advantageous to enter into a new relationship, with a private or for-profit entity. Individuals at private or for-profit entities can contribute in the form of products, services, and expertise that will be crucial to the delivery of the research objectives. As with all participants in the ALCoE,

any activities by government, private or for-profit entities will be subject to the terms of the ALCoE.

An individual can be the lead PI for only one (1) submitted proposal and only involved in up to two (2) additional submitted proposals in any capacity other than lead PI (e.g. co-PI, collaborator, contractor, etc.). If an individual's name appears on multiple proposals, this should be noted in the List of Participants and in Current and Pending Support. In each proposal, a clear description should be included to explain how the proposed work is complementary, not duplicative, of other proposed efforts and how the participant will budget his or her time. Should an individual appear on four (4) or more proposals, all proposals by the individual will be disqualified. It is the responsibility of the submitters to confirm that each member of the proposal team is within the eligibility guidelines.

Each proposal must be a stand-alone document.

V. Evaluation Information

Guidance regarding evaluation of the proposals is as follows, with Scientific Merit a primary consideration.

Scientific Merit (75%)

- Scope, quality, and potential for fundamentally significant results of the proposed research
- Project plan describing integration among the sub-projects
- Value of the anticipated outcomes for contributing to the eligible research disciplines and themes of ALCoE in the Gulf Coast Region

Qualifications (20%)

- Expertise of PI and co-PIs in the relevant research domains and in the delivery of focused research
- A demonstrated record of scientific achievement in the relevant science
- Realistic timeline and availability of appropriate facilities for the project's duration
- Knowledge of the Gulf of Mexico region

Contract Compliance plan (5%)

- Soundness of the project's data management plan
- Outreach plan

Review Process

To ensure scientific integrity, the review process will be conducted by the Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium, (MASGC) using the standard protocols supported by the National Sea Grant Office, which are similar to those used by the National Science Foundation.

Briefly, MASGC will obtain at least three merit reviews for every proposal. At least one external merit review and two Technical Review Panel (TRP) reviews will be obtained. The TRP and external reviewers will include scientists from universities outside Alabama and federal and state agencies who have expertise in one or more of this RFP's priorities. These reviewers will use the

standardized evaluation criteria described above. All reviewers will be required to adhere to MASGC's standard reviewer conflict of interest and confidentiality procedures. The TRP will be convened to discuss each proposal using the results from the external and TRP merit reviews. At the end of each discussion, the proposal is placed into one of the following categories: "fundable," or "not fundable."

After the technical review, MASGC will send the recommendations from the TRP and provide comments on each proposal to the ALCoE Director and members of the Mobile NEP Project Implementation Committee (PIC).

The ALCoE may elect to award a grant for any, all, or none of the proposed activities in any given proposal or it may request modification of the proposal. Decisions to make awards are entirely held by the ALCoE Administration within the scope of this RFP and the governing documents of the ALCoE.

VI. Application and Submission Information

In order to be considered for funding under this ALCoE RFP, proposing researchers must submit:

1. a letter of intent, and
2. a full proposal.

When preparing materials for submission, applicants are encouraged to review the FAQs: <http://alcoe.disl.edu/grants/>. Any additional questions can be submitted at the link above. The deadline to submit questions on this RFP is January 29th, 2021 at 5:00pm Central time. No new questions will be addressed after this time.

1. Letter of Intent

The letter of intent (LOI) is required in advance of submission of a full proposal. An LOI must be received on or before February 12th, 2021.

The LOI and full proposal submission and full proposal review process for this competition will be managed by MASGC. MASGC uses an online project management system called eSeaGrant. This system requires an applicant to register before submitting an LOI. You can register to use eSeaGrant at: <http://eseagrants.masgc.org/>. After submitting your LOI through eSeaGrant you will receive a confirmation email. If you need help in registering for eSeaGrant or if you do not receive a confirmation email, please contact Loretta Leist (loretta.leist@usm.edu or 228-818-8835). Changes can be made to the LOI and full proposal until the closing date and time. Once the deadline has passed, the eSeaGrant system will close the portal and changes or late submissions will not be accepted. After the LOI submission deadline has passed, you will receive a separate response identifying your LOI Submission Number.

The LOI must follow the format outlined and all instructions detailed below and the LOI should

clearly and concisely address the objectives of one of the themes noted in the RFP. The LOI will not be reviewed and investigators will not receive feedback on the letter. The LOI will serve to prepare for the receipt of full proposals and inform the first part of the review process.

A. Required Sections of the Letter of Intent (5 page maximum)

The Letter of Intent shall consist of the following elements:

1. Project Overview.

- a. The Lead Principal Investigator (PI)
- b. Lead MESC Institution Name
- c. Title of the Project
- d. Estimated Funding Request

2. People (including the PI, anticipated co-PIs, institutional partners and key researchers).

- a. Name
- b. Institution
- c. Address
- d. Telephone number
- e. Email address

3. Project Theme

The specific RESTORE Act research discipline being addressed (must select only one):

1. Coastal and deltaic 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
2. Coastal fisheries and wildlife ecosystem research and monitoring in Gulf Coast Region
3. Sustainable and resilient growth, economic, and commercial development in the Gulf Coast Region
4. Comprehensive observation, monitoring, and mapping of the Gulf of Mexico

4. Brief Narrative Project Description

The narrative description shall briefly provide a clear and compelling statement of the scientific questions to be addressed, the approach, and the ultimate goals of the research project.

When preparing a LOI, applicants are encouraged to review the ALCoE website for updated information and answers to frequently asked questions: <http://alcoe.disl.edu/grants/>. The LOI content will provide essential information for avoiding conflicts of interest in the review process. No full proposal will be accepted without a previously submitted Letter of Intent.

2. Full Proposal

The full proposal should clearly and concisely address one of the themes noted in the RFP. The proposal must follow the format outlined and all instructions detailed below. Full proposals must be submitted to the ALCoE on or before **March 15, 2021 at 5:00pm Central Time** via the MASGC eSeaGrant system as first described above at <http://eseagrant.masgc.org/> . Applicants are strongly encouraged to seek guidance from their institutional contracting officers early in the proposal development process.

A. Required Sections of the Full Proposal

The full proposal must include the main components described in Sections 1-9, below. Page limits are indicated where necessary. **Full proposals containing items other than those described in the proposal instructions, missing required sections, exceeding page limits, or that do not address the selected research theme will be disqualified.** It is required that applicants format their proposal in the following order and clearly label each section and subsection:

1. Cover Sheet (1 page)
 - a. Project Title
 - b. Applicable Priority Discipline
 - c. Lead Institution Name and Location
 - d. PI Information (The name and address of the MESC Principal Investigator submitting the proposal shall be clearly indicated)
 - e. Co-PI Information (if any)
 - f. Budget and Duration Information
 - g. Proposal Authorization (Signatures, including digital signatures, of those persons duly authorized to sign such documentation on behalf of the Lead Research Institution are required; the names and titles must be typed beneath their signatures)

2. Project Summary (1 page).

The summary should be written in the third person, be informative to persons working in the same or a related field and be understandable to a scientifically or technically literate lay reader. Provide a concise description of the project including research objectives and goals. Describe how the proposed project will address one of the themes in Section I of RFP. Describe the nature of the project and articulate the potential scientific and societal impact of the project if funded.

3. Narrative Project Description, including tables and illustrations (15 pages total).

The narrative description shall indicate the interest, approach and qualifications of the research institution.

- a. Research Objectives and Goals of the Project: Provide a clear and compelling statement of the:
 - scientific questions to be addressed;

- milestones expected to be achieved;
- ultimate goals of the research project; and
- timelines for all activities.

b. Approach: Provide a detailed description of the proposed approach for carrying out the research. The approach should emphasize innovation and best practices.

- specify the role(s) of key personnel within the research project, and the number of postdoctoral researchers and graduate students involved; and
- provide sufficient detail to allow assessment of the scientific merit of the proposal.

c. Contract Compliance

- a synopsis of key research accomplishments by the PI and co-PI(s) that establishes the feasibility of the project and demonstrates the track records of the PI and co-PI(s);
- a description of how graduate student and postdoctoral career mentoring will be ensured; and
- metrics of progress to be used in evaluating personnel involved in the project, to guide internal management of the Research Project as actively led by the PI. If appropriate, the metrics described in the proposal could also be used by the ALCoE in its evaluation of the research project.

d. Data Management Plan (no more than 1 page of Narrative Project Description total page limit)

All data should be made available with minimal delay, through submission to the ALCoE data archive for the advancement of knowledge and utility to researchers, agencies and others. Proposals must include no more than one page describing how the proposal will conform to ALCoE's policy on the dissemination and sharing of research results found at

<https://www.disl.edu/research/data-management-center/> and may include:

- the types of data, samples, physical collections, software, and other materials to be produced in the course of the project;
- standards to be used for data and metadata format and content (where existing standards, e.g. ISO 19139, ISO 19115-2 and ISO 19110, are absent or deemed inadequate, this should be documented along with any proposed solutions or remedies);
- policies for accessing and sharing data, including provisions for appropriate protection of privacy, confidentiality, security, intellectual property, or other rights or requirements;
- policies and provisions for re-use, re-distribution, and the production of derivatives; and

- plans and timelines for archiving data, samples, and other research products
- with minimal time delay, and for submitting data and metadata to ALCoE and, if appropriate, a nationally recognized repository for the specific type of data (e.g. GenBank).

It is essential that provision be made that video and satellite data tagged with appropriate information be included in the data submissions. This should be executed to modern high standards. It is desired that these activities draw to the greatest extent possible on existing data management systems.

Each Project is required to submit necessary links to these data submissions as part of their reporting activities. All PIs and co-PIs are required to adhere to all ALCoE data policies.

A strong commitment to data management and sharing is required. Each project awarded will be required to develop a comprehensive data management plan.

4. Budget and Budget Justification (see <http://alcoe.disl.edu/grants/> for required template):
 - a. Provide an annual budget for each of the one to three years of proposed research, as well as an overview, summary budget. The proposed budget should be consistent with the needs and complexity of the proposed project. ALCoE funds shall not be used by any research project, institution, or co-investigator for the acquisition or construction of physical infrastructure (including, but not limited to ships, or laboratories), except where specifically authorized by the ALCoE. Allocated research funds must be clearly discernible, including those for:
 - ship time, Remotely Operated Vehicle and Autonomous Underwater Vehicle time;
 - aircraft time;
 - sampling technologies;
 - computing facilities;
 - access to existing long-term monitoring sites or other research facilities;
 - reasonable and appropriate costs for development of new technology;
 - participation in designated ALCoE meetings;
 - public education and outreach; and
 - data management, including data submission.

Payroll and personnel reimbursement policies of the home institutions of each research participant will be followed for all participants.

Overhead charges should be no higher than the federally applied overhead rates for corresponding institutions. Overhead for subcontracts must follow the institution's guidelines that have been federally approved. Administrative support should be

provided from the indirect costs, unless specific exceptions are requested and accepted through the review and contract process. A copy of the negotiated indirect cost rate agreement should be included as supporting documentation.

- b. Submit a separate annual budget (see <http://alcoe.disl.edu/grants/> for Annual Budget Template) and budget justification (2-page limit for each partner institution to describe their total requested budget) for each participating institution with a co-PI and for any subcontracts with a sub-award exceeding \$25,000 per year.
 - c. Identify and fully justify items of equipment costing more than \$5,000. ALCoE funds may only be used for Capital Expenditures to the extent that the investigator was not able to obtain access to the required capital equipment through other collaborations or partnerships, and such funding has been specifically approved by the ALCoE under an active grant or annual continuation of funding under such a grant.
5. References Cited: Please follow the *Science* Reference Style, which includes title, for citations: <http://www.sciencemag.org/site/feature/contribinfo/prep/res/refs.xhtml#general>. Applicants must be especially careful to follow accepted scholarly practices in providing citations for source materials relied upon when preparing any section of the proposal. This section must include bibliographic citations only and must not be used to provide parenthetical information outside the 15-page Project Description.
6. Personnel:
The PI may draw appropriate talent from partnering institutions and organizations. Personnel from any of the partners should be reimbursed appropriately for their time commitment to the research program based on the salary structures at their home institutions. The research that they lead will be open in nature and will include work by undergraduate students, graduate students, and postdoctoral research associates as appropriate.
- All research staff conducting activities financed, directly or indirectly, in whole or in part, through the ALCoE, including PI, co-PIs, undergraduate students, graduate students, and postdoctoral research associates, are subject to and must comply with the terms of the ALCoE financial guidelines, including the requirement that all activities are 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).
- a. Biographical sketches (2-page limit per person), including a list of up to five relevant key publications, must be provided for the PI and co-PI(s) only. Copies of publications should not be included. There is no standard format or template for the biographical sketches of key personnel so we ask that information as deemed appropriate be provided, within the two-page limit.
 - b. Provide a complete list of partner institutions and associated project personnel (1 page limit).
 - c. Qualifications: Provide:

- a 2 page c.v. similar to that used by the National Science Foundation (<https://www.nsf.gov/bfa/dias/policy/biosketch.jsp>) that includes sections on Professional Preparation, Appointments, Products most Closely Related to the Proposed Project, as well as Other Significant Products, and Synergistic Activities
 - a synopsis of key research accomplishments by the PI and co-PI(s) that establishes the feasibility of the project and demonstrates the track records of the PI and co-PI(s);
 - a description of how graduate student and postdoctoral career mentoring will be ensured; and
 - metrics of progress to be used in evaluating project personnel, to guide management of the Research Project as actively led by the PI. If appropriate, the metrics described in the proposal could also be used by the ALCoE in its evaluation of the research project.
7. Current and Pending Support (see <http://alcoe.disl.edu/grants/> for required template): Provide current and pending support information for the PI and co-PI(s) only. This should include titles, amounts, funding source, duration of the award, and amount of time allocated to the effort.

Reference to personnel, facilities, equipment, vessels, experimental and standards materials and other resources in the proposal is considered verification that all are available; evidence to the contrary may lead to return without review.

B. Optional Statement on Proprietary Information (no more than 1 page):

Proprietary or privileged information (if applicable): If confidential information is provided in your submitted proposal, clearly indicate the segments that cannot be made public and why.

To the extent that any home institution of any PI or co-PI submitting a proposal in response to this RFP is restricted by law from agreeing to any applicable ALCoE requirement, the proposal shall clearly indicate which provisions the PI's or co-PI's home institution objects to, as well as the specific legal basis for any such objection.

Full proposals containing items other than those described in these proposal instructions, missing required sections, or exceeding the page limitations will be returned without review. The format of proposals responding to this RFP does not allow for "letters of support / collaboration." However, ALCoE recognizes that as part of their own internal procedures, institutions may require letters of support or collaboration of their collaborators.

Proposals responding to this RFP are required to describe the arrangements or details of collaborations in the body of the proposal. If the collaboration includes funding, the budget for collaboration and justification should be explained in the budget section of the proposal.

C. Proposal Formatting

Prior to submission, applicants are encouraged to conduct an administrative review of the proposal to ensure that it complies with the proposal formatting guidelines noted below. Ensuring that all of the required materials included in the application have been properly prepared is the applicant's responsibility. Following the full proposal deadline, an administrative review of all proposals will be conducted by MASGC. If a proposal does not meet the administrative guidelines, it will be disqualified and returned without review. Applicants are strongly encouraged to seek appropriate technical support in the creation of electronic files and to review the electronic files prior to submission. Some materials may require scanning and insertion into the text. Discretion should be exercised in the resolution of figures and scanned materials. Applicants should also be aware that while color figures may be included, applications might be printed in black and white for review. Applicants may wish to annotate figure legends directing the reader to the electronic file if color is an important aspect of the figure. Applicants should utilize the required templates provided for download at: <http://alcoe.disl.edu/grants/>

1. Proposal Pagination Instructions

The proposal pages should be numbered in consecutive order.

2. Required Sections of the Full Proposal

The proposal must include the required sections, in the given order. These sections, and subsections, must be clearly labeled as described in Section 2A of this document. **Proposals not collated with the required sections or in the proper order will be disqualified and returned without review.**

3. Proposal Margin and Spacing Requirements

The proposal must be clear, readily legible, and conform to the following requirements:

- a. Use one of the typefaces identified below:
 - Arial, Courier New, or Palatino Linotype at a font size of 10 points or larger;
 - Times New Roman at a font size of 11 points or larger; or
 - Computer Modern family of fonts at a font size of 11 points or larger.

A font size of less than 10 points may be used for mathematical formulas or equations, figure, table or diagram captions and when using a Symbol font to insert Greek letters or special characters. PIs are cautioned, however, that the text must still be readable.

- b. No more than six lines of text within a space of one inch.
- c. Margins, in all directions, must be at least one inch.

The guidelines specified above establish the minimum type size requirements; however, applicants are advised that readability is of paramount importance and should take precedence in selection of an appropriate font for use in the proposal. Small type size makes it difficult for reviewers to read the proposal; consequently, the use of small type not in compliance with the

above guidelines may be grounds for the proposal to be returned without review. Adherence to type size and line spacing requirements is necessary to ensure that no applicant receives an unfair advantage, by using smaller type or line spacing to provide more text in the proposal.

These requirements apply to all sections of a proposal, including supplementary documentation.

4. Page Formatting

Since most reviewers will be handling proposals electronically, applicants are strongly encouraged to use only a standard, single-column format for the text. While line spacing (single-spaced, double-spaced, etc.) is at the discretion of the applicant, established page limits must be followed. Additionally, the use of landscape (i.e., sideways) page orientation should be avoided if possible in the Project Description.

D. Submission of Proposal to ALCoE

Proposals, including all required documents, must be submitted in a single PDF file via a web-based submission to: <http://eseagrants.masgc.org/> Applications sent in other formats, including multiple files assembled into an integrated PDF unit, or by fax or email will NOT be accepted. Proposals should be saved as: Letter-of-Intent-Submission#_PILastname.pdf.

Proposals must be submitted on or before March 15, 2021 at 5:00pm Central time.

VII. Significant Dates and Times

- January 6, 2021** – RFP release
- January 19, 2021** – Question-and-Answer Webinar
- January 29, 2021** – FAQ Deadline
- February 12, 2021** – Letter of Intent deadline
- March 19, 2021** – Full proposal Deadline
- June 15, 2021** – Tentative Award announcement
- July 1, 2021** – Award start date

IX. Links*

Alabama Center of Excellence	http://alcoe.disl.edu/
RFP I	http://alcoe.disl.edu/grants/
RFP FAQs and Required forms and templates	http://alcoe.disl.edu/grants/
Science Reference Style	http://www.sciencemag.org/site/feature/contribinfo/prep/res/refs.xhtml#general
On Being a Scientist: A guide to Responsible Conduct in Research 3rd Edition	http://www.nap.edu/catalog.php?record_id=12192
MASGC eSeaGrant: Proposal submission portal	http://eseagrants.masgc.org/
RESTORE Act Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions and Program-Specific Terms and Conditions	https://home.treasury.gov/policy-issues/financial-markets-financial-institutions-and-fiscal-service/restore-act/centers-of-excellence-research-grants-program/center-of-excellence-coe-resources
2 C.F.R. Part 200 - Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards	https://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title02/2cfr200_main_02.tpl

*Links have been provided throughout this RFP, as reference material for all applicants. Please review all links when preparing your preliminary and full proposals.

X. Other Information

Grant Administration/Grant Terms and Conditions

The following terms and conditions apply to all proposals:

- 1) Grants must be hosted by a lead institution who must be an MESC member (the Lead Research Institution)
- 2) 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 miles inland from the coastline to the offshore boundary of the Exclusive Economic Zone.
- 3) The funds distributed by ALCoE may be used for equipment, but cannot be used by any research institution, PI, or co-PI for the acquisition or construction of physical infrastructure (including, but not limited to ships or laboratories).
- 4) Grant recipients under the RESTORE Act must comply with guidance issued by the Office of Management and Budget entitled, “Part 200 – Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards” as well as Treasury-specific guidance, ADCNR terms of the agreement between ADCNR and MSEC, and the subaward issued by MESC.

Permits

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 of permits must be provided to MESC.

Research Involving Human Subjects

Research involving human subjects is allowed when the project has been certified by a responsible body. If one is not in place now, each university has the responsibility for setting up an Institutional Review Board (IRB) to review research protocols and ensure the protection of the rights of human subjects. Projects involving human subjects cannot be recommended for funding until this certification or its equivalent has been provided to MESC and Treasury has approved it in writing.

Care and Use of Live Vertebrate Animals

Recipients must comply with all applicable statutes pertaining to the care, handling, and treatment of vertebrate animals held or sacrificed for research, teaching, or other activities.