

OUTREACH PLAN INFORMATION

All full proposals must include the section Outreach Plan in the “Outcomes” section of the proposal. Investigators are strongly encouraged to contact the Maryland Sea Grant office to discuss potential outreach approach and audiences (which could include industry, policy-makers, the broad researcher community, and the public). Discussions with Sea Grant Extension Program agents and specialists are encouraged in the early stages of proposal development. A list of Sea Grant Extension personnel can be found at: <http://www.mdsg.umd.edu/programs/about/staff/>.

Why Ask About Outreach?

Sea Grant has a broad mission to contribute to the sustainable and wise use of our coastal resources. To accomplish this Maryland Sea Grant uses three tools: research, education, and outreach. Our outreach products are useful to society and incorporate science as the basis for the messages we convey. To ensure that the research we fund is as effective as it can be in serving our broad mission, we require investigators receiving support to demonstrate that they have a plan for translating their findings into a form that is useable by the individuals and organizations that the research intends to benefit.

What is Outreach?

In our research proposals, principal investigators must describe reasonable anticipated benefits of the research to be undertaken over short to long time scales and to various “end users” of the information or technologies developed. Since, very few end users will read peer-reviewed journal articles or attend professional meetings, outreach must employ different and appropriate vehicles to convey the research findings to end-users in a readily understandable manner. There are many different tools that can be used, provided that there is a clear target audience and a logical outcome from the research effort.

Articulating a plan to get this information to end users is a vital part of successful proposals to Maryland Sea Grant.

Potential End Users

- Environmental managers
- Decision makers
- Commercial fishermen
- Environmental NGOs
- K-12 students
- Targeted groups within the general public

What is not “Outreach” (for MDSG’s purposes)?

The following are all important products of the research process, but they do not qualify as outreach to constituents or end users.

- Undergraduate and graduate education.
- Peer-reviewed journal articles.
- Presentations at scientific meetings.

What is an Outreach Plan?

A Maryland Sea Grant outreach plan describes how specific end users will learn about research outcomes so that they can use the information when making decisions (e.g., about coastal resources or land use policy). An outreach plan describes what methods you will use and/or products you will create to communicate results as well as how the end users will get the information. In addition, the plan should predict, within reason, the impact of the research and outreach effort on the targeted end-users. For example:

- Will managers be able to make a better decision regarding a specific issue?
- Will a new method to manage a specific problem be developed and disseminated?
- Will a key group have new tools and training to address an important issue pertaining to Chesapeake Bay management?

A general distribution of information to wide audiences in the general public (e.g., via a website) can be useful but is most likely not sufficient in and of itself. An outreach effort should lead to outcomes that can be evaluated as products of the funded project.

The following bullets form the framework for a Maryland Sea Grant Outreach Plan. They are designed to guide investigators as they develop plans and will serve as the reference for evaluating outreach efforts over the lifetime of funded projects.

- Describe the products and scientific outcomes of the proposed study that will be applicable to your outreach effort.
- Describe the non-peer end users for the products/outcomes.
- Describe the outreach mechanisms you will use to reach end peer users.
- Present a timeframe for developing and implementing this outreach plan.
- Describe the intended impact of these efforts with particular emphasis on how those impacts align with the focus areas and research emphases outlined in the original RFP (<http://www.mdsg.umd.edu/programs/research/funding/rfp/>).

These efforts often require funds and as such an appropriate, justified funding request should be included in the project budget.

Outreach Assistance and Examples

The key to a successful outreach effort is defining a strategy for ways in which specific users can **learn about and make use of** the products of the proposed research.

- Engage the Maryland Sea Grant communications team: Maryland Sea Grant staff regularly writes and publishes online news articles and our magazine *Chesapeake Quarterly*.
- Contact Maryland Sea Grant Extension Faculty: Our Extension educators and specialists have a variety of expertise and are actively working with many of the groups that are potential beneficiaries of your research.
www.mdsg.umd.edu/extension/
- Serve on or connect with a committee or working group: Some researchers, as part of their research programs or service activities, are directly and actively engaged with end user communities. These groups help to inform the direction of

the proposed research and provide a built-in audience for the results when they become available.

- Partner with industry or NGOs. Some researchers collaborate with environmental consultants or other interested constituencies in the development of research questions and/or the dissemination of pertinent results.
- Involve citizens in research. Incorporate interested volunteers or environmental groups in the collection of data.

Describing engagement with specific groups and the specific activities to be conducted related to the project being proposed, is as valid an outreach plan as one that directly involves Maryland Sea Grant staff, faculty, and products. The key is defining a strategy for ways in which specific users can learn about and make use of the products of your research.