John H. Prescott Marine Mammal Rescue Assistance Grant Program (Prescott Grant Program)

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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: John H. Prescott Marine Mammal Rescue Assistance Grant Program (Prescott Grant Program)

Announcement Type: Initial

Funding Opportunity Number: NOAA-NMFS-PRPO-2022-2006908

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 11.439, Marine Mammal Data Program

Dates: Applications must be postmarked, provided to a delivery service, or received by Grants.gov by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on October 13th, 2021. U.S. Postal mail and commercial delivery must be documented with a receipt. Submission through Grants.gov is HIGHLY ENCOURAGED due to current maximum teleworking conditions. PLEASE NOTE: When developing your submission timeline, keep in mind that (1) a free annual registration process in the electronic System for Award Management (SAM) may take two weeks and up to five weeks if requesting an EIN (see Section IV.C. of this FFO), and (2) if you submit an application via Grants.gov you will receive a series of email notifications for up to two business days before learning whether a Federal agency’s electronic system has received your application via a validation or rejection message. **NOAA STRONGLY RECOMMENDS that applicants do not wait until the application deadline to begin the application process through Grants.gov. This announcement should be read in its entirety, as some information has changed from the previous year.**

Funding Opportunity Description: NOAA NMFS' Marine Mammal Health and Stranding Response Program (MMHSRP) is directed under the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) to facilitate collecting and disseminating reference data on stranded marine mammals and health trends of marine mammal populations in the wild. The John H. Prescott Marine Mammal Rescue Assistance Grant Program is administered by NOAA to provide Federal assistance to eligible members of the National Marine Mammal Stranding Network and collaborators to (1) support basic needs of organizations for the response, treatment, and data collection from living and dead stranded marine mammals, (2) fund scientific research objectives designed to answer questions about marine mammal strandings, health and health trends, or rehabilitation techniques utilizing data from living and dead stranded marine mammals, and (3) support facility operations directly

related to the recovery, treatment, and data collection from living and dead stranded marine mammals. This document describes how to submit proposals for funding in fiscal year (FY) 2022 and how NMFS will determine which proposals are selected for funding.

The MMHSRP encourages applicants and awardees to support the principles of diversity and inclusion in their proposals and performing their work.

The MMHSRP strives to build an inclusive environment in which we leverage diversity (including, but not limited to, the representation of all ages, races, national, cultural, and socio-economic backgrounds, genders, gender identities, sexual orientations, and physical abilities) to achieve our mission goals and objectives, and maximize the potential of the Stranding and Entanglement Response Networks as a whole. Therefore, in several parts of the application (as outlined below), applicants should specifically address their efforts to support diversity and inclusion and promote underrepresented groups in Science, Technology, Engineering, Math (STEM) fields. Diversity is defined as a collection of individual attributes that together help organizations achieve objectives. Inclusion is defined as a culture that connects each employee to the organization. Promoting diversity and inclusion improves creativity, productivity, and the vitality of the marine mammal community in which the MMHSRP engages.

FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Program Objective

The John H. Prescott Marine Mammal Rescue Assistance Grant Program (hereafter referred to as the Prescott Grant Program) was established under the Marine Mammal Rescue Assistance Act of 2000 (16 U.S.C. 1421f-1), an amendment to the MMPA. The Prescott Grant Program is administered by the MMHSRP of NOAA's NMFS.

The Prescott Grant Program provides federal assistance to eligible Marine Mammal Stranding Network participants and collaborators for (1) basic needs of organizations for the response, treatment, and data collection from living and dead stranded marine mammals; (2) scientific research objectives designed to answer questions about marine mammal strandings, health, or rehabilitation techniques utilizing data from living and dead stranded marine mammals; and (3) facility operations directly related to the recovery, treatment, and data collection from living and dead stranded marine mammals. A stranded marine mammal is a marine mammal in the wild that is (1) dead and on a beach, shore, or in waters under the jurisdiction of the United States or (2) is live and on a beach or shore of the United States and unable to return to the water, is in apparent need of medical attention, or is in waters under the jurisdiction of the United States but is unable to return to its natural habitat under its own power or without assistance. The Prescott Grant Program also provides federal assistance to eligible Marine Mammal Entanglement Response Network Participants for the needs of organizations to respond to entangled marine mammals. An entangled marine mammal is a marine mammal in the wild that is entangled or ensnared in either active or derelict fishing gear, marine debris, other attached human-made materials (ropes, nets, line, debris, etc.), with or without associated materials (hooks, buoys, anchors, pots/traps, etc.).

The MMHSRP, through close coordination with Regional Stranding and Entanglement Response Networks, has the following goals and objectives:
(1) improve the rescue, care, and treatment of stranded or entangled marine mammals;
(2) reduce the health risk to animals, humans, and the ocean environment during the response to, and rehabilitation and release of, stranded or entangled marine mammals;
(3) collect life history, biological, and biomedical data from living and dead stranded or entangled marine mammals;
(4) develop baseline reference data on the health of wild marine mammal populations, normal stranding, and entanglement rates, and causes of morbidity and mortality;
(5) improve the rapid detection of morbidity and mortality events;
(6) collect samples for archival and retrospective studies on causes of mortality or illness,

including material samples such as entangled or ingested gear, and biological samples and for placement in the National Marine Mammal Tissue (and Serum) Bank and other properly curated, professionally accredited archival facilities;
(7) refine and/or utilize comprehensive and consistent guidance for the rescue and rehabilitation of stranded or entangled marine mammals, collection of specimens, quality assurance, and analysis of tissue samples; and
(8) broaden participation of historically underrepresented groups in marine mammal science by actively encouraging, promoting, and supporting diversity and inclusion in the marine mammal health and stranding response community.

B. Program Priorities

For this solicitation, all applications must fall within one of the two categories described below. The applicant must select only one category to apply under. Since some projects may meet priorities in more than one category, you should determine which one category best fits the goals of your proposed project and apply under that one. For each of the categories the MMHSRP has identified multiple national and regional funding priorities. Organizations that incorrectly identify the Category of their proposal may be moved to the correct corresponding category before Technical and Program Reviews.

These program priorities pertain only to marine mammal species under the jurisdiction of the Department of Commerce (DOC) (cetaceans and pinnipeds excluding walrus). International travel to conferences, workshops, and meetings is not eligible to be funded under this NOFO.

**The MMHSRP strives to build an inclusive environment in which we support diversity (including the representation of all ages, races, national, cultural, and socio-economic backgrounds, genders, gender identities, sexual orientations, and physical abilities) to achieve our mission goals and objectives, and maximize the potential of the Stranding and Entanglement Response Networks as a whole. Therefore, in several parts of the application (as outlined below), applicants should specifically address their efforts to support diversity and inclusion and to promote the participation of underrepresented groups in Science, Technology, Engineering, Math (STEM) fields. ** Diversity is defined as a collection of individual attributes that together help organizations achieve objectives. Inclusion is defined as a culture that connects each employee to the organization. Promoting diversity and inclusion improves creativity, productivity, and the vitality of the marine mammal community in which the MMHSRP engages.

Category A - Marine mammal health, stranding, entanglement response, and rehabilitation scientific objectives. Data or samples may be collected from stranded or entangled animals

as well as bycaught, subsistence hunted, or “free-swimming” wild animals, if those animals serve as controls or for comparisons in specific scientific study designs. If proposals under Category A are using wild animals such as from subsistence use, by-caught, or field research on free-swimming animals, the proposal must link the use of these animals/samples from these wild animals to known or suspected health issues of stranded marine mammals, to the health status of the population, or to the development and validation of new tools and techniques to assess such health conditions.
NOTE: All organizations applying under Category A must be authorized as of October 13, 2021, to conduct:
• Stranding Network activities either through a Stranding Agreement, official designee status under a Stranding Agreement granted by the applicable NMFS Region, or as a federal, state, or local government employee under Section 109(h) of the MMPA (16 U.S.C. 1379(h)); or
• Entanglement response activities either through a MMPA/ESA Permit no. 18786- 05 Co-Investigator Letter, Stranding Agreement, official designee status under a Stranding Agreement granted by the applicable NMFS Region, or as a federal, state, or local government employee under Section 109(h) of the MMPA (16 U.S.C. 1379(h)).

Category A1. Further the development of scientific research objectives designed to test hypotheses about marine mammal strandings, entanglements, health, or rehabilitation techniques utilizing data from living and dead stranded and/or wild marine mammals. Multi-organization, multi-regional or cross-regional proposals are encouraged.

1) National Funding Priorities
a) Improve understanding of health and health trends in populations of cetaceans and pinnipeds and improve response to distressed animals. Improving our understanding of marine mammal health, which may include development of new treatments, tools, sedation or drug regimens, investigation of health trends that evaluate environmental parameters (e.g., environmental changes, distribution of prey, freshwater exposure or harmful algal blooms), types and frequency of anthropogenic interactions, or infectious (i.e., zoonotic, epidemic, emerging) agents and diseases. For investigations of pathogen impacts on population health or strandings, you may want to refer to the infectious disease priority list developed by the Working Group for Marine Mammal Unusual Mortality Events (WGMMUME), available on the Prescott Grant Program website (https://media.fisheries.noaa.gov/dam-migration/high-priority-marine-mammal-pathogens-2011-prescott-grants-pr.pdf).
Some examples of ways to address health research priorities include but are not limited to:
• Developing, testing, and evaluating new tools and/or treatments (to determine whether these are safe, effective, and able to be operationalized) for stranded, entangled, or injured/distressed marine mammals;

• Validating new or modifying existing tools (e.g., point of care diagnostics, tag designs, refloating aids, and specialized knives) and/or treatments; or
• Investigating emerging diseases or emerging issues (such as extreme flood events) that may impact marine mammal health or strandings.
b) Conduct analyses and interpretation of baseline information, trends, and correlations between population demographics, diet, health, environmental parameters (e.g., environmental changes, distribution of prey, freshwater exposure or harmful algal blooms), or types and frequency of anthropogenic interactions or other stressors and potential stressor interactions, as they relate to strandings, entanglements, and overall marine mammal population health.

2) Regional Funding Priorities - There are no additional regional funding priorities.

Category A2. Support collaborative, multi-organizational scientific and response services provided to the Stranding Network to enhance data collection, analyses, and improve understanding of marine mammal health, strandings, entanglements, and rehabilitation. Multi-regional or cross-regional proposals are encouraged.

1) National Funding Priorities
a) Increase Stranding Network diagnostic capabilities (see definitions in Section VIII of this notice of funding opportunity (NOFO) announcement) by providing diagnostics, disease surveillance, or histopathology services.
b) Performance and interpretation of additional services to improve understanding of marine mammal health and strandings or entanglements. Examples of services include but are not limited to: hearing testing, imaging, gas analyses, tooth aging, genetics, stomach content analysis, parasites, stable isotopes, gear analyses, sample archiving/preservation, etc.
c) Provide tags, post-release monitoring, analysis, and interpretation of telemetry data from stranded, out-of-habitat, entangled, or rehabilitated and released cetaceans and pinnipeds.
d) Increase Stranding Network incident management and coordination capabilities for major events such as Unusual Mortality Events (UME), natural disasters, disease outbreaks, and oil spills to enhance data collection and analyses.
e) Enhance regional and trans-regional logistical support, data collection, and analyses for response to living and dead large whale stranding or entanglement events by:
• Obtaining additional applicable training (e.g., Incident Command System (ICS), large whale necropsy, entanglement response training, etc.);
• Acquiring and maintaining supplies and equipment, including necessary and appropriate emergency communication systems (e.g., satellite phones for offshore rescue operations);
• Developing and testing tools for more efficient responses to strandings or entanglements;
• Developing cooperative plans with local, tribal, state, or federal agencies to identify carcass

landing/necropsy sites;
• Identifying and securing towing/transport and disposal services by promoting partnerships with local businesses/contractors; or
• Supporting costs of large whale stranding or entanglement responses (including telemetry, tools, etc.) as appropriate.
f) Enhance regional and trans-regional logistical support, data collection, and analyses for response to living pinniped and small cetacean entanglement events by:
• Obtaining or providing additional applicable training (e.g., Incident Command System (ICS), entanglement response training, remote sedation training, etc.);
• Developing and testing tools for more efficient responses to entanglements including but not limited to: development of remote entanglement response tools for small cetaceans; development of remote sedation tools and techniques for small cetaceans; improvement in remote sedation tools and techniques for pinnipeds; or
• Supporting costs of entanglement responses (including telemetry, tools, etc.) as appropriate.

2) Regional Funding Priorities - There are no additional regional funding priorities.

Category B- Support basic and enhancement needs of organizations for the response, treatment, rehabilitation, and data collection from living and dead stranded or entangled marine mammals. Support needed modifications and/or upgrades to rehabilitation facilities to meet or exceed the NMFS' Policies and Best Practices- Rehabilitation Facility Standards (https://repository.library.noaa.gov/view/noaa/14916).
Organizations should apply under Category A1 if the budget request for scientific research is more than 50% of the total Federal budget. If research objectives are included in Category B proposals, the research objectives must be designed with testable hypotheses. Organizations that incorrectly identify either A or B categories may be moved to the correct corresponding category before Technical and Program Reviews by Prescott program staff.
NOTE: All organizations applying under Category B must be authorized as of October 13, 2021, to conduct:
• Stranding Network activities either through a Stranding Agreement, official designee status under a Stranding Agreement granted by the applicable NMFS Region, or as a federal, state, or local government employee under Section 109(h) of the MMPA (16 U.S.C. 1379(h)); or
• Entanglement response activities either through a MMPA/ESA Permit no. 18786- 05 Co-Investigator Letter, Stranding Agreement, official designee status under a Stranding Agreement granted by the applicable NMFS Region, or as a federal, state, or local government employee under Section 109(h) of the MMPA (16 U.S.C. 1379(h)).

Category B1. Further the development of organizations for the response, treatment,

rehabilitation, and data collection from living and dead stranded or entangled marine mammals. Organizations may only apply under Category B1 if they have never had a Prescott application accepted and reviewed during the technical review process of a previous annual Prescott competition.

1) National Funding Priorities
a) Build capacity and infrastructure for basic stranding response or marine mammal rehabilitation activities in areas of low, intermittent, or no coverage. This may include the collection of Level A data (with or without samples for analyses) from a majority of stranded animals and outreach/education to raise community awareness for stranded animals.
b) Train new responders to improve consistency and quality of clinical care and treatment, assessments, necropsies, documentation, and data management for live and/or dead stranded marine mammals. Enhance participation in Regional Stranding Network Meetings and additional appropriate domestic meetings or conferences.
c) Enhance, repair, or upgrade rehabilitation facilities to address non-compliance issues and deficiencies identified during NMFS rehabilitation facility inspections.
d) Enhance, repair, or upgrade rehabilitation facilities to meet NMFS' Policies and Best Practices - Standards for Rehabilitation Facilities (https://repository.library.noaa.gov/view/noaa/14916).
e) Enhance entanglement response, training, tagging, and post-release monitoring for:
• large whales by authorized Level 4 or Level 5 entanglement response Co-Investigators (especially in Alaska, Greater Atlantic, Pacific Islands, and West Coast regions);
• pinnipeds (especially in Alaska, Greater Atlantic, Pacific Islands, and West Coast regions, primarily in Washington and Oregon); and
• small cetaceans (especially in the Southeast region).
This may also include preparing for entanglement response by purchasing supplies, tools, equipment, receiving or providing training for entanglement responders, and enhanced participation in Regional Entanglement Response Network Meetings and additional appropriate domestic meetings or conferences. Collaborative proposals of one to three years are encouraged.

2) Regional Funding Priorities - In addition to the above national priorities, each region has identified the following priorities of particular interest:

a) Alaska Region
i) Develop or expand capacity for effective collection of Level A data in areas of Alaska where response capacity is currently lacking, intermittent, or low. Much of Alaska is considered rural or remote, and as such, much of the state has limited or low response capacity or is completely lacking coverage. Given this, the highest priority areas (due to the

presence of UMEs, Species in the Spotlight species, or endangered species) include locations in the following regions of Alaska: western Alaska; northern Alaska; Cook Inlet; and Kodiak.

ii) Increase community involvement in the Alaska Regional Stranding Network; examples of activities targeted at promoting involvement may include but are not limited to, providing stranding response support, developing stranding-related outreach materials, and hosting stranding-specific training, meetings, or outreach events.

b) Greater Atlantic Region

i) Provide stranding response coverage for Level A data collection, timely data submission to NMFS, and increase capability to conduct live animal response and post mortem examinations following established protocols in the following areas: Massachusetts' coverage areas Rockport to Plymouth and Martha's Vineyard.

ii) In collaboration with NMFS, improve consistency and quality of public outreach and messaging through Public Service Announcements, online tools, or printed materials to address and manage public expectations surrounding stranding responses to abundant pinniped species.

iii) Develop Level 3, 4, or 5 large whale entanglement response capabilities in the New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, and Long Island, New York areas.

c) Pacific Islands Region

i) Support of outreach and training for Hawaiian monk seal stranding response and readiness in the Main Hawaiian Islands.

ii) Support directed outreach to raise awareness for stranding response, rapid real-time reporting, and engage cultural communities to build stronger partnerships and educate the public about cetacean response in the Pacific Islands Region.

d) Southeast Region

i) Establish capabilities to collect Level A data and perform necropsies on dead-stranded marine mammals and/or respond quickly and humanely to live-stranded marine mammals.

ii) Establish permanent and/or mobile necropsy facilities.

iii) Establish capabilities to perform diagnostics on live or dead-stranded marine mammals.

iv) Establish capabilities to humanely euthanize live stranded marine mammals.

v) Increase collaboration with state and local government organizations (e.g., law enforcement, fire departments, lifeguards, environmental management agencies) to respond to stranding events more effectively.

e) West Coast Region

i) Provide coverage for Level A data collection in areas where coverage is sporadic or

unknown by building volunteer or collaborative partnerships to establish response and investigation capability of marine mammal stranding events on all accessible beaches in the participant’s authorized response area. Examples include: building an additional volunteer base or negotiating collaborative partnerships; opening or enhancing communication; and working relationships with local governments. An emphasis on education and outreach, addressing and managing public expectations, and distributing informational materials (e.g., handouts, permanent signage, promotion of Share the Shore, etc.) for public outreach is extremely important.

Category B2. Support basic and enhancement needs of organizations that have previously applied for or received Prescott funding for the response, treatment, rehabilitation, and data collection from living or dead stranded or entangled marine mammals. Collaborative proposals are encouraged.

1) National Funding Priorities
a) Enhance the quality, consistency, quantity, reporting, and sharing of Level A, B, and C data collected from stranded marine mammals by completing diagnostic screening, collecting and analyzing samples and scientific data, and detecting and reporting emerging diseases, new lesions, or uncommon findings. This is a high priority for NOAA Fisheries' Species in the Spotlight (Cook Inlet beluga whales, Hawaiian monk seals, North Atlantic right whales, Southern Resident killer whales: https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/topic/endangered-species- conservation/species-spotlight), ongoing UME and post-UME monitoring and analyses, and for other endangered species. Projects involving non-ESA-listed or non-MMPA depleted species should provide data/information for conservation management needs such as establishing or maintaining baseline information; and identifying human interactions, fisheries interactions, habitat threats, or other threats to co-occurring species.
b) Enhance attendance and participation by professional staff and facility volunteers in training, particularly in: Regional Stranding Network Conferences or additional appropriate domestic meetings or conferences; Incident Command System relative to oil spill response and natural disasters involving marine mammal as well as HAZWOPER; public health concerning marine mammals; marine mammal disease and treatment issues; and veterinary care.
c) Improve capacity for responses such as mass strandings, hazardous material spills, UMEs, natural disasters, out-of-habitat situations, and disease outbreaks. Responses may include necropsy and sample analyses, live animal triage, treatment, short- and long-term care (including temporary facilities), and tagging to assess, monitor, and analyze the post-release success of rehabilitated animals.
d) Enhance, repair, or upgrade rehabilitation facilities to address non-compliance issues and

deficiencies identified during NMFS rehabilitation facility inspections.
e) Enhance, repair, or upgrade rehabilitation facilities to meet (or exceed) NMFS' Policies and Best Practices - Standards for Rehabilitation Facilities (https://repository.library.noaa.gov/view/noaa/14916).
f) Enhance entanglement response, training, tagging, and post-release monitoring for:
• large whales by authorized Level 4 or Level 5 entanglement response Co-Investigators (especially in Alaska, Greater Atlantic, Pacific Islands, and West Coast regions);
• pinnipeds (especially in Alaska, Greater Atlantic, Pacific Islands, and West Coast regions); and
• small cetaceans (especially in the Southeast region)
This may also include preparing for entanglement response by purchasing supplies, tools, equipment, receiving or providing training for entanglement responders (as deemed appropriate by the Regional Entanglement Coordinator), and enhanced participation in Regional Entanglement Response Network Meetings and additional appropriate domestic meetings or conferences. Collaborative proposals of one to three years are encouraged.

2) Regional Funding Priorities - In addition to the above national priorities, each region has identified the following priorities of particular interest:

a) Alaska Region
i) Develop or expand capacity for effective collection of Level A data in areas of Alaska where response capacity is currently lacking, intermittent, or low. Much of Alaska is considered rural or remote, and as such, much of the state has limited or low response capacity or is completely lacking coverage. Given this, the highest priority areas (due to the presence of UMEs, Species in the Spotlight species, or endangered species) include locations in the following regions of Alaska: western Alaska; northern Alaska; Cook Inlet; and Kodiak.
ii) Increase capacity to collect, archive, and analyze data from stranded marine mammals to investigate overall health parameters, prey types, diseases, and immune and reproductive functions.
iii) Enhance the quality and consistency of data collected and reported from stranded marine mammals (e.g., standardized necropsy examinations and reports, standardized sample analyses, increase the supply of gear caches).
iv) Address underlying causes of pinniped entanglement in Alaska to reduce injury and mortality due to fishery gear and marine debris interactions.
v) Analyze and publish data related to Alaska marine mammal strandings and health.
vi) Enhance collaboration, data sharing, and training throughout the Alaska Regional Network (e.g., by organizing and hosting regional and statewide meetings, training, etc.).
vii) Investigate the effects of warming ocean conditions on marine mammals in Alaska,

including increased prevalence of harmful algal bloom toxins or novel disease agents.
viii) In collaboration with NMFS, provide conservation messaging outreach support to educate the public on marine mammal behavior, wildlife viewing, entanglements, or feeding issues. An emphasis on education and outreach, addressing and managing public expectations for stranding responses, and developing informational materials (e.g., handouts, permanent signage, online tools, public service announcements, etc.) for public outreach is extremely important.
ix) In collaboration with NMFS, enhance large whale entanglement response, tagging, and post-release monitoring in Alaska by authorized Level 4 or 5 entanglement response Co-Investigators. This may also include preparing for entanglement response by purchasing equipment, providing first responder training, enhancing communication, or otherwise building capacity for large whale entanglement response.
x) In collaboration with NMFS, provide support for disentanglement and post-release survival monitoring of free-swimming pinnipeds. This may include capture resources and tools and methods for land and boat-based disentanglement or preparing for entanglement response by purchasing equipment, providing first responder training, enhancing communication, or otherwise building capacity for pinniped entanglement response.

b) Greater Atlantic Region
i) Increase capacity to collect, provide timely reports to NMFS, archive, and analyze data from stranded marine mammals to investigate overall health parameters, prey types, diseases, and immune and reproductive functions.
ii) Enhance the quality and consistency of data collected and reported from stranded marine mammals (e.g., standardized necropsy examinations and reports, standardized sample analyses, increase the supply of gear caches, findings of human interaction, and timely data submission to NMFS).
iii) In collaboration with NMFS and NOAA Office of Law Enforcement, increase and enhance public outreach and messaging through Public Service Announcements, online tools, or printed materials to address and manage public expectations surrounding stranding responses to abundant pinniped species, and to promote responsible wildlife viewing (e.g., do not feed pinnipeds/dolphins campaigns).
iv) Increase quality of dead cetacean disease and cause of death surveillance (focusing on cetacean morbillivirus, brucellosis, and other diseases of concern within the region). This includes enhancing: veterinary participation, data collection, and necropsies during stranding events.
v) In collaboration with NMFS, inventory regional equipment caches for large whale stranding response, and increase or enhance gear, equipment, and medical supplies for dead and live large whale response.
vi) Develop Level 3, 4, or 5 large whale entanglement response capabilities in the New

Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, and Long Island, New York areas.
vii) Enhance collaboration, data sharing, and training throughout the Greater Atlantic Regional Network (e.g., by conducting regional and statewide meetings, training, etc.).
viii) Analyze and publish data related to historical regional marine mammal strandings and health.

c) Pacific Islands Region
i) Increase quality of dead cetacean disease and cause of death surveillance (focusing on cetacean morbillivirus, brucellosis, and other diseases of concern within the region) in the main Hawaiian Islands and U.S. Pacific Islands (e.g., Guam, American Samoa, and Northern Mariana Islands). This includes enhancing: veterinary participation, data collection, and necropsies during stranding events.
ii) Organize outreach and training for stranding response and readiness for dead stranded cetaceans (in the Main Hawaiian Islands) and both live and dead stranded cetaceans in the U.S. Pacific Islands (e.g., Guam, American Samoa, and the Northern Mariana Islands).
iii) Improve access to veterinary care for stranded marine mammals including facility improvements and instruments for treatment monitoring for existing pinniped rehabilitation facilities, as well as on-site (laboratory or field) equipment and instruments for more rapid medical assessments for live stranded cetaceans and pinnipeds.
iv) Enhance, repair, or upgrade existing cetacean necropsy or monk seal rehabilitation facilities in Hawaii.
v) Support directed outreach to raise awareness for stranding response, rapid real-time reporting, and engage cultural communities to build stronger partnerships and educate the public about cetacean response in the Pacific Islands Region.

d) Southeast Region
i) Southeast Region high priority areas are: Louisiana, Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin Islands, South Carolina, areas where there are ongoing UMEs, repeated UMEs, or areas that may need to conduct post-UME monitoring, and areas where stranding/human interaction data are utilized by a Take Reduction Team.
ii) Enhance capabilities to rapidly perform thorough necropsies on dead-stranded marine mammals in good condition before degradation- particularly during large whale stranding events, mass strandings, human interaction events (e.g., potential gunshot or entangled animals), and UMEs.
iii) Enhance local logistical support for response to stranding events, including single and mass strandings and large whales, by:
• Developing cooperative plans with local, state, or federal agencies to identify carcass landing/necropsy sites; or
• Identifying and securing towing/transport, heavy equipment, disposal services, and other

resources by promoting partnerships with local, state, or federal agencies and/or local businesses/contractors.

iv) Enhance or upgrade permanent and/or mobile necropsy facilities.

v) Enhance capabilities to perform diagnostic tests on dead-stranded marine mammals. This may include funding to analyze previously collected tissue samples that are currently archived.

vi) Enhance capabilities to triage live stranded marine mammals, including performing thorough diagnostics, such as hematology, histopathology and cytology, and euthanasia.

vii) Enhance capabilities to rapidly and effectively respond to mass strandings. This may include equipment caches, herding capabilities, triage, euthanasia, thorough necropsy, carcass disposal, and resources for potential release (immediate release or post-rehabilitation). Collaborative proposals to enhance response and partnerships among stranding networks for mass strandings are encouraged.

viii) Provide support for disentanglement of free-swimming small cetaceans and/or rescue of out-of-habitat dolphins. This may include monitoring and capture resources, capture technique training, and tools and methods for boat-based disentanglement.

ix) Increase collaboration with state and local government organizations (e.g., law enforcement, fire departments, lifeguards, environmental management agencies) through training and outreach to respond to stranding events more effectively.

x) Enhance capabilities to monitor animals reported in freshwater and rapidly perform thorough necropsies on dead-stranded animals with reported freshwater exposure.

e) West Coast Region

i) Provide coverage for Level A data collection in areas where coverage is sporadic or unknown by building volunteer or collaborative partnerships to establish response and investigation capability of marine mammal stranding events on all accessible beaches in the participant’s authorized response area. Examples include: building an additional volunteer base or negotiating collaborative partnerships; opening or enhancing communication; and working relationships with local governments. An emphasis on education and outreach, addressing and managing public expectations, and distributing informational materials (e.g., handouts, permanent signage, promotion of Share the Shore, etc.) for public outreach is extremely important. Dead animal response in Los Angeles County and San Diego County is a priority for the West Coast Region.

ii) Determine if public reports to the Network accurately indicate actual marine mammal stranding events in an area of consistent response that may be considered to be in more remote areas and reporting from the public may be inconsistent. This proposal would include conducting systematic and/or periodic beach surveys to identify areas where marine mammal strandings are not being reported to the Network. This data would be compiled to provide information to NOAA Fisheries to enhance future planning and outreach efforts.

iii) Enhance reporting and documentation of live entangled pinnipeds throughout your geographic response area. Data collected must be provided to NOAA for inclusion in the West Coast Region Human Interaction Database.

iv) Establish capabilities to humanely euthanize live stranded marine mammals including large whales, small cetaceans, and moribund pinnipeds throughout the West Coast Region. This would also include tool development and techniques for assisting large whales off of the beach if in good overall condition (as well as post-release marking or monitoring) and if they are not considered candidates for euthanasia.

v) Provide conservation messaging outreach support to educate the public on pinniped life history and to minimize public interference with wild pupping and rearing processes in nursery habitats in West Coast Region coastal bays and estuaries, California, and the inland waters of Washington. An emphasis on education and outreach, addressing and managing public expectations, and developing informational materials (e.g., handouts, permanent signage, promotion of Share the Shore, etc.) for public outreach is extremely important.

vi) Increase capability to conduct postmortem examinations using an appropriate protocol for the collection and submission of fluid samples and tissues for analysis by a qualified pathology laboratory and report the results for inclusion in the national MMHSRP database.

vii) Develop a cooperative West Coast Region plan to enhance large whale response and necropsies, provide funds for carcass disposal costs, and network travel. A collaborative West Coast Region-wide multiple-year proposal is encouraged but Puget Sound is a priority area for these activities, including developing cooperative plans with local, state, or federal agencies to identify carcass landing/necropsy sites is ideal, and identifying and securing towing/transport, heavy equipment, disposal services, and other resources by promoting partnerships with local, state, or federal agencies and/or local businesses/contractors.

viii) Enhance, improve, repair, or upgrade existing and new facilities to meet (or exceed) NMFS' Policies and Best Practices - Standards for Rehabilitation Facilities (https://repository.library.noaa.gov/view/noaa/14916).

ix) Enhance facilities, equipment, and staff to increase rehabilitation and holding capabilities (short-term and long-term) in Oregon and Washington for ESA-listed species or human interaction cases.

x) Contribute to the new database that captures standardized data collection of capturing tagging, marking, and re-sight data of rehabilitated pinnipeds throughout the West Coast Region. We encourage all West Coast Marine Mammal Stranding Network participants to provide data to this effort.

xi) Increase collaboration with state and local government organizations (e.g., law enforcement, fire departments, lifeguards, environmental management agencies) through training and outreach to respond and coordinate for response to stranding events more effectively.

C. Program Authority

Authority 16 U.S.C. 1421 f-l

II. Award Information

A. Funding Availability

Awards are dependent upon the availability of federal funding as provided by Congress. The fiscal year 2022 budget has not been finalized by Congress and could result in unknown funding scenarios. Applicants are not guaranteed any level of funding. The exact amount of funds that may be awarded will be determined during pre-award negotiations between the applicant and NOAA representatives. Funds have not yet been appropriated for this program, and there is no guarantee that funds will be appropriated or that sufficient funds will be available to make awards for all qualified projects or any projects. Publication of this notice does not obligate NOAA to award any specific project or to obligate any available funds. If an application for a financial assistance award is selected for funding, NOAA has no obligation to provide any additional funding in connection with that award in subsequent years beyond the award period.

Notwithstanding verbal or written assurance that may have been received, there is no obligation on the part of NOAA to cover pre-award costs. If an applicant incurs any costs before receiving an award agreement signed by an authorized NOAA official, the applicant would do solely at its own risk of these costs not being reimbursed by the government or not receiving an award. The maximum federal award for each grant cannot exceed $100,000 (16 U.S.C. 1421f-1).

If funds become available, NOAA estimates that approximately ten to 40 awards may be made, depending on the number of funds appropriated. Funds may be set aside from the annual appropriation to provide emergency assistance awards to eligible stranding network participants. These emergency funds will be available until expended during the period of fiscal availability.

There is no limit on the number of proposals that can be submitted by the same Stranding Network participant during the FY 2022 competitive grant cycle. However, Stranding Network participants will receive no more than two awards per year as part of the competitive program. All awards must be for completely independent projects that are clearly separate in their objectives, goals, and budget requests and must be successful in the competitive review process. Eligible researchers applying as Principal Investigators, but not independently authorized under Sections 112(c) or 109(h) of the MMPA (16 U.S.C. 1382(c)

and 1379(h), respectively, can only receive one award per year as part of the competitive grant cycle.

B. Project/Award Period

The requested award start date must begin on the first day of the first month and end on the last day of the last month of the project period. Prescott awards may have a maximum project period of three years, but the total federal award cannot exceed $100,000 for each award regardless of the length of the project period. Proposals requesting incrementally funded projects exceeding $100,000 will not be accepted. If an applicant would like to complete unfinished work on a project funded through this program beyond the approved award period, the applicant may notify the assigned Grants Officer no less than 30 days prior to the end of the period to determine eligibility for a no-cost extension or follow the award terms if Research Terms and Conditions have been applied to the award. If the money is expended and funds are needed to continue the project, the applicant should submit another proposal during the next competitive award cycle (FY 2023) or seek an alternate source of funding.

C. Type of Funding Instrument

Under this solicitation, NOAA will fund Prescott projects as grants or cooperative agreements, as appropriate for the nature of the project. Where a cooperative agreement is issued, the nature of NOAA's "substantial involvement" will generally be a collaboration between NOAA and a Recipient on the scope of work. Additional forms of substantial involvement that may arise are described in Chapter 5.C of the Department of Commerce (DOC) Grants and Cooperative Agreements Manual, which is available at, https://www.commerce.gov/sites/default/files/2021-04/Department%20of%20Commerce%20Grants%20%20Cooperative%20Agreements%20Manual%20%2820%20April%202021%29.pdf

III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applicants

1) All eligible applicants must currently be active, authorized participants or researchers in the National Marine Mammal Stranding Network or Entanglement Response Network. Eligible applicants must be:
a) Stranding Agreement (SA) holders or their designee organizations recognized by the applicable NMFS Region; or
b) Co-Investigators (CI) authorized as Level 3, 4, or 5 entanglement responders under the MMHSRP’s MMPA/ESA scientific research and enhancement permit (permit no. 18786-

05); or
c) Holders of researcher authorization letters issued by an NMFS Regional Administrator and/or an MMPA and/or ESA scientific research or enhancement permit (when applicable) including Co-Investigator authorization; or
d) An eligible federal, state, or local government personnel or tribal personnel (pursuant to Section 109(h) of the MMPA (16 U.S.C. 1379(h)); or
e) Diagnostic or service organizations performing services for the stranding network. Federal agencies in the DOC or Department of the Interior (DOI) are not eligible to receive Federal assistance under this notice.

2) "In Good Standing Criteria". All eligible applicants must meet the following "in good standing" criteria:
a) If the applicant is a designated Principal Investigator on an MMPA and/or ESA scientific research or enhancement permit or a Co-Investigator on the MMHSRP's MMPA/ESA scientific research and enhancement permit (permit no. 18786-05), the applicant must have fulfilled all permit requirements. The applicant must not have any pending or outstanding enforcement actions under the MMPA or ESA.
b) The applicant must have complied with the terms and responsibilities of the appropriate SA, MMPA Section 109(h) authorization, CI letter, or researcher authorization letter. This includes, but is not limited to 1) completion of all reporting requirements; 2) cooperation with state, local, and federal officials; 3) cooperation with state and local officials in the disposition of stranded marine mammals; and 4) cooperation with stranding network participants.
c) The applicant must have cooperated in a timely manner with NMFS in collecting and submitting Level B and Level C data and samples when requested.
d) The applicant must not have any current enforcement investigations for the take of marine mammals contrary to MMPA or ESA regulations.
e) The applicant must not have any pending NMFS notice of violation(s) regarding the policies governing the goals and operations of the Stranding Network and SA, if applicable (e.g., probation, suspension, or termination).

3) Category Specific Criteria. Organizations and individuals must meet all of the following eligibility criteria specific to their category of participation in order for a proposal to be considered for funding:
a) SA Holder Participant or SA Designee Participant - SA participants must hold a current, active SA for stranding response and/or rehabilitation from an NMFS Regional Administrator or the Assistant Administrator. SA Designee participants must be holding a current, active letter of designation from an NMFS SA holder authorized by NMFS. Designees cannot request authorization for activities beyond the scope of what is authorized

by the SA to the agreement holder.
b) Researcher Participant - Researcher participants must hold a current, active authorization letter for the proposed award period from the appropriate NMFS Regional Administrator or the Assistant Administrator to salvage stranded marine mammal specimens, parts, and samples for the purpose of utilization in scientific research (50 CFR 216.22). Researchers who are authorized under an MMPA/ESA scientific research or enhancement permit must still obtain an authorization letter from the Regional Stranding Coordinator in order to use parts or specimens from stranded animals. Researcher participants that would not require an authorization letter from the NMFS Regional Administrator (i.e., they will be working with data only and not possessing samples or specimens) must still provide a letter of eligibility from the Regional Stranding Coordinator (see section III.A.3. of this FFO). Researcher participants must also have designated Co-Investigator(s) that are active NMFS authorized Stranding Network participants in good standing, and provide documentation to this effect.
c) Local, State, Federal Government Employees or Tribal Participants - local, state, federal, and tribal government officials or employees participating pursuant to Section 109(h) of the MMPA (16 U.S.C. 1379(h)) for marine mammal species not listed under the ESA must fulfill reporting obligations outlined in 50 CFR 216.22.
d) Diagnostic Laboratories – While diagnostic laboratories performing analyses for Stranding Network members do not need authorization from NMFS to receive and possess samples or specimens from stranded marine mammals (50 CFR 216.22(c)(8)), diagnostic laboratory applicants must still provide a letter of eligibility from the MMHSRP at NMFS Headquarters (see section IV.B.7.a. of this NOFO). When requesting a letter of eligibility, laboratories should submit examples of their diagnostic capabilities, diagnostic services proposed and their testing turn-around time to the MMHSRP (see section VII of this NOFO for contact information).
e) Service Organizations – Organizations without an existing SA that are receiving parts from the stranding network to perform analyses that are not diagnostic analyses (see Section VIII for definitions) must have a valid transfer authorization letter issued by the applicable NMFS Region. Organizations working with carcasses or live stranded animals in coordination with a stranding network member may or may not require additional authorization depending upon the service. All service organizations must provide a letter of eligibility from the MMHSRP at NMFS Headquarters (see section IV.B.7.a of this NOFO). When requesting a letter of eligibility, service organizations should submit examples of their capabilities, services proposed, and their turn-around time (if applicable) to the MMHSRP (see section VII of this NOFO for contact information).

4) Letter of Eligibility. All applicants must submit a letter of eligibility issued by the appropriate NMFS Regional Stranding Coordinator (A1, B1, or B2 categories) or the MMHSRP at NMFS Headquarters (A2 for service organizations, diagnostic organizations,

and entanglement responders authorized as CIs under the MMHSRP's permit). This letter is required in order to be considered for an award in this funding cycle. The letter of eligibility states that you are: 1) an eligible Stranding or Entanglement Response Network participant, diagnostic laboratory, service organization, or permitted researcher at the time of the application submission and during the award period; 2) in good standing; 3) have a history of participation in/with the Stranding or Entanglement Response Network or that your organization is from a local area with no pre-existing stranding response and/or rehabilitation capabilities or your organization provides diagnostic or other services. A copy of your SA, CI letter, or research authorization will not be considered as proof of eligibility. Any proposal that does not provide a letter of eligibility from the NMFS Regional Stranding Coordinator (or NMFS Headquarters) will not be considered eligible and will not be considered for further review. Contact the NMFS Regional Stranding Coordinators or the Prescott Grant Program at the address in the Agency Contacts, Section VII of this NOFO to request this letter at,
https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/contact-directory/marine-mammal-stranding-network-coordinators.

Federal agencies in the DOC or DOI are not eligible to receive Federal assistance under this notice. In addition, federal employees shall not provide assistance in writing any application, writing letters of support for any application, or otherwise confer any unfair advantage on a particular application. However, for activities involving collaboration with current NOAA programs, NOAA employees can write a letter verifying that they are collaborating with the project. This collaboration letter cannot support or endorse the applicant or project.

MMHSRP staff and other Federal Program Officers can provide guidance on application procedures and the proper completion of required forms. Applications encompassing activities conducted under the authority of an MMPA/ESA scientific research or enhancement permit issued to the DOC or DOI should include a copy of the permit and a letter from the Principal Investigator (DOC/DOI employee) verifying that the work is being conducted with their approval. Federal employee travel costs or salaries are not allowable costs under this program. Refer any questions about potential collaboration or support by non-DOC/DOI federal employees to the official listed in Agency Contacts, Section VII of this NOFO.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement

All proposals submitted must provide a minimum non-federal cost-share of 25% of the total budget (i.e., 0.25 x total project costs = total non-federal share). Therefore, the total federal share will be 75% or less of the total budget. For example, an application for a proposed federal share of $100,000, would need to include a non-federal share of $33,334

for a total project budget of $133,334 in order for the federal share to be 75% of the total (federal share=0.75 x $133,334=$100,000; non-federal cost share=0.25 x $133,334=$33,334) similarly, if the proposed total budget for your project is $100,000, the government portion would be $75,000 and your 25% contribution would be $25,000. Cost-share must be an integer, so please round up. The applicant may include a non-federal cost-share for more than 25% of the total budget, but this cost-share amount is binding and must be fulfilled. Applicants should understand that any cost-share committed to the Prescott Grant Program cannot be applied to any other federal grant program. In order to reduce calculation errors when determining the correct cost-share amounts, we urge all applicants to use the cost-share calculator on the Prescott Program website (https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/grant/precott-grant-cost-share-calculator).

If a proposal does not comply with the minimum cost-share requirements, it will not be considered for further review in this annual funding cycle. Pursuant to 48 U.S.C. 1469a, the match requirement does not apply to the U.S. insular areas (Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the U.S. Virgin Islands).

NOAA will review the valuation of the applicant's proposed non-federal cost-share according to 2 C.F.R. 200.306. This regulation describes valuation for property or services contributed by the applicant as well as third-party in-kind contributions, which are specifically allowed by the Prescott Grant Program statute and 2 C.F.R. 200.306. An in-kind contribution is a non-cash contribution, including such contributions donated or loaned, by a third party to the applicant. In many cases, the value of in-kind services or property used to fulfill a non-federal cost-share will be the fair market value of the services or property. The fair market value is the cost of obtaining such services or property, had they not been donated, or of obtaining such services or property for the period of a loan. The applicant must document any third-party in-kind services or property used to fulfill the non-federal cost share.

C. Other Criteria that Affect Eligibility

Eligibility Permits and Approvals.

It is the applicant's responsibility to obtain all necessary federal, state, and local government permits and approvals. Do not include copies of Stranding Agreements as the eligibility letter qualifies the applicant as an eligible stranding network member. For all other permits and approvals, the applicant must include in the application package either: 1) an application cover letter from the Prescott applicant to the appropriate authorizing entity requesting permits (e.g., MMPA/ESA scientific research or enhancement permit, etc.) or approvals, or 2) a copy of the cover letter only of the final permit or approval. The applicant must be able to provide the entire permit or approval if requested by the Prescott Grant Program. If the

proposed activities fall under the jurisdiction of a facility's Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC), the applicant must have requested or obtained approval from the IACUC prior to applying for funding (as required by the Animal Welfare Act and its relevant implementing regulations at 9 C.F.R. 2.30-2.31). If the proposed data collection involves intrusive research (50 C.F.R. 216.27(c) (6)) or if animals must be held after rehabilitation has been completed (prevented from release), the applicant must also obtain an MMPA (and ESA, if applicable) scientific research and enhancement permit before the proposal will be considered for funding. Receipt of required MMPA (and ESA, if applicable) scientific research and enhancement permits and verification of IACUC approval is required prior to awarding of funds. Activities directly related to the individual animal's health assessment, standard diagnostics, treatment, approved post-release monitoring, or release are separately authorized by NMFS under the Stranding Agreement for Stranding Network participants. These activities do not require an additional permit.

If proposed activities will take place within National Marine Sanctuaries, National Parks, National Seashores, State Parks, and other Federal or state-designated protected areas, it is the applicant's responsibility to request and obtain from the appropriate government agencies any necessary permits or letters of agreement for conducting the proposed activities. For further information on permit requirements and application procedures for Federal natural resource permits, contact the NMFS Office of Protected Resources (see Section VII, Agency Contact(s)).

The awarding of funds will be delayed if other federal, state, and local permits are not obtained.
Applications will be reviewed to determine if the proposed activities were analyzed in the Final Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (FPEIS), https://repository.library.noaa.gov/view/noaa/4939) and Supplemental Environmental

Assessment (EA) for the MMHSRP. For those activities analyzed in the FPEIS and EA, no further environmental documentation will be required. For applications whose activities were not analyzed in the FPEIS and EA, program staff will ensure sufficient environmental documentation has been provided to determine the appropriate level of environmental analysis needed to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Proposal activities may be categorically excluded, or an EA may be necessary. For those applications needing an EA, affected applicants will be informed after the peer review stage. Applicants will be requested to assist in the preparation of an EA by providing all necessary information to complete the assessment prior to the award.

IV. Application and Submission Information

A. Address to Request Application Package

Both this NOFO and application instructions for this grant program are available via the Grants.gov website at http://www.grants.gov. Applicants without internet access can obtain application instructions from Lanni Hall, NOAA/NMFS/Office of Protected Resources (F/PR), 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910; Phone: (301) 427-8402; e-mail: Lanni.Hall@noaa.gov.

B. Content and Form of Application

Proposals must adhere to the following instructions and requirements by the proposal submission deadline. Failure to follow these instructions may be reflected in lower-scoring by reviewers. Proposals should be submitted via the Grants.gov website. If you cannot submit your application via Grants.gov, for any reason, a hard copy of the application will be accepted. One signed original (can be printed double-sided) of the complete proposal package must be sent to the address listed in Section IV.F. of this NOFO and postmarked by the submission deadline.

The following forms are required as part of each application and are available on Grants.gov:
Application for Federal Assistance (SF-424)
- Budget Information, Non-Construction Programs (SF-424A)
- Assurances, Non-Construction Programs (SF-424-B)
- Certifications Regarding Lobbying (CD-511), and
- Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (SF-LLL) (if applicable)

Proposals and all attachments must be in 10-point font, double-spaced with one-inch margins. If possible, please submit proposal documents as PDF files to ensure conversion errors do not occur when proposal documents are later accessed in NOAA’s Grants Online system (zip files, jpeg, and password-protected PDF files cannot be converted). For applicants submitting proposals by mail, the SF-424 must be signed in ink or signed by using a valid electronic signature or digital signature.

Applicants must choose and identify one category and the specific funding priority or priorities within the identified category to which the proposal is addressing. Applicants may choose national, regional, or a combination of both funding priorities. If the proposal addresses more than one priority, clearly identify and list first the priority that most closely reflects the objectives of the proposal. Applicants should not assume prior knowledge on the part of the Prescott Grant Program or the reviewers as to the relative merits of the project described in the application.

The MMHSRP recognizes that it has a particular and unique opportunity to support NOAA's commitment to diversity and inclusion by taking an intentional step that encourages program applicants to consider diversity and inclusion as part of their scientific projects. This action has the potential to impact not only the diversity and inclusion in science at NOAA but also beyond the agency. In the Organizational Summary, describe how well the proposed activity broadens the participation of groups that are underrepresented in STEM (e.g., gender, ethnicity, disability, geographic, etc.). Examples could include but are not limited to, full participation of women, persons with disabilities, and underrepresented minorities in STEM.

All applications must include the following information:
1) Title Page (one-page limit): Provide the project title, project duration (with start date no earlier than August 1, 2022), applicant name, name address, and phone number of Principal Investigator or Contact, the Prescott Grant Program Category under which the project fits (see Section I.B. of this document), the project's objective(s), and a list of the Federal, non-Federal, and total costs of the project. A sample title page is available on the Prescott Grant Program website, (https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/national/funding-and-financial-services/frequent-questions-prescott-grant-program).

2) Proposal Narrative (ten-page limit): Describe the project activities completely and accurately. The Project Description should be a clear statement of all work to be undertaken and must include the information listed below in (a)-(g).
a) Goals and Objectives: Identify one Prescott Grant Program Category and the national and/or regional funding priorities (listed in Section I.B.) most relevant to the project. State expected project accomplishments and their significance to the marine mammal health, stranding and entanglement response, and rehabilitation community. Objectives should be attainable within the specified time period and with the available monetary and human resources described/listed. Objectives should be simple, understandable, and as specific and quantitative as possible. Historic stranding data in the region of proposed activities should be used to assess season, species, and likelihood of future strandings. The data are critical in linking the proposed project objectives with the Prescott Grant Program's goals and priorities. Applicants are encouraged to provide stranding data and statistics by year and geographic area in sufficient detail to provide a regional context to the project.
b) Project Management: Describe how the proposed project will be organized and managed, including financial management of the project. An application may only have one designated Principal Investigator. Other project participants or organizations that will have a significant role in conducting the project should be listed as Co-Investigators. Organizations or individuals that support the project should be referred to as Cooperators. If any portion of the project will be conducted through subcontracts, follow the procurement guidance found in 2

C.F.R. Part 200. Describe how provisions for competitive subcontracting will be met, if applicable. If the contractor has been identified, please provide a statement of their qualifications or background.

c) Project Description: Describe the scientific or technical plan of activities that will be accomplished to meet the proposed project goals and objectives. Include detailed descriptions of activities, collaborators, milestones, and expected products resulting from the completed project. The description should include:

i) Project activities and how they relate to the project's goals and objectives.

ii) A list of the activities that will be conducted by Co-Investigators, Cooperators, sub-contractors, paid (stipend) interns/externs and volunteers, etc. Describe the oversight of volunteers and how their staff time will be used to complete project activities. The Principal Investigator is responsible for all technical oversight and implementation of the approved work plan.

iii) List project milestones and a description of the specific activities and associated timelines necessary to meet them. Describe the timelines in increments (e.g., month one, month two, etc.), rather than by specific dates. Please explain if dates are necessary (i.e., activities must be conducted during the pupping season). Make sure the timelines are reasonable and reflect your overall project period. Specify the quantitative and/or qualitative evaluation criteria to determine the relative success or failure of the project in achieving the stated project goals, objectives, and milestones.

iv) Identify the outcomes, results, or products, and how they relate to the Prescott Grant Program goals (i.e., the goals outlined under your chosen Category A or B, and national and/or regional funding priorities) and how they will be applied and/or made available to any appropriate user groups through outreach and education efforts.

v) If this is a re-submission of a previously unfunded Prescott Grant application, include a brief description of how the new proposal has been revised in response to reviewer comments.

d) Environmental Impacts: Discuss whether any negative environmental, biological, social, political, or economic impacts are expected as a result of the proposed activities. If any negative impacts are anticipated, describe what steps will be taken to minimize or mitigate these impacts. This information is the basis for a determination of the level of analysis required under the NEPA. See Section VI.B. (Administrative and National Policy Requirements) below for further information about NEPA requirements.

e) Need for Federal Assistance: Demonstrate the need for government financial assistance. List all other sources of funding that are or have been sought for the project.

f) Federal, State, Tribal, and Local Government Programs and Activities: List any Federal, state, or local government programs or activities that this project would affect and reference any corresponding documentation (i.e., permits, approvals, and environmental assessments).

g) Participation by persons or groups other than the applicant: Describe how governmental

and non-governmental entities, particularly other members of the marine mammal health and stranding response community will participate in the project and the nature of their participation. Additionally, describe how this project will broaden the participation of traditionally underrepresented groups in marine mammal science.

3) Organizational Summary (three-page limit): Provide a summary of your facility and the role your organization plays in the Marine Mammal Stranding or Entanglement Network. The summary must include: a map of your response area; response statistics (i.e., number of strandings/year, species, etc.); organizational overview (i.e., number of paid staff, paid (stipend) interns/externs, volunteers, researchers, etc.); size and capacity of your facility; a summary of your relationship with neighboring Stranding or Entanglement Network responders; **a description of what your organization has done to address diversity and inclusion within your organization** (i.e., paid or stipend internships, volunteer and educational and outreach programs), and a financial overview of your facility, including what funds are available for the proposed work. A sample organizational summary is available on the Prescott Grant Program website, (https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/national/funding-and-financial-services/frequent-questions-prescott-grant-program).

4) Data Sharing Plan (two-page limit): Provide a data sharing plan that includes descriptions of the types of environmental data and information expected to be created during the course of the project, and how it will be shared; 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. Prescott Grant Program Data Management Guidance is available on the Program’s website (https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/grant/john-h-prescott-marine-mammal-rescue-assistance-grant-program). The plan is a minimum requirement and is part of NOAA's data sharing policy described in Section VI.B below, and will be reviewed as part of the Evaluation Criteria under V.A.1.

5) Budget Information (no page limit): Applications must include the SF-424A (Budget Information, Non-Construction Programs) form. All instructions should be read carefully before completing the form. The amounts per category and total amounts indicated on the form must correspond with the amounts indicated on all other proposal documents. The Federal and non-Federal columns must be filled in completely and separately.
Each application must have a detailed budget narrative and the corresponding spreadsheet describing the total project costs, including contributions and donations. The narrative must justify the itemized costs per category between Federal and non-Federal shares and the corresponding direct and indirect cost totals. For the non-Federal share, the itemized costs in

the budget narrative and spreadsheet should be separated into the applicant and third-party in-kind contributions. If third-party in-kind contributions are included, briefly describe the method for calculating the value of these contributions. A sample budget spreadsheet is available on the Prescott Program website, (https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/national/funding-and-financial-services/frequent-questions-prescott-grant-program).
Indirect costs may be included in the budget. Applicants proposing to use an approved negotiated indirect cost rate agreement (NICRA) are required to submit a copy of the signed NICRA with the application package (see Section IV.B.7.f.). This copy will not be included in the page limit requirements. Any non-Federal entity that does not have a current negotiated (including provisional) rate, except those non-Federal entities described in Appendix II to 2 C.F.R. 200 paragraph D.1.b), may elect to charge a de minimis rate of 10% of modified direct total costs (MDTC) which may be used indefinitely. No documentation is required to justify the 10% de minimis indirect cost rate. As described in 2 C.F.R. 200.403, costs must be consistently charged as either indirect or direct costs, but may not be double charged or inconsistently charged as both. If chosen, this methodology once elected must be used consistently for all Federal awards until a non-Federal entity chooses to negotiate for a rate, which the non-Federal entity may apply to do at any time.

Funds for salaries and fringe benefits may be requested only for that 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. If funds are requested for a staff position that is not currently filled by personnel, a position description must be provided with the Supporting Documentation (see Section IV. B.7.i). Funds requested for travel to professional meetings and conferences should be directly related to the project goals and objectives. International travel (i.e., outside the United States) to conferences should not be included in the proposal request. The budget narrative should be as detailed as possible and list each piece of equipment, the cost, and a description of how it will be used and why it is necessary to the successful completion of the proposed project. An applicant may choose to attach Supporting Documentation (see Section IV. B.7.h) regarding any piece of equipment and/or the basis for its cost without affecting the page limits. Fees, fundraising activities, travel for Federal employees (both inside and outside of the United States), salaries for Federal employees, or profits are not allowable costs.

6) Appendices (15-page limit): Additional material in support of project goals and objectives may be provided (e.g., tables, charts, graphs, maps, photographs, slide shows, and other pictorial presentations).

7) Supporting Documentation (no page limit): The following supporting documentation is

required for all proposals:
a) Letter of Eligibility: See requirements in Section III, Eligibility Information.
b) Results of Previous Prescott Awards: If any Principal Investigator/Co-Investigator on the project has received Prescott Grant Program awards, the following information is required for each annual competitive and emergency grant received in the past three years: 1) award number, amount, and period of support; 2) title of the project; 3) summary of the results of the completed work including a brief description of available data, samples, physical collections, and other related research projects (1-2 paragraphs); 4) a list of any publications resulting from the award (do not include copies of the publications in the application); and 5) if the current application is for renewed or continuing support, a description of the relation of the completed work to the proposed work. If the most recent Prescott grant was awarded more than three years ago, the information listed above is required for the most recent grant. Do not submit copies of publications, progress, or final reports.
c) Curriculum Vitae (CV) for Named Investigators (maximum four pages each): Abbreviated CVs
are required for the Principal Investigator, Co-Investigators, and named collaborators.
d) Letters of Cooperation: Letters of cooperation between the Principal Investigator and all named participants in the project, describing and agreeing to the specific activities each participant would perform. A letter of cooperation is required from all cooperators for all activities.
e) Letters of Support: Letters of support (optional, up to five letters) include any endorsements or letters of support for the project from other National Marine Mammal Stranding or Entanglement Network participants (e.g., participants in adjacent geographical areas) or other entities.
f) Indirect Cost Rate Agreement: Applications including negotiated indirect cost rates in the budget must include a copy of the most recent, approved, NICRA with the Federal government.
g) Permits, Authorizations, IACUC Approvals, and Complete Environmental Analyses: Applicants requiring MMPA/ESA scientific research and enhancement permits must include a copy of the cover letter of their permit(s) or their request for such permit. Projects requiring IACUC review must include a copy of their IACUC approval or request for such approval.
h) Equipment Descriptions: The budget narrative should list each piece of equipment, the cost, and a description of how it will be used and why it is necessary to the successful completion of the proposed project. An applicant may choose to attach supporting documentation regarding any piece of equipment and/or the basis for its cost without affecting the page limits. Equipment is defined as an item of property that has an acquisition cost of $5,000 or more (unless the applicant organization has established lower levels) and expected service life of more than one year. Any items that do not meet the threshold for

equipment can be included under the supplies line item. Please note that any general use equipment (e.g., computers, etc.) that is charged directly to the award should be allocated to the award according to the expected usage on the project. Equipment procured for the project is subject to requirements in 2 C.F.R. 200.317-.327.
i) Position Descriptions: Applicants requesting funds for new staff positions or staff positions that are vacant at the time of application submission must provide a detailed position description for each vacancy. The position description should include the qualifications, skills, and requirements necessary to fill the vacancy.

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

Each applicant (unless the applicant is from those requirements under 2 C.F.R 25.110(b) or (c), or has an exception approved under 2 C.F.R 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 (i.e., Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number); 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 two weeks to complete the SAM registration; registration is required only once but must be renewed yearly.

D. Submission Dates and Times

Applications must be received and validated by Grants.gov, postmarked, or provided to a delivery service and time-stamped on or before 11:59 p.m. ET (Grants.gov) or local time (postmark and delivery service), October 13, 2021. To apply on Grants.gov, you must first have an up-to-date registration in the Federal System for Award Management (SAM) described in Section IV.C. Applications submitted through Grants.gov are automatically stamped with the date and time of submission and will be the basis of determining timeliness. For applications submitted through Grants.gov, there will be three automated email receipts sent to the application submitter with the date and time of submission. The first email confirms the initial receipt of the application by the Grants.gov portal. The second email confirms that there are no errors with the application submission and the third email confirms the application has been forwarded to NOAA for further processing. If email confirmation receipts are not provided within two business days of application submission, contact the Grants.gov Help Desk (800-518-4726) and Lanni Hall, at Lanni.Hall@noaa.gov.

PLEASE NOTE: It may take Grants.gov up to two business days to validate or reject the application. Please consider this when developing your submission timeline. Applicants are responsible for ensuring that all required application elements have been appropriately submitted. Use of U.S. mail or another delivery service for hard copy applications must be documented with a receipt. No facsimile or electronic mail applications will be accepted.

Important note on Grants.gov application attachment file names: file names are limited to 50 or fewer characters. Please use only the following UTF-8 characters when naming your attachments: A-Z, a-z, 0-9, underscore, hyphen, space, period, parenthesis, curly braces, square brackets, ampersand, tilde, exclamation point, comma, semicolon, apostrophe, at sign, number sign, dollar sign, percent sign, plus sign, and equal sign. Attachments that do not follow this rule may cause the entire application to be rejected or cause issues during processing.

The Prescott Grant Program is a competitive grant program since available funding is limited and demand is greater than the annual allocation. Therefore, criteria have been established to ensure an even and equitable process for all interested applicants. Applications should ideally and preferably be submitted electronically through the Grants.gov website at http://www.grants.gov. NOAA strongly recommends that applicants do not wait until the application deadline to begin the application process through Grants.gov. If you experience a Grants.gov “systems issue” (e.g., technical problems or glitches with the Grants.gov website, receipt of an error message) that you believe threatens your ability to complete submission before the application deadline, please (i) print any error message received; and (ii) call the Grants.gov Contact Center at 1-800-518-4726 for assistance. Applicants need to obtain a case number regarding communications with Grants.gov. Please note: problems with an applicant organization’s computer system, email account, equipment, or failure to comply with the Grants.gov system requirements are not considered “systems issues.” Similarly, an applicant’s failure to: (i) complete the required registration, (ii) ensure that a registered Authorized Representative (AOR) submits the application, or (iii) notice receipt of an email message from Grants.gov are not considered systems issues. A Grants.gov “systems issue” is an issue occurring in connection with the operations of Grants.gov itself, such as the temporary loss of service by Grants.gov due to unexpected volume of traffic or failure of information technology systems, both of which are highly unlikely. It is the applicant’s responsibility to take the necessary steps to document a “systems issue” and contact NOAA. The MMHSRP reserves the right to accept an application in an alternate format (i.e., hard copy submission), however, all applications must be postmarked by the deadline unless an extension has been granted for an “extenuating circumstance” following the submission of a “Hardship Exemption Request” (please see below).

If online submission is not possible, for any reason, hard copy applications may be submitted by postal mail or commercial delivery and must be documented with a receipt and sent to NOAA/NMFS/Office of Protected Resources (F/PR), ATTN: Lanni Hall, 1315 East-West Highway, Room 13623, Silver Spring, MD 20910. If submitting by postal mail or commercial delivery please contact Lanni Hall at lanni.hall@noaa.gov to notify of the mailing immediately after posting with the name of the carrier service and tracking number, if applicable. No facsimile or electronic mail applications will be accepted.

In the event of an “extenuating circumstance” (i.e., a natural or anthropogenic disaster, validated service disruption in a specific area, or the sudden acute severe illness or death of the Project Investigator/Authorized Representative or immediate family member) that interferes with an organization’s ability to meet a proposal submission deadline, there can be flexibility for obtaining an extension to the announced deadline date that may be granted on a case-by-case basis with approval from the Program Office. Applicants facing extenuating circumstances and in need of an extension should contact the Agency Contact of the Program Office as outlined in the NOFO and submit a “Hardship Exemption Request” to seek an extension for late proposal submission. Requests for extensions should ideally be received by the Program Office on or before 11:59 pm ET on the day of the grant application deadline, and no later than 48 hours after the regular deadline. The Hardship Exemption Request should include a description of the hardship circumstances and a proposed new deadline up to 14 calendar days after the regular grant application deadline. Applicants must contact the Program Office via e-mail (or telephone, if email is unavailable) regarding Hardship Exemption Requests. The Program Office will review the request and inform the applicant whether an extension can be accommodated. Applicants that are provided an extension should follow the written or verbal guidance provided by the Program Office. The Program Office can accommodate an extension of the deadline up to a maximum of 14 calendar days and will work with each impacted organization on a case-by-case basis to address their specific issue and needs.

E. Intergovernmental Review

Applications submitted under this program are subject to the provisions of Executive Order (EO) 12372, "Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs".

F. Funding Restrictions

Indirect Cost: The budget may include an amount for indirect costs if the applicant has an established indirect cost rate with the federal government. Indirect costs are essentially overhead costs for basic operational functions (e.g., utilities, rent, and insurance) that are incurred for common or joint objectives and, therefore, cannot be identified specifically within a particular project. A copy of the most recent approved NICRA with the federal

government must be included in the application.

If an applicant does not have a current indirect cost rate with a federal agency it may choose to negotiate a rate with the Department of Commerce or use the de Minimis indirect cost rate of 10% of Modified Total Direct Costs (MTDC) (as allowable under 2 C.F.R. 200.414). The negotiation and approval of a rate are 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
lamar.revis@noaa.gov

Allowable Costs: Funds awarded cannot necessarily pay for all the costs that the recipient might incur in the course of carrying out the project. Allowable costs are determined by reference to the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements, at 2 C.F.R. Part 200. Generally, costs that are allowable include salaries, equipment, supplies, and training, as long as these are "necessary and reasonable".

G. Other Submission Requirements

First-time registration with Grants.gov may take two to five weeks. It is strongly recommended that this registration process be completed as soon as possible. Grants.gov will not accept submissions if the applicant has not been authorized or if credentials are incorrect. Authorizations and credential corrections can take several days to establish. Please plan your time accordingly to avoid late submissions as such submissions will be rejected.

The Grants.gov validation process for a submitted application can take up to two business days to complete (following submission through Grants.gov). Only validated applications are sent to NOAA for review. To ensure the successful submission of an application, it is strongly recommended that a final and complete application is submitted at least two business days prior to the submission deadline.

V. Application Review Information

A. Evaluation Criteria

Suggested Scoring Guidance:
90 and above Proposal elements can be achieved with maximum impact and there is high certainty that the project benefit will be substantial.

80-89 Proposal elements can be achieved effectively and efficiently. There is high certainty that the project benefit will be moderate to substantial.

79-70 Proposal elements can be achieved adequately. There is moderate certainty that the project benefit will be successful.

69-60 Proposal elements cannot be achieved satisfactorily. There is high or moderate certainty that the project benefit will have no benefit.

59 and below Proposal elements cannot be achieved. There is high or moderate certainty that the project will not be successful.

Category A1, A2, and B2 proposals will be evaluated by reviewers based on the following criteria (with their relative weights):
1) Importance/relevance and applicability of proposed project to the program goals (30%). This criterion ascertains whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and/or relevance to NOAA, Federal, regional, state, tribal or local activities, and assesses the project's broader impacts. For the Prescott Grant Program Competition, this includes importance and relevance to the scientific priorities of the selected Prescott Grant Program, the PI’s record of making his/her data accessible and usable by the scientific community in the past, the Statement of Diversity and Inclusion described in Section IV and the procedures described in Data Sharing Plan. Applications will be evaluated to determine if the project goals and objectives are: clear, relate to project activities, and relate to the Prescott Grant Program goals and funding priorities. Reviewers will consider: the likelihood of meeting project milestones and achieving anticipated results in the stated time period; the project’s contributions towards increasing diversity and inclusion of historically underrepresented groups in STEM and in marine mammal science; the Data Sharing Plan; the contribution of potential outcomes, results, or products to the marine mammal stranding and rehabilitation communities; and the amount of collaboration with other stranding network participants. (Score = 1-100 points)

2) Technical/scientific merit (35%). 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 will be scored on their clear identification of goals and objectives and appropriate performance evaluation methods. Proposals should have sufficient information to enable Reviewers to provide a technical evaluation of the project. The evaluation will be based upon the technical design's strengths and/or weaknesses relative to obtaining productive and meaningful results. (Score = 1-100 points)

3) Overall qualifications of applicants (15%). This criterion ascertains whether the applicant possesses the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project. Project management will be evaluated based upon documentation of related experience and qualifications of the Principal Investigator, Co-Investigator(s), and other personnel. Other personnel includes designated contractors, consultants, and Cooperators. The results of any previous Prescott awards will be considered when evaluating applicant qualifications. Reviewers will also consider the extent to which the applicant complied effectively with the application instructions in this Announcement. (Score = 1-100 points)

4) Project costs (15%). This criterion evaluates the budget to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time frame. The proposed costs and overall budget of the project will be evaluated according to the proposed work. Itemized costs and the overall budget must be justified and appropriately allocated. (Score = 1-100 points).

5) Outreach and education (5%). This criterion assesses whether the project provides a focused and effective education and outreach strategy regarding NOAA's mission to protect the Nation's natural resources. Applications will be evaluated on whether project results or products will be shared appropriately given the nature of the proposed work and whether sufficient detail is provided to make this determination. Depending on the nature of the project, outreach and education may include: peer-reviewed publications, training, paid (stipend) apprenticeships/internships/externships, presentations at professional meetings and Stranding Network conferences, development of brochures, education materials, training manuals or websites, or distribution of project results to the Stranding Network. The MMHSRP encourages the use of paid internships/apprenticeships over unpaid opportunities to maximize diversity and inclusion, and specifically to reduce barriers to participation in the field of marine mammal science. Proposals should be rated on whether the outreach/education discussed is appropriate for the type and nature of the proposal and whether the outreach/education is expected to be effective. (Score = 1- 100 points)

Category B1 proposals will be evaluated by reviewers based on the following criteria (with their relative weights):
1) Importance/relevance and applicability of proposed project to the program goals (30%). This criterion ascertains whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and/or relevance to NOAA, Federal, regional, state, tribal, or local activities, and assesses the project's broader impacts. Applications will be evaluated to determine if the project goals and objectives are: clear, relate to project activities, and relate to the Prescott Grant Program goals and funding priorities. In addition, applicants will include their Statement of Diversity

and Inclusion as described in Section IV. Reviewers will consider the project's likelihood of meeting basic stranding response needs, the amount of communication and collaboration with neighboring stranding network participants, and the Data Sharing Plan. (Score = 1-100 points)

2) Technical/scientific merit (35%). 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. Recognizing applications are from organizations that have never applied for Prescott Grant funding, proposals will be scored on their clear identification of goals and objectives and appropriate performance evaluation methods. Proposals should have sufficient information to enable reviewers to provide a technical evaluation of the project. (Score = 1-100 points)

3) Overall qualifications of applicants (15%). This criterion ascertains whether the applicant possesses the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project. Project management will be evaluated based upon documentation of related experience and qualifications of the Principal Investigator, Co-Investigator(s), collaborators, and other personnel. Other personnel includes designated contractors, consultants, and Cooperators. Reviewers will also consider the extent to which the applicant complied effectively with the application instructions in this Announcement. (Score = 1-100 points)

4) Project costs (15%). This criterion evaluates the budget to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time frame of basic stranding response operations. Recognizing applications are from organizations that have never applied for Prescott Grant funding, the proposed costs and overall budget of the project will be evaluated according to the proposed work. Itemized costs and the overall budget must be clear and appropriately justified. (Score = 1-100 points)

5) Outreach and education (5%). This criterion assesses whether the project provides a focused and effective education and outreach strategy regarding NOAA's mission to protect the Nation's natural resources. Applications will be evaluated on whether project results or products will be shared appropriately given the nature of the proposed work and whether sufficient detail is provided to make this determination. Outreach and education may include: training, public lectures, presentations at schools or Stranding Network conferences, paid (stipended) apprenticeships/internships/externships, and the development of brochures, pamphlets, or websites. Proposals should be rated on whether the outreach/education discussed is appropriate for the type and nature of the proposal. (Score = 1-100 points)

B. Review and Selection Process

Review and selection of applications will take place in five steps: initial evaluation, technical review, program review, selection by the Selecting Official (Office of the Director, NMFS Office of Protected Resources or designee), and approval by the NOAA Grants Officer.

1) Initial Evaluation of the Applications. Applications received in the NMFS Office of Protected Resources will be screened to ensure that they were received on time; provide for at least 25% non-Federal cost share; and provide the letter of eligibility. NOAA, in its sole discretion, may continue the review process for applications with non-substantive issues that may be easily rectified or cured. Applications that meet minimum requirements will be forwarded for review. Applications that pass the initial screening will be grouped based on the applicant's chosen category (Category A1, A2, B1, or B2). If your application does not conform to the minimum requirements listed above, and the deadline for submission has passed, the application will be withdrawn from further consideration in the competition.

We are under no obligation to screen applications before the submission deadline in order 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 and resubmit 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 be withdrawn from consideration in the competition.

2) Technical Review. Each accepted application will undergo a technical review by participants in the National Marine Mammal Stranding and Entanglement Network or other qualified persons (e.g., scientists, researchers, stranding network participants from foreign countries, etc., consistent with 16 U.S.C. 1421f-1(c)). Technical reviewers will be asked to evaluate individual proposals based on the Prescott Grant Program National or Regional funding priorities identified by the applicant and the Evaluation Criteria. Each category of proposals will be reviewed by at least three individual reviewers. Category B applications will be reviewed and scored by individuals from a different NMFS region than the applicant to avoid any potential conflicts of interest. Category A (research and national services) applications may be reviewed by technical experts and scientists from the same NMFS region as the applicant. A technical review will be conducted in a panel format with reviewers providing individual, independent reviews for each proposal, not as a consensus. There may be panel members present for the discussion that are from the same NMFS

Regional Stranding Network. Each technical reviewer must certify that they do not have a conflict of interest concerning the proposal(s) they are reviewing prior to their review. Each panelist will be required to identify potential conflicts of interest with proposals being reviewed by their panel. Reviewers with conflicts of interest will not be present during those proposal discussions. Scores and comments for proposals will be completed during the technical review meetings. Technical review scores will be used to numerically rank the proposals and provide comments on each proposal.

To determine the appropriateness of each proposal to the Prescott Grant Program's goals and/or National or Regional funding priorities, the technical reviewers will provide independent reviews using the weighted criteria outlined in Section V.A. A weighted score will be generated from each review using the numeric score per criteria and the weights assigned to each criterion. Given the nature and quality of the submitted proposals, the most competitive proposals, those scoring 60 points or more, will move on to the program review panel. The less competitive proposals will not be reviewed further.

3) Program Review Panel. A panel of Federal employees, consisting of at least three national and regional staff consulting with the Marine Mammal Commission, will further evaluate the most competitive applications. Based on the rank order from the technical reviews, the Program Review Panel will apply the following considerations that may result in revisions to the original order. The Panel will take into account the following considerations in Section 408 of the MMPA, 16 U.S.C. 1421f-1(a)(2): any episodic strandings or mortality events that occurred in the preceding year between the publication of this NOFO and the program review meeting, preference to facilities with established records, and equitable distribution of funds among stranding regions. Equitable distribution will be determined using the best available data on episodic, anomalous, or unusual stranding events; average annual strandings and mortalities; and sizes of marine mammal populations within each region. The Panel will also consider the actual stranding statistics per region and stranding network effort or coverage per region. In addition, the Panel will consider technical review scores and comments, application materials, collaboration with other stranding network participants, track records for encouraging diversity and inclusion, and the applicant's history with past funding from the Prescott Grant Program, including any delinquencies in the report submission and the applicant's history providing scientific and national services (for Category A2 applicants). In the event limited funding is appropriated ($1,000,000 or less) for the Prescott Grant Program and based on the statutory requirement for equitable distribution to the greatest extent practicable, the Panel will recommend for funding at least one proposal from each NMFS Region to the extent possible.

4) Selection Recommendations. The Selecting Official will make the final recommendations

to the NOAA Grants Officer regarding which proposals will be funded based on recommendations of the Program Review Panel as well as the selection factors set forth in Section V.C. (Selection Factors) below. Justifications will be given for any recommendations that fall outside the program review ranking, or for any cost adjustments.

5) Grants Management Division Approval. NOAA reserves the right to negotiate the budget and scope of work with any application that has been selected for an award, which may include requesting that the applicant remove certain costs. Additionally, NOAA may request that the applicant modify objectives or work plans and provide supplemental information required by the agency prior to award. NOAA may select some, all, or none of the applications, or part(s) of any particular application, or ask applicants to work together or combine projects, defer applications to the future, or reallocate funds to different funding categories to the extent authorized. After applications are proposed for funding by the Selecting Official and prior to the issuance of an award, the NOAA Grants Management Division will conduct an assessment of the risk posed by the applicant in accordance with 2 C.F.R. 200.206. In addition to reviewing repositories of government-wide eligibility, qualification, or financial integrity information, the risk assessment conducted by NOAA may consider items such as the financial stability of an applicant, quality of the applicant's management systems, an applicant's history of performance, previous audit reports and audit findings concerning the applicant and the applicant's ability to effectively implement statutory, regulatory, or other requirements imposed on non-Federal entities. Upon review of these factors, if appropriate, specific award conditions that correspond to the degree of risk may be applied by the NOAA Grants Officer pursuant to 2 C.F.R. 200.208. Applicants may submit information 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. In addition, NOAA reserves the right to reject an application in its entirety where information is uncovered that raises a significant risk with respect to the responsibility or suitability of the applicant. The final approval of selected applications and issuance of awards will be by the NOAA Grants Officer. The award decisions of the NOAA Grants Officer are final.

C. Selection Factors

The program review panel shall provide a rank order to the Selecting Official for final funding recommendations. The Selecting Official shall recommend awarding in the rank order unless the proposal is justified to be selected out of rank order based upon one or more of the following factors:
1) Availability of funding.
2) Balance/distribution of funds: a. geographically; b. by type of institutions; c. by type of partners; d. by research areas; e. by project types.

3) Duplication of other projects funded or considered for funding by NOAA or other Federal agencies.
4) Program priorities and policy factors as set out in Section I.
5) Applicant's prior award performance (including report submission).
6) Partnerships and/or participation of targeted groups, including communities commonly and historically underrepresented in marine mammal science.
7) Adequacy of information necessary for NOAA to make a NEPA determination and draft necessary documentation before recommendations for funding are made to the Grants Officer.
Therefore, the highest-scoring proposals may not necessarily be selected for an award.

D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

Subject to the availability of funds, a review of proposals will occur during the four months following the proposal due date given in this announcement. Funding should begin during summer 2022 for most approved projects. Projects should not be expected to begin prior to August 1, 2022, unless otherwise directed by the Federal Program Officer.

Information about proposals received (organizational name, proposal title, and federal funding request) may be publicly shared on the John H. Prescott Marine Mammal Rescue Assistance Grant Program web page, https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/grant/john-h-prescott-marine-mammal-rescue-assistance-grant-program. Applicants that do not want their proposal information shared on this webpage may contact the program office following the submission of their proposal.

VI. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notices

Successful applicants will receive notification of funding from the NOAA Grants Management Division. Applicants should not initiate any project in expectation of federal funding until they receive a grant award document signed by an authorized NOAA Grants Officer. A cooperative agreement will be utilized if the proposed work entails substantial involvement between the applicant and NMFS. The final determination of the funding instrument (grant or cooperative agreement) will be made by the NOAA Grants Management Division. After successful applicants have been notified, a Federal Program Officer will notify unsuccessful applicants. Comments and scores from the technical review will be provided to all applicants. Unsuccessful applications will be kept on file in the Program Office for a period of twelve months and will then be destroyed.

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements. Through 2 C.F.R. 1327.101, the DOC adopted Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for federal awards at 2 C.F.R. Part 200, which applies to awards in this program. Refer to http://go.usa.gov/SBYh and http://go.usa.gov/SBg4. Department of Commerce Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions.

The DOC will apply the Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions to this award. Refer to
https://www.commerce.gov/sites/default/files/2020-11/DOC%20Standard%20Terms%20and%20Conditions%20-%2012%20November%202020%20PDF_0.pdf.
If the DOC publishes revised Standard Terms and Conditions prior to issuance of awards under this NOFO, the revised Standard Terms and Conditions will apply.
Prescott Grant Program Award Conditions: Prescott Grant Program Award Conditions will apply to these awards. Previous Prescott Grant Award Conditions are available upon request from the Prescott Grant Program (see section VII of this NOFO for contact information) and are subject to update prior to the issuance of any award.

DOC Pre-Award Notification Requirements: The DOC 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.

Access to Information: DOC regulations implementing FOIA, 5 U.S.C. 552, are found at 15 C.F.R. Part 4, Public Information. These regulations set forth rules for the Department regarding making requested materials, information, and records publicly available under the FOIA.

Applications submitted in response to this NOFO may be subject to requests for release under the FOIA. In the event that an application contains information or data that the applicant deems to be confidential commercial information that is exempt from disclosure under FOIA, that information should be identified, bracketed, and marked as Privileged, Confidential, Commercial or Financial Information. Based on these markings, the confidentiality of the contents of those pages will be protected to the extent permitted by law.

Limitation of Liability: NOAA or the DOC is not responsible for proposal preparation costs. Publication of this announcement does not oblige NOAA to award any specific project or to obligate any available funds. Recipients are subject to all federal laws and agency policies, regulations, and procedures applicable to federal financial assistance awards.

Unpaid or delinquent tax liability: When applicable under appropriations law, NOAA will provide certain applicants a form to be completed by the applicant's authorized representative making a certification regarding federally assessed unpaid or delinquent tax liability or recent felony criminal convictions under any federal law. If a form is provided, an award may not be issued until it is returned and accepted by NOAA.

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA): NOAA must analyze the potential environmental impacts, as required by NEPA, for applicant projects or proposals. Detailed information on NOAA compliance with NEPA can be found at the following NOAA NEPA website: http://www.nepa.noaa.gov, including NOAA Administrative Order 216-6 and the Council on Environmental Quality's NEPA implementing regulations. 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.

Applicants may be asked to assist NOAA in the drafting of an EA if NOAA determines one is required. Applicants will also be required to cooperate with NOAA in identifying and implementing feasible measures to reduce or avoid any identified adverse environmental impacts of their project. Failure to do so shall be grounds for the denial of an application.

NOAA's Data Sharing Policy: Environmental data and information collected or created under NOAA grants or cooperative agreements must be made discoverable by and accessible to the general public, in a timely fashion (typically within two years), 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.

Proposals submitted in response to this Announcement must include a Data Management Plan of up to two pages describing how these requirements will be satisfied. The Data Management Plan should be aligned with the Data Management Guidance provided by NOAA in the NOFO. The contents of the Data Management Plan (or absence thereof), and past performance regarding such plans, will be considered as part of the 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 submissions and may charge a fee, particularly for large or unusual datasets.

NOAA may, at its own discretion, make publicly visible the Data Management Plan from funded proposals, or use information from the Data Management Plan to produce a formal metadata record and include that metadata in a Catalog to indicate the pending availability of new data.
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, https://repository.library.noaa.gov/, after acceptance, and no later than upon publication. Such manuscripts shall be made publicly available by NOAA within one year after publication by the journal. More information about the Data Sharing Policy is available on NOAA's Environmental Data Management Committee website at: https://nosc.noaa.gov/EDMC/PD.DSP.php

C. Reporting

Grant recipients will be required to submit financial and performance (technical) reports. All financial reports (SF-425) shall be submitted electronically via NOAA Grants Online to the NOAA Grants Management Division in accordance with the award conditions. Progress reports should be submitted via NOAA Grants Online to the Prescott Grant Program Officers in accordance with the award conditions. All progress reports will be submitted on a semi-annual schedule and must be submitted no later than 30 days following the end of each six-month period from the start date of the award. The comprehensive final report is due 120 days after the award expiration. Additional reporting on project details may be required at the request of the Program Office. Grant recipients must submit any copies of publications printed with award funds (e.g., manuals, surveys, etc.) to the NMFS Federal Program Officer for dissemination to the public. Publications should be submitted either as hard copies or in an electronic version.

Based on the location of the projected work, NMFS Regional Stranding Coordinators or MMHSRP staff will serve as Technical Monitors to advise the Program Officer. For projects taking place in more than one region, the Technical Monitor will be MMHSRP Headquarters staff.

The Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006, 16 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 www.FSRS.gov on all sub-awards over $30,000. Refer to 2 C.F.R. Part 170 and the DOC Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions, referenced in Section VI.B. of this NOFO.

VII. Agency Contacts

The point of contact is Lanni Hall, Prescott Grant Program, NOAA/NMFS/Office of Protected Resources (F/PR), 1315 East-West Highway, Room 13623, Silver Spring, MD 20910; Phone: (301) 427-8402; or email at Lanni.Hall@noaa.gov.

VIII. Other Information

The following definitions apply to Category A funding priorities:
Diagnostic (dead animal) - A "diagnostic specimen" from a marine mammal carcass is a biological substance or other physical evidence, part, or sample (including blood and its components, bone, hair, tissue, and tissue fluids, etc.) that is obtained from a dead animal for the sole purpose of identifying, determining, or attempting to determine, the cause or manner of death, injury, or disease for that individual animal.

Diagnostic (live animal) - A "diagnostic specimen" from a live marine mammal is a biological substance or other physical evidence, part, or sample (including blood and its components, bone, hair, tissue, and tissue fluids, etc.) that is obtained during a medical examination for the sole purpose of identifying, determining, or attempting to determine the presence or absence of an illness, injury, or causative agent affecting the health of that individual animal for the purpose of determining a course of medical treatment or the development of a prognosis for survival of that individual animal.

Research specimen - A marine mammal "research specimen" is a biological substance or other physical evidence, part, or sample (including blood and its components, bone, hair, tissue, and tissue fluids, etc.) that is obtained in a manner consistent with a systematic sampling protocol, by collection, or transfer for comparison with other similar specimens to aid in a scientific research investigation to discover or revise facts or theories that may be related to, but not limited to, epidemiology, genetics, population health, life history, trends in health, etc. Residual diagnostic specimens may be used for research as described above and considered a "research specimen" only by facilities or individuals approved pursuant to 50 C.F.R. 216.22 and/or 50 C.F.R. 216.37.

The applicant acknowledges and understands that information and data contained in applications for financial assistance, as well as information and data contained in financial, performance, and other reports submitted by applicants may be used by the DOC in conducting reviews and evaluations of its financial assistance programs. For this purpose, applicant information and data may be accessed, reviewed, and evaluated by DOC employees, other federal employees, and also by federal agents and contractors, and/or by non-federal personnel, all of whom enter into an appropriate conflict of interest and confidentiality agreements covering the use of such information. As may be provided in the terms and conditions of a specific financial assistance award, applicants are expected to support program reviews and evaluations by submitting required financial and performance information and data in an accurate and timely manner, and by cooperating with the DOC and external program evaluators. In accordance with 2 C.F.R. 200.303(e), applicants are reminded that they must take reasonable measures to safeguard protected personally identifiable information and other confidential or sensitive personal or business information created or obtained in connection with a DOC financial assistance award.

In addition, DOC regulations implementing the FOIA, 5 U.S.C. Sec. 552, are found at 15 C.F.R. Part 4, Public Information. These regulations set forth rules for the DOC regarding making requested materials, information, and records publicly available under the FOIA. Applications submitted in response to this NOFO may be subject to requests for release under FOIA. In the event that an application contains information or data that the applicant deems to be confidential commercial information that should be exempt from disclosure under FOIA, that information should be identified, bracketed, and marked as Privileged, Confidential, Commercial or Financial Information. In accordance with 15 C.F.R 4.9, the DOC will protect from disclosure confidential business information contained in financial assistance applications and other documentation provided by applicants to the extent permitted by law.