



**Gulf of Mexico Research Initiative  
Request for Proposals – Creation of a Documentary  
February 21, 2014**

**Introduction**

On 20 April 2010, the Deep Water Horizon drilling rig operating approximately 50 miles (80 km) off the coast of Louisiana experienced a catastrophic failure that resulted in the tragic loss of 11 lives, 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). By the time the well was capped on July 15, 2010 (87 days later), millions of barrels of oil had leaked into the Gulf.

The Gulf of Mexico Research Initiative (GoMRI) is a 10-year independent research program established to study the effects, and the potential associated impacts, of hydrocarbon releases on the environment and public health, as well as to develop improved spill mitigation, oil detection and characterization, and remediation technologies. An independent 20-member Research Board makes funding and research direction decisions to ensure intellectual quality, effectiveness and independence of the GoMRI research. All research data, findings and publications will be made publicly available. The program was established through a \$500 million financial commitment from BP.

Please visit the program's website for additional information: <http://gulfresearchinitiative.org/>.

**Size of fund**

Up to \$1 million is available on this solicitation.

**What kind of documentary project?**

This documentary project provides an opportunity to share critical GoMRI research findings on effects of the oil spill, the worst in US history, while being sensitive to the loss of human lives in the accident. What were the impacts of the Deepwater Horizon event (physical, chemical, biological, economic, human health and societal), what are GoMRI scientists finding through their research in this region, and how do these research findings translate to developing more advanced ways to protect public health and restore environmental resources in case of future events? Project products should tell an easy-to-understand, engaging story on research being conducted by GoMRI scientists that will provide a sense of place, appeal to the public's understanding of science, encourage long-term support for protecting resources in this region, and promote science literacy. Project products should appeal to viewers on a national scale. The audience is envisioned to be a science-curious public with an 8<sup>th</sup> grade level of science understanding.

As part of this Request, we seek experienced documentary film makers to develop and propose their creative vision for a documentary project of this subject that must be successfully targeted for a national television outlet such as National Geographic, PBS, Discovery Channel, etc. as well as secondary media outlets. The program's Outreach and Communications Committee will advise the documentary makers on scientific content and direction while allowing filmmakers to maintain control of artistic vision.

GoMRI has five theme areas and a guiding set of goals that should be demonstrated in how the story is told. Projects are expected to have strong message about importance of the environment and of science in the Gulf region.

**GoMRI themes:**

- 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;
- Chemical evolution and biological degradation of the petroleum/dispersant systems and subsequent interaction with coastal, open-ocean, and deep-water ecosystems;
- 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;
- Technology developments for improved response, mitigation, detection, characterization, and remediation associated with oil spills and gas releases; and
- Impact of oil spills on public health including behavioural, socioeconomic, environmental risk assessment, community capacity and other population health considerations and issues.

**GoMRI Goal:**

The ultimate goal of the GoMRI will be to improve society's ability to understand, respond to and mitigate the impacts of petroleum pollution and related stressors of the marine and coastal ecosystems, with an emphasis on the Gulf of Mexico. Knowledge accrued will be applied to restoration and to improving the long-term environmental health of the Gulf of Mexico.

**GoMRI's Legacy:**

- 1) Significantly advance the scientific understanding of the Gulf of Mexico, including its interactions with oil, dispersant, and dispersed oil by fostering the highest quality of research for the benefit of those who depend upon its ecosystems for their well-being.
- 2) Engender improved understanding, confidence, and trust of the public and other stakeholders and inform best science-based policy and management.
- 3) Build intellectual capacity by: a.) advancing relevant technologies; b.) fostering research connectivity; c.) building and maintaining an interactive GoMRI Gulf of Mexico database that can serve as a future baseline and to inform a more efficient future response; d.) informing and training future scientists and engineers; and e.) stimulating interest in STEM for K-12 students and educators.
- 4) Demonstrate that responsiveness of the GoMRI model is appropriate and effective in serving the public good by enabling and overseeing timely and independent research funded through a private-public partnership with industry

The final product must also be consistent with the Master Research Agreement, which defines operating principles for GoMRI. Details and the current version of the agreement can be accessed here: <http://gulfresearchinitiative.org/about-gomri/master-research-agreement/>.

**Proposal**

Eligible applicants will:

- Provide a clearly articulated concept document describing the vision of the documentary project. Storybook concepts will be required of finalists.

- Provide a well-defined promotional and distribution plan that targets being shown on a national television outlet(s) such as National Geographic, PBS, Discovery Channel, etc., and includes secondary options such as film festivals, DVD release, free download from web, or other relevant options
- Provide examples of documentaries produced (brief clips from previous documentary productions) and a description of where and how films were distributed
- Demonstrate past success in distributing to national outlets identified above
- Have the ability to meet a timeline for filming and production that results in a final product by mid-2015 and the potential to provide film segments in advance of final product for use in classrooms as STEM-focused educational resources
- Provide a detailed budget, including estimates for pre- and post-production as well as distribution costs
- Provide references

### **Proposal Format**

Proposals should be no more than 10 pages in length and be divided into the following sections:

- Project description
- Budget (no more than two pages)
- Approach to distribution/outreach plan to secure a national outlet as identified above
- Past performance - examples of work and outlets where distributed

### **Submission of Proposals**

Proposals should be submitted electronically to [info@gulfresearchinitiative.org](mailto:info@gulfresearchinitiative.org) no later than March 19, 2014, at 5pm Eastern.

### **Selection Process**

The successful applicant will be selected by a panel made up of Research Board members with peer review input. Three top applicants will meet in person with the GoMRI Outreach Committee. The award will be announced by the end of May, with the option for work to be authorized while the contract is being executed.

### **Selection Criteria**

1. The quality of the story idea presented and the potential to capture the identified audience and meet the described outcomes.
2. Capability and experience of filmmakers and their previous work.
3. Distribution plan.
4. Cost.

### **Deliverables**

- One or more documentaries that will be distributed by a national television outlet
- 10 copies of the documentary in a DVD format with a GoMRI-branded packaging
- Electronic files of all images captured during the shooting

### **Contracting**

Successful applicant will enter into a production funding agreement with GoMRI through the Gulf of Mexico Alliance (GOMA).

### **Notice About The Award of This RFP**

The RFP was awarded to Screenscope, Inc. Because their proposed documentary will become an episode of their award-winning television series Journey To Planet Earth (narrated by Matt Damon), the final funding agreement provides that Screenscope retains complete independent creative and editorial control of the project, including Screenscope's selection of all featured scientists and their research.