

Michigan Sea Grant 2025 Request for Proposals for Graduate Student Research Fellowships

Research Program Overview

Michigan Sea Grant (MISG) is inviting proposals for innovative research projects for the upcoming funding period. All MISG funds are awarded via a competitive process involving external peer review and external advisory panel recommendations.

Graduate Student Research Fellowships

Fellowships to support graduate students (M.S. or Ph.D.) conducting research in the natural or social sciences in collaboration with Great Lakes agencies or non-governmental organizations for one or two years. Funding up to \$60,000 total per fellowship. Note that MISG funding requires a 50% non-federal match – see below for more information.

Due: May 30, 5:00 PM EDT

Information and Guidelines for Graduate Student Research Fellowship Proposals

Michigan Sea Grant (MISG) is offering one- or two-year fellowships from 2024–2026 for graduate students enrolled full-time at Michigan universities and colleges (including Tribal colleges) who are interested in natural or social science research relevant to current Great Lakes environmental issues. This fellowship will provide support for a student up to \$60,000 total per fellowship that could include tuition, stipend, travel, and research expenses. Funds can be spent at any time during the two-year funding period. Note that PIs are required to provide a 50% non-federal match to MISG funding for each year of the project (see Non-Federal Match section below for more information).

Research fellows will work with an agency or non-governmental organization (NGO) sponsor and faculty member at an accredited institution in Michigan to conduct a research project that supports or expands existing Great Lakes research. Applicants should submit a brief proposal for their research as part of the selection process and are expected to have letters of support from agency/NGO and faculty sponsors. Interactions with agency/NGO and MISG professionals are expected to enhance academic and professional development opportunities.

Eligibility

Graduate Student Research Fellowships will support a student enrolled in or admitted to a full-time graduate or professional degree program at an accredited Michigan university (including Tribal colleges),

with support of a faculty member from that institution. Students may be working toward a degree in any discipline related to Great Lakes coastal or environmental issues. Students also must identify a sponsor from a Michigan federal, state, or local agency, office, or non-governmental organization.

Non-Federal Match

All full proposals require a 50% non-federal match. Applicants are required to document the source of the project match within the full proposal. Fellowship match may be identified through the fellow's home institution with assistance of the advising faculty, or through match from cooperating agencies or partners involved in the project. Potential sources of the match include foregone faculty and staff salary and fringe benefits (e.g., student mentoring, technical support of project); equipment; ship time; office or laboratory space; and third-party matching funds or gifts. Note that researchers are encouraged to work with their institution's business office and MISG to ensure that proposed sources of matching funds follow the federal cost policy for eligible match prior to submitting a full proposal.

Online Interview

Applicants selected as finalists will be invited to an online interview with the review panel. Each interviewee will be asked the same set of questions about the interviewee's background, research interests, and career goals. Interviews will last approximately 30 minutes. While the interviews are not scored they are considered by the MISG management team when making final award selections after the panel review.

Important Dates

- **May 27, 2025** – Deadline for questions about Graduate Student Research Fellowship proposals to be submitted to MSG-RFPinfo@umich.edu (5 p.m. ET). Responses will be posted on the MISG website as soon as possible after questions are received.
- **May 30, 2025** – Full fellowship proposals are due by 5 p.m. ET. Full proposals should be submitted through the MISG [website](#).
- **July 2025** – Interviews of finalists.
- **August 2025** – Notification of final proposal funding decisions.
- **September 1, 2025** – Funding for new projects begins, pending federal appropriations.
- **September 1, 2025 through August 31, 2027** – Timeline for projects approved for funding.

Questions and Informational Webinar

Questions related to the Graduate Student Research Fellowship should be submitted to the Michigan Sea Grant Research Program Manager (MSG-RFPinfo@umich.edu) by the deadline listed above. Responses will be posted on the Michigan Sea Grant RFP webpage. MISG also will host a webinar during early February (TBD) to introduce the Graduate Research Fellowship RFP process and answer any questions.

Application Submission Information

Fellowship applicants should complete the Fellowship Application Submission Form (on [our website](#)) at least two weeks before the deadline. After applicants complete the online application form, the academic advisor and agency/NGO sponsor will receive a system-generated request for the letter of

recommendation with instructions on how to log in and upload the letter as a PDF. In addition, Budget Form 90-4, which outlines the proposed budget, should be included as part of the online application. This form will be available on our [website](#).

**Please allow sufficient time for all application materials to be received before the deadline.
Late applications will not be accepted.**

Full Proposal Guidelines

- 1) Project narrative – 1-2 pages describing the goals, approach (including theoretical background if applicable), methods, and expected outcomes, as well as how this research is relevant to the sponsor and how findings will be communicated.
- 2) Career goals statement – 1 page maximum describing your career objectives and how the proposed research project will help to support those objectives.
- 3) Undergraduate and graduate transcripts – unofficial copies are acceptable.
- 4) Letters of recommendation – one from your primary academic advisor and one from an agency/NGO sponsor.
- 5) Budget – outline of proposed expenses (e.g., tuition, stipend, research expenses, travel, supplies, indirect costs, etc.) up to \$60,000 total and a timeline of up to 2 years. The budget should also indicate the source and allocation of the 50% non-federal match (e.g., \$30,000 non-federal match for a \$60,000 funding request from MISG for a total of \$90,000 for the project).
 - Use Budget Form 90-4 to develop the proposed budget. Each year must be separately detailed in the budget spreadsheet, including budget justification, with an overall project budget summary included, as well.
- 6) Commitment Letter confirming match requirement from university/institution.
- 7) Curriculum Vitae – 2 pages maximum and must include contact information for the graduate student applicant and primary advisor(s).
- 8) Data Management – NOAA regulations require a data management plan to make data available within two years of award completion. If you will generate new data, then you will be required to submit a data management plan as part of your final proposal. The MISG data management plan can be found [here](#).
- 9) NEPA Questionnaire – All research projects are required by NOAA under the National Environmental Protection Act to submit an abbreviated Environmental Compliance Questionnaire. The form can be found on our [website](#) and MISG research staff are available to assist you with filling out the form.
- 10) Office of Management and Budget-approved Demographics Question (optional) – In accordance with OMB SPD 15, the lead PI/Applicant should complete this online form. Submission of the requested information is voluntary and is not a precondition of award. Any individual not wishing to submit some or all the information should check the box provided for this purpose or skip the question. Upon receipt of the application, this form will be separated from the application. This

form will not be duplicated, and it will not be a part of the review process. Data will be confidential. To answer these question, please use [this form](#).

Please note that applications that do not meet the requirements specified above may be rejected without review.

Proposal Evaluation Criteria

Fellowship applications will be evaluated on the six criteria listed below:

- 1) Quality of Proposal and Integration with Agency/NGO Needs – 25 points
Is the proposed project clearly described and the outcomes achievable? Does the proposed topic address a relevant agency/NGO/community concern or question?
- 2) Research and Career Goals of the Student – 25 points
How does the proposed project fit in with the student’s stated career aspirations? Will the proposed project benefit the student’s stated research or career goals?
- 3) Academic Ability and Relevance – 10 points
How does the student’s academic history support the proposed topic? Does the student’s educational background and experience lend itself to the successful execution of the proposed topic?
- 4) Communication Skills – 10 points
How well can the student communicate with a variety of partner audiences, both technical and non-technical?
- 5) Support from Advisors – 20 points
What kind of support will the student receive from faculty and relevant agency/NGO advisors?
- 6) Serving All Michigan’s Communities – 10 points
Will this fellowship and project advance MISG’s goals for serving all of Michigan’s coastal communities, for example by engaging a variety of communities or increasing representation from a variety of communities in environmental fields?

Three external reviewers, possibly including representatives from Great Lakes agencies (state or federal), NGOs, and academia, will review all qualified Graduate Research Fellowships proposals. Members of the MISG Management Team and at least two of the external reviewers will interview fellowship applicants in mid-to-late summer 2025. The MISG Management Team will make funding decisions based on external reviews and rankings, as well as the online interview, with consideration for availability of funding, prior award performance of applicants, balance across institutions, focus areas, as well as programmatic needs, objectives, and priorities. Notification of funding decisions will occur in August 2025, and fellowship research will be conducted within the 2-year period from September 1, 2025, through August 31, 2027.

About the Michigan Sea Grant Research Program

Michigan Sea Grant-supported projects address issues affecting the Great Lakes and Michigan’s coastal areas and include 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. For more information, please see: 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. Please see www.michiganseagrant.org for more information.