



**MICHIGAN SEA GRANT UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN + MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY**

**Michigan Sea Grant  
Integrated Assessment Request for Proposals  
Full Proposal Guidelines (2021)**

Full proposals for Integrated Assessments to be conducted from 2022-2024 are due by 5 p.m. (EST) May 24, 2021. Any applicant that submitted a pre-proposal may submit a full proposal using these guidelines, however, Michigan Sea Grant (MISG) selects a set of pre-proposals that are encouraged to submit a Full Proposal based on impartial external reviews and MISG Management Team input. Note that encouraged proposals are not guaranteed funding and all full proposals will be reviewed by external reviewers and a review panel. Those pre-proposals that were not encouraged to submit full proposals are still eligible to apply and all full proposals will be evaluated on their own merits, not pre-judged based on the pre-proposal reviews. Notification of final proposal funding decisions will occur in September 2021, and funded projects will be carried out from February 1, 2022 through January 31, 2024.

Each Integrated Assessment (IA) project will follow a unique trajectory depending on the type and scope of the focal issue; however, most projects address the following components:

1. *Define and refine the policy-relevant question around which the assessment is to be performed.* This often begins with identification of an issue by managers or policy makers that has defied typical and routine action. The focal IA question must be refined with stakeholder input.
2. *Clarify the history, causes, and consequences of the issue.* Projects should help clarify aspects of the issue that are uncertain and are impeding action. A description of current conditions and historical trends can enhance understanding and provide a foundation for further analyses. To address the issue effectively, decision makers will need to better understand the probable causes and the environmental, social, and economic consequences of the issue.
3. *Identify and evaluate potential options.* Projects should identify potential options for addressing the issue, including policies, management actions, or new initiatives that are politically, socially, and economically feasible. Integrated Assessments help stakeholders compare and evaluate a suite of options, rather than recommending a single approach.
4. *Develop tools and information that can guide decisions and help implement potential options.* If appropriate, researchers should provide an assessment of certainty levels associated with their findings to help policy makers interpret analyses or identify future research needs.

Integrated Assessment projects often integrate the expertise of social and natural scientists and could include economic analyses and cost-benefit assessments during discussions about potential policy options.

**Policy or Management Context**

When developing topics for Integrated Assessment projects, Michigan Sea Grant identifies one or more policy or management contacts for each topic included in our [RFP](#). Research teams should discuss their focal issue and project approach with the contact(s) identified in the RFP. The contact(s) potentially support the proposal development process in several ways:

- Serve as a contact for the research teams submitting a full proposal, providing further explanation of the issue, the policy context, and the key players as needed.

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[michiganseagrants.org](http://michiganseagrants.org)



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- Offer feedback about the full proposal to ensure that the proposal is strong and targets the needs of the state or area.
- Help the research team engage stakeholders, develop partnerships, and identify additional resources that could support the project.
- Provide guidance about how to best package and share the project results.
- Serve as an advisor or collaborator for the research team during their project, attending project meetings as relevant, reviewing documents, and providing guidance. Some policy contacts (or their staff) become involved in the analytical or outreach components of the project.

Because the policy contact helped develop the topic descriptions in the RFP, conflict of interest guidelines prevent MISG funds for this project from supporting project activities in the policy contact's government unit or organization.

### Outreach context

The collaborative process is an essential component of an Integrated Assessment. To identify or refine proposed outreach opportunities, research teams should discuss their focal issue and project approach with the communications and Extension contact(s) noted under the RFP topic or those listed below. Michigan Sea Grant will seek expert review of the proposal's overall approach to outreach and stakeholder engagement. The participation of stakeholders, including local, tribal, and state decision makers, natural resource managers, and other intended users of the assessment, can improve the research team's understanding of the issue, ensure that the project is useful and relevant, and promote application and implementation. MISG encourages proposals that 1) recruit and engage with students and staff from underrepresented racial and ethnic groups, individuals with disabilities, or educational or economically disadvantaged backgrounds and 2) proposals that benefit underserved communities in Michigan's coastal regions.

We encourage research teams to talk with MISG outreach staff and relevant state, tribal, and local government personnel.

- For an initial discussion of proposal and outreach needs, please contact Heather Triezenberg, Extension Program Leader, at (517) 353-5508 or [vanden64@msu.edu](mailto:vanden64@msu.edu)
- To discuss communication ideas, please contact Elizabeth Striano, MISG Communication Program Leader, at (734) 764-0767 or [estriano@umich.edu](mailto:estriano@umich.edu)

### PROPOSAL PREPARATION

**Deadline:** Full proposals are due to Michigan Sea Grant on **Monday, May 24, 2021**, via web form at: *Updated web link to be published when guidelines are released in April 2021.*

**Full Proposal Elements:** Limit the proposal narrative to 10 pages, including elements 3-6 below. The title page, non-technical summary, list of potential peer reviewers, references, current and pending support, bios, budgets, and letters of support **do not count toward the page limit**. Please use 1-inch margins and 12-point Times New Roman font.



**1. Title Page:**

- a) **Project Title**
- b) **Principal Investigator** (primary contact for the project)
  - i. Title/Position
  - ii. Institution
  - iii. Telephone Number
  - iv. Postal Mailing Address
  - v. E-mail Address
- c) **Additional Team Members** - name, institution, telephone, and e-mail.
- d) **Date of Submittal**
- e) **Non-technical Summary:** Provide a 200-word summary suitable for a general audience that describes the proposed IA and why it is important.

**2. Peer Reviewers:**

Identify at least three (3) potential reviewers for the proposal from institutions other than those represented by the project team, outside the State of Michigan. Include name, institution, phone number, and email address. These reviewers will be included in the pool of experts that MISG will contact for reviews.

**3. Problem Statement:**

Describe the issue your assessment will address, demonstrating an understanding of the context and underlying causes. Identify previous and ongoing attempts to address this problem, and the technical and non-technical barriers that hinder an effective response. Indicate the geographic focus of your assessment and the type of potential options that will be considered, e.g., management actions, legislation, regulations, education/outreach programs, or other initiatives. **Include your draft Integrated Assessment question.**

**4. Objectives:**

Describe the objectives of this Integrated Assessment and convey what you will attempt to accomplish with the project. Do not describe how you will conduct the assessment.

**5. Project Approach:**

Describe each stage of the proposed Integrated Assessment and how it links to the IA objectives. If your proposal relies on developing new methods, give the reviewers ample information about the starting point for those new methods and how they will evolve over the course of the project. Indicate how you will access or generate the needed data and information for the technical analysis. Be sure to identify specific methods and tools (e.g., models, special analytical approaches, etc.) to be used. Make it clear how the proposed methods are appropriate and how they will succeed. For more detailed information on the theory of Integrated Assessment, refer to resources available on the Michigan Sea Grant website at: <http://michiganseagrants.org/research/approach>.



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### 6. Stakeholder Process:

Provide a detailed overview of the stakeholder engagement process. *Research teams are encouraged to discuss their outreach plans with Michigan Sea Grant's outreach specialists and the policy contact identified in the [RFP](#).* Questions to consider include:

- What roles will stakeholders fill?
- Who will be involved?
- How will you determine that all the correct entities are engaged?
- What specific methods will you use to engage stakeholders?
- How will you maintain stakeholder involvement?
- How will the stakeholder process be integrated with technical aspects of the project?
- How does the project engage with underserved communities?

### 7. Data and Data Sharing:

Funds for Integrated Assessments should primarily support analysis and communication of existing data rather than collection of new field data. Stakeholder surveys, focus groups, observations and interviews are permitted if used to support the goals of the Integrated Assessment. Please identify any existing data sets you plan to use, their owners, and how you intend to access the data. You may also indicate your knowledge of closely related projects, briefly identifying those projects and their PIs.

As part of the full proposal submittal, the proposal PI is required to fill out a MISG Data Management form located at [2021 Request for Proposals](#), as stipulated by NOAA regulations.

### 8. NEPA Environmental Compliance Questionnaire:

All funded projects are required to complete the NEPA Environmental Compliance Questionnaire. This questionnaire is used by NOAA to collect information about proposed activities for NEPA and other environmental compliance requirements associated with the proposed project. All questions must be addressed; if a question is not applicable to your proposed activity, please explain why the requested information is not relevant. MISG is requesting that PIs submitting full proposals complete the NEPA forms and submit with their full proposal to facilitate approval of MISG research funding requests to the National Sea Grant Office. The NEPA form is located at [2021 Request for Proposals](#). Additional guidance can be provided upon request if needed.

**Note: please attach the Data Management and NEPA forms as an addendum to your proposal and submit with the proposal package as one pdf.**

### 9. Project Timeline:

Provide a timeline of the Integrated Assessment stages, including the stakeholder process, by project quarter. Identify project tasks, team leader, and support for each element.

### 10. Overview of IA Team:



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Describe how the principal investigator's previous accomplishments are relevant both to leading a multidisciplinary team and to this specific project. Indicate why the IA team is appropriate for this project and whether individuals, sub-units or the entire team have worked (together or separately) on similar projects. Specify the roles and responsibilities of each team member, including who will be involved in day-to-day project activities. Identify steps taken to recruit a diverse team including students, staff, and Co-PIs from underrepresented racial and ethnic groups, individual with disabilities, or from disadvantaged backgrounds.

### 11. References:

Provide those cited in the proposal body.

### 12. Qualifications:

Supply curriculum vitae or bios of principal investigator and co-investigators. Each CV should be no more than two (2) pages and should include relevant publications.

### 13. Ongoing Support:

List **current and pending support** of principal investigator and co-investigators. Indicate if any projects are complementary to the proposed Integrated Assessment.

### 14. Supporting Documentation:

**Include at least one (1) letter of endorsement from a representative of the appropriate management or policy agency.** Additional letters indicating stakeholder willingness to participate and contribute are valuable.

### 15. NOAA Budget Form:

Provide a detailed budget and budget justification using the 90-4 form available on the proposal submission web page. The Excel-based form includes tabs for annual expenses, a summary of expenses and a budget justification. Submit the budget as a separate Excel file when submitting your application. The [90-4 budget form](#) can be found here.

Proposals must include a 50 percent non-federal contribution in the budget, showing a match of at least \$1 for every \$2 of federal support requested. For example, if the PI requests \$80,000 in a year, they must provide at least \$40,000 in match for a total of \$120,000 put toward the project in the first year. The total budget amount must be distributed nearly equally over the two project years and should document the source of the project match.

## PROPOSAL EVALUATION CRITERIA

Proposals must comply with all submission instructions and proposal guidelines in order to be considered for funding and must have submitted a pre-proposal. Each compliant, full proposal will be peer-reviewed by three experts in the field of the proposed project from outside the PI home state and a review panel of experts. One of these written reviews could include a member of the review. Reviewers will provide both written comments and a proposal rating using the criteria below.





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All written peer reviews will be provided to the expert panel, which will review the proposals and provide advice on funding priorities to the MISG management team. Review panelists will read all of the proposals and each reviewer will be prepared to lead a panel discussion of one or more proposals depending on the total number of proposals being reviewed. The panelists will discuss each proposal, evaluate the relevancy of the project to the MISG Strategic Plan and research goals, and assess if the project is fundable. The outcome of the panel review will be a final score for the project, an assessment of the fundability, and funding priority recommendations. Funding decisions are made by the MISG Management Team and incorporate all reviews and rankings as well as availability of funding, prior award performance of applicants, balance across institutions, focus areas, and applicant diversity, and programmatic needs, objectives, and priorities. As identified above, projects are encouraged that will benefit underserved communities and/or recruit team members from underrepresented racial and ethnic groups or educationally or economically disadvantaged backgrounds, and projects that address one of the topics identified in the [RFP](#). All recommendations must be approved by NOAA National Sea Grant prior to a research grant being awarded.

Applicants should directly and explicitly address the following criteria within their proposal. Each submittal will be rated under a point system with a total of 100 points possible. Applicants will be evaluated based on the quality and extent to which they address the criteria; failure to provide applicable information in the proposal will affect the score.

**1. Problem Statement – 5 points**

To what extent does the proposal explain the context, underlying issues, and potential options related to the focal issue?

**2. Project Approach – 30 points**

**A. Technical Aspects – 15 points:** To what extent does the proposed project adhere to the goals and collaborative process of an [Integrated Assessment](#)? How well does the proposal explain the data sources and analytical methods involved in the technical aspects of the assessment?

**B. Collaborative Process – 15 points:** To what extent does the list of potential decision makers, intended users, and relevant stakeholders reflect a holistic understanding of the defined problem? To what extent does the proposal describe appropriate methods for collaboration related to each stage of the Integrated Assessment?

**3. Roles, Responsibilities, and Qualifications – 20 points**

To what extent do the PI and project team members possess the skills, experience, and qualifications to execute the proposed activities? How suitable is the PI to lead a multidisciplinary assessment process, and will they be involved in day-to-day project activities? To what extent have individuals or the team addressed similar issues or taken a similar approach to addressing natural resource problems? How well defined are roles within the team? Does the team include members from underrepresented racial and ethnic groups or economically or educationally disadvantaged backgrounds?



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### 4. Synergy – 15 points

- To what extent will the research team leverage complementary projects, existing data sources, and the time and support of stakeholders or government units? Does the proposal inducing letters of support demonstrate significant support from stakeholders or collaborators?

### 5. Feasibility – 30 points

**A. Practicality – 15 points:** How feasible is the approach given the available data, expertise of the team, and proposed methods? How realistic is the timeline in terms of completing the proposed work and activities? Is the budget appropriate for the work proposed?

**B. Potential Impact – 15 points:** To what extent will the project address the technical and non-technical barriers to effective resolution of the issue? How likely is the project to influence policy, planning, natural resource management, or other types of decision-making? Does this research benefit underserved communities?

Additional questions about these proposal guidelines can be submitted by May 3, 2021, to the MISG Research Program by emailing [MSG-RFPinfo@umich.edu](mailto:MSG-RFPinfo@umich.edu). Answers will be publicly available at the Michigan Sea Grant research webpage by May 8, 2021.

### **About the Michigan Sea Grant Research Program**

*Michigan Sea Grant-supported research studies an array of issues affecting the Great Lakes and Michigan's coastal areas, including Integrated Assessments and basic research. The goals are to develop information, create tools, and build partnerships that will improve decision making for particularly challenging coastal issues in the state and to fulfill critical research needs for the Great Lakes and coastal systems. See: [www.michiganseagrant.org/research](http://www.michiganseagrant.org/research)*

### **About Michigan Sea Grant**

*Michigan Sea Grant helps to foster economic growth and protect Michigan's coastal, Great Lakes resources through research, education and outreach. See: [michiganseagrant.org](http://michiganseagrant.org)*