

The Coastal Fund Major Application Fall 2025

Amount Requested: \$4200.00

Please provide a 1-paragraph summary of your funding proposal

Ocean inaccessibility is an environmental justice issue that affects members of the Santa Barbara community. Sea League is an ocean education non-profit organization whose mission is to increase ocean recreation and education opportunities for students in grades 1st-9th through a sliding-pay scale tuition program. While this tuition system greatly expands the opportunities for low-income families to join the program, there are still financial barriers that prevent students from being able to participate in Sea League. Therefore, by providing 10 scholarships for the 2026 spring season, the Coastal Fund will help support students who may not otherwise have this opportunity, removing a major barrier to ocean access. This spring term, Sea League will be hosting 10 after-school programs to teach up to 132 kids across all sessions. It will be an 8-week season held from March to May 2026. Enrolled students attend one session each week of the season, where they have the opportunity to surf, stand-up paddleboard, tidepool, sail, and visit the UCSB REEF Center and Benioff Ocean Science Lab.

Are you requesting emergency funding?

No.

Budget Information

List your proposed budget line items and amount requested from Coastal Fund ONLY, consolidating line items if needed. Please be sure to distinguish what funds will be used to pay student interns and if they will be paid via stipend or hourly wage. If you prefer to supplement this table with more details or a complete program budget you may attach additional documentation in the Application Documents section below. This table should be completed whether or not you include additional documentation. [Click here for a sample budget.](#)

	Budget Item	Budget Amount
1.	10 full scholarships for 8 week session (\$420.00 x 10 students)	\$4200.00

	Budget Item	Budget Amount
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		
7.		
8.		
9.		
10.		
Total		\$4200.00

List any additional sources of funding for this project, either confirmed or under review. To add a row, click on the plus sign underneath the table.

N/A

Coastal Fund frequently receives more requests for funding than we are able to fulfill. If we are unable to award full funding, are you interested in partial funding? If so, how much is

required and how would you adjust your scope? Use this box to provide any explanation, information or justification relative to your budget or line items that is not captured elsewhere in the application.

If the Coastal Fund is unable to fulfill the full requested funding, partial funding would still be used to provide scholarships. Sea League’s goal is to fully sponsor 10 students for the upcoming spring season, but in the case that less money for this project is allocated by the Coastal Fund, the maximum amount of full scholarships that can be funded will be offered. In order to provide a single full scholarship, a minimum of \$420.00 would be required.

Do you expect to request additional funding for this project from the Coastal Fund in future funding cycles?

Yes, if funding is awarded to support scholarships for this season, Sea League will continue to request funding to support scholarships for the program in future seasons.

Timeline

Please provide an anticipated timeline for your project, including any major milestones or deliverables, in the table below. Add a row to the table by clicking the plus sign on the right.

	Time Period	Actions/Milestones
	December 2026	Recieve Funduing
	January-February 2026	Advertise Scholarships
	March 15, 2026	Select Scholarship Recipients
	May 25-29th	Informal Interviews to Gauge Impact

When do you expect to complete your project, or the stages of your project funded through this request? Note that your end date should be no more than 1 year from when funding is awarded, or approximately 15 months from the date of this application.

This funding will be applied 2 weeks before the start of the spring season, with participants receiving scholarships on March 15, 2026.

Application Detail

How does your proposal fit within the Coastal Fund mission to "connect people and the environment by allocating funds to programs that celebrate, explore, and protect the coastal ecosystems in and around the University of California, Santa Barbara"? Suggested response length 100-250 words.

Sea League's program embodies every core value of the Coastal Fund. Sea League celebrates coastal ecosystems by creating joyous moments in the ocean through offering various recreational activities in the water and on the coast. These celebratory moments will be fostered through surfing, stand-up paddleboarding, and playing beach games.

By removing barriers to access and teaching students about their local ocean ecosystems through education programs and hands-on activities, students thoroughly explore their local coastline. Exploring will include tidepooling and beach walks, and this exploration will be deepened through visits to UCSB's Reef and Benioff Ocean Science Lab.

By fostering connections between students and the ocean, as well as emphasizing the importance of conservation throughout the program, students learn the importance of protecting Santa Barbara's coastal ecosystems. Coaches continuously mention the importance of protecting our oceans throughout the course of each session, and designated gratitude and reflection time ensures students consider their own role in the well-being of our oceans.

The coaching staff is predominantly made up of UCSB students, which gives undergrads an opportunity to work as ocean educators and inspire action in future generations. The programs taking place at either UCSB's Campus Point or Leadbetter Beach position them directly at the heart of our community's coastal ecosystems.

Has Coastal Fund funded this project or program in the past? Note that answering yes here will open up 2 additional questions.

Yes.

Please provide any necessary background information and your proposal's importance in a broader context. Your response should be written for a scientifically literate but non-technical audience, with a suggested maximum length of 750 words. For many proposals, this section will be much shorter. Although not required, any included references may be attached below under “Application Documents”.

Sea League was founded in 2021, beginning as a group of just five enthusiastic students and one coach. Formed with the sole intention of getting marginalized communities into blue spaces (outdoor environments dominated by water), Sea League aimed to expand ocean recreation to all young members of the community. Since its launch, the organization has evolved to host daily programs during both a fall and spring season, reaching a cap of 132 kids per season and a coaching staff of over 30 coaches. It now serves kids of all racial and financial backgrounds, and has implemented a ‘sliding pay scale’ which ensures tuition cost is based on household income.

This program’s importance spans far beyond that of a regular recreation after-school program. Giving students the unique opportunity to build a relationship with the ocean from a young age by having positive experiences on and around the coast, they develop a sense of stewardship and love for coastal ecosystems that can not be replicated by classroom teaching. Recent research shows that children’s exposure to blue spaces promotes environmental action that will, in turn, result in conservation efforts, indirectly benefiting further human health and wellbeing (George, 2024). Researchers also speculate that the next generation of ocean policy-makers and storytellers will come from a pool of ocean-literate children, like those who experience ocean recreation programs. (Jacobson, 2020)

Besides the environmental importance of instilling these values in students from a young age, ocean spaces are proven to be highly effective environments for kids to experience and develop emotional, social, and physical skills. (Jacobson, 2020). Students in Sea League get after-school exercise while experiencing time outdoors. Between running around playing beach games, paddling surfboards, and swimming through waves, students have an opportunity to get their heart rate up and build both aerobic and anaerobic endurance. During a Sea League session, participants learn new physical skills, including surfing, which helps to hone balance, strength, and coordination. It also emphasizes mental toughness, and is a great opportunity for students to try something new. During each Sea League session, students participate in an “opening circle” where they share one thing they are grateful for. This routine helps to develop an important emotional skill of practicing and acknowledging gratitude. It also gives students a chance to talk openly amongst their peers and an opportunity to listen to others. The program occurs across all Santa Barbara schools, so it gives students an opportunity to socialize with students outside of their usual school groups and meet other young members of the community.

Sea League believes that ocean recreation and the opportunity to be in the water should not be a privilege reserved for those with a certain economic status. The ‘sliding pay scale’ for

the program's tuition aims to decrease the financial burden of the program as much as possible. Main program costs include water gear (surfboards, stand-up paddle boards, boogie boards, wetsuits, and games) as well as financial compensation for staff coaches. Volunteer coaches are also crucial in supporting the function of the program.

Research also points to a lack of people of color in blue spaces as a direct result of where they have been forced to live for decades through years of systematic racism. (Martinez, 2023) Historical racism and exclusion from ocean recreation are other barriers that non-white communities and community members face, and Sea League strives to combat this deeply rooted issue. While the program is no longer limited to BIPOC community members, it still emphasizes and encourages the message that the ocean is for everyone!

To even further break down financial barriers to participation, the Coastal Fund would provide students with scholarships, supporting this initiative of changemakers and promoting equitable ocean access.

References

George, P., Murray, K., & Christian, H. (2024). Young children's use of blue spaces and the impact on their health, development and environmental awareness: A qualitative study from parents' perspectives. *Health promotion journal of Australia : official journal of Australian Association of Health Promotion Professionals*, 35(1), 45–56. <https://doi.org/10.1002/hpja.710>

Jacobson, S. (2020). Blue space and blue recreation importance: A case study of marine education programs in the state of California [Master's thesis, The Evergreen State College]. Evergreen State College Institutional Repository. <https://collections.evergreen.edu/s/repository/item/7163>

Martinez, S. R. (2023). Racism in the water: Access for all in outdoor recreation. *Ecology Law Quarterly*, 50(1), 1–54. <https://doi.org/10.15779/Z38VM42Z54>

Describe your planned steps, process or methodology.

When applying for Sea League, low-income students will have the opportunity to receive a scholarship funded by this program, which allows them to attend the spring season free of cost. This scholarship opportunity will be added to all normal advertising for the program, including school emails and flyers, to ensure that students are fully aware of this option before deciding whether to apply. Students who have not participated in the program before and whose applications most align with the need for financial assistance will receive the scholarships.

What outcomes do you hope to achieve?

If the Coastal Fund chooses to accept this grant proposal, 10 students in Santa Barbara will receive a full scholarship to attend the entire spring season free of charge. These students will learn about coastal ecosystems and develop a connection with a blue space that wouldn't have been possible without Coastal Fund funding. These students will become ocean literate, learn new skills, experience a new social setting, and practice gratitude, which will benefit their own well-being as well as the way they interact with the environment.

On the last day of the session, students will be interviewed by one of their coaches about their experience in Sea League. During a brief 5-minute one-on-one, coaches will ask questions about the student's experience in Sea League, from what skills and knowledge they learned, to their view on ocean conservation, to whether they made new friends during the program. This will be used to assess the success of the program in meeting Sea League's goals.

Will your project continue to have an impact or evolve beyond this funding cycle? If so, how?

Students who benefit from this funding by being given scholarships will take with them the lessons of ocean conservation and coastal connection they formed during the program. The ocean connection and knowledge they will leave with will be carried on throughout their life, equipping them with the skills to be confident in the ocean on their own. Alumni students will be empowered by the knowledge that our local beaches and oceans are for everyone, and will continue to spread this important narrative to peers. They will also be aware of the importance of protecting our coast and continue to be conscious of ocean conservation.

Please either describe the project leader's expertise in the project's topic area or attach a resume or CV as a separate document under Application Documents near the bottom of this form. If you are attaching a resume or CV, please write "see attached" in the text box below.

See attached.

Student Involvement

Coastal Fund's annual budget comes from fees paid by UCSB students. Does your project include any student leadership, internship or volunteer opportunities? Note that answering yes here will open up 3 additional narrative questions.

Sea League hires UCSB students as paid coaches and volunteers, providing a job walking distance from campus that caters to the schedule of a full-time student. Student coaches work in

an active outdoor education setting, which teaches them hard skills in group management, childhood education, and ocean recreation coaching. The position also teaches UCSB student coaches important soft skills, including patience, resilience, and improvisation. This opportunity empowers students to continue working as outdoor educators and provides them with resume skills for a future career in environmental education and the wider environmental field.