



**2025 REQUEST FOR**

**Mini-grant Proposals**

***Submission Deadline:***

***April 25, 2025***

***by 4 p.m.***

***(Local Time at College Park, Maryland)***

**In Cooperation with   
USDA  
National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA)**

**TO: POTENTIAL APPLICANTS FOR NRAC FUNDING UNDER THE MINI-GRANT PROGRAM**

The Northeastern Regional Aquaculture Center (NRAC) is inviting mini-grant proposals for project funding consideration. The NRAC selection criteria, review process and proposal submission guidelines are described later in this notice.

There will be one round of applications under this program in 2019. **The deadline for submitting mini-grant proposal is April 25, 2025, at 4:00 p.m. for electronic copy** (Local Time in College Park, Maryland)**. A hard copy may be requested by NRAC if proposal is approved for funding.** Mini-grant proposals will be reviewed by members of the NRAC Technical Industry Advisory Committee and the Executive Committee. Successful proposals are expected to receive funding approximately three months following the application deadline and approval from the Board of Directors.

This round of proposal development and project funding will use funds available from NRAC's grant award from the United States Department of Agriculture, National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA). NRAC will fund mini-grant proposals in areas described elsewhere in this notice. Research and/or Extension priority areas are recommended to NRAC by representatives of the aquaculture industry in the Northeast through an industry-driven committee process. NRAC provides funding for projects, which are regional in nature and rely on in-place equipment and facilities to achieve objectives. Indirect costs (overhead), "brick and mortar" construction funds and student tuition remission costs are **not** allowed.

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**GENERAL CRITERIA FOR NRAC FUNDING**

In addition to technical and industry merit (and the specific evaluation categories listed on page one), research and project proposals are judged against **four criteria**. **YOUR PROPOSED RESEARCH OR PROJECT MUST**:

**1**. **SUPPORT COMMERCIAL AQUACULTURE INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT** in Washington D.C. or the twelve Northeastern states. Your project must be relevant to the needs identified by the aquaculture industry and/or provide evidence of potential economic benefit to the industry.

**2.** **HAVE THE ASSISTANCE, SUPPORT, OR ENDORSEMENT OF INDUSTRY** in the Northeast. Funded or non-funded industry collaborators are encouraged; letters of endorsement from industry members or associations can provide additional evidence of the value of the proposed project.

**3. IDENTIFY ROLE OF COLLABORATORS:**

The role of all collaborators and cooperating, non-funded participants must be defined.

**4. MEET BUDGET REQUIREMENTS:**

Any costs not allowed by USDA for NRAC projects are also not allowed to be claimed as matching funds (e.g., indirect costs or overhead, tuition remission, capital costs). Matching funds or cost sharing funds are not required and should **NOT** be included in the budget sheets.

Please CALL NRAC (301) 405-6917, email [ssadams@umd.edu](about:blank), if you have any questions regarding these issues, for assistance in building regional teams, or in developing Extension/outreach programs.

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**NORTHEASTERN REGIONAL AQUACULTURE CENTER**

**REQUEST FOR 2025 MINI-GRANT PROPOSALS**

**Background and Authorization**

The NORTHEASTERN REGIONAL AQUACULTURE CENTER (NRAC) currently located at the University of Maryland was created in 1987 to *“support aquaculture research, development, demonstration and extension education to enhance viable and profitable U.S. aquaculture production which will benefit consumers, producers, service industries, and the American economy”.* NRAC is one of five Regional Aquaculture Centers established by the U.S. Congress and administered by the U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA). NRAC is supported by yearly grants from USDA, which is authorized under Federal legislation (Agriculture and Food Act of 1981, Title IV, Subtitle L, §1440, Pub. L. 97-98) to coordinate efforts in the implementation of the National Aquaculture Act of 1980.

NRAC supports research, Extension education, development, and demonstration projects aimed at increasing aquaculture production, profitability, and processing. The NRAC comprises the geographical region of Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, Washington D.C., and West Virginia. Qualified individuals within the region associated with any state agricultural experiment station, college, university, other research institution or organization, federal agency, private organization or corporation are eligible to participate.

There is approximately $200,000 available this year from NRAC to fund relevant and selected projects within the mini-grants program. NRAC will fund projects for up to one year with a maximum total funding of up to $25,000 per request. **Ideally,** and contingent on Congressional funding, **successful proposals are expected to receive funding within 6 months of the application deadline**. Mini-grant funding priorities (described on page 4) are established at Industry and Technical committee meetings sponsored by NRAC. Targeted research, Extension, and demonstration areas are reviewed by NRAC's Technical and Industry Advisory Council (TIAC) and are ultimately approved by NRAC’s Board of Directors and USDA, NIFA. **Proposal Submission Guidelines**

**Mini-grant Proposals:** NRAC encourages short proposals to present ideas, objectives, and working procedures on relevant industry problems, including, where appropriate, co-sponsoring regional meetings.

Proposals should be straightforward and concise. One original of the Proposal with original signatures by the PC (Project Coordinator) or PI (Principal Investigator) must be single-sided and submitted to NRAC. An electronic copy in a single WORD or .pdf document must be submitted via e-mail to [ssadams@umd.edu](about:blank) or on a disk. The budget page must be submitted using the NRAC Mini-grants EXCEL template and/or must be contained in the proposal document.

**The following format must be strictly adhered to or the proposal will be considered incomplete and removed from funding consideration:**

1. A separate title/signature page;
2. The proposal body (**not to exceed three [single-sided] pages, in a font not smaller than Times Roman 12 point; margins - top 1", sides and bottom, 0.5" minimum**) describing the project in the categories **“Why, What, Where, Who, How and When.”** Any proposal outside of these guidelines will not be accepted.
3. A separate one-page budget summary budget (using Word or Excel), if not presented within the proposal document. **PI salaries for mini-grants are discouraged.** **Tuition remission and indirect costs are not allowed.** **Matching funds or cost-sharing funds are not allowed and should not be included.**
4. A separate budget justification narrative for each line in the budget is required.
5. **A Data Management Plan:** Details of the format for reporting your plan can be found at the following website: [www.nifa.usda.gov/sites/default/files/resource/data-management-plan-for-research-education-extension-projects-20190926.pdf](http://www.nifa.usda.gov/sites/default/files/resource/data-management-plan-for-research-education-extension-projects-20190926.pdf). These plans must be made publically available upon request or accessible from your institution’s website.
6. A Logic Model outlining how this undertaking will ultimately lead to positive impacts for the aquaculture industry in the northeast. See example below.
7. **One page only** vita (résumé) for each researcher or cooperator.

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The NRAC TIAC will use the following criteria to rank proposals. All proposals will be judged for technical merit and relevance to industry needs by members of the NRAC TIAC.

**Proposal Evaluation Criteria:** the NRAC Technical and Industry Advisory Committees will judge Proposals in four categories:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 1. | *Relevancy of the project to the needs of the aquaculture industry* | up to 30 points |
| 2. | *Benefits and potential economic impact to the aquaculture industry* | up to 30 points |
| 3. | *Overall scientific and technical approach* | up to 20 points |
| 4. | *Overall probability of the team accomplishing the objectives considering qualifications of participants and adequacy of requested funding.* | up to 20 points |
| Total | | **up to 100 points** |

**Individuals submitting proposals *are not assured of funding by NRAC***. Ultimate approval for funding of proposals will be by the NRAC Board of Directors and by the US Department of Agriculture, National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA).

**Regionality and Outreach:** NRAC normally requires that all proposals have regional involvement (as defined as having funded participants in two or more states within the NRAC region). **This requirement has been suspended for the mini-grant program; however, the proposal must still have multi-state, regional relevance, application, impact, and/or importance**. Dissemination of project results to targeted audiences is an expectation as is discussion of Extension aspects with Extension specialists within the region. In addition, a clear statement on **anticipated outcomes** in the form of a Logic Model (**e.g., change in knowledge, documented adoption of recommended practice, changes in societal behavior toward aquaculture** – see below for template) is required.

**Mini-grant focus areas of eligibility:** NRAC is interested in funding selected projects dealing with the research or Extension that fall within the following criteria:

1. Projects of an urgent nature and would not otherwise be practical within the existing NRAC RFP process.
2. Projects of limited scope that do not necessarily fall within the current industry research priority areas. This criterion will be of a secondary priority, but will be fully considered.

Examples of fundable projects might include: specialized (and timely) workshops that address pressing industry needs, pilot field studies, proof-of-concept principal research, economic or spatial-planning studies and technology transfer activities.

**Proposals with strong industry support and evidence of industry partnership are favored. Furthermore, although not a requirement, evidence of strong industry, academic, or governmental collaborative engagement are encouraged.**

**Special Considerations: The NRAC program will not pay indirect costs (i.e., overhead) to participating institutions, and will not pay student tuition remission costs. NRAC expects applicants to have equipment and facilities in place; NRAC will not pay for brick-and-mortar costs.**

Regulations applicable to NRAC grants include the USDA Uniform Federal Assistance Regulations, 7 CFR Part 3015 and Special Terms and Conditions thereto. All individuals funded by NRAC are required to submit the NIFA-2008 Form (Assurance Statement).

**Project Coordinator (PC) and Principal Investigators (PI):**  One PC (the lead PI) must be identified for each project. The PC’s institute is the recipient of the NRAC award, and issues subcontracts to the PIs of the project. The PC coordinates and monitors the activities and progress of all PIs, maintains communication among participants, is responsible for overall project reporting to NRAC, is the main contact person on the overall project, and is fiscally responsible to NRAC for the overall project. Each PI is fiscally responsible to the PC’s institution for their subcontract, and is responsible for reporting data and deliverables in a timely manner to the PC. An individual may be a PC or PI on more than one proposal.

All funded individuals will be required to provide a signed letter of intent to participate in the project in their indicated capacity.

If vertebrate animals are involved in the project submission an approved Institutional Animal Care and Use Protocol must be on file at the PC’s home institution or organization.

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All funded project PC and/or PIs are expected to provide a **Project Completion Report** to NRAC within six (6) months post-project termination. Failure to comply with this requirement may impact future funding opportunities.

**Conflict of Interest:** NRAC encourages the participation of the best-qualified researchers, Extension personnel, and industry members throughout the Northeastern Region. While NRAC does not intend to exclude TIAC members from involvement on funded projects, there are certain restrictions that are detailed in NRAC’s Conflict of Interest Guidelines. These guidelines are posted on the NRAC Website and can be obtained from the NRAC office.

**Submission deadline:** **Electronic copy of** **proposals must be received by NRAC no later than 4:00 P.M. (local time in College Park, Maryland) April 25, 2025. Handwritten or Facsimile transmission copies, as well as proposals received after the deadline, will not be considered. A hard copy may be requested by NRAC if the proposal is approved for funding.** Proposals that fail to follow the guidelines and enclosed format will also not be considered. All inquiries and submissions should be addressed to:

Sharon S. Adams [ssadams@umd.edu](about:blank)

Written submissions if you so choose to send can be mailed to:

NRAC Coordinator/MGRFP 2024

Northeastern Regional Aquaculture Center/NRAC

University of Maryland

2113 Animal Sci/Agric. Engineering Building #142

College Park, Maryland 20742-2317

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**2025-2026 Priority Statement**

**Targeted Project Area (TPA)**

The following statement, as prepared by the NRAC Technical and Industry Advisory Council and approved by the Board of Directors, is intended to address challenges and opportunities identified by industry members for research, demonstration, outreach, and/or education. Pre-proposals that address these areas will receive equal consideration. Areas described below are in no particular order. Aquaculture commodities chosen for study should have proven or have viable economic potential for commercial development in the Northeast region. Collaborative partnership(s) with appropriate industry sector(s), firm(s), fishing groups, or tribal groups is highly encouraged. Projects that promise to produce tangible end-products that are of direct use or value to aquaculture businesses or address key bottlenecks to aquaculture operations or marketing are preferred.

NRAC encourages a diversity of projects and multi-disciplined investigators to advance aquaculture (including aquaponics) in the Northeast as it relates to species, production systems, applications, and markets. NRAC supports projects that demonstrate measurable impacts in either marine or freshwater environments, at sea or on land, and in urban centers or rural settings. Aquaculture organisms are always aquatic and include finfish, shellfish, invertebrates, seaweed, other aquatic plants, and microalgae.

**Goal:** To improve the opportunities for growth and sustainability of the aquaculture industry by focusing on areas of economic, environmental, and social impacts at all industry stages (i.e., product life-cycle curve):

* New/young businesses: issues affecting barriers to entry, assisting market or industry segment entrants
* Established businesses: issues affecting scalability and growth as demands increase
* Mature businesses: issues affecting sustainability and maintenance such as the development of new market opportunities or diversification

**Statement of Opportunity:** Aquaculture in the northeast region includes a diversity of species, systems, and industries. NRAC funds projects that focus on all aspects of aquaculture and emphasize outcomes leading to development and sustainable growth of the industry. Members of the Industry Advisory Committee have identified the following challenges as major constraints:

* Access to capital and/or increasing financial literacy
* Operation siting
* Navigating the regulatory environment
* Education-to-workforce pipeline
* Infrastructure needs and/or shortfalls
* Commercial water access and water rights
* Improving efficiency and optimizing production
* Disease, biosecurity, and/or product safety
* Practical responses to environmental interactions and/or change and identifying potential biological, market, and policy solutions
* Industry-wide strategic planning
* Market/public acceptance of aquaculture
* Market development, expansion, and diversification
* Sustainable waste management and environmental stewardship

**NRAC welcomes proposals that address these identified issues, as well as other issues that advance aquaculture in the Northeast.**

Mini-grants submitted under this RFP are for one (1) year only and capped at $25 K.

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**NRAC Mini-Grants Proposal**

**Title Page**

**Project Title: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Project Duration** (months)**:**

**Total Funding Requested from NRAC:**  **$**

**States with Participants in Project (circle / list):**

**CT DE ME MD MA NH NJ NY PA RI VT WV Wash, DC / Other:**

**Project Coordinator** (Lead Principal Investigator) (name/position/institution/address/phone/fax/email):

(one name only)

**Principal Investigator(s)** (name/position/institution/address/phone/fax/email):

**Cooperating, Non-funded Participant(s)** (name/position/institution/address/phone/fax/email):

**Project Coordinator**’s **Signature:**  **Date:**

**NRAC Mini-Grants Proposal**

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**Description of Project Categories and Body of Proposal**

**1.0 WHY:** Justify the problem or issue addressed by the proposed project.

**2.0 WHAT:**  State the objectives of the project and their relationship to the problem or issue described above.

2.1 Describe the product, process, or program that will result from successful accomplishment of the project objectives.

2.2 Identify and describe the end-users and beneficiaries of the project results.

2.3 Indicate what measurable economic benefits will result from the use of the product/process/program.

**3.0 WHERE:**  Identify the states and region (e.g., Chesapeake Bay) and describe the environment (land-based system, freshwater, nearshore, etc.) where the project results will be immediately applicable. Where else may the results be transferred to and applied?

**4.0 WHO:** Describe who will be involved in the project **and** their respective roles and responsibilities. Attach a one page vita of each funded participant.

**5.0 HOW:**  Describe how the project will be carried out and achieve the objectives defined above. Describe the supporting facilities that will be made available to the project. How will project results be evaluated? How will the results or products be transferred to industry or public entities?

**6.0 WHEN:** Indicate desired starting and completion dates (months) for the proposed project (i.e., account for seasonality of data collection). Provide a clear time line for completion of objectives with due dates specified for all products. Strong justification for the immediacy of the project is expected. **Project timeline must not exceed one year**.

1. **BUDGET SUMMARY - $25,000 MAXIMUM:** (ENCOURAGED BUT NOT REQUIRED FOR MINI-GRANTS AT SUBMISSION STAGE)

NRAC will not pay for indirect costs (overhead), student tuition remission, and capital costs. These may not be included as a component of matching funds. Matching funds or cost sharing funds are not required but if included should be shown on the budget sheet or presented within the content of the proposal.

**Funds Requested**

Funds Requested

Salaries and Wages

A. Principal Investigators

1. B. Research Assoc./Post-doctorates

C. Graduate/Pre-baccalaureate Students

D. Other Professionals (not consultants)

Fringe Benefits

Non-expendable Equipment

Materials and Supplies

Travel

Publication Costs/Page Charges

Other Direct Costs

Lab Analyses

Consultant Services

Subcontracting

Phone/Fax/Photocopy/Postage

**TOTALS**

(Enter these values on the title/signature page)

1. **BUDGET JUSTIFICATION:**

Please provide a short narrative for each budget line indicating details such as time expended (and rates) for personnel, equipment and travel costs, etc.

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1. **VITA (rÉsumÉ) gUIDELINES:**

name

Address Phone

Fax

Email

**EDUCATION**

B.S. (Institution, Year)

M.S. (Institution, Year)

Ph.D. (Institution, Year)

**POSITIONS**

List each position on a separate line from newest to oldest.

**SCIENTIFIC AND PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATION**

List alphabetically each organization on a separate line.

**SELECTED PUBLICATIONS**

List relevant publications from newest to oldest.

1. **OTHER FUNDING:**

Are you applying for funds for this work to other agencies?

If yes, which/how much?

**11.0 LOGIC MODEL:** you must submit a Logic Model outlining the outcome expectations of your project.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Logic Model of:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**  **Situation Statement:**  **Outcome Summary:** | | | | | | | |
| **Inputs** |  | **Outputs**  **Activities Participation** | |  | **Outcomes – Impact**  **Short Term Medium Term Long Term** | | |
| **What we invest:** |  | **What we do:** | **Who we reach:** |  | **What the short term results are:** | **What the medium term results are:** | **That the ultimate results are:** |
| **Assumptions** | | | |  | **External Factors** | | |
| **Evaluation - How will you measure and report your outcomes?** | | | | | | | |

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**CHECKLIST FOR SUBMISSION OF MINI-GRANTS PROPOSALS**

Proposal Format:

Margins (minimum): top 1", sides and bottom 0.5"

Font not smaller than: Times Roman 12 pt.

Separate title page

Body: limited to 3 (single sided) pages

Budget and budget justification (Not Required)

Résumé/vita: 1-page per participant

Did You Include the Following?

Vita (résumé) for each researcher or cooperator

Industry letters of support (optional, but suggested)

Data Management Plan

Logic Model

\_\_\_\_\_One Electronic copy submitted as a single WORD or PDF document. Must arrive by deadline.

**DO NOT INCLUDE**:

Include bibliography and /or reference material

Matching funds in budget

Submit in binders or folders

Include a cover

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