



**Virgin Islands Experimental Program to Stimulate Competitive Research
Request for Incubator Grant Proposals 2009**

The Virgin Islands Experimental Program to Stimulate Competitive Research (VI-EPSCoR) is pleased to announce its 2009 request for incubator grant proposals. VI-EPSCoR Incubator Grants support researchers in exploring new research directions related to the project thrust on Integrated Caribbean Coastal Ecosystems (ICCE). VI-EPSCoR provides seed funding to researchers to support pilot research, proposal development, and other activities that advance a research project to the point at which it can attract competitive external funding.



Vi-EPSCoR's 2009 Incubator Grants Program

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Goals of the 2009 Incubator Grants Program

- *Stimulate research of priority to the ICCE research thrust.*
ICCE research teams are currently working on three interrelated research areas: (1) Evolutionary and Ecological Patterns and Processes; (2) Ocean and Coastal Processes; and (3) Environmental Analysis and Management.
- *Stimulate research collaborations in order to build strong interdisciplinary research teams.*
Preference will be given to proposals that promote collaborative linkages among Virgin Islands researchers and external researchers. Incubator researchers will be expected to actively participate as members of ICCE research teams.
- *Provide student research opportunities.*
VI-EPSCoR is particularly interested in proposals that include thesis research opportunities for UVI Master in Marine and Environmental Science students. Preference will also be given to proposals that include research opportunities for Virgin Islands undergraduate and high school students.

Current Research Priorities

- **Biodiversity** - regional studies to understand Caribbean biodiversity, genetic relationships of scleractinian corals and other poorly known marine organisms and impacts on biodiversity such as sea surface warming and coral diseases.
- **Coral Reef Ecosystems** – Test hypotheses related to coral reef resilience, disease, bleaching between near-shore and deep coral reef habitats, develop monitoring and sampling protocols for measuring impacts of human activity on coastal environments including wetlands, mangrove, seagrass and coral reefs habitats.
- **Fisheries Ecology** – Test hypotheses related to MPA effectiveness and management of sustainable fisheries, effects of fishing on trophic ecology, connectivity among spawning habitats and nursery grounds and influence of coral reef condition on ontogenetic habitat shifts.
- **Dynamic ocean modeling** – Produce predictive models of ocean current patterns and processes and its linkages to coastal and oceanic marine environments and inputs from land-based sources. Relationship between distribution, abundance, and settlement patterns of



sessile reef organisms and large mobile invertebrates and the transmission of coral diseases and other pathogens

- **Pelagic connectivity** – Model potential larval pathways from spawning to settlement with an emphasis on predicting levels of retention or dispersal mechanisms. Integrate ocean modeling, spawning aggregations and larval behavior to understand complex coastal processes
- **Larval biology** – Using field based methods test hypotheses about larval distribution patterns over vertical and horizontal spatial scales and analyze behavioral mechanisms that may be used to predict vectors of dispersal or areas of larval settlement which may promote retention
- **Marine geology** – Examine detailed bathymetry and its effects on circulation patterns, coral distribution and fish assemblage structure.
- **Human and Ocean Health** - Understanding impacts of anthropogenic influences on watershed processes and linking watershed processes with impact on human and coastal environmental health. Linked to ciguatera research, infectious disease, natural products and cistern toxins. Support development of water monitoring program. Collaborating with WRRI, DPNR, WAPA, Public Health, Waste Management
- **Watershed Processes** – Measurement and analysis of flow of water, sediment, nutrients, and pollutants under different land management practices, from watersheds to wetlands and near-shore reefs. Design long-term environmental monitoring studies along land-sea gradients.
- **Ecological Modeling** – Modeling and predicting flow of water, sediment, nutrients, and pollutants under different land management practices, from watersheds to wetlands and near-shore reefs.
- **Economics of Natural Resource Management** - Diagnostic studies. Impact of institutions and policies. Integration of physical and biological research with socio-economic studies to evaluate best practices.

Eligibility for VI-EPSCoR Incubator Grants Funding

Virgin Islands EPSCoR Incubator Grants are primarily intended to support researchers within our EPSCoR jurisdiction, i.e. the US Virgin Islands. According to the new NSF EPSCoR RII guidelines, organizations and individuals eligible for funding include:

- organizations (academic, jurisdictional, profit and non-profit) within the Virgin Islands;
- individuals employed by eligible organizations in the Virgin Islands, even if the individual is outside the Virgin Islands;
- collaborators at research universities in other EPSCoR jurisdictions.

VI-EPSCoR Incubator Grants may also include research collaborators outside the Virgin Islands, including US or non-US collaborators who do not meet funding eligibility qualifications. In that case, VI-EPSCoR funding can only be used for EPSCoR-based components of the project.



More specifically, VI-EPSCoR funding can support costs of joint research efforts involving eligible and 'non-eligible' researchers. This would typically involve joint intellectual leadership by the collaborators as co-PI's. The most obvious example would be funding for joint fieldwork costs. It would not, however, include funding for costs such as salary or travel for the 'non-eligible' researchers.

VI-EPSCoR funding can also be used by researchers to purchase services from organizations or individuals outside the Virgin Islands. For example, VI-EPSCoR funding could be used for analytical services of an external lab.

Proposal Process

Project Requirements

Incubator grants support pilot research, proposal development, and other activities that advance a research project to the point at which it can attract competitive external funding.

As a condition of the incubator grant, incubator researchers must submit at least one follow-on proposal for competitive external funding.

Incubator researchers are expected to participate in research team meetings, incubator seminars, and the VI-EPSCoR annual conference.

Incubator researchers are required to submit a brief semi-annual report describing activities funded by the incubator grant as well as progress toward obtaining external support.

Project Period and Level of Funding

The length of the project period is usually one calendar year with possible renewal for a second year. Incubator grants are typically funded at about \$20-25,000, but larger or smaller awards will be considered.

Project Deadlines

Proposals should be submitted to Dr. Nasseer Idrisi, VI-EPSCoR Acting Director. Proposals will be considered starting on the target date of 11 April 2009. Project funds will be available upon award of the grant.

Format for Vi-EPSCoR Incubator Grant Proposals

Incubator grant proposals should include the following elements: cover page with abstract; project description (max. 5 pages); draft budget with budget justification; and Curriculum Vitae of project investigators. Proposals should be submitted to Nasseer Idrisi, VI-EPSCoR Acting Director.

Cover page with abstract

Include the title of the project, email address and phone number of each investigator, and a one-paragraph abstract describing the research to be done.

Project Description (max. 5 pages)

1. Research problem and background
Articulate (a) the research problem and why it is important, and (b) what has already been done.
2. Objectives
Project objectives should (a) correspond to the research problem, (b) define the strategy to overcome the problem, and (c) contribute to broader ICCE research priorities.
3. Inputs
Project inputs needed to achieve objectives could include people (researchers, students, etc), travel costs, equipment, supplies, and facilities.
4. Workplan
Summarize what will be done to achieve the project objectives, when and how activities will be conducted, and duration for each activity.
5. Outputs
Project outputs should be clearly related to the objectives. *Outputs must include at least one proposal for external funding.*
6. Project management
Identify the project leader, list all collaborator(s), and briefly describe who will be responsible for each activity in the workplan.
7. Plan for seeking external funding
Describe plans for seeking follow-on external funding, including funding agencies and expecting timing for proposal submission.
8. Relevance of proposed activities to priorities of ICCE research thrust
Address how the proposed research will fit into and contribute to ICCE research priorities.
9. Relevance of proposed activities to development of ICCE research teams
Describe what type of collaboration will take place, and how this will contribute to building strong interdisciplinary ICCE research teams.
10. Opportunities for student research
Describe any student research opportunities included in the proposal.



Draft budget and justification

Provide a detailed estimate of all expected project costs, with budget justification. Include any resources expected from other sources including investigators' home institutions.

Curriculum Vitae (C.V.) of project investigators

Provide brief C.V.'s for all investigators, in standard National Science Foundation format.

Faculty release time

Faculty requesting salaried release time need to provide evidence of approval from their department supervisors for release time for research to the amount of time requested in their budget.

Review process for the 2009 VI-EPSCoR Incubator Proposals

The review process for the 2009 Incubator Proposals will include an initial review by an external panel of ICCE Advisory Board members and a final review by the VI-EPSCoR leadership team.

Further Information

Potential applicants are encouraged to attend one of the upcoming brownbag lunches where VI-EPSCoR staff will be available to answer questions about the Incubator Grants Program. First meeting will be on March 25, 2009, 12 noon at the McLean Marine Science Center, Rm MSC 200, video-conferencing and tele-conferencing will be available upon request. Other meetings TBD.

For more information, contact Nasseer Idrisi, VI-EPSCoR Acting Director, 340-693-1388 or nidrisi@uvi.edu.

