

# Coastal Management and Digital Coast Fellowship Project Proposal

## Title:

Systemic change around justice and equity within state coastal zone management programs

## One line description:

Support coastal states' and territories' ability to integrate the principles of diversity, equity, inclusion, justice and accessibility across the National Coastal Zone Management Program by providing technical assistance, capacity, and relationship building support.

## 1. Background and Introduction

The [Coastal States Organization \(CSO\)](#) convenes state and territory coastal zone management programs from around the country and serves as their collective voice around topics relating to protecting and restoring the nation's coastline. CSO typically does this through workgroups, partnership-driven project management and coordination, and legislative outreach. We also partner with federal agencies and other NGOs. The partnerships that are most relevant to this project are the NOAA Office for Coastal Management (OCM) and the National Wildlife Federation (NWF).

In our most recent CSO meeting convening coastal management programs, we heard interest in building community around environmental justice issues, especially in exploring systemic levers that they can use in their work that can lead to systemic change around ["DEIJA" or Diversity, Equity, Justice, Inclusion, and Accessibility](#). NOAA's Office for Coastal Management is conducting an inventory of coastal zone management program activities that support the advancement of DEIJA. Apart from this inventory, there are not a lot of resources that we can provide to coastal states and territories to address this need.

Capacity, technical assistance, communications, and relationship building are foundational to DEIJA work. But organizational staff are so busy trying to keep up with grants, reporting, administration, project management that these foundational tasks are not often given the care and attention that they deserve. Having a coastal management fellow dedicated to these tasks will support the states' and territories' ability to integrate the principles of diversity, equity, inclusion, justice and accessibility across the National Coastal Zone Management Program.

## 2. Goals and Objectives

*The goal of this fellowship is to: provide technical assistance, capacity, and relationship building to drive systemic change around justice and equity within state coastal zone management programs*

*The objectives are as follows:*

- **Capacity support:** Support 3-5 coastal zone management (CZM) programs in meaningfully engaging with frontline communities to advance natural infrastructure projects.

- **Technical assistance:** Provide all coastal zone management programs with resources to advance environmental justice policies or principles within their programs.
- **Build relationships:** Connect coastal zone management programs to a network of national organizations advancing environmental justice; develop mechanisms to partner with these organizations through reciprocal engagement.
- **Communications:** Develop and share content (static, dynamic, other modes) within existing coastal zone management communication streams to amplify marginalized voices and uplift the perspectives and stories of frontline communities.

## Milestones and Outcomes

The following is a suite of potential milestones and outcomes that CSO envisions for this project. As part of the initial 2–3-month scoping at the start of the project, the fellow and mentor will refine this list in coordination with the CSO Executive Director and NOAA-OCM to an accomplishable set of milestone to be included in final fellowship workplan.

| <b>Overall Purpose</b><br>Provide technical assistance, capacity, and relationship building to drive systemic change around justice and equity within state and territory coastal zone management programs |  |                        |   |  |
|--|--|------------------------|---|--|
| <b>Objective</b>   | <b>Milestone</b>   | <b>Timeline</b>        | <b>Deliverable</b>  | <b>Outcome</b>   |
| <b>Capacity support:</b><br>Support 3-5 state and territory CZM programs in engaging with frontline communities to advance natural infrastructure projects   | In coordination with NWF and NOAA-OCM, identify 2-3 state programs in need of added support to work with frontline communities         | Sept – Nov 2023        | States/territories and frontline communities identified                           | <b>Short term:</b> Provide capacity to expand CSO and NWF’s existing frontline communities’ natural infrastructure capacity program.<br><b>Mid term:</b> Strengthen relationships between coastal management programs and frontline communities<br><b>Long term:</b> Set in motion mechanisms for long term and sustained investment in frontline communities. |
|  | Meet with CZM programs/NWF/OCM and develop a plan of action for each community being supported   | Dec 2023 – Feb 2024    | Plan of action for assisting communities with their natural infrastructure needs  |  |
|  | Provide coordination and support for NWF to align with state coastal program and community needs.                                      | March 2024 – July 2024 | Meeting agendas, project tracking plan, metrics for measuring success             |  |
|  | Assess progress and either deepen engagement with existing communities or onboard new communities that could benefit from this support | August 2024 – Jan 2025 | Report out on metrics; action plan for continuation OR new communities identified |  |
|  | Work with NWF and CZM programs to find ways to support the communities in achieving their longer term goals.                           | Jan 2025- August 2025  | Draft grant applications, list of funding sources to continue the work, etc.      |  |
| <i>(space intentionally left blank)</i>  |  |                        |   |  |

| Objective  | Milestone   | Timeline                            | Deliverable   | Outcome  |
|--|---|-------------------------------------|---|--|
| <p><b>Technical assistance:</b></p> <p>Provide all CZM programs with resources to advance environmental justice policies or principles within their programs</p> | <p>Using OCM’s inventory, identify 1-2 areas of work (e.g., public access, hazard mitigation, fisheries mitigation, sediment management) where there is interest by (some) CZM programs to make systemic changes to broaden environmental justice benefits and outcomes</p> | <p>Sept 2023 – Feb 2024</p>         | <p>1-2 areas of work identified</p>   | <p><b>Short term:</b> Coastal programs have technical knowledge and peer support for institutional change</p> <p><b>Medium term:</b> Coastal programs have draft policies or procedures for institutionalizing justice and equity.</p> <p><b>Long term (beyond fellowship):</b> Policy or programmatic changes</p> |
|  | <p>With input from OCM liaisons, and possibly input from other state agencies, develop sample process, procedure and/or policies to address DEIJA in specified topic(s)</p>   | <p>Feb 2024 – August 2024</p>       | <p>Sample process, procedures, policies developed</p>   |  |
|  | <p>Develop implementation plan with/for 3-5 states and provide support for initial steps</p>  | <p>August 2024 – August 2025</p>    | <p>Implementation plan + research/coordination support</p>  |  |
|  | <p>Coordinate with OCM to support community building for DEIJA practitioners (OCM peer to peer sharing efforts/ CSO listserv, etc.)</p>   | <p>September 2023 – August 2025</p> | <p>Monthly listserv content shared with CSO members; participation and support for OCM’s peer to peer sharing</p> |  |
| <p><i>(space intentionally left blank)</i></p>   |   |                                     |   |  |

| Objective  | Milestone   | Timeline                            | Deliverable  | Outcome  |
|--|---|-------------------------------------|--|--|
| <p><b>Build relationships:</b> Connect CZM programs to a network of national organizations advancing environmental justice and develop mechanisms to partner with these organizations through reciprocal engagement.</p> | <p>Meet with organizations or individuals whose job is advancing environmental justice that has a coastal connection and/or working to bring DEIJA values into organizations or government (e.g., EJ director at EPA, EJ NGOs, leaders of tribal nations etc.)</p>                  | <p>December 2023- July 2024</p>     | <p>Contact list or network map of 15-20 organizations or individuals that includes areas of work and expertise, who have already been introduced to CSO.</p> | <p><b>Short-term:</b> Build awareness of priorities of other organizations, especially environmental justice organizations and tribal nations</p> <p><b>Mid-term:</b> CSO and NOAA OCM develop stronger relationships with other organizations and agencies working on environmental justice</p> <p><b>Long term:</b> Mechanisms are established to work as equal and reciprocal partners with environmental justice organizations and tribal nations.</p> |
|  | <p>Connect with associations of state and tribal agencies (e.g., Env. Council of States, Assc. of Fish &amp; Wildlife Agencies, Assc. of Clean Water Administrators, tribal councils) to learn how their members are systemically including DEIJA in their resource management.</p> | <p>July 2024 – September 2024</p>   | <p>Memo with recommendations for how CSO could engage with these groups; bring relevant groups into 1-2 CSO workgroup meetings</p>                           |  |
|  | <p>Develop mechanisms for CZM programs to partner more closely with environmental justice organizations (such as writing funding proposals to obtain honoraria to support their engagement in CZM work)</p>   | <p>September 2024 – August 2025</p> | <p>Draft funding proposals; “matchmaking” of 2-3 state CZM programs who are writing grants with EJ orgs who could partner and benefit from the project</p>   |  |

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| Objective  | Milestone   | Timeline  | Deliverable   | Outcome   |
|--|---|---|---|---|
| <p><b>Communications:</b></p> <p>Develop and share content (static, dynamic, other modes) within existing CZM communication streams to amplify marginalized voices and uplift the perspectives and stories of frontline communities.</p> | <p><b>Capacity goal:</b> Frontline community voices amplified and shared for an audience of federal agency decision makers (medium of communication TBD)</p>                            | <p>1<sup>st</sup> year (4-6 pieces)</p> <p>2<sup>nd</sup> year (4-6 pieces)</p> | <p>TBD based on fellow’s interests. Deliverables could be static, dynamic, real time, or a blend of all of these.</p> | <p><b>Short term:</b> CZM communication channels are sharing more diverse voices and perspectives</p> <p><b>Mid-term:</b> CZM programs have access to resources that they need for programmatic change</p> <p><b>Long-term (beyond fellowship):</b> Integration of environmental justice messaging with CZM messaging</p> |
|  | <p><b>Technical assistance goal:</b> CZM program procedures, policies, and other information relevant to coastal programs shared via monthly listserv</p>                               | <p>Monthly</p>  | <p>Monthly listserv content.</p>  |   |
|  | <p><b>Relationship building goal:</b> Voices and messages of environmental justice organizations amplified and shared for an audience of CZM programs (medium of communication TBD)</p> | <p>1<sup>st</sup> year (4-6 pieces)</p> <p>2<sup>nd</sup> year (4-6 pieces)</p> | <p>TBD based on fellow’s interests. Deliverables could be static, dynamic, real time, or a blend.</p>                 |   |

**Travel:**

Anticipated travel includes:

- CSO Member Meeting, Duluth, MN – October 2023
- CSO Member Meeting, GA (? TBD) – October 2024
- RAE Summit, TBD – December (?) 2024

## Project Description

### Overall Purpose

Provide technical assistance, capacity, and relationship building to drive systemic change toward justice and equity within state coastal zone management programs.

This project will build on the following activities that are already taking place:

- CSO is working with NWF on a capacity support program to strengthen relationships between coastal management programs and frontline communities around natural infrastructure projects;
- CSO is working with coastal programs to provide resources and networking support for institutional change around coastal justice and equity;
- OCM is inventorying CZM programs and projects to understand how programs are considering and/or advancing diversity, equity, inclusion, justice and accessibility in their investments;
- OCM and CSO are working on peer to peer sharing around justice and equity for coastal management programs;
- CSO and OCM have communication channels and have started to build and share content that amplify the voices of those with marginalized identities, but this effort is still in its infancy.

This project is designed to empower the fellow to work at multiple levels to gain a holistic understanding of how coastal management works at different levels.

- a) Community level (via the frontline communities project work with NWF)
- b) State and territory level (via the technical assistance around environmental justice policies and procedures provided to state coastal management programs)
- c) National level (via networking and relationship building with environmental justice and other agencies working on environmental justice at the national level)

### Capacity support: (35%)

The fellow will be embedded within the CSO-NWF project team. Based on the fellow's interests and experience, the fellow could provide coordination support, more specialized science-based technical assistance, background research etc.

### Technical assistance: (35%)

CZM programs have expressed interest in asynchronous forms of technical assistance around programmatic levers to institutionalize environmental justice. OCM's inventory of existing progress could lead to the identification of CZM thematic areas where environmental justice issues could be further advanced (eg., public access, fisheries management, etc).

The fellow would provide support in developing draft policies, procedures, and/or program documents to begin the process of programmatic change. Institutional change is slow and as such, the expectation of the fellow is not that they would see through the change, but rather that they would provide some catalyst and energy to launch these initiatives.

Additionally, to facilitate peer to peer sharing, coastal programs expressed interest in a curated listserv and potential community building for staff who are working on justice issues. While there is some level of burnout around traditional workgroups, there is interest in being in community with each other and sharing peer-to-peer knowledge in spaces where they already convene.

### **Relationship building: (15%)**

This aspect of the project is to institutionalize partnerships between coastal management programs and environmental justice organizations and tribes. In the first year, we envision that the fellow would spend time meeting with individuals, orgs, and coalitions engaged in environmental justice work (include state agency associations and tribes).

In the second year, we envision that the fellow would work to identify mechanisms to solidify these partnerships. Examples could include identifying sources of honoraria to fund EJ groups' /tribal participation in CZM/ CSO activities; helping CZM programs form inclusive and diverse project teams where EJ organizations and tribal nations are brought on as equal (funded) partners and decision-makers, etc.

### **Communications (15%):**

The current audience for CSO communications is federal decision-makers (congressional and administration), CSO members/CZM programs, other coastal zone management related professionals (such as floodplain managers, emergency response managers, city planners, etc.), and the general public. Informed by their work on the above three areas, the fellow will develop communication pieces for a specific subset of these audiences.

We envision that the fellow will build content that amplifies marginalized identities, and uplifts environmental justice themed messages so that CSO's existing audiences (such as federal agency staff and decision makers) can consider these perspectives in their work.

We are open to a variety of communication products based on the fellow's interests. We welcome (but do not require) non-traditional forms of communication such as storytelling, and are also open to different modes of communication (static, dynamic, real-time, presentations, oral, written, etc.).

### **The project after the fellowship**

- **Capacity support:** NWF is hiring full time permanent staff to continue working with frontline communities even after the duration of the fellowship. The fellow will be starting around the same time that new NWF staff are getting oriented, and will provide that extra support to help NWF staff get acquainted with coastal programs. The fellow's role would be to solidify relationships between coastal programs, frontline communities, and NWF so that NWF can continue leading the work past the duration of the fellowship.
- **Technical assistance:** CSO, OCM, and many CZM programs are interested in implementing systemic programmatic changes to advance environmental justice; the limitations are often the lack of understanding and lack of capacity to *launch* these efforts. The fellowship will begin this process, with the expectation that state programs will continue implementation after the fellowship ends. Additionally, CSO hopes to use the fellowship to align our efforts in advancing justice and equity in coastal programs with OCM's efforts, and develop specific opportunities for CSO to support OCM under Task 2 of our cooperative agreement (NA22NOS4730024), which outlines roles CSO could play in advancing OCM's

strategic initiatives on justice and equity. Furthermore, all the deliverables produced by the fellow can be used by CSO and OCM in further engagement with the states.

- **Relationship building:** CSO will continue to steward and maintain relationships with environmental justice groups that the fellow has worked with. CSO will continue to identify and incentivize the use of mechanisms for reciprocal relationship building with environmental justice groups.
- **Communications:** CSO and OCM will periodically share out content that the fellow developed through social media channels and Digital Coast connects. CSO will repurpose the content to be used by staff for presentations, workshops, and member meetings.

## 5. Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice

This project primarily focuses on environmental justice and institutionalizing equitable coastal management. There may also be opportunities for the fellow to embody principles of inclusion and accessibility in the work products that they develop and in the services that they provide.

## 6. Fellow Mentoring

CSO is committed to providing the Fellow with independent responsibility, professional development support, and access to national professional networks to advance their career goals through their fellowship work. The Fellow will be based out of CSO's Washington, D.C. staff offices. Their primary mentor and project supervisor at CSO will be Program Director, Vidya Balasubramanyam; they will also receive mentorship from Executive Director, Derek Brockbank, and work closely with all CSO staff members.

### **Mentor Information**

- Vidya brings 6 years of professional experience working within coastal zone management programs to advance environmental justice. She was a NOAA Coastal Management Fellow from 2017-2019, and has since mentored one other Fellow and 2-3 early career CZM staff members.
- Vidya is involved with a wide network of climate justice practitioners through her work with the American Society of Adaptation Professionals and brings a variety of lived experiences and identities that shape her work within the coastal management realm.
- Vidya has completed 18 hours of formal training in leadership and supervision with a focus on managerial communication, intra-cultural communication, and emotionally intelligent leadership which has equipped her with the ability to work with people from diverse and varied life experiences.

### **Integration of fellow into CSO activities and professional development**

The Fellow will be a full member of the CSO staff office, working with five full-time staff and typically two to three other policy fellows, and will be expected to take responsibility for a portion of the organization's programmatic portfolio that capitalizes on the Fellow's expertise and advances their professional development in areas supporting their long-term career goals. The Fellow will have opportunities to coordinate with CSO work groups and collaborate directly with CSO members in state coastal programs. They will also attend, facilitate, and/or lead CSO meetings, including two annual member meetings and other public events, and represent CSO to federal agencies and national partners.

### **Day to day supervision**

- At the beginning of the fellowship, the fellow and mentor will work together to develop a workplan that refines the above milestones based on the fellow's interest and skillsets.
- The mentor will meet with the fellow on a weekly basis, will participate along with the fellow on calls, meetings, and events through the introductory stages and during the pivotal milestones of the project.
- The mentor will support the fellow in navigating complex meeting dynamics, conflict-resolution, and change management – which inevitably come up throughout the project.

### **On-the-job education**

- Based on the fellow's skillsets and experience, the mentor will help the fellow identify relevant webinars and trainings to assist with professional growth of the fellow.
- The mentor will work with the fellow to understand their lived experience and work with the fellow to integrate their lived experience into the way that the project unfolds.
- If needed, the mentor will work with the fellow to identify an external network of mentors in the climate justice field at large that may more closely match the fellow's background, identity, and lived experience.

## **7. Office Environment**

CSO follows federal and District of Columbia COVID-19 guidelines regarding health precautions and expects all staff to be fully vaccinated for in-person work. When safe and feasible, all CSO staff will work in the office full-time with an option for remote work 1-2 days per week. If/when working remotely, CSO staff, including the Fellow and mentor, will remain in contact through staff-wide and project-specific team meetings.

The Fellow will have a desk at the CSO staff office in Washington, D.C, and receive all workplace support: desk phone, computer and required peripherals and software, printers, and office supplies. CSO will coordinate with the Fellow to ensure they receive necessary computer equipment, software, and peripherals if/when working remotely.

The host office is wheelchair accessible and proximate to public transport and social services (library, healthcare and community centers) all located within a 2-3 mile radius. All CSO staff are committed to their personal and professional growth and learning journeys around social justice and racial equity. We strive to create an inclusive work environment and are open to iterative feedback and accommodation needs.

## **8. Project Partners**

This project will build on the following activities that are already taking place:

| Efforts already taking place   | How the project will build on these efforts  |
|--|--|
| CSO is working with NWF on a capacity support program to strengthen relationships between coastal management programs and frontline communities around natural infrastructure projects | The fellow will provide connective tissue to scale up this capacity support program.   |
| OCM is inventorying CZM programs and projects to understand what progress is being made around justice and equity  | The fellow will provide support to identify CZM thematic areas and develop draft policies, procedures, and/or program documents to begin the process of programmatic change. |
| OCM is conceptualizing peer to peer sharing around justice and equity for coastal management programs  | The fellow will bring these efforts to life to support community building for DEIJA practitioners.   |
| CSO and OCM have communication channels and have started to build and share content around DEIJA topics  | The fellow will carry on this work by building and sharing out content around this topic.  |

## 9. Cost-Share Description

Coastal States Organization will provide \$15,000 match (\$7,500 per year), plus travel funds, out of our unrestricted revenue and a contract with National Wildlife Federation to work on advancing natural infrastructure with State CZM programs that are engaging with “frontline” communities. Unrestricted revenue primarily comes from CSO membership dues.

## 10. Strategic Focus Area

This project is intended to advance the implementation of each strategic focus area in ways that are equitable and just. However, because the overarching purpose of this project is to “provide technical assistance, capacity, and build relationships to drive systemic change around justice and equity”, the project most directly supports the strategic focus area “Resilient Coastal Communities”.