

Ohio Department of Higher Education Harmful Algal Bloom Research Initiative Call for Proposals

On behalf of the Chancellor of the Ohio Department of Higher Education (ODHE), the Ohio Sea Grant College Program and the University of Toledo are requesting Harmful Algal Bloom Research Initiative (HABRI) proposals for two-year research projects from Ohio colleges and universities that will aid the management efforts of state agencies and will support [Governor Mike DeWine's H2Ohio Initiative](#). We anticipate approximately \$4 million in funding to be available for this competition. Proposed project budgets will be evaluated and assessed based on the scope of work; there is no predetermined minimum or maximum funding amount per project. ODHE HABRI encourages both large, multi-investigator, interdisciplinary proposals as well as smaller, more targeted proposals. **Project funding will begin on March 1, 2026, and will end on February 28, 2028.**

Pre-proposal Deadline: Ohio Sea Grant must receive a PDF version uploaded to its web page (ohioseagrant.osu.edu/research/submit) by **5:00 p.m. Thursday, October 23, 2025.**

Full Proposal Deadline: Ohio Sea Grant must receive a PDF version uploaded to its web page (ohioseagrant.osu.edu/research/submit) by **5:00 p.m. Thursday, January 15, 2026.**

Research Priorities: Specific research priorities have been provided by the Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODA), Ohio Department of Health (ODH), Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR), Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (OEPA), and the Ohio Lake Erie Commission (OLEC). Research that addresses these priorities will help agencies prevent, manage, and/or mitigate HABs and help guide the efforts supported by Governor Mike DeWine's H2Ohio Initiative. Detailed priorities can be found online at: go.osu.edu/habripriorities.

Please also note that the HABRI Agency Advisory Board welcomes novel research projects and has occasionally recommended funding proposals that do not directly address a priority highlighted by agencies. If the project proposed does not address a listed priority, you are encouraged to consult with Ohio Sea Grant (Drs. Chris Winslow, winslow.33@osu.edu and Kristen Fussell, fussell.10@osu.edu) prior to proposal submission.

Due to the nature of this funding, successful proposals must include research and/or development in support of Ohio industry, commerce, and business (e.g., water treatment plants, agricultural producers, health care providers, etc.). Research and/or product innovation, development, and commercialization must also include consultation with Ohio businesses and industry, state and local public entities and agencies, or collaboration with public and private education institutions, and research organizations or institutions.

Please keep in mind that the application and use of research results, as well as the societal and economic impacts, are also important considerations for this funding opportunity. More detail is highlighted in pre-proposal instructions below.

Deadlines and Planned Schedule:

Thursday, October 23, 2025, by 5:00 p.m. - Applicants should submit a single PDF pre-proposal by accessing ohioseagrant.osu.edu/research/submit and uploading files.

Friday, November 14, 2025 - Applicants will be notified of the status of their pre-proposals (encouraged or discouraged from submitting a full proposal).

Thursday, January 15, 2026, by 5:00 p.m. - Applicants should submit a single PDF version of their full proposals by accessing ohioseagrant.osu.edu/research/submit and uploading files.

Friday, February 6, 2026 - Researchers will be notified as to whether their proposal will be included in the list of projects submitted to the Chancellor of the Ohio Department of Higher Education for final approval.

Pre-proposals: The pre-proposal process allows investigators to outline projects and receive feedback without spending the time required to prepare a full proposal. Successfully completing the pre-proposal process (i.e., being encouraged to submit a full proposal) does not, however, guarantee funding.

A PDF version of the pre-proposal (with all pieces of the pre-proposal in one PDF document) must be submitted to Ohio Sea Grant by **5:00 p.m. on Thursday, October 23, 2025**. Applicants must submit by accessing ohioseagrant.osu.edu/research/submit and uploading one PDF document. The pre-proposal document must include:

1. **Cover page:** Include the project title, and the name, affiliation, and email address of each investigator.
2. **Summary narrative (Maximum of three pages** for sections a through c below) explaining the rationale, objectives, and methodology of the proposed project. Font size must be 11pt or greater.
 - a) **Rationale:** Provide a description of the novelty of the proposed research, background information, and how this effort builds upon previous work. Additionally, describe how the proposed project addresses one or more of the ODA, ODH, ODNR, OEPA, and OLEC research priorities and anticipated benefits to resource managers. *This section should focus more on need, not historical background surrounding the HABs issue.*
 - a) **Objectives:** Clearly state what the investigator intends to do and/or produce. Measurable, hypothesis-based objectives are typically preferred. This section should make a connection between the outcomes of the proposed research and agencies. Specifically, how might this work support Ohio industry, commerce, business (e.g., water treatment plants, agricultural producers, health care providers, etc.), and the needs of our state agencies.
 - c) **Methodology:** Outline the methods, approaches, and techniques that will be used to meet the stated objectives/outcomes. The investigator should demonstrate the technical qualities of the proposed approach with enough detail so that the review panel can adequately assess the features of the proposed work. Be sure to describe any collaboration between universities and the public and/or private sector. NOTE: not all panel members are academics so the proposals methods should be understandable by individuals that are not in your academic discipline.

3. **Literature cited:** References are required if cited in the text of the proposal; citation of literature is essential to establish the familiarity and expertise of the project leader(s) to the subject in the proposal. This section is not included in the page limit.
4. **Budget:** A budget form is required for each year of the project **and** a summary budget combining all years. Itemized budget forms are also required for each subaward on the project. The budget form and more detailed instructions are available on Ohio Sea Grant's website (ohioseagrant.osu.edu/research/funding). Match is **not** required for this proposal. Indirect costs are allowable to a maximum of 8% MTDC (Modified Total Direct Costs). *Budgets do not need university approval at the pre-proposal stage.*
5. **Detailed budget justification:** Please include a yearly budget justification for the overall budget, as well as any subawards.
6. **Vita:** A short vita (maximum of two pages) is required for each principal investigator and co-investigator. Each vita must contain the investigator's complete address, telephone number, and e-mail address. Beyond this, we are quite flexible and want the investigator to include the information that is most relevant to this funding opportunity. A list of current research support that is closely related to the project is a good idea. Listings of current and past positions held, and honors are also often helpful. Publications written by the investigator, especially those that are peer reviewed and related to the research project proposed should be listed.

Full Proposals: Full proposals will be due by **5:00 p.m. on Thursday, January 15, 2026.**

A PDF version of the full proposal (with all pieces in one PDF document) must be submitted to Ohio Sea Grant by 5:00 p.m. on Thursday, January 15, 2026. Applicants must submit by accessing ohioseagrant.osu.edu/research/submit and uploading one PDF document. The full proposal document must include:

1. **Cover page:** Include the project title, and the name, affiliation, and email address of each investigator.
2. **Project narrative (Maximum of seven pages** for sections a through d described below) explaining the rationale, objectives, methodology, and end-users of the proposed project. Font size must be 11pt or greater.
 - a) **Rationale:** Provide a description of the novelty of the proposed research, background information, and how this effort builds upon previous work. Additionally, describe how the proposed project addresses one or more of the ODA, ODH, ODNR, OEPA, and OLEC research priorities and anticipated benefits to resource managers. This section should focus more on need, not historical background surrounding the HABs issue.
 - b) **Objectives:** Clearly state what the investigator intends to do and/or produce. Measurable, hypothesis-based objectives are typically preferred. This section should make a connection between the outcomes of the proposed research and agencies. Specifically, how might this work support Ohio industry, commerce, business (e.g., water treatment plants, agricultural producers, health care providers, etc.), and the needs of our state agencies.

- c) **Methodology:** Outline the methods, approaches, and techniques that will be used to meet the stated objectives/outcomes. The investigator should demonstrate the technical qualities of the proposed approach with enough detail that the review panel can adequately assess the features of the proposed work. Be sure to describe any collaboration between universities and the public and/or private sector. Please include specific information on why you chose the method you selected, how many sites/replicates will be collected, project location, how the data will be collected, etc. Additionally, please include a timeline or schedule for the project in the format of your choosing.
 - d) **End-Users:** Describe how the proposed research and/or product innovation, development, and commercialization will include consultation with Ohio business/industry or state and local public entities and agencies. If applicable, discuss to what degree end users or potential users were brought into the planning of the activity, will be brought into the execution of the activity, or will be kept apprised of progress and results.
2. **Literature cited:** References are required if cited in the text of the proposal; citation of literature is essential to establish the familiarity and expertise of the project leader(s) to the subject in the proposal. This section is not included in the page limit.
3. **Budget:** A budget form is required for each year of the project **and** a summary budget combining all years. Itemized budget forms are also required for each subaward on the project. The budget form and more detailed instructions are available on Ohio Sea Grant's website (ohioseagrant.osu.edu/research/funding). Match is **not** required for this proposal. Indirect costs are allowable to a maximum of 8% MTDC.
4. **Detailed budget justification:** Include a yearly budget justification for the overall budget as well as any subawards.
5. **Vita:** The maximum length vita is two pages for each principal investigator and co-investigator. Each vita must contain the investigator's complete address, telephone number, and e-mail address. Beyond this, we are quite flexible and want the investigator to include the information that is most relevant to this funding opportunity. A listing of current research support that is closely related to the project is a good idea. Listings of current and past positions held, and honors are also often helpful. Publications written by the investigator, especially those that are peer reviewed and related to the research project proposed should be listed.
6. **Letters of Collaboration:** Please have project partners and/or other entities providing you with resources (i.e., land access, equipment, other expertise needed to complete project) complete the Letter of Collaboration form found on our website (ohioseagrant.osu.edu/research/funding). Instructions are included at the bottom of the form. These letters should be then sent back to the investigator to be included in the project submission. Please note that these forms are not required but will be helpful when assessing project partnerships and feasibility of the proposed work.
7. **Indirect Cost Rate Agreement:** If you are a non-Ohio State principal investigator (PI), please include your university's indirect cost rate agreement form with your submission.

8. **University Approval:** Proposals submitted at the full proposal stage need to show approval of your proposed work and budget by your university with appropriate authorized signatures. If the proposal PI is not affiliated with Ohio State University (OSU), please complete the form “Subrecipient Letter of Intent” available on Ohio Sea Grant’s webpage (ohioseagrant.osu.edu/research/funding) and obtain the appropriate signatures. If the proposal PI is affiliated with OSU, please be sure to submit the university’s ePA-005 form prior to proposal submission.

Proposal Evaluation

Pre-proposal evaluation: A panel composed primarily of the members of our agency advisory committee (representatives from ODA, ODH, ODNR, OEPA, and OLEC) will review and rank pre-proposals to determine which projects are encouraged to move forward to the full proposal stage. It is possible that requests to modify projects and even combine projects will occur at this step. The first investigator listed on each pre-proposal will be contacted with the results of the review by Friday, November 14, 2025.

Full proposal evaluation: Experts from the state management agencies and appropriate content experts will review full proposals. Investigators will be notified by Friday, February 6, 2026, as to whether their project will be included in the list of projects submitted to the Chancellor of the Ohio Department of Higher Education for final approval.

Full proposals will be evaluated using the criteria below. Pre-proposals will be evaluated similarly; however, the End-Users evaluation will be removed since that section is not included in the project narrative at that stage.

Project Contribution (30 points): The importance, relevance and applicability of proposed project and its application to problems or opportunities with societal relevance, including the degree to which the proposal is responsive to agency need (go.osu.edu/habripriorities).

Technical and Scientific Merit (30 points): The degree to which the activity will advance scientific understanding and whether the approach is technically sound and innovative, uses appropriate methods, includes clearly stated measurable objectives and mechanisms and is likely to achieve anticipated results in the time proposed.

End-Users (20): The degree to which the PI(s) illustrates how the proposed research and/or product innovation, development, and commercialization will include consultation with Ohio business/industry or state and local public entities and agencies. If applicable, to what degree were end users or potential users brought into the planning of the activity or will be brought into the execution of the activity or will be kept apprised of progress and results.

Qualification and Past Record of Investigators (5 points): Applicants possess the necessary education, experience, training, facilities and administrative resources to accomplish the project, with consideration to career stage and past performance.

Project Cost (5 points): Budget is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and timeframe, reasonable given the availability of program funds, and effectively leverages other

resources to achieve the project outcomes.

Scores for all reviewed proposals will be ranked from highest to lowest. Projects recommended for funding will be selected in rank order until funding is exhausted with four possible exceptions: (1) PI is not in good standing, (2) the proposal was duplicative of a stronger proposal submitted under this call (3) the panel would like to increase diversity of research topics and/or universities funded, and/or (4) the proposal was well written and highly ranked, but the review panel knew of a duplicative project recommended for funding under a different call for proposals. The latter occasionally occurs because many of our review panel members sit on other funding review panels.

Additional Information

- Proposals will not be accepted from investigators who are not current with their reporting requirements on previous projects funded by Ohio Sea Grant or the Ohio Department of Higher Education.
- Submitting electronic reprints to our office of resultant peer-reviewed publications is a part of investigators' reporting requirements.
- Principal investigators, or members of the research team:
 - will be called on annually to present their research findings to state agency experts. This ensures that your research findings are informing management decisions. Ample time will be given for researchers to prepare for these presentations.
 - will be required to attend update webinars as needed to update ODHE and state agency representatives on progress toward your objectives and interesting findings to date.
 - may be called on to present their research findings (i.e., elected officials and state agencies) or at relevant local and regional conferences. Ample time will be given for researchers to prepare for these presentations.