



National Marine Sanctuary Foundation

DISCOVER WONDER

Mesophotic and Deep Benthic Communities Restoration Education & Outreach Resource Development

BACKGROUND

Mesophotic and Deep Benthic Communities (MDBC) are vast and complex ecosystems that are a foundation to Gulf of Mexico food webs. Despite the depth of these resources, human activities and environmental perturbations can threaten the health and resiliency of these communities. Potential threats include oil and gas industry activity; fishing (e.g., harvest pressure, damage from bottom-tending gear, impacts from anchoring or lost gear); recreational activities, such as diving and boating; marine debris; invasive species; and climate change.

The Active Management and Protection (AMP) project intends to utilize existing knowledge and information that emerges from the work of the [Deepwater Horizon MDBC Restoration portfolio](#) to identify activities that can address present threats, prevent future injury, and provide a framework for monitoring, education, and outreach. Activities conducted through the Education & Outreach (E&O) element of the AMP project will engage and inform members of the general public, K-12 students and teachers, resources users, and stakeholders about the value and importance of MDBC, the restoration activities being undertaken as a part of the portfolio-wide efforts, and the actions that can be taken to protect MDBC.

The AMP Team has identified a number of strategies to begin implementation of E&O activities, including development of multimedia content for web and social media, development of exhibits and displays at public venues such as museums and aquariums, live telepresence broadcasts from ships conducting restoration activities in the Gulf of Mexico, and more.

The National Marine Sanctuary Foundation and NOAA are seeking science education and content development experts to develop new educational resources that could be implemented to reach audiences across the Gulf of Mexico and beyond. The proposed resources can take any form that would be conducive to connecting target audiences with deep sea ecosystems over 100 miles offshore in the Gulf, from online educational modules to hands-on activity kits and beyond. Work will begin in November 2023 with the resource finalized and ready to begin implementation and evaluation by June 2024 at the latest. The performance period will end in May 2025, with final reporting and evaluation metrics due at that time.

NEED

1. Create an educational resource(s) that engages an identified target audience(s), providing educational content about mesophotic and deep benthic communities in the Gulf of Mexico, the restoration activities taking place through 2028, the threats these ecosystems face, and the actions we can take to protect them.
2. Identify an implementation plan for the resource(s), including how the resource will be made available to its target audience(s), and potentially replicated across multiple platforms, venues, or contexts.
3. Identify how the resource will be evaluated to determine whether educational objectives are being met and gauge metrics relating to the reach of the resource.



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To support development and ensure that the proposed resource is scientifically accurate and effectively represents the activities of the MDBC restoration portfolio, the Foundation and NOAA can provide:

- Multimedia content such as photos and video of mesophotic and deep benthic communities in the Gulf of Mexico
- Multimedia content such as photos and video of scientists conducting the restoration activities, including interviews with personnel
- Access to subject-matter experts working on the restoration of mesophotic and deep benthic communities in the Gulf of Mexico
- Connections to existing project partners and identified potential project partners, including a number of public venues and educational institutions
- Direct coordination with AMP project managers and the Education & Outreach Manager

DELIVERABLES

1. Educational resource developed by June 2024
2. Implementation and evaluation of the resource completed by May 2025

FUNDING AVAILABILITY AND PERIOD OF PERFORMANCE

The total project budget is not to exceed \$250,000. Proposals can be formatted to include scalable options, up to \$250,000, as funding more than one proposal may be considered. The project timeline is expected to take place from November 2023 to May 2025. Final deliverables are expected to be sent to the Foundation no later than May 2025. Timeline of project activities and overall completion should be clearly addressed and outlined in the applicant's proposal.

ELIGIBILITY AND CRITERIA

The experience and skills of the applicant may vary depending on the proposed resource, but the following are desired:

- Educational background and experience that includes knowledge of science/environmental education and communication best-practices in informal and/or formal settings
- Experience with the development and implementation of educational resources, including (but not limited to): lesson plans, experiential learning activities, and/or multimedia products
- Experience or background knowledge in marine biology and conservation, ocean exploration, environmental restoration, data visualization, and/or science communication
- Ability to identify a target audience (or audiences) and tailor educational content to the needs and context of that audience
- Knowledge of and experience evaluating educational resources to determine reach and measure whether educational objectives are being met
- Knowledge of and ability to align resource with standards such as the National Marine Educators Association's Ocean Literacy framework and/or the North American Association for Environmental Education's Guidelines For Excellence
- Experience working within Google Drive and commenting on/editing live documents
- As applicable, digital resources should meet [Section 508 standards](#), as much as possible. This includes captions for all audio/video content, alt text for all images, appropriate tags



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for content.

- The applicant must not have a paid staff member serving on the Foundation's Board of Trustees.
- Project work is conducted by a U.S. organization in the United States or territories and is not a federal employee, federal government agency, or a foreign entity.
- The applicant can provide a federal tax id #.

HOW TO APPLY

Applicants must submit the project proposal, not to exceed 5 pages typed (single spaced, 12 point font) and supporting materials, by **11:59 pm ET on September 15, 2023** to sfrancis@marinesanctuary.org and cc RFP@marinesanctuary.org with the subject line "MDBC - Educational Resource Development." Determinations will be made no later than **October 6, 2023**, and applicants notified shortly thereafter.

Project proposal should include and will be evaluated against (via a technical review committee) the following elements, for a total of 20 points:

- Vision for the educational resource, including target audience(s), implementation plan, and evaluation plan (5 pts.)
- Clear project timelines, including deliverables (5 pts.)
- Proposed Budget (5 pts.)
- 2-3 examples of educational products the applicant has previously created and implemented, as well as the outcomes of that product (5 pts.)*

*These documents will not count towards the 5 page limit

The applicant should include these additional materials in their project proposal (these documents will not count towards the 5 page limit):

- PI and project team's CVs and/or outline of qualification

Additional Information

This is a Request for Proposals only. Issuance of this RFP does not in any way obligate the Foundation to make an award or pay for costs incurred by potential offerors in the preparation and submission of an offer. In addition:

- A. The Foundation may cancel RFP and not award;
- B. The Foundation may reject any or all responses received;
- C. Issuance of RFP does not constitute award commitment by The Foundation;
- D. The Foundation reserves the right to disqualify any offer based on offeror failure to follow RFP instructions;
- E. The Foundation will not compensate offerors for a response to RFP;
- F. The Foundation reserves the right to issue an award based on an initial evaluation of offers without further discussion;
- G. The Foundation may negotiate with short-listed offerors for their best and final offer;
- H. The Foundation may reissue the solicitation or issue formal amendments revising the original RFP specifications and evaluation criteria before or after receipt of proposals;
- I. The Foundation may modify the specifications without issuing a formal notice to all offerors when the revisions are immaterial to the scope of the RFP;
- J. The Foundation may choose to award only part of the activities in the RFP or issue multiple awards based on multiple RFP activities;



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- K. The Foundation reserves the right to waive minor proposal deficiencies that can be corrected prior to award determination to promote competition; and
- L. The Foundation shall retain ownership of any/all content generated under this RFP.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Applicants may find it useful to explore existing content related to the Mesophotic and Deep Benthic Communities restoration portfolio to gain a deeper understanding of the ecosystems in question, restoration goals, etc. More resources can be found here:

- NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service Office of Habitat Conservation MDBC Homepage:
<https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/southeast/habitat-conservation/mesophotic-and-deep-benthic-communities-restoration>
- NOAA National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science MDBC Homepage:
<https://coastalscience.noaa.gov/science-areas/restoration/gulf-mdbc-restoration/>
- 2023 MDBC Public Webinar recording:
<https://www.gulfspillrestoration.noaa.gov/2023/04/materials-april-11th-mesophotic-and-deep-benthic-communities-restoration-webinar-available>
- MDBC Restoration Type Planning Phase Fact Sheet:
https://www.gulfspillrestoration.noaa.gov/sites/default/files/2019-05%20OOTIG_DraftRP_2EA_MDBC_Fact_Sheets.pdf
- MDBC Technical Publications:
<https://repository.library.noaa.gov/gsearch?collection=noaa%3A44280&terms=MDBC>
- Web Stories:
 - [Bringing Together Experts to Plan Innovative Deep-sea Habitat Restoration](#)
 - [Scientific Cruises Set Sail to Help Restore Open Ocean Communities](#)
 - [2022 Gulf of Mexico Deep Sea Cruise Season, By the Numbers](#)
 - [NOAA, USGS Investigate Mesophotic Coral Biology to Support Restoration](#)
 - [Inventory of Northern Gulf of Mexico Deep Seafloor Habitat Data and Maps Now Available](#)
- MDBC Restoration Cruises StoryMap:
<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/908a2d2000894c2b8a6daafb8163a357>