



Bren School Group Project

Proposal Guidelines

2026-2027 Project Period

The Bren School of Environmental Science & Management at the University of California, Santa Barbara seeks proposals for Group Projects to solve environmental problems. The Group Project serves as the master's thesis for graduate students in our Master of Environmental Science and Management program. The projects will be conducted from **April 2026 to April 2027**.

All proposers are encouraged to contact **the Bren School** (projects@bren.ucsb.edu) as a **first step in proposal development**. The Bren School provides guidance regarding proposal content and format. They will also connect proposal authors with Bren faculty, staff, and students who can provide additional guidance and assistance in writing proposals.

Project proposals are due via email to projects@bren.ucsb.edu on Monday, January 19, 2026, by 11:59 pm (PST) and are limited to **three pages** (excluding references, budget and justification, and client letter of support). Examples of successful proposal submissions and completed projects can be found in the Master's Project Directory on the Bren School website at bren.ucsb.edu/projects.

PROPOSAL FORMAT:

Title

Descriptive of the environmental science and management problem to be solved.

Identification

Name and contact information (email, phone, and affiliation) of the proposer(s). Proposers may be clients, faculty and/or Bren students. If you have worked actively with a faculty member or student(s) to write the proposal, please list them as co-authors. If more than two Bren students contribute to the proposal, the client and/or students must select up to two primary student authors. If the proposal is selected, the two primary student authors will have the option to be guaranteed membership in the group.

Client/Organization

Include name, email, phone, and affiliation. The client/organization is the primary representative from the client organization and the main point of contact for students. All



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Science & Management

clients listed on the proposal will be notified at the end of Winter Quarter (late March) regarding the status of the proposal. If you would prefer to limit notification of the proposal status to specific individuals, please note this in your proposal.

Proposed Project (3 pages)

Objectives. Briefly describe the environmental problem that you seek to solve with this project. What do you intend to accomplish for the client/organization? What specific question(s) would you like to have answered by the project? Think of the bigger picture, beyond the client/organization. The methodology for how you will reach your objectives will be described below in Possible Approach, not in Objectives. Concentrate on formulating a few (2-4) specific and attainable objectives that involve both science and policy/management.

Implications. Contextualize the importance of this work and its current relevance. Shed light on the problem's origins, underscoring the significance of addressing it now. If relevant, specify the project's geographic scope and provide a glimpse into past efforts to tackle the challenge, if known. Explain what new insights you intend to add to help solve the problem. Identify the target audience and highlight potential beneficiaries beyond the client who could gain from the project's outcomes.

Equity. A project may address a historical environmental injustice, or prevent one from happening. Does the proposed project have the potential to address specific environmental justice issues? If so, in what ways will this project improve environmental equity? If the project will involve overburdened and underserved communities, briefly describe the environmental burden, what benefits the project aims to provide, and a few steps you will take to prevent further negative impacts during the time of the project. If the project does not involve specific equity concerns, indicate this here and provide justification for why equity is not being considered in the scope of the project.

The US Environmental Protection Agency defines environmental justice as "the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income, with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations and policies. This goal will be achieved when everyone enjoys: (1) the same degree of protection from environmental and health hazards, and (2) equal access to the decision-making process to have a healthy environment in which to live, learn, and work." (<https://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice>).

Available data. Describe the data available for understanding, analyzing, and addressing the problem. If possible, provide direct links to available data sources. Explain how and when students can gather data for analysis. If data acquisition is required (e.g., survey,



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fieldwork), specify the process clearly. Share any specific data sources or acquisition methods that you have in mind. Note that the students will have a limited amount of time for data acquisition, and this is an important factor in the selection process. If access to proprietary data will require a Non-Disclosure Agreement, indicate it here.

Possible Approach. Very briefly summarize potential strategies for meeting project objectives. This should be very general, addressing “how could the problem be solved?” using the available data/information mentioned above. While students refine approaches for Group Projects, initial client input helps focus the project.

Deliverables. All Group Projects generate a final written report, executive summary, and final presentation. Do you need a client-specific project output (e.g., a model, a database, a video)? Further deliverables will be discussed between the client and project team once teams are assigned.

Internships. Clients are encouraged to provide at least one summer internship (see Internships section below) to a student(s) in the Group Project to further the goals of the project, help the student(s) develop professional skills, and build stronger relationships with the client. Please describe the number of internships, including any financial compensation, and duties in the client’s letter of support.

Supporting Materials (not counted toward 3-page limit)

Citations. Due to the scientific and technical nature of many interdisciplinary environmental problems, authors are encouraged to include citations to support their proposal.

Budget and justification. Each project chosen by the Group Project Committee will receive \$1,000 from the Bren School to cover the group’s basic operations. This funding will be held at the school and is only accessible to the students. The students will determine how to allocate the funds to cover expenses such as conference calls, travel, conference fees, software, etc. If the proposed project requires additional funding for completion, the client must provide that funding. If needed, please include a budget with a description of anticipated costs that will be covered by the client.

Client letter of support. Clients must submit a letter of support to clearly describe their commitment to hire at least one Bren student summer intern and whether or not the client has budget approval to pay them. The letter should also describe the client’s ability to provide data, additional funding, and/or any other resources for the project. The details of these commitments must be articulated clearly in the letter of support addressed to the Group Project Committee.



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- a. **Internships:** Include internships in the proposal only if they are certain to be provided upon project selection. Internships should align with Group Project objectives and cultivate students' professional skills. A mentor from the client's organization must guide the student professionally. Projects with paid student internships have higher selection potential. Clients can directly pay interns or contribute to Bren School's Summer Internship Fellowship Fund for the project (details in Funding section). If valuable unpaid opportunities exist but funding is lacking, unpaid internships may still be included.
 - o **Internship Scenarios:** Please select/address the following scenarios regarding your internship opportunity.
 - An internship will be offered and it is well-defined and funded (How many internships and how much funding?).
 - An internship will be offered and funded, but it is not well-defined. (How many internships and how much funding?).
 - An internship will "most likely" be offered but it is not well-defined and funding is unclear at this time.
 - An internship will be offered but there is no funding available (How many internships are you willing to provide?).
 - An internship is unlikely at this time, but it might be a possibility at a later date.
 - No internships are available and will not be offered as part of this Group Project.
 - o **Intern Selection:** Please describe if a specific intern selection protocol must be followed. This protocol may not be guaranteed and is dependent on students' internship commitments prior to joining the project. Some examples of what clients have done in the past are:
 - Proposal writer selected for internship
 - Interested group members apply or interview
 - Group selects dedicated intern
- b. **Commitment Caution:** If you commit to internships with funding, only commit if certain, and please follow through with your funding process promptly. Students finalize internship plans by May 1. Delays to this timeline cause significant stress and burden on students and jeopardize the client's ability to secure interns. These guidelines ensure clarity for students juggling academics and internship searches. Your cooperation is appreciated.
 - o **Note:** The Bren School offers Summer Internship Fellowships (SIF) to support students completing low-paying or unpaid internships. The small stipend



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offsets a portion of the students' travel and living expenses. This funding is not a work stipend, is not guaranteed, and depends on financial resources in a given year. It is preferred that clients provide internship funding as an investment in the high-quality research students are providing.

- c. **Funding:** If the proposed Group Project requires more funding than provided to the students by the Bren School, then the client is responsible for providing those funds. Please clearly describe the client's financial commitment in the letter of support.
- If the client is providing direct support for the student intern(s), then the client is responsible for managing those funds.
 - If the client is interested in making a gift to the Bren School for a specific Group Project through the Summer Internship Fellowship Fund, then the Bren School will select and provide the fellowship funding to the student intern(s). Please contact Assistant Dean for Partnerships & Development Dr. Lotus Vermeer (lvermeer@bren.ucsb.edu) for guidance on how to make a gift. Gifts can be restricted in support of a specific Group Project and are subject to UCSB's 6% gift fee.
- d. **Data:** If the client intends to provide data or facilitate the acquisition of data, the client should specify the type and content of the data and when it will be available to students. It is preferable for the data to be provided to the students with no obligation of confidentiality or restriction for publication of the data shared. However, if a non-disclosure agreement will be required, please describe the constraints around the use of the data. Any NDA needs to be entered into by the university on behalf of the student group and requires review and approval by UCSB's legal team. Any NDA should be promptly provided to students for vetting to ensure no lags in the data acquisition process.

Submit proposals via email by Monday, January 19, 2026 at 11:59 pm (PST) to:

projects@bren.ucsb.edu

Limited Intellectual Property License

By participating in the Group Project, the client agrees that: (1) its logo and other "publicly available" intellectual property may be used by the Bren School (e.g., its students, faculty and staff) solely in connection with the specific Group Project in which the client participates, and (2) any Group Project's deliverables containing the client's logo or other intellectual property may be made publicly available via the Bren School's website and other formats.

Upon written request by the client, a Group Project incorporating the client's intellectual property will include a disclaimer identifying the client as the owner of the intellectual property and that all rights are reserved by the client. The client may, upon written request, withhold consent to use certain intellectual property owned by the client