



National Estuarine Research Reserve System Science Collaborative

Initiative to Understand Impact:

Advancing capacity to capture and explain impacts while exploring them through prior collaborative science projects

Common Questions & Answers for the 2026 Opportunity

Last updated 2/17/2026

Q: Will this opportunity be available in 2027?

A: At this time, we are planning to offer the Initiative to Understand Impact opportunity this year only, i.e., March - December 2026. It is possible that we may offer it again in 2027 but that will depend on a number of factors, including the program's budget. If you are interested in this opportunity, you should apply this year.

Q: How do I confirm that I have identified the right individual for working with to submit a joint application?

A: This opportunity is designed to involve two representatives for each project of focus, i.e., teams of two individuals. If you are interested in participating, you will need to identify a second individual with whom you will work and coordinate the submission of a single application.

Your team of two must meet the following criteria:

- At least one individual should have held a leadership role in the project of focus (e.g., project, collaborative or science lead),
- At least one individual should be reserve staff; and
- Both individuals should have strong familiarity with the project of focus and its key partners.

If you have questions about whether the two individuals you have identified will meet the above criteria, don't hesitate to contact us.

Q: Does each reserve get a spot in this opportunity?

A: No, unlike *Getting Started in Collaborative Science* and the Reserve Capacity Building Grants where each reserve gets a “spot” or grant, this opportunity does not originate from a reserve; it stems from a prior NERRS Science Collaborative project. We have capacity to work with up to 12 projects this year. If interest is greater than we have capacity to support, we will select projects that allow for the greatest diversity in terms of reserve participation, time since project completion, and project type.

Q: Are both participants required to attend all events?

A: We request that you and your partner attend all of the learning sessions. The sessions are designed to share essential concepts, frameworks, and approaches that you will use to organize and facilitate your conversations with partners. They will also provide opportunities to discuss and practice methods. In addition, the requirement to identify and work with a partner is part of the intentional design of this opportunity. It is important for both of you to attend the sessions, to be listening and learning together to then decide how you will apply the methods in the context of your project. To get the most out of the sessions and the opportunity, your attendance and your partner’s is crucial. If one of you has a conflict with the schedule that you cannot avoid, please reach out to us. If we have a lot of interest in this opportunity and must select among applications, we will give priority to those who are able to participate fully.

Q: Are both applicants required to travel to Michigan?

A: We request that both you and your partner attend the in-person gathering in September. This time together is extremely important for advancing our collective understanding about what you are learning and to support you in developing your impact narrative. In addition, participating alongside your partner is part of the intentional design of this opportunity. It is important for both of you to attend the sessions, to be listening and learning together to then decide how you will apply the methods in the context of your project. If one of you has a conflict with the schedule that you cannot avoid, please reach out to us. If we have a lot of interest in this opportunity and must select among applications, we will give priority to those who are able to participate fully.



Q: Some of our project-related activities extended beyond the end of the project's grant funding. What should I report as the project end date when completing the application?

A: For the purposes of the application, please provide the end date for the grant that funded your project. However, keep in mind that project-related activities that occurred after the end of the grant are very relevant to what you will be exploring during the Initiative to Understand Impact.

Q: Can funds be dispersed as reimbursement, as opposed to a contract?

A: Yes, a one-time reimbursement once the activities and narrative are completed is the simplest approach. If a contract is preferred, that is also possible.

Q: Will participants have access to NERRS Science Collaborative communications support, e.g., webinars?

A: Yes, we are open to discussing ideas for how our communications capacities can support those participating in this opportunity.

