Agency Name:	Sea Grant Consortium		
Agency Code:	P260	Section:	48

Fiscal Year FY 2027-2028

Agency Budget Plan

FORM A - BUDGET PLAN SUMMARY

	For FY 2027-2028, my agency is (mark "X"):	
OPERATING REQUESTS *(FORM B1)*	X	Requesting General Fund Appropriations.
		Requesting Federal/Other Authorization.
		Not requesting any changes.

	For FY 2027-2028, my agency is (mark "X"):	
NON-RECURRING REQUESTS *(FORM B2)*		Requesting Non-Recurring Appropriations.
		Requesting Non-Recurring Federal/Other Authorization.
	X	Not requesting any changes.

	For FY 2027-2028, my agency is (mark "X"):	
CAPITAL REQUESTS *(FORM C)*		Requesting funding for Capital Projects.
	X	Not requesting any changes.

	For FY 2027-2028, my agency is (mark "X"):	
PROVISOS *(FORM D)*		Requesting a new proviso and/or substantive changes to existing provisos.
		Only requesting technical proviso changes (such as date references).
	X	Not requesting any proviso changes.

Please identify your agency's preferred contacts for this year's budget process.

	Name	*Phone*	*Email*
PRIMARY CONTACT:	Emily Osborne	(843) 953-2078	emily.osborne@scseagrant.org
SECONDARY CONTACT:	Ryan Bradley	(843) 953-2076	ryan.bradley@scseagrant.rog

I have reviewed and approved the enclosed FY 2027-2028 Agency Budget Plan, which is complete and accurate to the extent of my knowledge.

	Agency Director	*Board or Commission Chair*
SIGN/DATE:	Emily Osborne Digitally signed by Emily.Osborne Date: 2026.09.25 12:19:15 -04'00'	Geoffrey I. Scott Digitally signed by Geoffrey I. Scott Date: 2026.09.15 16:26:05 -04'00'
TYPE/PRINT NAME:		

This form must be signed by the agency head – not a delegate.

Agency Name:	Sea Grant Consortium
Agency Code:	P260
Section:	48

BUDGET REQUESTS			FUNDING					FTES				
Priority	Request Type	Request Title	State	Federal	Earmarked	Restricted	Total	State	Federal	Earmarked	Restricted	Total
1	B1 - Recurring	Workforce Sustainability and Market Alignment Initiative	211,730	0	0	0	211,730	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
2	B1 - Recurring	Restoring Coastal Water Quality Extension Services	65,919	0	0	0	65,919	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
TOTALS			277,649	0	0	0	277,649	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

Agency Name:	Sea Grant Consortium		
Agency Code:	P260	Section:	48

FORM B1 – RECURRING OPERATING REQUEST

AGENCY PRIORITY

1

Provide the Agency Priority Ranking from the Executive Summary.

TITLE

Workforce Sustainability and Market Alignment Initiative

Provide a brief, descriptive title for this request.

AMOUNT

General: $211,730

Federal: $0

Other: $0

Total: $211,730

What is the net change in requested appropriations for FY 2027-2028? This amount should correspond to the total for all funding sources on the Executive Summary.

NEW POSITIONS

0.00

Please provide the total number of new positions needed for this request.

FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH THE REQUEST

Mark "X" for all that apply:	
X	Change in cost of providing current services to existing program audience
	Change in case load/enrollment under existing program guidelines
	Non-mandated change in eligibility/enrollment for existing program
	Non-mandated program change in service levels or areas
	Proposed establishment of a new program or initiative
	Loss of federal or other external financial support for existing program
	Exhaustion of fund balances previously used to support program
	IT Technology/Security related
X	HR/Personnel Related
	AI Related
	Related to a Non-Recurring request – If so, Priority #

STATEWIDE ENTERPRISE STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Mark "X" for primary applicable Statewide Enterprise Strategic Objective:	
X	Education, Training, and Human Development
	Healthy and Safe Families
	Maintaining Safety, Integrity, and Security
	Public Infrastructure and Economic Development
	Government and Citizens

1.1.1, 1.1.2, 1.1.3, 2.1.1, 2.1.2, 2.1.3, 2.1.4, 2.1.5, 3.1.1, 3.1.2, 3.1.3, 3.1.4

The FY2027-28 funding request will fill a critical gap in the S.C. Sea Grant Consortium (Consortium)'s ability to sustain its current workforce as well as enhance abilities to recruit high-level talent required to achieve the agency's mission and goals, and therefore would support all three of the agency's management and administrative goals and corresponding strategies and objectives. The Consortium is seeking recurring funding to enhance:

Programmatic Impact: A chief function of the agency is to provide science-based information on issues and opportunities to improve the social and economic wellbeing of our coastal citizens while ensuring the optimal use and conservation of our marine and coastal natural resources. As experts in planning and implementing effective community engagement across our strategic areas, the agency provides valuable on the ground perspective and experience in carrying out effective extension programs and in providing priority information to stakeholders. Facilitating and coordinating relationships with groups enhances our ability to serve.

ACCOUNTABILITY OF FUNDS

Societal Impact: The Consortium works with and supports a number of the agency's partners and stakeholders (including SCOR, South Carolina Office of Resilience) as well as industry-based partners (organizations and individuals) to utilize coastal applied science to benefit the economic growth, public safety, and support of maritime business and industries. This added capacity will allow the agency to improve our effectiveness in engaging communities and the transfer of information to our constituents for their benefit. This information will allow decision-makers to better evaluate the options before them as they balance plans for accommodating future growth, preparing for hazards, fostering economic development, and providing for natural resources conservation.

Economic Impact: As the Consortium shares tools and information with our constituents, it prepares them to make decisions that benefit the economic development of our businesses and communities, ensuring efficient investments to remain resilient to changes in weather, tides and storms. The Consortium measures economic benefits and reports the figures to the NOAA National Sea Grant Office NSGO as well as to our state entities.

Statewide Enterprise Strategic Objective: Education, Training and Human Development - The requested funds will support the Consortium's ability to maintain a highly qualified and experienced workforce needed to deliver science-based research, extension, education, and technical assistance to South Carolina communities. Addressing documented compensation disparities will strengthen the Consortium's ability to recruit and retain specialized personnel and maintain the organizational capacity necessary to provide effective public services.

What specific strategy, as outlined in the most recent Strategic Planning and Performance Measurement template of agency's accountability report, does this funding request support? How would this request advance that strategy? How would the use of these funds be evaluated?

RECIPIENTS OF FUNDS

Funds will support existing full-time Consortium employees in currently filled FTE positions, excluding the Agency Head, through targeted salary adjustments based on documented market compensation gaps. The adjustments are intended to improve the Consortium's ability to retain and recruit highly qualified employees in specialized research, extension, education, administrative, communications, technology, and grants management positions.

What individuals or entities would receive these funds (contractors, vendors, grantees, individual beneficiaries, etc.)? How would these funds be allocated – using an existing formula, through a competitive process, based upon predetermined eligibility criteria?

Request Calculations: Existing Staff Market Alignment Adjustment (10.5%): $155,766 (salary/wages) + $11,995 (7.7% cost of living locality scale) + $43,969 (26.21% fringe) = $211,730 (Total Personnel Cost). The fringe benefit rate for currently filled FTEs was calculated using the FY2026-27 employer contribution rates of 18.56% for the South Carolina Retirement System (SCRS) and 7.65% for FICA, resulting in a combined employer contribution rate of 26.21% applied to all requested salary adjustments.

Request Justification: The South Carolina Sea Grant Consortium requests **$211,730 recurring funding to support a Workforce Sustainability and Market Alignment Initiative** designed to address compensation disparities identified through a comprehensive review of employee salaries.

An analysis conducted using statewide South Carolina Enterprise Information System (SCEIS) compensation data found that Consortium employees are compensated on average **10.5% below comparable South Carolina state employees** performing similar duties and responsibilities. **Eighteen of the Consortium's 21 employees are paid below the statewide average** for comparable positions. This disparity exists despite the Consortium employing a highly experienced and exceptionally qualified workforce. Staff include professionals with 25 to 30 years of state service across administrative, managerial, and research roles, as well as advanced technical expertise, professional certifications, and graduate-level education, including numerous master's and doctoral degrees.

The higher cost of living in the Charleston region, where the Consortium is headquartered poses additional challenges to retention and recruitment. According to

JUSTIFICATION OF REQUEST	the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis Regional Price Parities (RPP) 2024 data (https://www.bea.gov/data/prices-inflation/regional-price-parities-state-and-metro-area), the overall cost of living in the Charleston metropolitan area is **7.7 percent higher than the South Carolina average**. Housing costs present an even greater challenge, with housing prices approximately **48.8 percent higher than the statewide average** and 50.7 percent higher than the Columbia metropolitan area. The combination of below-market salaries and higher local living costs places the Consortium at a significant competitive disadvantage in the labor market. We request **$155,766 to apply retention and market-alignment salary adjustments for our existing 21 FTEs**. This allocation will be distributed based on three factors: market salary gap (60%), years of service (25%), and relevant graduate degrees or advanced qualifications (15%). This approach is intended to address the largest compensation disparities by prioritizing positions with the greatest salary gaps; recognize institutional knowledge and experience; and place value on advanced qualifications such as graduate degrees and certifications that materially contribute to an employee's responsibilities and job performance. The proposed methodology provides a consistent, transparent, and data-informed approach to addressing retention challenges and improve the Consortium's ability to maintain competitive salaries for its specialized workforce. The proposed allocation is subject to change based on personnel changes, including vacancies, new hires, or other staffing changes that may occur between submission of this request and the potential receipt of funds. In addition to the salary adjustment request, the recurring funding proposal includes $11,995 to cover the 7.7% cost-of-living locality adjustment associated with the proposed salary increases and $43,969 for the corresponding fringe benefit costs. **The Consortium has not submitted a recurring state budget request for employee recruitment and retention salary adjustments in at least the past decade**. This request addresses a growing compensation gap that is affecting the agency's ability to recruit and retain the highly specialized workforce needed to fulfill its mission. Over the past year, the Consortium has lost seven employees, approximately one-third of its workforce, with compensation identified as a primary factor in most departures. Because the Consortium's work relies on specialized expertise, strong partner relationships, and community trust, turnover creates significant operational challenges and can require up to a year for new employees to become fully effective. Addressing these salary disparities is critical to retaining talent, preserving institutional knowledge, and ensuring the Consortium can continue providing science-based services and support to South Carolina's coastal communities.

Please thoroughly explain the request to include the justification for funds, potential offsets, matching funds, and method of calculation. Please include any explanation of impact if funds are not received. If new positions have been requested, explain why existing vacancies are not sufficient.

Agency Name:	Sea Grant Consortium		
Agency Code:	P260	Section:	48

FORM B1 – RECURRING OPERATING REQUEST

AGENCY PRIORITY

2

Provide the Agency Priority Ranking from the Executive Summary.

TITLE

Restoring Coastal Water Quality Extension Services

Provide a brief, descriptive title for this request.

AMOUNT

General: $65,919

Federal: $0

Other: $0

Total: $65,919

What is the net change in requested appropriations for FY 2027-2028? This amount should correspond to the total for all funding sources on the Executive Summary.

NEW POSITIONS

0.00

Please provide the total number of new positions needed for this request.

FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH THE REQUEST

Mark "X" for all that apply:	
X	Change in cost of providing current services to existing program audience
	Change in case load/enrollment under existing program guidelines
	Non-mandated change in eligibility/enrollment for existing program
	Non-mandated program change in service levels or areas
	Proposed establishment of a new program or initiative
	Loss of federal or other external financial support for existing program
X	Exhaustion of fund balances previously used to support program
	IT Technology/Security related
X	HR/Personnel Related
	AI Related
	Related to a Non-Recurring request – If so, Priority #

STATEWIDE ENTERPRISE STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Mark "X" for primary applicable Statewide Enterprise Strategic Objective:	
	Education, Training, and Human Development
X	Healthy and Safe Families
	Maintaining Safety, Integrity, and Security
	Public Infrastructure and Economic Development
	Government and Citizens

1.1.1, 1.1.2, 1.1.3, 2.1.1, 2.1.2, 2.1.3, 2.1.4, 2.1.5, 3.1.1, 3.1.2, 3.1.3, 3.1.4

The FY2027-28 funding request will fill a critical gap in the S.C. Sea Grant Consortium (Consortium)'s ability to sustain its current workforce as well as enhance abilities to recruit high-level talent required to achieve the agency's mission and goals, and therefore would support all three of the agency's management and administrative goals and corresponding strategies and objectives. The Consortium is seeking recurring funding to enhance:

Programmatic Impact: A chief function of the agency is to provide science-based information on issues and opportunities to improve the social and economic wellbeing of our coastal citizens while ensuring the optimal use and conservation of our marine and coastal natural resources. As experts in planning and implementing effective community engagement across our strategic areas, the agency provides valuable on the ground perspective and experience in carrying out effective extension programs and in providing priority information to stakeholders. Facilitating and coordinating relationships with groups enhances our ability to serve.

ACCOUNTABILITY OF FUNDS

Societal Impact: The Consortium works with and supports a number of the agency's partners and stakeholders as well as industry-based partners to utilize coastal applied science to benefit the economic growth, public safety, and support of maritime business and industries. This added capacity will allow the agency to improve our effectiveness in engaging communities and the transfer of information to our constituents for their benefit. This information will allow decision-makers to better evaluate the options before them as they balance plans for accommodating future growth, preparing for hazards, fostering economic development, and providing for natural resources conservation.

Economic Impact: As the Consortium shares tools and information with our constituents, it prepares them to make decisions that benefit the economic development of our businesses and communities, ensuring efficient investments to remain resilience to changes in weather, tides and storms. The Consortium measures economic benefits and reports the figures to the NOAA National Sea Grant Office NSGO as well as to our state entities.

Statewide Enterprise Strategic Objective: Healthy and Safe Families - The requested funds will support the protection of South Carolina's coastal water and environmental resources by restoring Extension capacity to provide science-based technical assistance to communities, local governments, and other stakeholders. The position will address water quality, stormwater, septic systems, groundwater, contaminants of emerging concern, wetlands, and environmental monitoring, helping communities identify and respond to environmental risks and make informed decisions that protect public resources and support the well-being of South Carolina's coastal communities.

What specific strategy, as outlined in the most recent Strategic Planning and Performance Measurement template of agency's accountability report, does this funding request support? How would this request advance that strategy? How would the use of these funds be evaluated?

RECIPIENTS OF FUNDS

Funds will support one currently vacant, full-time Consortium position (Program Manager I) within the Extension Department. The position will focus on coastal water quality and environmental quality issues and will provide technical assistance, education, and outreach to South Carolina coastal communities, local governments, and other stakeholders. The State funding will support 50 percent of the position's salary, with the remaining 50 percent supported by existing federal NOAA funding.

What individuals or entities would receive these funds (contractors, vendors, grantees, individual beneficiaries, etc.)? How would these funds be allocated – using an existing formula, through a competitive process, based upon predetermined eligibility criteria?

JUSTIFICATION OF REQUEST

Request Calculations: $42,348 (half of 1 unfunded FTE positions) + $3,261 (7.7% cost of living locality scale)+ $20,310 (44.53% fringe) = $65,919 (Total Personnel Cost). The fringe benefit rate for currently filled FTEs was calculated using the FY2026-27 employer contribution rates of 18.56% for the South Carolina Retirement System (SCRS) and 7.65% for FICA plus estimated employer costs for health, dental, life, and disability benefits, resulting in a total fringe rate of 44.53%.

Request Justification: The South Carolina Sea Grant Consortium requests **$65,919 recurring funding** to restore critical Extension capacity by supporting 50 percent of an existing vacant **Program Manager I (Coastal Water Quality Extension Specialist)** position and its associated fringe benefits.

The Consortium has taken deliberate steps to manage personnel costs by evaluating vacancies and delaying or foregoing backfills when feasible, allowing limited resources to be directed toward retaining existing staff. While fiscally responsible, this approach has reduced organizational capacity, as each unfilled position limits the agency's ability to deliver services and meet its mission. The requested position is located within the Extension Department, which serves as the agency's primary connection to South Carolina's coastal communities. The Consortium will match the State's investment dollar-for-dollar through federal NOAA funding, supporting the remaining 50 percent of the position cost.

The Coastal Water Quality Extension Specialist will provide science-based technical

	assistance, outreach, and partnership development on issues that directly affect South Carolina's environmental health, public health, and coastal economy. Demand for assistance related to stormwater management, septic systems and groundwater, contaminants of emerging concern, wetlands, and environmental monitoring continues to grow, yet current staffing levels limit the Consortium's ability to fully respond. The request includes **$42,348** for 50 percent of the salary of a Program Manager I position, **$3,261** for the Charleston locality adjustment, and **$20,310** in associated fringe benefits. This funding does not create a new position or expand agency programs; rather, it restores capacity associated with an existing vacant FTE and leverages federal resources to enhance the Consortium's ability to address critical coastal water-quality challenges facing South Carolina communities.

Please thoroughly explain the request to include the justification for funds, potential offsets, matching funds, and method of calculation. Please include any explanation of impact if funds are not received. If new positions have been requested, explain why existing vacancies are not sufficient.

Agency Name:	Sea Grant Consortium		
Agency Code:	P260	Section:	48

FORM E – AGENCY COST SAVINGS AND GENERAL FUND REDUCTION CONTINGENCY PLAN

TITLE	Agency Cost Savings and General Fund Reduction Contingency Plan
AMOUNT	$46,460 *What is the General Fund 3% reduction amount? This amount should correspond to the reduction spreadsheet prepared by EBO.*
ASSOCIATED FTE REDUCTIONS	N/A *How many FTEs would be reduced in association with this General Fund reduction?*
PROGRAM / ACTIVITY IMPACT	This plan, if implemented, would result in a 11.9% reduction of the agency's operating funds, which currently total $391,936. Of this total amount, approximately sixty-five percent (64.9%) is allocated for the Consortium's office space lease in Fiscal Year 2026-27 ($144,700), annual state insurance premiums ($19,709), annual IT equipment replacement schedule ($10,400), and the newly-established Commerical Seafood Apprenticeship Program ($50,000) with the remainder supporting the agency's day-to-day office operations (utilities, IT software/securities programs, business supplies, etc.). A reduction of $46,460 would greatly restrict the ability of the agency from meeting our administrative, fiduciary, and programmatic responsibilities. *What programs or activities are supported by the General Funds identified?*
SUMMARY	The loss of 11.9% of the agency's operating funds would jeopardize the agency's ability to meet its administrative responsibilities, would impact the ability of the agency to meet its programmatic and fiduciary responsibilities, and could affect our current office lease agreement (see Program/Activity Impact).

Please provide a detailed summary of service delivery impact caused by a reduction in General Fund Appropriations and provide the method of calculation for anticipated reductions. Agencies should prioritize reduction in expenditures that have the least significant impact on service delivery.

AGENCY COST SAVINGS PLANS

The Sea Grant Consortium is not proposing to implement any cost savings measures over $50,000 for the upcoming fiscal year.

What measures does the agency plan to implement to reduce its costs and operating expenses by more than $50,000? Provide a summary of the measures taken and the estimated amount of savings. How does the agency plan to repurpose the savings?