FY 2023 Marine Fisheries Initiative (MARFIN)

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NOTICE OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Federal Agency Name(s): National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Department of Commerce

Funding Opportunity Title: FY 2023 Marine Fisheries Initiative (MARFIN)

Announcement Type: Initial

Funding Opportunity Number: NOAA-NMFS-SE-2023-2007555

Federal Assistance Listings Number: 11.433, Marine Fisheries Initiative

Dates: Applications must be received by http://www.Grants.gov, postmarked, or provided to a delivery service by 11:59 pm, Eastern Standard Time, November 29, 2022. Use of Grants.gov is preferred. If Grants.gov cannot be used, use of U.S. mail or another delivery service must be documented with a receipt; private metered postmarks are not acceptable.

Funding Opportunity Description: The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), Southeast Region, is seeking proposals under the Marine Fisheries Initiative Program (MARFIN), for research and development projects that optimize the use of fisheries in the Gulf of Mexico, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and off the South Atlantic states of North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida, involving the U.S. fishing industry (recreational and commercial), including fishery biology, resources assessment, socio-economic assessment, management and conservation, selected harvesting methods, and fish handling and processing. This program addresses NOAA's mission goal "Healthy Oceans."

FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Program Objective

The Marine Fisheries Initiative (MARFIN) is a competitive Federal assistance program that funds projects seeking to optimize research and development benefits from U.S. marine fishery resources through cooperative efforts involving the best research and management talents to accomplish priority activities. Projects funded under MARFIN provide answers for fishery needs covered by NOAA Fisheries Strategic Plan, available from NOAA Fisheries, particularly those goals relating to: rebuilding overfished marine fisheries, maintaining currently productive fisheries, and integrating conservation of protected species and fisheries management. Funding priorities for MARFIN are formulated from recommendations received from non-scientific and technical experts and from NOAA Fisheries research and operations officials.

With the long-term planning capabilities available through the Southeast Data, Assessment, and Review (SEDAR) process, the priorities are selected to coordinate assessment needs with this solicitation.

B. Program Priorities

All of the items listed below under Ecosystems and Fisheries are considered high priorities and are not listed in any particular order of importance. Items under Economics and Human Dimensions are in order of priority. Proposals must address one of the priority areas listed below as they pertain to federally managed species. If you select more than one priority, you should list first on your application the priority that most closely reflects the objectives of your proposal. Projects should focus on the greatest probability of recovering, maintaining, improving, or developing fisheries; collecting data directly applicable for improving stock assessments, collecting and improving data on bycatch estimates and protected species fishery interactions, and/or generating increased social and economic values and opportunities for the commercial, recreational, and subsistence sectors of fisheries.

1. Economics and Human Dimensions

a. Estimate seafood demand models (using retail and/or ex-vessel data) for commercially important species managed in the Southeast Region, including but not limited to yellowtail snapper, vermilion snapper (S. Atlantic only), red, gag, other shallow water, and deep-water

groupers (S. Atlantic only), golden tilefish, blueline tilefish, black sea bass (South Atlantic only), king mackerel, Spanish mackerel, dolphinfish (Atlantic), wahoo (Atlantic), shrimp (penaeid species, rock shrimp, and royal red shrimp), golden crab, and spiny lobster. The primary purpose of these models is to estimate potential changes in prices because of regulatory actions (e.g., changes in annual commercial harvest limits) or other events that would be expected to cause a change in the domestic landings of that species.

b. In the Gulf of Mexico region, estimate the net economic benefits of alternative allocations to the private angler, for-hire and commercial sectors, inclusive of all value generated up to the end user/consumer, in at least one fishery where at least one sector is managed under catch shares and at least one species where no sector is managed under catch shares. Research should include estimating the loss of net economic benefits when a portion of the allocation is left unharvested.

c. In the South Atlantic Region, estimate the net economic benefits of alternative allocations to the private angler, for-hire and commercial sectors, inclusive of all value generated up to the end user/consumer for key species with allocations. Research should include estimating the loss of net economic benefits when a portion of the allocation is left unharvested.

d. Evaluate the potential economic and social effects of alternative catch share programs in the private recreational sector in fisheries (marine or inland) where they have been implemented (e.g., Tarpon in FL) or in fisheries where this sector has its own allocation (e.g., Gulf Red Snapper).

e. Evaluate the social effects of alternative allocations among competing user groups including the commercial, private angler, and for-hire sectors for at least one species where at least one sector is managed under catch shares and at least one species where no sector is managed under catch shares.

f. Develop a simulation model to forecast the expected change in commercial fishing behavior to changes in, for example but not limited to, the stock size, regulations, and economic factors (costs and fish prices). Apply the model to one fishery (or component thereof) managed with catch shares and one fishery not managed with catch shares.

g. Collect social and economic information on crew members/mates in the for-hire sector who are not owners or operators in the commercial and for-hire fisheries, including, but not limited to, basic personal and household demographic information, personal and household income and debt, employment patterns (seasonal, across fisheries, non-fishing), economic

and other social measures of well-being, and attitudinal information concerning fishing, fisheries management, and expectations of future well-being and continued participation in the fishing industry; sample to support analysis by fishery and gear-type. NOTE: If an award under this priority is issued, the instrument developed to collect data must be submitted to an Institutional Review Board (IRB)-a group tasked with reviewing and monitoring research involving human subjects-for clearance before funds can be expended.

h. Develop economic impact models (e.g., input-output models) for Puerto Rico or the U.S. Virgin Islands that can be used to accurately assess the economic impacts of the commercial fisheries and changes to those impacts due to regulatory changes and other factors.

2. Ecosystems

a. Link inshore coastal habitats to offshore fisheries production so habitat protection and restoration could be incorporated into stock assessments. Provide scientific support to demonstrate how NOAA’s habitat program is adding value to the fishing economy.

b. Refine/develop ecosystem models to improve our understanding of the long-term benefits and impacts of Mississippi River sediment diversions on NOAA trust resources and coastal communities (diversions).
1) Advance ecosystem modeling and socioeconomic impact assessments of Mississippi River Sediment Diversions.
2) Determine what environmental changes are most influential in overall marsh health (e.g., varying nutrient loads on aboveground and below-ground biomass, varying nutrient loads and salinities on soil shear strength and marsh sustainability, varying flood heights and duration, and what extent soil shear strength is a reliable indicator.

c. Evaluate how dredging affects federally-managed fish species' use of shallow sand bottom areas as nursery, spawning and foraging habitat. Evaluate effects of dredging on the use of ebb/flood shoals as nursery, spawning, and foraging habitat.

d. Identify and prioritize those federally-managed fish stocks in the Southeast Region that would most benefit from habitat utilization assessments that will help us better understand and demonstrate the benefits of habitat conservation to fisheries and protected species.

e. Evaluate the use of nearshore hardbottom, tidal freshwater, oligohaline wetland, and coastal inlet habitats by NOAA trust resources in the Southeast Region.

f. Study the factors contributing to listed corals' susceptibility to disease and corals' resiliency to climate stressors to support efforts to improve resistance to disease and adaptation to climate impacts.

g. Identify the science needed to better integrate and inform EFH consultation processes for managed fisheries:
1) Improve the understanding of shore-side factors, such a land use run-off, coastal development, etc., on the marine ecosystem and associated fisheries resources.
2) Define and develop an inshore-offshore decision support tool to effectively help habitat managers evaluate the impacts of management decisions affecting onshore habitats on the productivity of offshore fish populations.
3) Investigate the value of artificial reefs and Gulf oil rigs as fish habitat for reef fishes as well as their potential as habitats to enhance stock building efforts.

h. Obtain and provide georeferenced data to support development of a Caribbean Fishery Ecosystem Plan; exemplary datasets include but are not limited to turbidity, ocean color (chlorophyll), sea surface temperature and others that may be available to a limited audience.

i. Study the factors impacting coral recruitment, particularly grazing, to inform management measures to facilitate recruitment.

j. Identify, define and operationalize human dimension indicators in the Southeast Region that help us better understand and demonstrate the feedback loops between the ecosystem and human communities. The human dimensions' indicator development should move past socio-demographic information and focus on concepts such as human well-being, sustainability, equity and security.

k. Collect fishermen ecological knowledge to develop innovative strategies for adapting and mitigating environmental change for the Southeast region.

3. Fisheries

a. Conduct comprehensive fishery-independent monitoring and sampling in the South Atlantic, Gulf of Mexico, or U.S. Caribbean to support quantitative assessments, track changes in fish size and abundance through time, assess status and trends of reef fish species, and reconcile difference between catch per unit effort indices and fishery-dependent age composition used for stock assessments. Indices should cover a broad seasonal/spatial scale and age structure and incorporate climate-related impacts and trends.

b. Create reliable annual estimates of marine mammals, threatened and endangered species, and other bycatch in managed fisheries by enhancing existing observer and survey programs and applying new technologies, including working with the Marine Recreational Information Program to test and validate the use of electronic reporting methodologies for this purpose; priority fisheries include shrimp (including assessing compliance with turtle excluder device requirements), South Atlantic snapper-grouper, other Southeast Region recreational hook-and-line fisheries, and fisheries under take reduction teams.

c. Obtain better estimates of natural mortality and release mortality in commercial and recreational fisheries for snapper grouper species and effects of devices and methods to improve survival of released fish.

d. Develop pilot studies and methods for enhancing data collection to test alternative management strategies for the recreational sector, such as harvest tags, days-at-sea, regional state-by-state management, and catch share programs.

e. Continue to invest in maintaining and improving both fishery-dependent (including sample processing) and fishery-independent data from the Marine Recreational Information Program, Marine Resources Monitoring Assessment and Prediction program, Southeast Area Monitoring and Assessment Program, Southeast Fishery-Independent Survey, video surveys in the Gulf and South Atlantic, National Coral Reef Monitoring Program, targeted demographic surveys for threatened corals in the Keys and Puerto Rico, and surveys for threatened corals in the U.S. Virgin Islands.

f. Develop and validate three-dimensional larval dispersal/connectivity models and conduct associated genetic studies for identifying and predicting spatial patterns of recruitment of reef fishes and spiny lobster in the Gulf of Mexico, South Atlantic, and U.S. Caribbean.

g. Conduct research on age, growth, and reproduction of reef fish in anticipation of upcoming stock assessments, with emphasis on data-poor species.

h. Conduct density dependence studies using a habitat context to examine the potential effects of habitat on catchability and selectivity.

i. Conduct research (e.g., otolith analysis, tagging, etc.) to better describe stock structure and mixing rates of stocks.

Table 1. Data and Research Needs by Stock - Please note this table is not inclusive or

prioritized.
South Atlantic
Black Sea Bass – Climate change impacts on species distribution
Blueline Tilefish - Abundance indices, fecundity, recruitment, discard mortality rates and effects of best fishing practices
Cobia - Stock identification, abundance indices, tagging, recruitment Dolphin - Age information, assessment approach, recruitment
Gag Grouper – Abundance index for age-0 fish, discard mortality rates, and effects of besting fishing practices
Gray Snapper - Stock ID, discard mortality, age validation, recruitment Gray Triggerfish – Recruitment, abundance index for age-0 fish
Greater Amberjack - Age validation, discard mortality rates, abundance indices, recruitment, role of Sargassum in life history
Red Grouper – Recruitment, discard mortality rates and effects of best fishing practices Red Porgy – temporal trends in growth, sex at age, and female maturity at age, potential factors contributing to low recruitment, investigate whether males establish and maintain territories as part of spawning behavior
Red Snapper - Discard mortality rates, private recreational discards, recruitment
Scamp - Age and growth, age validation, recruitment, discard mortality rate and effects of best fishing practices
Snowy Grouper – Abundance indices, stock ID, recruitment, discard mortality rates and effects of best fishing practices
Spanish Mackerel - Stock ID, recruitment
Tilefish - Abundance indices, particularly for juveniles, recruitment Vermilion Snapper - Growth models with age-0 fish, recruitment
White Grunt - Stock ID, age validation, recruitment, discard mortality rate

Gulf of Mexico
Cobia - Recruitment measures, discard mortality, stock structure
Gag - Continuous red tide effect analysis, sex ratio, recruitment, reproduction
Gray Snapper - Recruitment measures, age and growth, Stock ID
Gray Triggerfish - Age composition and validation, recruitment, gear selectivity Greater Amberjack - Age composition and validation, recruitment
Red Snapper - Discard mortality rates, effect of devices to reduce barotrauma, stock structure
Scamp - Recruitment measures, age and growth, Stock ID Spanish Mackerel - Recruitment measures
Tilefish - Recruitment measures, age and growth, Stock ID Vermilion Snapper - Recruitment measures

Yellowedge Grouper - Age and length composition samples, recruitment, discard mortality

Gulf and South Atlantic
Black Grouper - Recruitment
Goliath Grouper - Non-catch based assessment methods, age and length composition data, recruitment, reproduction, discard mortality rates, gear selectivity
Hogfish - Recruitment, stock ID, gear selectivity, discard mortality King Mackerel - Discard mortality, recruitment, Mexican data
Mutton Snapper - FI indices, recruitment, discard mortality, climate change impacts on species distribution
Spiny Lobster - Age composition, recruitment, relationship between the reproductive cycle characteristics in Florida and in the Caribbean, with postlarval recruitment in Florida
Yellowtail Snapper - Stock ID, recruitment

U.S. Caribbean

Queen conch - Stock ID; Life history information; larval distribution and recruitment; incorporation of ecosystem information; environmental parameters including effects of climate change; biomass, abundance, and spatial distribution; changes in fishing effort; recreational catch and effort data

Spiny Lobster - Stock ID; Life history information; larval distribution and recruitment; incorporation of ecosystem information; environmental parameters including effects of climate change; biomass, abundance, and spatial distribution; changes in fishing effort; recreational catch and effort data

Queen Triggerfish - Stock ID; Life history information; larval distribution and recruitment; incorporation of ecosystem information; environmental parameters including effects of climate change; biomass, abundance, and spatial distribution; changes in fishing effort; recreational catch and effort data

Red hind - Stock ID; Life history information; larval distribution and recruitment; information on spawning aggregation areas (SPAG); recreational catch and effort data; environmental parameters including effects of climate change

Queen Snapper - Stock ID; Life history information; larval distribution and recruitment; incorporation of ecosystem information; environmental parameters including effects of climate change; changes in fishing effort; recreational catch and effort data

Silk Snapper - Stock ID; Life history information; larval distribution and recruitment; incorporation of ecosystem information; environmental parameters including effects of climate change; changes in fishing effort; recreational catch and effort data

Yellowfin grouper - Stock ID; Life history information; larval distribution and recruitment; information on SPAG areas; environmental parameters including effects of climate change; recreational catch and effort data

Yellowtail Snapper - Stock ID; Life history information; larval distribution and recruitment; environmental parameters including effects of climate change; recreational catch and effort data

Mutton Snapper - Stock ID; Life history information; larval distribution and recruitment; information on SPAG areas; environmental parameters including effects of climate change; recreational catch and effort data

Lane Snapper - Stock ID; Life history information; larval distribution and recruitment; recreational catch and effort data

Hogfish - Stock ID; Life history information; larval distribution and recruitment; environmental parameters including effects of climate change; recreational catch and effort data

Redtail Parrotfish - Stock ID; Life history information; larval distribution and recruitment; incorporation of ecosystem information; environmental parameters including effects of climate change; biomass, abundance, and spatial distribution; recreational catch and effort data

Stoplight Parrotfish - Stock ID; Life history information; larval distribution and recruitment; incorporation of ecosystem information; environmental parameters including effects of climate change; biomass, abundance, and spatial distribution; recreational catch and effort data

Dolphin - Stock ID; Life history information; larval distribution and recruitment; incorporation of ecosystem information (including Sargassum influxes); environmental parameters including effects of climate change; recreational catch and effort data

Wahoo - Stock ID; Life history information; larval distribution and recruitment; incorporation of ecosystem information (including Sargassum influxes); environmental

parameters including effects of climate change; recreational catch and effort data

Blackfin Tuna - Stock ID; Life history information; larval distribution and recruitment; incorporation of ecosystem information; environmental parameters including effects of climate change; recreational catch and effort data

King Mackerel - Stock ID; Life history information; larval distribution and recruitment; incorporation of ecosystem information; environmental parameters including effects of climate change; recreational catch and effort data

HMS-Sharks
Bull Shark, Sandbar Shark - Stock ID, discard mortality Finetooth Shark - Stock ID, life history update

C. Program Authority

Authority for the Marine Fisheries Initiative Program is provided by 16 U.S.C 753a and 16 U.S.C. 742d.

II. Award Information

A. Funding Availability

Actual funding available for this program is contingent upon the availability of FY 2023 Congressional appropriations. Publication of this notice does not obligate NOAA to award any specific project or to obligate any available funds. The number of awards made as a result of this solicitation will depend on the number of eligible applications received, the amount of funds requested for each project, the merit and ranking of the proposals, and the amount of funds made available to the MARFIN program.

B. Project/Award Period

The period of award may be from one to three years. The requested award start date must begin on the first day of the month and end on the last day of the month. The earliest start date for projects will be September 1, 2023, dependent upon availability of Federal funding as provided by Congress, acceptable completion of all NOAA/applicant negotiations including National Environmental Policy Act analysis and permit requirements, and the provision of other supporting documentation as requested. Applicants selected to receive funding may be asked to modify the project start date.

C. Type of Funding Instrument

The funding instrument (grant or cooperative agreement) will be determined by the NOAA Grants Office. A cooperative agreement will be used if the proposed project involves substantial Federal scientific or programmatic involvement. Substantial involvement means that, after award, NOAA scientific or program staff will assist, guide, coordinate, or participate in project activities in a partnership role; it is not to assume direction, prime responsibility, or a dominant role in the activities. The dominant role and prime responsibility resides with the awardee for the project as a whole, although specific tasks and activities may be shared among the awardees and NOAA. The exact amount of funds, the scope of work, and the terms and conditions of a successful award will be determined in pre-award negotiations between the applicant's Authorized Representative and NOAA Fisheries representatives.

III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants may be institutions of higher education, nonprofit organizations, individuals, and state, local, and Indian tribal governments. Federal agencies or institutions are not eligible. For-profit organizations are ineligible. Foreign governments, organizations under the jurisdiction of foreign governments, and international organizations are excluded for purposes of this solicitation since the objective of the MARFIN program is to optimize research and development benefits from U.S. marine fishery resources.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement

Cost sharing is not required for the MARFIN program.

C. Other Criteria that Affect Eligibility

Not Applicable

IV. Application and Submission Information

A. Address to Request Application Package

The standard application package is available at https://www.Grants.gov. If an applicant has problems with Grants.gov, contact the Grants.gov Customer Support at 1-800-518-4726 or support@Grants.gov. If you do not have internet access, or if Grants.gov is inaccessible, you can obtain an application package by contacting Kelly Donnelly, Federal Program Officer, NOAA/NMFS/SERO, 263 13th Avenue S., St. Petersburg, FL 33701, Phone: (727) 551-5731, e-mail: kelly.donnelly@noaa.gov.

B. Content and Form of Application

B. Content and Form of Application

1. Format Requirements:

A complete standard NOAA grant application package is required in accordance with the guidelines in this document. Applications that are not complete on the closing date of this announcement will not be reviewed. Your application must contain all required documents and forms; if these forms are not signed via the www.Grants.gov application process, they MUST be signed in ink. Paper applications without inked signatures on their forms will be considered incomplete and will not be reviewed. The Authorized Representative MUST sign and date these forms in the space reserved for electronic signature. Signatures (electronic or ink) must match the name printed in the "Authorized Representative" section of the SF-424 Block 21. Another Authorized Representative may not sign on behalf of the individual noted in Block 21. An incomplete application or one that does not follow the format requirements will not be reviewed and will be withdrawn from the competition.

All application materials should be submitted in Adobe PDF or a common word processing format, and when printed out should meet all format requirements. All pages must be no less than single-spaced printed or typed, in at least 12-point font, and printable on 8.5-inch x 11-inch paper, with 1-inch margins. If these requirements are not followed, the proposal will be withdrawn without consideration.

2. Content Requirements:

Each application must include (listed below are minimum requirements that must be included in the proposal submission. If any of these are not included the proposal will not be considered and will be withdrawn from the competition):

A. Federal Application forms, which are available on Grants.gov, including:

SF-424 - Application for Federal Assistance - The Application for Federal Assistance (SF-424) must be signed by the authorized representative identified in Grants Online. Electronic signatures submitted through Grants.gov satisfy this requirement. If the person submitting the application is not the AOR listed in Block 21 of the SF-424, then hardcopies of ink signatures of the AOR must be included.
SF-424A - Budget Information, Non-Construction Programs SF-424B - Assurances, Non-Construction Programs

CD-511 - Certifications Regarding Lobbying (CD-511)
SF-LLL - Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (if applicable)

B. Project Synopsis (2-page maximum):

It is critical that the project synopsis accurately describes the project being proposed and conveys all essential elements of the activities. It is imperative that potential applicants tie their proposals to one of the program priorities listed in Section I.B of the Notice of Funding Opportunity.

The synopsis must include:

- Applicant Information: Applicant organization and name, title, and contact information of the Principal Investigator.
- Project Information: Project title, location, requested project period (start and end dates), Federal funding requested, and identification of the MARFIN priority that most closely reflects the objectives of your proposal. If more than one priority is addressed by the proposal, one priority must be identified as the primary. The primary priority will determine the type of subject matter expert used to evaluate your proposal.
- Partners: partners and their organizations. Identification and contact information of co-Principal Investigators.
- Abstract: A clear description of proposed activities, including the species/resources to be addressed. It is critical the abstract accurately describes the project being proposed and conveys all essential elements of the project for public dissemination.

C. Project Narrative (15-page maximum)

The project narrative comprises the research plan for the project. The narrative must be detailed enough for reviewers to make a clear connection between the proposed activities and the proposed benefits. The major part of the narrative should be devoted to a description and justification for the project, including details of the methods to be used. It should include a timeline for major activities, and should indicate who will be responsible for which activities. There should be no ambiguity about who will perform particular parts of the project, and the time at which these activities take place. The Project Narrative may not exceed 15 pages. Any tables and visual materials, including charts, graphs, maps, photographs and other pictorial presentations that you submit to document the project and the problem/opportunity you seek to address are included in the 15-page limit. The Project Synopsis, required federal forms, the Budget Narrative and Supporting Documentation (described in this NOFO) do not count towards the 15-page Project Narrative limit.

The project narrative should closely follow the evaluation criteria outlined in this solicitation (See Section V.A. Evaluation Criteria) for the application to receive a consistent review against competing applications. The narrative should demonstrate your knowledge of, and convey the need for, the project and show how your proposal builds upon any past and current work in the subject area, as well as relevant work in related fields. The narrative should highlight any relationship to fishery management plans, or other fishery-related strategic planning or management documents, and if the project will yield environmentally compatible socioeconomic benefits.

The Project Narrative should include:

1. Project goals and objectives – Identify the one specific MARFIN priority (described in Section I. B. Program Priorities) to which the proposed project responds. The primary priority will determine the subject matter expert used to evaluate your proposal. Identify the problem/opportunity you intend to address and describe its significance to the fisheries resource and fishing community. Objectives should be simple and understandable; as specific and quantitative as possible; clear as to the "what and when," but should avoid the "how and why"; and attainable within the time, money and human resources available. Projects should be accomplishment oriented and identify specific performance measurements.

2. Project impacts – Describe the anticipated impacts of the project on the fisheries resource and the fishing community in terms of increased product yield, or other measurable benefits. Identify the benefits that will be achieved as a result of this effort, both to the recipient, the industry and the general public as a whole. Describe how you/your organization (or others) will monitor progress and measure the project's impacts.

3. Evaluation of Project – Specify the criteria and procedures that you will use to monitor and evaluate the relative success or failure of a project in achieving its objectives.

4. Need for governmental financial assistance – Explain why you need NOAA financial assistance for the proposed work, and why other funding sources, if applicable, cannot fund all of the proposed work. List all other sources of funding you have or are seeking for the project.

5. Federal, state, and local government activities and permits – It is your responsibility to obtain all necessary Federal, state, and local government permits and approvals where necessary for the proposed work to be conducted. You must note whether or not permits are

required. If no permits are required, this section must indicate “no permits are required.” If permits are required, provide a list of all applicable permits that will be required to perform the proposed work and an indication of the status of any permits needed (e.g., not yet applied, permit application submitted/pending/ permit granted, etc.) or a statement indicating that no permits are necessary.

6. Statement of Work

a. What is the project design? What specific work, activities, procedures, statistical design, or analytical methods will you undertake? Describe methodologies or technical plans for activities to be conducted under the project. You should provide sufficiently detailed information on the proposed activities and potential environmental effects so that NOAA can analyze the impacts of the project as required under the National Environmental Policy Act (see Section VI. B.). The NEPA questionnaire is a federal form and does not count towards application page limitations.
b. Who will be responsible for carrying out the various activities? Provide information about the specific responsibilities of other personnel funded through the proposal, including the technical and administrative points of contact as appropriate.
c. What are the project milestones? Display timelines for major tasks, target milestones for important immediate and final products, and key project outcomes. This includes identifying all consultation and permitting requirements and their status (e.g., not applied for, pending, secured). Describe the timeline in increments (e.g., month 1, month 2) rather than by specific dates. Identify the individual(s) responsible for the various specific activities.

7. Project Management – Describe how the project will be organized and managed. Describe how the necessary experience, facilities, and administrative resources are in place to successfully meet the responsibilities associated with managing a federal financial assistance award. Proposals should demonstrate the applicant organization’s knowledge and experience in delivering the project requested in this application.

8. Participation by persons or groups other than the applicant - Describe how any entities other than the applicant will participate in the project, and the nature (sub-award, subcontract, volunteer, etc.) of their participation.

9. Data Management/Sharing Plan

Note: The Data Management/Sharing Plan must be included in either the Project Narrative or Supporting Documentation and will count again the page limits of the section where it is submitted.

a. Environmental data and information collected or created under NOAA grant or cooperative agreements must be made discoverable by and accessible to the general public, in a timely fashion (typically within two year), free of charge or at no more than the cost of reproduction, unless an exemption is granted by the NOAA Program. Data should be available in at least one machine-readable format, preferably a widely used or open-standard format, and should also be accompanied by machine-readable documentation (metadata) preferably based on widely used or international standards.

b. Proposals submitted in response to this Announcement must include a Data Management/Sharing Plan of up to two pages describing how these requirements will be satisfied. The Data Management/Sharing Plan should be aligned with the Data Management Guidance provided by NOAA in the Announcement. The contents of the Data Sharing Plan), and past performance regarding such plans, will be considered as part of proposal review. A typical plan should include descriptions of the types of environmental data and information expected to be created during the course of the project; the tentative date by which data will be shared; the standards to be used for data/metadata format and content; methods for providing data access; approximate total volume of data to be collected; and prior experience in making such data accessible. The costs of data preparation, accessibility, or archiving may be included in the proposal budget unless otherwise stated in the Guidance.

Accepted submission of data to the NOAA National Centers for Environmental Information (NCEI) is one way to satisfy data sharing requirements; however, NCEI is not obligated to accept all submission and may charge a fee, particularly for large or unusual datasets.

c. NOAA may, at its own discretion, make publicly visible the Data Management/Sharing Plan from funded proposals, or use information from the Data Sharing Plan to produce a formal metadata record and include the metadata in a Catalog to indicate the pending availability of new data.

d. Proposal submitters are hereby advised that the final pre-publication manuscripts of scholarly articles produced entirely or primarily with NOAA funding will be required to be submitted to NOAA Institutional Repository after acceptance, and no later than upon publication. Such manuscripts shall be made publicly available by NOAA one year after publication by the journal.

D. Budget Narrative (10-page maximum)

Each application must include clear and concise budget information, both on the required

federal forms and as described here. To evaluate the appropriateness of proposed costs, a budget narrative must explain and justify all costs by object class category, as listed on the SF-424A, Section B., Cost Categories. Provide detailed narrative descriptions of all costs, and explain each calculation for all budget categories. Please include a budget table to further clarify the cost breakdown. All proposed costs must be reasonable, allowable, allocable, and necessary to the supported activity. Guidance may be found at https://www.noaa.gov/organization/acquisition-grants/frequently-asked-questions.

All funds must be estimated to the nearest dollar, do not submit budgets containing cents. For multi-year award applications, indicate and describe separate funding amounts for each year in the detailed justification, budget table, and in Section B of the SF-424A Budget Information form. You must submit a copy of a current negotiated indirect cost rate agreement with a federal agency, if such an agreement exists.

The Budget Narrative must include the following, as applicable:

a. Personnel costs, including salary and wages, should be broken out by named Principal Investigator (PI)and number of months requested per year, per PI, as a percentage of their normal salary rate. Support for each PI should be commensurate with their stated involvement. Any unnamed personnel (graduate students, post-doctoral researchers, technicians) should be identified by their job title, monthly or hourly rate, and amount of effort per year. Cost for graduate students must comply with 2 CFR §200.466 Scholarships and student aid costs, and must be reasonable compensation for the work performed. Fringe benefits should be listed separately from salary and wages. Funds for salaries and fringe benefits may be requested only for those personnel who are directly involved in implementing the proposed project and whose salaries and fringe benefits are directly related to specific products or outcomes of the proposed project.

b. Travel costs should be broken out by number of people traveling, destination, purpose of travel, and projected costs per person. Travel costs include transport costs, lodging, per diem for all travelers, which are to be described in the budget narrative. If details for a particular trip are unknown, explain how the estimate was determined. To qualify for support, attendance at meetings or conferences must enhance the investigator’s capability to perform the research or disseminate its results. Domestic travel is to be justified separately from foreign travel, since the latter may require additional clearances. You must adhere to the provisions of the "Fly America Act."

c. Equipment is non-expendable, tangible personal property with a unit cost of $5,000 or more, and a useful life of more than one year. Items that do not meet the equipment

definition must be included under supplies. List each piece of equipment separately and reference the type/model to be purchased and its contribution to the achievement of the project goals. General use equipment must be used 100% for the proposed project if charged directly to the award; if the equipment will be used for multiple projects, only a portion of the expense that is commensurate with the actual use of the equipment during the project may be requested.

d. Supplies should be itemized to the level of detail known or may be based on established historical costs. Whenever possible, you should include the quantity/number of units and cost per unit to justify expenses listed in the supplies category.

e. Each contract should be itemized and explained in the budget narrative and table. Contract budgets should follow standard budget categories that appear in the SF-424A. For each contract include a budget and explanation of the products or services to be obtained. You must indicate the basis for each contract cost estimate and specify the products or services to be obtained through all contracts.

f. Other costs should be listed by type of material or nature of expense (e.g., sub-award) and should be broken down by quantity/number of units and cost per unit, if applicable.

g. The budget may include an amount for indirect costs if the applicant has an approved indirect cost rate agreement with the Federal government. Indirect costs are costs for basic operational functions that are incurred for a common purpose, and cannot be identified specially with a particular project. A copy of the current, approved negotiated indirect cost rate agreement must be included with the application, if applicable.

If an applicant has not previously established an indirect cost rate with a Federal agency, they may choose to negotiate a rate with the Department of Commerce or use the de minimis indirect cost rate of 10% of MTDC (as allowable under 2 C.F.R. §200.414). The negotiation and approval of a rate is subject to the procedures required by NOAA and the Department of Commerce Standard Terms and Conditions Section B.06. The NOAA contact for indirect or facilities and administrative costs is:

Lamar Revis, Grants Officer
NOAA Grants Management Division
1325 East West Highway 9th Floor
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910 lamar.revis@noaa.gov

E. Supporting Documentation (15-page maximum)

In addition to the required 2-page résumé or curriculum vitae of the PI and any key partners, this section should include letters of collaboration from the relevant partner involved in the project, references, agreements, contracts and permits (budget contracts and agreement are included in the budget narrative), and /or other information relevant to the proposal not included in the Project Narrative.

All supporting documentation must be combined and uploaded as a single document not exceeding 15 pages. Supporting documents (described above) will not be accepted as separate stand-alone attachments

Letters of support or collaboration are allowable only from individuals or entities with direct involvement in the project and should outline the specifics of the collaborative effort. Letters of support from those that do not have direct involvement in the project will not be accepted during the review process.

It is recommended, but not required, that each application should also include the following. If the application results in an award, these will be required; the NEPA questionnaire does not count against the page maximum.

- NOAA NEPA Questionnaire (https://www.nepa.noaa.gov/docs/NOAA-Grants-Questionnaire-final.pdf). It is recommended that you pay attention to responding to Questions 1-19 and 20-37, the latter of which are specific to NMFS project submissions. Note: It is strongly recommended that applicants complete this questionnaire when initially submitting a full proposal application.

C. Unique Entity Identifier and System for Award Management (SAM)

To enable the use of a universal identifier and to enhance the quality of information available to the public as required by the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act, 31 U.S.C. 6101 note, to the extent applicable, any proposal awarded in response to this announcement will be required to use the System for Award Management (SAM), which may be accessed online at https://www.sam.gov/SAM/.

Each applicant (unless the applicant is an individual that is excepted from those requirements under 2 CFR 25.110(b) or (c), or has an exception approved by the Federal awarding agency under 2 CFR 25.110(d)) is required to: (i) be registered in SAM before submitting its application; (ii) provide a valid unique entity identifier in its application; and (iii) continue to maintain an active SAM registration with current information at all times during which it has an active Federal award, application or plan under consideration by a Federal awarding

agency. The Federal awarding agency may not make a Federal award to an applicant until the applicant has complied with all applicable unique entity identifier and SAM requirements and, if an applicant has not fully complied with the requirements by the time the Federal awarding agency is ready to make a Federal award, the Federal awarding agency may determine that the applicant is not qualified to receive a Federal award and use that determination as a basis for making a Federal award to another applicant. Applicants should allow a minimum of five (5) days to complete the SAM registration; registration is required only once, but must be renewed periodically.

Note: 2 CFR 25.110(b): Exceptions for individuals. None of the requirements in this part apply to an individual who applies for or receives Federal financial assistance as a natural person (i.e., unrelated to any business or nonprofit organization he or she may own or operate in his or her name).

D. Submission Dates and Times

Applications must be received by https://www.Grants.gov, postmarked, or provided to a delivery service by 11:59 PM, Eastern Standard Time (EDST) on November 29, 2022. Use of Grants.gov is preferred. If Grants.gov cannot be used, use of U.S. mail or another delivery service must be documented with a receipt; private metered postmarks are not acceptable. Applications received more than five (5) business days following the closing date will not be accepted. No facsimile or electronic mail applications will be accepted.

Please note: Validation or rejection of your application by Grants.gov may take up to two (2) business days after submission. Please consider this process in developing your submission timeline. Applications not adhering to postmark or submission deadlines will be rejected and returned to the sender without further consideration.

E. Intergovernmental Review

Applications submitted by state and local governments are subject to the provisions of Executive Order (E.O.) 12372, Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs. Any applicant submitting an application for funding is required to complete item 19 on SF-424 regarding clearance by the State Single Point of Contact (SPOC) established as a result of EO 12372.

F. Funding Restrictions

Construction is not an allowable activity under this program. Therefore, applications will not be accepted for construction projects.

The MARFIN Program will not consider expenses associated with fees, fund-raising activities, travel for activities not directly related to project implementation, travel or salaries for Federal employees, or profit as allowable costs in the proposed budget. NOAA funds may not be used to support ongoing efforts to comply with legal requirements, including permit conditions, mitigation and settlement agreements.

The total costs of a project consist of all allowable costs incurred in accomplishing project activities during the project period. Project costs can only include support for activities conducted between the effective start date and end date of the award (including any approved no-cost extensions), and cannot include activities undertaken either before or after the agreed upon dates. Applicants will not be reimbursed for time expended or costs incurred in developing a project or in preparing an application, or in any discussions or negotiations with the agency prior to the award.

Funding beyond the first year will be dependent upon satisfactory performance and the continued availability of funds. The total amounts awarded shall not exceed $175,000 for a one-year project, $350,000 for a two-year project, and $525,000 for a three-year project. Each funding year cannot exceed $175,000. Applications should be submitted with those limits in mind.

G. Other Submission Requirements

Applications must be submitted in Grants.gov. If an applicant does not have Internet access or if Grants.gov is inaccessible, paper applications will be accepted. Paper applications must be submitted with completed, signed, inked signatures, with original forms in hard copy and an electronic copy of the entire application on a thumb drive, including scanned signed forms. The Authorized Representative MUST sign and date forms SF-424, SF-424B, and CD-511. Signatures (electronic or ink) must match the name printed in the "Authorized Representative" section of the SF-424 Block 21. Paper applications must be postmarked or provided to a delivery service and documented with a receipt (private metered postmarks are not acceptable) and sent to Kelly Donnelly, Federal Grants Program Manager, NOAA/NMFS/SERO, 263 13th Avenue S., St. Petersburg, FL 33701, Phone: (727) 551-5731, e-mail: kelly.donnelly@noaa.gov.

V. Application Review Information

A. Evaluation Criteria

Technical reviewers will assign scores to applications ranging from 0-100 points based

on the following five evaluation criteria. The maximum score for each criterion is indicated in parentheses. Each criterion also includes the factors the reviewers will consider to determine how well an application meets the criterion. We encourage applicants to make explicit connections to the evaluation criterion and factors in their applications. Written comments are required to justify provided scores in each section of the review. Applications that best address these criteria will be most competitive. Score ranges are identified for each evaluation criteria below. Top range scores indicate the application fully addressed the criterion, a score of 0 indicates the criterion was not addressed at all. Scales are provided below to serve as general guides.

1. Technical/scientific merit (0-40 points): This criterion assesses whether the approach is technically sound and/or innovative, if the methods are appropriate, and whether there are clear project goals and objectives. Proposals should provide a clear definition of the approach to be used, including descriptions of field work, theoretical studies, and laboratory analysis to support the proposed research. Are the conceptual framework, design, methods, and analyses adequately developed, well integrated, and appropriate to the aims of the project? Are the objectives in the proposal clearly defined and focused, realistic and attainable within the proposed project period? Is there sufficient description of the project's environmental impact, such as detailed information on the activities to be conducted, locations, sites, species and habitat to be affected, and any environmental concerns that may exist? Does the applicant acknowledge potential problem areas and consider ways to resolve the issues or implement alternative tactics? Does the project develop new methodologies or technologies? Is sufficient detail provided in the proposal about the methods proposed for monitoring and evaluating the success of the project, and are they appropriate?

Marginally Adequately Frequently Highly Most Highly
0----------10--------15----------25--------30--------35--------40

2. Importance/relevance and applicability of proposed projects to the program goals (0-35 points): This criterion ascertains whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and/or relevance to NOAA, federal, regional, state, or local activities. Does the proposal describe its relevance to a MARFIN Program Priority, and how information gathered will contribute to NOAA's mission to enhance the understanding of the fishery resource and contribute to the body of information on which management decisions are made? Does this study address an important problem, providing a clear definition of the problem, issue or research need? Is this the best method to obtain the needed data?

Marginally Adequately Frequently Highly Most Highly
0----------10--------15----------25--------30--------35

3. Overall qualifications of applicants (0-10 points): This criterion ascertains whether the applicant possesses the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project. Does the applicant have the expertise to conduct the scope and scale of the proposed work, as indicated by the qualifications and past experience of the project leaders and partners, if necessary to complete the work, that show adequate experience in successfully completing similar projects? Does the applicant describe the facilities, equipment and/or administrative resources available to support and successfully manage the work and award responsibilities? If consultants and contractors are conducting the critical activities under the award, is the primary applicant's involvement necessary?

Marginally Frequently Most Highly
0----------5----------10

4. Project costs (0-10 points): This criterion evaluates the budget to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time frame. Is the proposed budget sufficiently detailed, with appropriate breakdown and justification of costs by object class and funding year? Is the proposed budget cost-effective and realistic based on the applicant's stated objectives, and time frame?

Marginally Frequently Most Highly
0----------5----------10

5. Data Management Plan Technical Soundness (0-5 points): This criterion assesses whether the Data Management Plan, if required, ensures that the data collected and/or created will be made available to general users in a timely manner free of charge, or at minimal cost.

Marginally Adequately Frequently Highly Most Highly
0----------1----------2----------3----------4----------5

B. Review and Selection Process

Initial Screening – An initial administrative review will be conducted on each application to determine compliance with application requirements and completeness of application materials. Applications determined to be ineligible, incomplete, or non-responsive will not be considered and will be withdrawn.

When applications are received they will be screened to ensure they were received by the

deadline date (see Section IV. D. Submission Dates and Times); the applicant is eligible to apply; the proposed project addresses one of the program priorities; and includes a project synopsis with an abstract and summary of potential benefits, a project description, a budget, and supporting documentation as outlined in Section IV.B, Content and Form of Application. We do not have to screen applications before the submission deadline to identify deficiencies that would cause your application to be rejected so that you would have an opportunity to correct them. However, should we do so and provide you information about deficiencies, or should you independently decide it is desirable to do so, you may correct any deficiencies in your application before the deadline. After the deadline, the application must remain as submitted; no changes can be made to it. If your application does not conform to the requirements listed above, and the deadline for submission has passed, the application will not be considered and will be withdrawn.

Technical Review – Applications determined to be responsive to this solicitation will be evaluated for their technical merit by three or more appropriate Federal, private or public sector experts with subject matter experience. Their evaluations will be based solely on the information included in the application, based on the criteria described in Section V.A. Evaluation Criteria. Each reviewer will independently evaluate each project and provide an individual score and comments to corroborate that score. No consensus advice will be given. Reviewers will be required to certify they do not have a conflict of interest concerning the application(s) they review. NOAA will protect technical reviewer identity to the maximum extent permitted by law. After the technical review, the individual scores will be averaged to determine the final technical score for each application. Applications will be ranked in descending order by their final technical scores.

The number of applications sent on to the MARFIN Panel review will be determined by the following set of criteria:

If we receive between 1 and 25 eligible applications, then the top 10 applications (including those tied for tenth) will be forwarded to the MARFIN Panel for further review. If we receive 26-50 eligible applications, then the top 15 applications (including those tied for fifteenth) will be sent to the Panel for review. If we receive over 51 eligible applications, then the top 20 applications (including those tied for twentieth) will be sent to the Panel for review. Those applications that are not in the top category (based on the number of eligible applications received) will be eliminated from further review.

MARFIN Panel Review – Those applications ranking high enough based on the scenarios listed above will be presented to the MARFIN Panel, a group of non-NOAA fishery experts. Each member of the panel individually considers the following Panel Evaluation Criteria: 1)

Are the needs of the Agency, as described under the Program Priorities, addressed in each proposal; 2) Does the project benefit the fishing industry; and 3) Does the project address issues that are important to regional fisheries management (referred to collectively as the Panel Evaluation Criteria). Needs of the agency follow the information identified in the Magnuson-Stevens Act, Title III, Sections 301 and 404. NOAA Fisheries will advise members of the MARFIN panel of any unpredicted fishery events, or other issues that arise after the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) is published, which affect the needs of the Agency and the priorities. Panel members will have the option of considering the new information in their individual scoring.

Each member of the panel will independently assign a numerical rating on Grants Online between 1 and 5 for each application according to the following scale, and provide comments to support their score (fractions of whole numbers will not be accepted):

1 - Application did not address the Panel Evaluation Criteria as outlined in the NOFO.

2 - Application marginally addressed the Panel Evaluation Criteria as outlined in the NOFO.

3 - Application adequately addressed the Panel Evaluation Criteria as outlined in the NOFO.

4 - Application frequently addressed the Panel Evaluation Criteria as outlined in the NOFO.

5 - Application fully addressed the Panel Evaluation Criteria as outlined the NOFO.

The panel will give no consensus advice. The Program Manager ranks the proposals in the order of average panel score. In the event that there are two or more projects tied in the panel's ranking, all tied projects will be given equal consideration by the Selecting Official based on the Selection Factors, regardless of the tied projects' peer review score.

C. Selection Factors

The MARFIN Panel ratings will be provided in rank order to the Selecting Official for final funding recommendations. The Selecting Official shall award in the rank order, unless the proposal is justified to be selected out of rank order based on the following factors:

1. Availability of funding
2. Balance/distribution of funds:
a. by geographic area
b. by type of institutions

c. by type of partners
d. by research priority
e. by project types
3. Duplication of other projects funded or considered for funding by NOAA/federal agencies
4. Program priorities and policy factors
5. Applicant's prior award performance
6. Partnerships with/participation of targeted groups
7. Adequacy of information necessary for NOAA staff to make a NEPA determination and draft necessary documentation before recommendations for funding are made to the Grant Officer.

In the case of ties among applications that received a panel review, the Selecting Official will justify the selection based on the selection factors. The Selecting Official may negotiate the funding level of the proposal. The Selecting Official makes final recommendations for award to the Grants Officer who is authorized to obligate funds.

After applications are proposed for funding by the selecting official, the Grants office performs administration reviews. These may include financial stability of an applicant, quality of the applicant's management systems, history of performance, and the applicant's ability to effectively implement statutory, regulatory, or other requirements imposed on non-Federal entities. After administrative review, special conditions appropriate to the degree of risk determined to exist may be applied to the award.

D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

Successful applications are usually recommended for funding within 240 days from the application due date specified in this notice. The earliest start date of awards will be September 1, 2023, dependent upon availability of Federal funding, acceptable completion of all NOAA/applicant negotiations including NEPA analysis and permit requirements, and all provision of other supporting documentation as requested.

The exact amount of funds awarded, the final scope of activities, and the project duration, are determined in pre-award negotiations between the applicant, the NOAA Grants Office, and the NOAA Fisheries Program Office. Recipients must not initiate projects until an approved award is received from the NOAA Grants Office.

VI. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notices

Successful applicants will receive notification that the application has been approved for funding by the NOAA Grants Management Division with the issuance of an award signed by a NOAA Grants Officer. This is the authorizing document that allows the project to begin. The award will be issued electronically to the authorizing official of the project.

Award documents provided by the Grants Officer may contain specific award conditions limiting the use of funds for activities that have outstanding environmental compliance requirements. These specific award conditions may also include other compliance requirements for the award, as applicable, and will be applied on a case-by-case basis. Applicants are strongly encouraged to review award documents carefully before accepting a Federal award so they are fully aware of the relevant Standard Terms and Conditions as well as any Specific Award Conditions that have been placed on the award.

Unsuccessful applicants will be notified by the NOAA Fisheries program office that their proposals were not selected for recommendation. Panel review comments will not be provided to unsuccessful applicants, unless requested by the applicant.

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements - The Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements contained in the Federal Register notice of December 30, 2014 (79 FR 78390) are applicable to this solicitation and may be accessed online at https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2014-12-30/pdf/2014-30297.pdf.

Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements – Through 2 C.F.R. § 1327.101, the Department of Commerce adopted Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal awards at 2 C.F.R. Part 200, which apply to awards in this program. Refer to https://go.usa.gov/SBYh and https://go.usa.gov/SBg4.

Administrative Requirements – Successful applicants who accept a NOAA award under this solicitation will be bound by Department of Commerce and NOAA Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions. This document will be provided in the award package in NOAA's Grants Online system, on NOAA's AGO Web site, http://www.ago.noaa.gov/grants/external_links.html and http://go.usa.gov/hKbj. In addition, award documents provided by the NOAA grants office through the Grants Online award package may contain program-specific special award conditions.

Limitation of Liability – Limitation of Liability - Funding for programs listed in this notice

is contingent upon the availability of FY 2023 appropriations. Applicants are hereby given notice that funds may not have been appropriated yet for the MARFIN program described in this notice and are advised that the competition described herein may be subject to cancellation due to unavailability of funding or revision of agency priorities. In no event will NOAA or the Department of Commerce be responsible for proposal preparation costs. Publication of this announcement does not oblige NOAA to award any specific project or to obligate any available funds. You should not initiate your project in expectation of Federal funding until you receive an award document signed by an authorized NOAA official. Any costs incurred prior to the start date of the award will not paid. Recipients and sub-recipients are subject to all Federal laws and agency policies, regulations, and procedures applicable to Federal financial assistance awards.

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Requirements – NOAA must analyze the potential environmental impacts, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), for applicant projects or proposals which are seeking NOAA federal funding opportunities. Detailed information on NOAA compliance with NEPA can be found at the following NOAA NEPA Web site: http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/, including our NOAA Administrative Order 216-6 for NEPA, and the Council on Environmental Quality implementation regulations, http://energy.gov/sites/prod/files/NEPA-40CFR1500_1508.pdf. Consequently, as part of an applicant's package, and under their description of their program activities, applicants are required to provide detailed information on the activities to be conducted, locations, sites, species and habitat to be affected, possible construction activities, and any environmental concerns that may exist (e.g., the use and disposal of hazardous or toxic chemicals, introduction of non-indigenous species, impacts to endangered and threatened species, aquaculture projects, and impacts to coral reef systems).

In addition to providing specific information that will serve as the basis for any required impact analyses, applicants may also be requested to assist NOAA in drafting an environmental assessment, if NOAA determines an assessment is required. Applicants will also be required to cooperate with NOAA in identifying feasible measures to reduce or avoid any identified adverse environmental impacts of their proposal. Failure to do so shall be grounds for not selecting an application. In some cases, if additional information is required after an application is selected, funds can be withheld by the Grants Officer under a special award condition requiring the recipient to submit additional environmental compliance information sufficient to enable NOAA to make as assessment of any impacts that a project may have on the environment.

It is the applicant’s responsibility to obtain all necessary Federal, state, and local government permits and approval for the proposed work to be conducted. Applicants are expected to

design their proposed activities to minimize the potential for adverse impacts to the environment. If applicable, documentation of requests for, or approval of required environmental permits should be included in the application package. Applications will be reviewed to ensure they contain sufficient information to allow NOAA staff to conduct a NEPA analysis so that appropriate NEPA documentation, required as part of the application package, can be submitted to the NOAA Grants Management Division along with the recommendation for funding for selected applications.

Applicants whose proposed projects may have an environmental impact must furnish information requested to assist proposal reviewers in assessing the potential consequences of supporting the project.

Review of Risk – After applications are proposed for funding by the Selecting Official, the Grants Office will perform administrative reviews, including an assessment of risk posed by the applicant under 2 C.F.R. 200.205. These may include assessments of the financial stability of an applicant and the quality of the applicant's management systems, history of performance, and the applicant's ability to effectively implement statutory, regulatory, or other requirements imposed on non-Federal entities. Special conditions that address any risks determined to exist may be applied. Applicants may submit comments to the Federal Awardee Performance and Integrity Information System (FAPIIS) about any information included in the system about their organization for consideration by the awarding agency.

Minority Serving Institutions – The Department of Commerce/National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (DOC/NOAA) is strongly committed to increasing the participation of Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs), i.e., Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Hispanic-serving institutions, Tribal colleges and universities, Alaskan Native and Native Hawaiian institutions, and institutions that work in underserved communities.

Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) – In the event that an application contains information or data that you do not want disclosed prior to award for purposes other than the evaluation of the application, mark each page containing such information or data with the words "Privileged, Confidential, Commercial, or Financial Information - Limited Use" at the top of the page to assist NOAA in making disclosure determinations. DOC regulations implementing the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), 5 U.S.C 552, are found at 15 C.F.R. Part 4, which sets forth rules for DOC to make requested materials, information, and records publicly available under FOIA. The contents of funded applications may be subject to requests for release under the FOIA. Based on the information provided by the applicant, the confidentiality of the content of funded applications will be maintained to the maximum extent permitted by law.

Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA) – This collection of information contains requirements subject to the Paperwork Reduction Act. The use of Standard Forms 424, 424A, 424B, SFLLL, and CD-346 have been approved by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) under control numbers 0348-0040, 0348-0044, 0348-0043, 0348-0046 and 0605-0001. Notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person is required to respond to, nor shall any person be subject to a penalty for failure to comply with, a collection of information subject to the requirements of the PRA unless that collection of information displays a currently valid OMB control number.

Administrative Procedure Act/Regulatory Flexibility Act – Prior notice and an opportunity for public comment are not required by the Administrative Procedure Act or any other law for rules concerning public property, loans, grants, benefits, and contracts (5 U.S.C. 553(a)(2)). Because notice and opportunity for comments are not required pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 553 or any other law, the analytical requirements of the Regulatory Flexibility Act (5 U.S.C. 601 et seq.) are inapplicable. Therefore, a regulatory flexibility analysis has not been prepared, and none will be prepared. It has been determined that this notice does not contain policies with Federalism implications as that term is defined in Executive Order 13132

Pursuant to Title 46 U.S.C. Chapter 45, all commercial fishing vessels chartered for NMFS sponsored research are subject to inspection in accordance with 46 C.F.R. Parts 24, 25, 26, and 28 (as applicable). NMFS financial assistance recipients are responsible for observing all laws and regulations applicable to their funded projects. Award recipients are encouraged to verify inclusion under valid agreements with the United States Coast Guard and seek any required permits or Letters of Designation to safely conduct research aboard a commercial fishing vessel. Obtaining the proper authorizations may prevent work interruptions resulting from enforcement inquiries.

C. Reporting

Award recipients will be required to submit performance and financial reports directly into Grants Online. Recipients must complete Performance Progress Reports using the formatted template for Research Performance Progress Reports provided in Grants Online. All reports, other than a comprehensive final performance report, will be submitted on a semi-annual schedule and must be submitted no later than 30 days following the end of each 6-month period from the start date of the award. In addition to the financial and performance reports, grant recipients will be required to submit the comprehensive final performance report 120 days after the project end date.

The Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act, 31 U.S.C. 6101 note, includes a

requirement for awardees of applicable Federal grants to report information about first-tier subawards and executive compensation under Federal assistance awards. All awardees of applicable grants and cooperative agreements are required to report to the Federal Subaward Reporting System (FSRS) available at https://www.fsrs.gov on all subawards over $25,000. Refer to 2 CFR Part 170.

VII. Agency Contacts

For questions regarding the application process, you may contact: Kelly Donnelly, Grants Management Branch, (727) 551-5731, or kelly.donnelly@noaa.gov.

VIII. Other Information

None.