

CoPe Recommendation: Scalable Research for Coastal Communities

Lauren Kinsman-Costello¹, Bobby Reece², and Jessica Boakye³

¹Kent State University, ²Texas A&M University, ³University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

We recommend that CoPe projects be structured in a tiered framework that ensures multidisciplinary, community engaged research at local, regional, and national scales. Small SEED grants will support co-production of research priorities and questions, large CORE grants will support transdisciplinary, discovery (“basic”) research projects with community partner involvement at local and regional scales, and SYNTHESIS grants will support national and global collaboration among regional scientists and community partners, who will use their CORE project outcomes to inform national coastal needs.

Specific, differentiated recommendation: Initiate a program with three discrete proposal opportunities that, together, promote **discovery research** that supports **societal needs**.

SEED grants will provide financial and logistical support for co-developing research ideas with community stakeholders. Money would be spent on meeting venues, community canvassing, travel, compensation and support for community participation (including food, child care if needed, etc.). Importantly, funds could also be used to contract a meeting facilitator to ensure an equitable, effective discussion among stakeholders, resulting in clear, co-produced research priorities and questions.

CORE grants will support foundational discovery research that is transdisciplinary and has broad participation. CORE projects are similar in scale to “traditional” disciplinary NSF research, yet a requirement of the solicitation will be that projects are crossdisciplinary (i.e., cross-directorate) and include at least one identified community partner. Although having completed a SEED project prior to submission would not be required, these SEED projects would support the development of competitive CORE proposals that meet the criteria of transdisciplinary, community engaged research. Stakeholder input into the research idea generation process must be demonstrated in the proposals, and a structure for direct community partner involvement included in the project activities identified at the outset. By virtue of their complex, community involved nature, CORE projects will be focused at local and regional scales, and “place-based” research will be encouraged to make stakeholder involvement and research that spans multiple disciplines feasible.

SYNTHESIS grants provide a venue for local and regional scientists and non-scientist partners to use CORE grant research outcomes and project experiences to inform national and global scale coastal system challenges. Funds would be used to support travel for face-to-face cross-region working group meetings, and personnel to complete synthetic scholarly and application work.

CoPe ANNUAL WORKSHOP: All three project types will be linked by annual meeting participation, in which project results are disseminated and shared. Presentations on the

outcomes of discovery research will be shared, as well as reflections on successful strategies for broadening participation, engaging community partners, and working across disciplines. In addition to research personnel (PIs, students, post-docs, etc.), community partners will fully participate in these meetings, and financial support will be provided to support their travel, lodging, and other expenses.

This tiered framework encourages *discovery research that supports societal needs*, by ensuring co-production of research priorities and questions with scientists of multiple disciplines and community stakeholders, direct involvement of community partners in research projects, and opportunities for substantive interactions among stakeholders at local/regional and national scales. Ultimate research outcomes may include products such as location-specific models, decision support tools, and frameworks for evaluating environmental and societal consequences of management and policy decisions.

Through direct community involvement at all stages of research, the most relevant research questions will be prioritized and projects will be completed in an inclusive and effective way. Project outputs will be directly relevant to community needs, and in useful formats. Projects will enhance local and regional social capital by facilitating interactions amongst stakeholders, providing time and flexibility to establish relationships and build trust, resulting in a substantive local and regional network that it is connect nationally by the CoPe program. By supporting community partner participation both in local and regional projects and in national workshops, **local initiatives can support both local and global system understanding and solutions**. This structure also promotes transparency at all levels of the CoPe program.