



**GULF OF MEXICO RESEARCH INITIATIVE
RESEARCH BOARD**

Gulf of Mexico Research Initiative

Request for Proposals-III (RFP-III):

**Short-Term Continuing and Emergent Observations and
Sampling**

June 7, 2011

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List of Acronyms

AU	Administrative Unit
DWH	Deepwater Horizon
GRI	Gulf of Mexico Research Initiative
MRA	Master Research Agreement
NOAA	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
RFP	Request for Proposals
US	United States

Section I: Background

SYNOPSIS OF GULF OF MEXICO RESEARCH INITIATIVE

On April 20, 2010, the Deepwater Horizon (DWH) drilling rig operating approximately 50 miles (80 km) off of the coast of Louisiana experienced a catastrophic failure that resulted in the release of petroleum (oil and gas) and subsequent explosion and fire, the ultimate sinking of the rig, and a discharge of gas and light sweet crude oil from an ocean depth of nominally 5000 feet (1525 m).

On May 24, 2010, BP committed \$500 million over a 10-year period to create a broad, independent research program to be conducted at research institutions primarily in the US Gulf Coast States. The program is known as the Gulf of Mexico Research Initiative (GRI). On June 15, 2010, BP announced the names of the scientific experts who would form GRI's independent Research Board. BP, in consultation with the White House and the Governors of the five Gulf Coastal States, later expanded the GRI Research Board¹ to 20 members,² ten appointed by BP and two recommended by the Governor of each of the five Gulf Coast States and appointed by the Gulf of Mexico Alliance (the Alliance is a non-profit entity formed by the Governors of the five Gulf Coast States). The Research Board is responsible for preparing this and subsequent requests for proposals (RFPs), enabling an open and transparent review process, selecting proposals for funding, and reviewing annual progress for continuation funding.

On March 14, 2011, BP and the Alliance entered into the GRI Master Research Agreement³ (GRI MRA). The GRI MRA creates the structure for the GRI, the selection and distribution of grants from the GRI, as well as the funding, conduct, and oversight of research in furtherance of the purposes of the GRI. Any Research Consortium, research institution, individual or co-investigator that receives funding, directly or indirectly, in whole or in part, under the GRI is subject to and must comply with the terms and conditions of the GRI MRA. To the extent that this or subsequent RFPs are inconsistent with the GRI MRA, the GRI MRA shall apply and take precedence over any inconsistent terms contained in such RFPs.

Objectives of the GRI are to investigate the impacts of the oil, dispersed oil, and dispersant on ecosystems of the Gulf of Mexico and affected Gulf Coastal States in a broad context of improving fundamental understanding of the dynamics of such events, the associated environmental stresses, and the public health implications. The GRI will also develop improved spill mitigation, oil and gas detection, characterization, and remediation technologies. The ultimate goal of the GRI will be to improve society's ability to understand and respond to the impacts of petroleum pollution and related stressors of the marine and coastal ecosystems, with an emphasis on conditions in the Gulf of Mexico. Knowledge accrued will be applied to restoration and to improvement of the long-term environmental health of the Gulf of Mexico.

The GRI emphasizes interdisciplinary science and technology involving experts in physical, chemical, geological, and biological oceanography; marine biology; coastal and reef ecosystems, fisheries and wildlife ecology; public health; and associated development of physical, chemical, and biological instrumentation, advanced modeling, and informatics. All activities selected for GRI funding will combine state-of-the-art research with deep scientific knowledge of the ecosystems of

¹ The Research Board Point of Contact is the Chair, Professor Rita Colwell, who can be contacted via the GRI website: <http://griresearchboard.org/contact/index.html>.

² <http://griresearchboard.org/about/board-membership.html>

³ http://gulfofmexicoalliance.org/pdfs/Gulf_of_Mexico_Research_Initiative_Master.pdf

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the Gulf of Mexico to create fundamental advances in understanding the interactions that occurred and continue to occur among the marine and coastal ecosystems, oil, and oil dispersants produced by the catastrophic loss of the DWH oil drilling platform. Success of the GRI depends on a combination of regional knowledge with regional, national, and international research innovation.

The GRI is an independent scientific research program and is separate from the Natural Resources Damages Assessment process.

GRI REQUESTS FOR PROPOSALS

The annual funding level for all GRI activities is expected to be \$50 million per year.

GRI Year 1

BP provided GRI Year 1 (June 1, 2010 – May 31, 2011) funds directly to Gulf Coast State institutions in Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, and Mississippi and to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services National Institutes of Health for rapid-response studies in the immediate aftermath of the DWH oil spill. Funds for subsequent GRI Years are to be distributed through widely-announced RFPs.

RFP-I and RFP-II

The purpose of RFP-I⁴ is to select the research activities for GRI Years 2–4 (June 1, 2011 – May 31, 2014) involving Research Consortia. A Research Consortium is defined as having four or more institutions. The total funds available for distribution to Research Consortia through RFP-I will be a minimum of \$37.5 million per year. Four to eight Research Consortia will be selected, and funding for each is estimated to be between \$1million (minimum) and \$7.5 million (maximum) per year. An additional RFP (RFP-II) will focus on activities involving less money and less internal management than a Research Consortium; RFP-II will be issued at a later date. RFP-II will request proposals from individual or collaborative efforts involving a principal investigator and co-principal investigators from up to three additional institutions and will be focused on the same research themes described in RFP-I. The total funds available for distribution through RFP-II will be up to a maximum of \$7.5 million per year; and funding for each is estimated to be between \$100,000 (minimum) and \$1 million (maximum) per year. RFP-II will fund activities for GRI Years 2–4.

RFP-III

The current RFP of this document, RFP-III, is described in Section II hereafter.

The names RFP-I and RFP-II had been prescribed before the GRI Research Board became aware of the urgent need to provide stop-gap or emergency funding to continue observations and sampling and/or to initiate new observations and sampling during the summer months when GRI Year 1 funds would be depleted and before funds from RFP-I and RFP-II could be distributed.

Sustainability of time series observations is critical to enhance understanding of the integrated Gulf of Mexico system.

⁴ <http://griresearchboard.org/rfp/RFP-I.html>

Section II: RFP-III

PURPOSE OF RFP-III, OVERVIEW OF PROCEDURES

RFP-III is intended to fill a funding gap in critical data acquisition, until such time as funds for projects that will be selected pursuant to RFP-I and/or RFP-II are available for distribution. RFP-III will involve accelerated proposal submission, review, and grant allocation procedures. No letter of intent is required.

The purpose of this RFP, designated RFP-III, is to support continuity of observations and sampling and for initiation of emergent, e.g., time sensitive, observations and sampling during July 1, 2011 to September 30, 2011. In addition to observations and sampling, up to two additional months of support are available for ancillary work, i.e., to catalogue the observations and samples and prepare them for availability to the wider community. RFP-III is to sustain or initiate critical observations and sampling related to the DWH oil spill. All costs must be encumbered by November 30, 2011, and costs encumbered after that date will not be paid. The level of funding for each RFP-III project is expected to be different, concomitant with the requirements of the continuing and emergent observations and sampling to be performed.

The total funds available for distribution through RFP-III are up to \$1.5 million. Funding for each award is estimated to be \$50,000 (minimum) and \$300,000 (maximum) for five months (maximum).

The deadline to submit a proposal for RFP-III is June 17, 2011 at 9:00 p.m. EDT. Awards will be announced on June 30, 2011. For proposals approved by the GRI Research Board, spending can begin on July 1, 2011 for a 90-day period until the grant agreement has been signed.

The work performed under RFP-III shall contribute to the major research themes to be addressed in RFP-I. These are:

1. Physical distribution, dispersion, and dilution of petroleum (oil and gas), its constituents, and associated contaminants (e.g., dispersants) under the action of physical oceanographic processes, air-sea interactions, and tropical storms.
2. Chemical evolution and biological degradation of the petroleum/dispersant systems and subsequent interaction with coastal, open-ocean, and deep-water ecosystems.
3. Environmental effects of the petroleum/dispersant system on the sea floor, water column, coastal waters, beach sediments, wetlands, marshes, and organisms; and the science of ecosystem recovery.
4. Technology developments for improved response, mitigation, detection, characterization, and remediation associated with oil spills and gas releases.
5. Fundamental scientific research integrating results from the other four themes in the context of public health.

RFP-III funds will support operating expenditures, including costs for:

- Field work associated with observations and sampling and other time-sensitive research.
- Personnel critical for the observations, sampling, and emergent research.
- Proper preparation or storage of observations and samples for future need.

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RFP-III funds shall not be used for the acquisition or construction of physical infrastructure, including, but not limited to ships, autonomous underwater vehicles or laboratories.

RFP-III proposals must make a compelling argument for:

- Why the funds are needed and what opportunity will be missed or taken advantage of.
- How funds will be used.
- Evidence that observations and samples are impossible to collect without the requested funding.

The RFP-III is open to all academic and research institutions, governmental and non-governmental organizations, and Federally Funded Research and Development Centers.

All observations, samples and information collected under RFP-III require input into the GRI database and website. A criterion for receiving RFP-III funding is that observations, samples and information must be shared to the wide community of scientific researchers and made available to other researchers and organizations to the extent that this is practicable. The individual or institution requesting observations and samples is expected to cover costs for transfer of observations and samples.

Adherence to US research requirements as for US National Science Foundation grants, among such other requirements described in the RFP-III and the GRI MRA, is mandatory.

Each applicant receiving a grant under RFP-III will communicate directly with the GRI Administrative Unit (AU) on administrative and financial issues, and in the handling of all reporting. The GRI AU will assemble reporting information and financial statements. A BP relationship manager will manage the financial, reporting, and intellectual property issues with the GRI AU. As described in the GRI MRA, BP will transmit funds to a third party non-profit entity (the GRI Grant Unit) for distribution to the Principal Investigator, and the Grant Unit will enter into grant agreements with the home institution of the applicant.

Standard academic overhead will be allowed (e.g., US Government approved overhead rates for research grants from such entities as the National Science Foundation, National Institutes of Health, Department of Defense, NOAA – whichever agency is the oversight audit agency for federal grants and contracts at that institution) to support the costs of the physical infrastructure and the administration of observation and sampling activities.

SELECTION PROCESS

The awardees for RFP-III will be chosen through a competitive review of the proposals submitted in response to this RFP. The review process will be conducted by a subcommittee of the Research Board, who will provide their evaluations and their recommendations to the Research Board for final selection of funded proposals and decisions about allocation of funding. Due to the nature of this RFP-III and the proposals, reviews of the proposals will not be provided.

TIMELINE

Year 2011

June 7	RFP-III Released
June 17, 9:00 p.m. EDT	Proposals Due
June 30	Announcement of Projects Funded in Response to RFP-III

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PUBLICATION, DATA, AND INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

The work carried out under the auspices of the GRI is for the purpose of advancing knowledge and expected to be published in peer-reviewed journals with excellent reputations. By accepting funding under the GRI, each Principal Investigator, research institution and co-Principal Investigator agrees to be bound by all terms and conditions of the GRI MRA, including the Intellectual Property and Publications Policy of the Gulf of Mexico Research Initiative (http://gulfofmexicoalliance.org/pdfs/Gulf_of_Mexico_Research_Initiative_Master.pdf).

The work carried out in the GRI is also expected to have wide utility to other researchers, government agencies, and others. The provision of a full and coherent database accessible to all scientists, policy makers, and the public is an essential outcome of the GRI. The GRI AU will maintain or contract for public database of GRI research results (data and metadata), with data to be posted with minimum time delay. It is a requirement that all GRI-sponsored data and the essential metadata be submitted to the GRI AU and federal database or nationally recognized repository appropriate for the investigator's discipline with minimum time delay. Satellite imagery will be included where appropriate. It is essential that provision be made that video data be tagged with appropriate information to be included in the data submission. The GRI AU will be responsible for managing and linking these individual submissions. By this means, it will be possible to combine individual efforts into a coherent body of work that represents the entire GRI.

Section III: Format of the Proposal

OVERVIEW

The proposal to be submitted on or before June 17, 2011 at 9:00 p.m. EDT should contain a:

- Cover sheet not to exceed 1 page (see Appendix A)
 - Project title, Principal Investigator and Co-Investigators, affiliations, addresses
- Project description not to exceed 3 pages and to contain or demonstrate,
 - Description of the proposed work
 - Rationale and a compelling need for funding (included in the 3 pages)
 - Work plan showing that the proposed work can be completed in the allotted time (included in the 3 pages).
- Budget for the work proposed, together with name and signature of appropriate institutional official, on a separate page.
- Information on all Current and Pending support for all investigators on separate page(s) (see Appendix B).
- Supplementary documentation as needed (e.g., letter verifying vessel availability) (no more than 3 pages total for supplemental documentation).

The proposal shall be submitted to <http://www.gulfresearchinitiative.org/request-for-proposals/rfp-iii/rfp-iii-submission-forms-templates/rfp-iii-online-submission-form/>.

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EVALUATION CRITERIA

Guidance regarding evaluation of the proposals is as follows. Scientific Merit is a primary consideration for continuity of observations and sampling and for initiation of emergent or time sensitive observations and sampling. This includes ancillary work such as to catalogue the observations and samples and prepare them for availability to the wider community.

Scientific Merit and Rationale (40%)

- Scope, quality, and potential for significant results of the proposed continuity of and/or emergent observations and sampling
- Degree to which the sustained or new observations and samples addresses improving the environmental robustness of the Gulf of Mexico and/or public health
- Importance of opportunity that will be missed or taken advantage of.

Capability (30%)

- Ability to conduct the proposed activities in the required timelines
- Infrastructure in place or able to be lined up in short order to support the planned work
- Nature of work associated with observations and sampling
- Personnel critical for the observations and sampling
- Proper preparation or storage of observations and samples for future need.

Experience (30%)

- Demonstrated record of scientific achievement in the relevant observations and sampling

INSTRUCTIONS FOR PROPOSAL SUBMISSION

1.0 General

- 1.1 RFP-III is for critical observations, sampling and information gathering during July 1, 2011 – September 30, 2011, with direct funding provided to the investigators from the GRI Grant Unit.

2.0 Proposal Submittal

- 2.1 Full proposals must be submitted in a web-based portal to the GRI Research Board on or before June 17, 2011 at 9:00 p.m. EDT to <http://www.gulfresearchinitiative.org/request-for-proposals/rfp-iii/rfp-iii-submission-forms-templates/rfp-iii-online-submission-form/>.
- 2.2 If you will be providing confidential information in connection with your response to the RFP, then indicate the segments that cannot be made public and why.

3.0 RFP-III Document Clarification

Requests for clarification of the RFP-III and proposal instructions must be submitted prior to 9:00 p.m. EDT June 13, 2011 via the GRI website: <http://griresearchboard.org/faq-r/>. Questions will not be accepted via phone or direct email to BP, GRI AU, any Research Board member, or any other group. Please review the Frequently Asked Questions posted on the website before submitting a question. This will be updated regularly with all responses to submitted questions.

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4.0 BP and Second Party Obligations

Neither BP nor the Alliance (including the GRI AU), the Research Board, nor any third party nonprofit organization providing administrative support to the GRI under the terms of the GRI MRA (including the American Institute of Biological Sciences serving as the Research Board Administrative Unit, the Consortium for Ocean Leadership supporting the GRI AU, and the GRI Grant Unit) shall be under any obligation to provide funding to any specific proposal submitted, and shall not be held liable for any expense incurred in preparation or submittal of any proposal or any subsequent discussion and/or negotiations.

5.0 RFP-III Document Modification

The Research Board may clarify the RFP-III in any respect by way of clarification, addition, deletion or otherwise, up to June 14, 2011, and will post any such changes on the GRI website.

6.0 Proposal Authorization

The proposal shall be signed by those persons duly authorized to sign such document on behalf of the Research Institution of the prospective investigator. The names and titles shall be typed beneath their usual signatures.

7.0 Proposal Basis and Composition

- 7.1 The RFP-III and information in the completed proposal, and subsequent modifications to the proposal as requested by the Research Board, shall form the basis of any grant that may ensue.
- 7.2 Applicants shall ensure that their proposals are complete in all respects such that a complete and meaningful evaluation can be accomplished.
- 7.3 Proposals that are incomplete or that do not address the research foci and required structure may be impossible to fairly evaluate and therefore may be rejected without complete evaluation.
- 7.4 The name and address of the applicant submitting the proposal shall be clearly indicated.

8.0 RFP-III Document Errors or Omissions

The prospective grantee shall take no advantage of any apparent errors or omissions in the RFP-III. In the event that any errors or omissions are discovered, the prospective grantee shall immediately notify the Research Board Chair, Professor Rita Colwell, who can be contacted via the GRI website:

<http://griresearchboard.org/contact/index.html>.

9.0 Award of Grant

Following review, the Research Board may elect to award a grant for any, all, or none of the proposed activities in any given proposal. The selection of each proposal includes a degree of selectivity, and the decision to make an award is entirely held by the Research Board within the scope of the RFP and the governing documents of the GRI, including the GRI MRA.