

## Purpose

The National Marine Sanctuary Foundation (the Foundation), in cooperation with NOAA Ocean Exploration, is proud to announce a funding opportunity to support Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEI&A) efforts related to ocean literacy, stewardship, and workforce development. The overarching goal is to engage diverse student groups in ocean exploration learning opportunities through partnering with institutions that advance Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math (STEAM) education for underserved and underrepresented communities across the U.S. states and territories. These mini-grants are intended for use by educators and/or education program implementers for the advancement of their students (in middle school, high school, undergraduate, and/or community college). Priority will be given to proposals that incorporate NOAA resources that relate to ocean exploration, such as national marine sanctuaries, and can demonstrate student impact in a relatively short period of time.

## Overview

### Background

The Foundation and NOAA Ocean Exploration share a common goal to engage and inspire the next generation of ocean explorers. To help achieve this goal, while simultaneously recognizing limited support for underserved and/or underrepresented communities to engage in ocean exploration career pathways, the Ocean Exploration Education Mini-Grants project launched to inspire the next generation of *all* ocean explorers.

### Need

The Ocean Exploration Education Mini-Grants project seeks to address the need to support and encourage STEAM education/identity for students from underserved and/or underrepresented communities, and to build the capacity for their STEAM educators to bring ocean science and exploration alive in the classroom and beyond. To increase inclusivity and build diversity, it is critical for STEAM education programs to intentionally engage with student groups lacking representation in STEAM fields. For example, a recent [report](#) by the House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology shows that staff of color at NOAA only comprise 14% of the agency's STEM workforce. This project aims to support initiatives and build partnerships with others seeking to fill these gaps and scale-up ideas promoting stronger connections between DEI&A and ocean exploration as it relates to ocean literacy, stewardship, or workforce development.

### Objectives

Proposals must focus on **ocean literacy, stewardship, or workforce development** projects promoting:

- I. The advancement of ocean exploration educational opportunities.
- II. Support for STEAM education/identity for students from underserved and/or underrepresented communities, which build the capacity for their STEAM educators to bring ocean science and exploration alive in the classroom.
- III. Establishment and strengthening of ocean exploration partnerships with organizations working at the intersection of STEAM education and DEI&A.

Examples of potential projects could include (but are not limited to) the following:

- **Ocean Literacy:** Incorporation of ocean exploration educational content into programming (NOAA resources will be prioritized).
- **Stewardship:** Experiential learning opportunities, access to guest speakers, and field trips that emphasize deep-sea science, technology, or conservation (especially those that connect to National Marine Sanctuaries, or other federally-managed marine protected areas).
- **Workforce development:** Funding for internships, research opportunities, attendance of conferences or workshops, and sponsorship of competitive learning challenges to promote skills-based training for ocean exploration careers.

## Funding Availability

Mini-grants will be offered in the range of \$10,000 - \$25,000 USD.

## Period of Performance

January 1, 2022 - July 15, 2022 (6.5 months of grant implementation). There will not be an opportunity for selected grantees to request to extend the period of performance. Projects can end prior to July 15, but cannot extend past that date. Timeline of project activities should be clearly addressed in the applicant's proposal. Projects that are unclear whether work can be completed within the noted timeline will not be rated as highly in the review process.

## Eligibility

Mini-grant applicants are limited to institutions of higher education; middle school and high school public and independent school systems; other nonprofits, including community-based organizations and informal education institutions, such as museums, zoos, and aquariums; state and local government agencies; and Indian tribal governments in the United States. Proposals should focus on one or more of the targeted age groups, including: middle school, high school, undergraduate, and/or community college students.

## How to Apply

Submit a proposal and budget using the Foundation's [Mini- Grant Proposal Template](#) -- not to exceed five pages -- by November 15, 2021 to [rfp@marinesanctuary.org](mailto:rfp@marinesanctuary.org). Determinations will be made by December 15, 2021 and applicants notified shortly thereafter.

## Useful Resources

[NOAA Ocean Exploration Education Theme Pages](#)

[Deep Ocean Education Project](#)

[Ocean Literacy- Overview and Guide](#)

[Diversity and Inclusion at NOAA](#)

## Additional Information

Please direct any questions to [rfp@marinesanctuary.org](mailto:rfp@marinesanctuary.org).

## Review Process

### Evaluation Criteria

- Does the proposal support student or teacher engagement in ocean exploration science?
- Does the proposal advance ocean literacy, stewardship, and/or workforce development?
- Does the proposal support DEI&A in STEAM and focus on underserved and/or underrepresented populations?
- Is the proposal feasible in the period of performance timeframe?
- Does the proposal include plans to measure student impact and outputs?

Each proposal will be subject to a technical review process and evaluated on the objectives and criteria stated above. Priority will be given to proposals that incorporate NOAA resources and can demonstrate student impact in a relatively short period of time.

## About Us

[The National Marine Sanctuary Foundation](#), founded in 2000 by America's most influential ocean conservation leaders, works with communities and NOAA to conserve and expand these special places for a healthy ocean, coasts, and Great Lakes. Sanctuaries and monuments are our essential network of protected waters, owned by every American and championed by us. Connected by currents, they sustain miraculous species, coastal communities, and our shared heritage. The Foundation is a leading voice for U.S. protected waters, and our work extends from the ocean floor to the classroom to Capitol Hill. The Foundation supports a growing portfolio of Community Stewardship, Outreach, and Education programs aimed at providing students, educators, and lifelong learners with opportunities to explore and discover connections to the natural world, no matter where they live.

[NOAA Ocean Exploration](#) is the only U.S. federal organization dedicated to exploring the deep ocean, with a mission to explore the ocean for national benefit. The office works with partners to explore previously unknown areas of our deep ocean, making discoveries of scientific, economic, and cultural value and supporting innovations in exploration tools and capabilities. The Ocean Exploration Education Mini-Grants project was created in cooperation with the Foundation under federal award NA19OAR110405.