

## **New England Gear Innovation Fund – Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)**

### **2023 Request for Proposals**

May 12, 2023

#### **Can you please clarify what costs are allowable?**

##### **Can proposals include equipment costs?**

- Applicants are encouraged to rent equipment where possible and cost-effective or use matching funds to make those purchases. NFWF acknowledges, however, that some projects may only be completed using NFWF funds to procure equipment, or in many cases equipment may not be available to rent. Many innovative gears may be considered equipment, and testing these gears will be a primary goal of some proposals. If you believe your project will need equipment, please contact Gray Redding to discuss how to include it in the budget.

##### **Can proposals pay fishermen participating in projects, such as testing equipment?**

- Additionally, fishermen are key partners in the work this RFP seeks to support. Project funds can be used to compensate participating fishermen at a reasonable rate for services they provide towards the project's scope of work.

#### **Are technology solutions that address whale entanglement, but are not related to fishing gear appropriate for this funding opportunity? Examples include tracking entangled whales, alert when an entanglement occurs, etc.**

- The focus of the New England Gear Innovation Fund is to promote the development and use of innovative fishing gear that address the lethal and sub-lethal threats of entanglement. Proposed projects should look to address the issue through work that involves fishermen and their fishing gear.

#### **Are gear innovations for the recreational lobster fishery or other recreational fixed gear fisheries eligible to receive funding?**

- No, the focus of the current RFP is on commercial fixed gear and mobile fisheries.

#### **Are there maximum or minimum award sizes that applicants should be aware of?**

- The RFP provides additional detail on funding amount, but NFWF believes that most grants will fall between \$250,000 and \$2 Million. There are no hard limits on project scale thought.

#### **What is the expected duration for a proposed project?**

- The RFP provides additional detail on project timing, but grants should aim to complete their scopes of work in no more than 3 years.
- NFWF is aware of an inconsistency in the original version of the Tip Sheet regarding timing. NFWF has uploaded an updated version to the Tip Sheet to the RFP page which matches the 3 year project duration listed in the RFP.

#### **Are there any considerations for how applicants should engage States?**

- State governments are eligible applicant entities and reasonable partners for other entities to engage in their proposals. Where projects may require approval from state agencies to conduct work, applicants are responsible for obtaining any approvals necessary to carry out work.
- The New England Gear Innovation Fund also recognizes that there are differences in fishing conditions and fishing businesses across states in the region, and across the state and federally licensed fisheries. This RFP encourages the consideration of this diversity in developing or testing innovative fishing gears to ensure these innovations work for all potential users.

**Can you clarify how applications submitted early impact award date?**

- NFWF has specific early application deadlines that if met, may allow a project to receive notification of award and access to funding earlier than the standard timeline. NFWF reserves the right to shift applications submitted early to the standard process.

**Are projects focused on ghost gear prevention with innovative gear eligible for funding?**

- These funds are not available for projects focused on ghost gear recovery or prevention.

**Will pre-proposals receive feedback that can be incorporated into the full proposal?**

- For all pre-proposals that are invited to full proposal, NFWF will provide limited feedback that can be incorporated into the full proposal.

**Are proposals working near or in wind energy areas eligible for funding?**

- This funding is focused on supporting the use and development of innovative gear to address entanglement challenges. Work addressing those challenges in or around wind energy areas is eligible. Work focused on understanding or addressing the impact of wind energy development or operation in the region is not eligible for funding.

**Is there an anticipated breakdown in awards between priority one (innovative gear) and priority two (outreach and engagement)?**

- As this is the first year of the New England Gear Innovation Fund, the program is assessing the funding need of the region and will award grants towards that need. This need will also help inform the balance of funding between the two RFP priorities, as there is no pre-determined mix.

**Are there any requirements for the pre-proposal, e.g., content, page limit, etc.?**

- The RFP and Tip Sheet describe the application process. Once in Easygrants, applicants will also be able to download a template of the pre-proposal narrative with specific instructions for that document.

**What is NOAA's role in the New England Gear Innovation Fund?**

- NOAA is a partner in the New England Gear Innovation Fund. In that role, they are engaged in proposal review and provide input in developing the RFP and its priorities. However, the final award decisions are made by the NFWF Board of Directors.

**Can NOAA staff be a partner on a proposal?**

- NOAA or NOAA staff can be partners on projects, but NOAA and other federal agencies are not eligible to receive funding directly. Please note that funds cannot support the time or costs of NOAA or other federal staff or agencies.

**Is it necessary for a proposed project to address all of the RFP priorities?**

- No, it is not necessary for proposed work to address all priorities listed in the RFP. Proposals may address either the whole or a part of one of the priorities, or may address elements of both priorities.

**Please clarify the need for geolocation of innovative gear.**

- Some innovative gears being developed or in use to address the entanglement issue remove surface marking buoys from fishing gear. Traditionally, these buoys allow other fishermen and maritime users to locate fishing gear and plan accordingly. Without these buoys, it is important to provide geolocation information for innovative gear to all necessary users to allow safe use of the area and prevent fishing gear conflicts.