THE HUDSON RIVER FOUNDATION

The Hudson River Foundation was established in 1981 under the terms of an agreement among environmental groups, government regulatory agencies and utility companies seeking the constructive resolution of a long series of legal controversies concerning the environmental impacts of power plants on the Hudson River. The Foundation's principal funding source is the **Hudson River Fund**, which was created in recognition of the critical need for an independent institution to sponsor research that would contribute to the development of sound public policy concerning the River's ecological systems. In 2013, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) selected the Foundation to manage the **New York-New Jersey Harbor & Estuary Program (HEP).** HEP is one of 28 National Estuary Programs established under the 1987 Clean Water Act to identify, restore, and protect nationally significant estuaries of the United States. The Foundation seeks to advance understanding of the issues affecting the River by supporting the dissemination of information gained through Foundation-funded research programs and through other sources. The Foundation convenes those working within the Hudson River Valley and elsewhere to discuss scientific and public policy issues and sponsors workshops and conferences.

Please visit the Foundation's website for more information regarding our programs.

THE HUDSON RIVER FUND

BACKGROUND

The Hudson River Fund supports scientific research on all aspects of the Hudson River ecosystem, with emphasis on studies that bear on its human uses. In 2023, the Foundation created a new strategic plan, to guide our future work and develop innovative approaches to achieve the Foundation's vision. The plan emphasizes our focus on supporting use-inspired, actionable science. The Foundation recognizes that people are integral to the ecosystem and is therefore interested in research that can provide insights on the interaction of social, cultural, economic and biophysical systems, that can lead to improved decision making, management, or policy shifts to protect the Hudson River watershed.

We are currently seeking social science research proposals that focus on the multiple modes of human engagement necessary to address the complex social-ecological challenges faced by the Hudson and its connected watershed. This RFP emphasizes inquiry regarding the relationships and feedbacks among different stakeholders interacting with the Hudson River and its watershed, the associated impacts, and connections to decision making, management, or policy shifts. It aims to fill the research gaps evident in regionally focused social science research and identify applications to benefit the people and natural systems connected to the the Hudson River.

Proposals may focus on any part of the Hudson River region, its tributaries, and watershed. Faculty and researchers with at least five years experience post-graduation are eligible to apply.

The Foundation places special emphasis on research that clearly articulates its significance for identified decision making, management, or policy issues and is conducted in the context of other ongoing research related to the River and its watershed.

HRF is committed to serving the diverse communities of the Hudson River and to facilitating an ongoing and inclusive dialogue with scientists, managers, policy makers, other stakeholders, and the general public, to address the environmental and societal challenges facing the community of the Hudson River and Watershed. We seek to enhance this work by supporting researchers and students, with the unique and varied backgrounds, circumstances, needs, and perspectives that reflect the diversity of our community.

THE HUDSON RIVER FUND 2024 Funding Cycle

Social Science Research Addressing Priority Areas of Interest

The constantly evolving interactions among the environmental, social, and cultural components of the Hudson River Estuary have shaped this unique ecosystem and our collective sense of its value. From its rural headwaters to the heavily populated estuary and ultimately to its confluence with the Atlantic Ocean, the Hudson provides a multitude of services that benefit many different human and natural communities. However, there are numerous challenges to sustaining and restoring this vital resource, each a reflection of the complex interactions between people and the environment. Decision making, management, and policy shifts to address these challenges need to be informed by research contributions, including on how people in this watershed interact within it.

This RFP acknowledges the breadth of 'social science' research across multiple disciplines and defines it expansively as "systematic investigation of the multi-faceted human experiences encompassing thoughts, emotions, and actions of individuals or groups, and their relationships with the multiple social, economic, political, and environmental systems that exist in society." Similarly, 'human interactions' or 'engagement' encompass the bidirectional relationship between people, the Hudson River, and its interconnected systems, where people's actions affect rivers and are also in turn affected by these systems.

Building on the history of the social sciences in applying research to advance societal impact, this RFP will support researchers in actively developing relationships, strategies, and adopting approaches to ensure that the knowledge generated leads to tangible real-world impact. Our theory of change to facilitate the research to impact pathway is to work with social scientists to understand and support their efforts to actively develop new relationships or grow existing ones with relevant partners so that they can jointly apply the research findings towards societal impact.

Relevant partners may include, but are not limited to decision makers (e.g., managers, public officials), practitioners, members of the public, and other researchers.

We consider 'societal impact' to encompass positive shifts in human and/or natural systems from decision making at appropriate systems-levels, including programs/initiatives (e.g., design, implementation), institutions/organizations (e.g., shifts in management practices/staff procedures), policy (e.g., developing or revising policy), and environmental improvements (e.g., greater biodiversity). In instances when 'societal impact' is anticipated at a timeframe beyond that of the proposed project, applicants will need to demonstrate concrete steps and processes they have established with their partners to make progress towards that impact.

In this request for proposals, HRF has identified the following priority areas of research that are critical to study and act upon to ensure the long-term protection and care of the HR watershed (HRW) with the help of the multiple stakeholders who interact with this resource. We will support a limited number of projects to provide research insights that can advance our understanding of the topics/challenges and potential solutions in the following priority areas. The examples of research studies for each priority area are guides for applicants as they develop their project. They are neither prescriptive nor exhaustive.

1. ***Exploring relationships between various societal systems and environmental protection in the HRW.*** Research in this area will illuminate the complex interplay between ecological, economic, social, political, and other relevant societal systems across location, scale, and time. We are especially interested in studies that situate the roles of relevant stakeholders (e.g., managers, public officials, and residents) in the systems examined, including identifying impacts on them. Studies of this priority area will use methodologies that could include various forms of modeling (e.g., predictive modeling, scenario analyses, valuation, cost-benefit analyses), as well as approaches that employ spatial analyses and other tools to identify key relationships, and feedbacks to elucidate benefits for nature, people, and municipalities. These could include but are not limited to, economic, environmental welfare, and societal level impacts.

   o *Example: Predictive analysis study of the socio-economic impacts of ecological resilience projects (e.g., gentrification) and strategies to ensure a just process in a localized area in the HRW.*

2. ***Understanding decisionmakers' capacities to support protection of the HRW:*** We are interested in research that examines the attitudes, skills, knowledge, competencies, and abilities of decisionmakers (e.g., natural resource managers, policy makers, and public officials) to be effective stewards. Potential studies in this priority area include but are not limited to, examining decisionmakers' motivations and barriers in advancing environmental protection; strategies to address their capacity gaps; their role in incorporating different stakeholders' values and worldviews in environmental protection; processes of learning about public priorities and how they use evidence (e.g., decision science) to inform communications, policies, project implementation, and household-level decisions.

- *Example:* Qualitative study of leadership practices, roles, and perceptions of efficacy in local public offices and their relationship to water governance, to inform leadership development of government officials
- *Example:* Mixed methods study of policymakers' knowledge of regional plastic pollution, how people are affected by them, and their influence on developing policies reducing plastic use

3. ***Understanding motivations and barriers faced by the public to protect current and future conditions of the HRW***: We are interested in research that illuminates the various influences on local environmental stewardship and strategies to enhance them. Within this priority area, two research strands are of interest:

   a) ***Identifying individual and collective capacity to address climate change impacts***: The first strand is interested in research on how residents grow their ability to prepare, mitigate, and adapt to climate change impacts (e.g., extreme heat, flooding, storms). Potential studies include explorations of individual and group-level knowledge of climate change; perceptions of trusted sources; precursors and consequences of behavioral shifts (e.g., migration); strategies to advance equitable and just climate action; the role of emotions in motivating action; and climate resilience connecting individual, community, and ecological wellbeing.

      - *Example:* Quasi-experimental study of youth's experiences with flooding, climate related emotions, and their influence on climate stewardship to inform college curriculum
      - *Example:* Critical case studies of inclusive approaches to climate justice by drawing on intersectional perspectives (e.g., across race, ethnicity, gender, queerness) to inform coalition building

   b) ***Examining multifaceted relationships with local ecologies and their role in stewardship:*** The second strand is interested in research that examines the various social, emotional, and cultural connections people have with nature, including along a rural-urban continuum, and how they influence environmental stewardship and care. Potential studies include those exploring perceptions of nature, positive and negative experiences with local environments, culturally relevant meanings of ecological spaces, divergences between environmental and personal values (e.g., social, health, economic) and strategies to align them.

      - Example: Ethnographic study of environmental stewardship ethics among faith-based communities

Proposed projects are required to demonstrate how their research, including any products developed, will inform decision making, management, or policy shifts over a relevant timeframe. Applicants need to describe the applied focus of the project, the level(s) at which societal impact is anticipated, the specific partners who will be involved, including the intended users of the research, and their unique and/or shared roles in facilitating the impact.

Additionally, applicants need to describe their planned approaches for relationship building with partners, including intended users, based on the phase of its development (e.g., starting a new relationship, deepening a current relationship, or expanding an established relationship), their strategies for ongoing communication and interaction during the project, and potential barriers to partnership development.

Proposals are sought from researchers at colleges, universities, and non-profit research institutions. There are no geographic restrictions on the location of either the investigator or the institution. We encourage proposals that draw from disciplines including but not limited to sociology, anthropology, geography, psychology, political science, economics, public policy, and cultural studies.

In this solicitation, we are targeting projects that can be completed within 18-24-months, with budgets not to exceed $100,000.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR APPLICANTS

Social Science Research Addressing Priority Areas of Interest

Those who are interested in applying must contact the Foundation to discuss their ideas prior to submitting a proposal. These informal conversations will help determine the alignment of the potential project with the priority areas in the RFP, provide an opportunity to discuss how the principal investigator(s) are thinking about their research project goals, their application towards societal impact, and what the Foundation might do to assist that effort. **Please send a message to: SocialScienceRFP2024@hudsonriver.org to arrange a time for a call.**

After speaking with Foundation staff, those that wish to apply should prepare and submit a brief Letter of Intent (LOI) that the Foundation can evaluate to determine how well the project aligns with our mission and the specific goals of this solicitation.

We emphasize that the LOI is required to be brief (2-pages maximum). To be most useful, please include the following information:

1. The title of the project and contact information for the lead investigator.
2. The priority area of research your work will address and a brief description of the specific issue/questions on which your project will focus.
3. A description of how the knowledge gained will address a research gap.
4. A description of your project's methodological approach to the research questions.
5. A description of how the knowledge, including any potential products will inform current or future decision making, management or policy shifts.
6. A description of the project team members, including their institutional/organizational affiliations, their disciplines and/or sectors, and their respective roles/contributions to the project. What approaches will the PI(s) use to collaborate with the other project team members (including students, if applicable) to enable the research goals?

The LOI must be submitted to **SocialScienceRFP2024@hudsonriver.org** as an email attachment in PDF format **by 5:00 pm, August 15, 2024**.

The Foundation will review all LOIs and will invite a subset to submit a full proposal. We anticipate that these decisions will be announced no later than **August 30, 2024**.
Those teams invited to the next round will be contacted by the Foundation with information regarding the format of the full proposal and to discuss suggestions for improvements that would increase the likelihood of success and potential impacts of the work.

Full proposals will be due no later than **5:00 pm, October 15, 2024.**

The RFP timeline is below.

Action	Date
LOI Submission deadline	Aug 15
Invitation to submit Full Proposal	Aug 30
Full Proposal Submission deadline	Oct 15
Award Notification	Jan 31, 2025