

ANNOUNCEMENT OF FEDERAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Federal Agency Name(s): National Ocean Service (NOS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Department of Commerce

Funding Opportunity Title: FY15 Coral Reef Conservation Program Domestic Coral Reef

Announcement Type: Initial

Funding Opportunity Number: NOAA-NOS-OCRM-2015-2004207

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 11.482, Coral Reef Conservation Program

Dates: Complete applications must be submitted electronically via www.grants.gov by 11:59 PM Eastern Standard Time on Wednesday, January 7, 2015 to be considered for funding. If Grants.gov cannot be reasonably used, hard copy applications may be submitted by mail or provided to a delivery service and documented with a receipt prior to 11:59 PM EST on Wednesday, January 7, 2015. Applications postmarked or provided to a delivery service after that date and time will not be accepted. Applications submitted via U.S. Postal Service or commercial courier service must have an official postmark; private metered postmarks are not acceptable. In any event, applications received more than 10 business days after the postmarked closing date will not be accepted. All mailed applications must include hand signed and dated Federal forms.

Funding Opportunity Description: The NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Grant Program, as authorized under the Coral Reef Conservation Act of 2000, provides matching grants of financial assistance through the Domestic Coral Reef Conservation Grant program to institutions of higher education, non-profit organizations, commercial organizations, and local and Indian tribal government agencies. These awards are intended to support coral reef conservation projects in shallow water coral reef ecosystems, including reefs at mesophotic depths, in American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Florida, Guam, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and coral-dominated banks in U.S. portions of the Gulf of Mexico. Projects may be proposed in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands and the U.S. Pacific Remote Island Areas, but these locations are not considered geographic priorities under this announcement.

Proposals submitted to this competition must address at least one of the following four categories: 1) Fishing Impacts; 2) Land-Based Sources of Pollution; 3) Climate Change; and 4) Local and Emerging Management Issues. Each category is described in more detail in the Federal Funding Opportunity announcement. All proposed work must be consistent with Coral Reef Conservation Program (CRCP) National Goals and Objectives 2010-2015 (http://coralreef.noaa.gov/aboutcrpcp/strategy/currentgoals/resources/3threats_go.pdf) and/or the

relevant Jurisdictional Coral Reef Management Priorities (<http://coralreef.noaa.gov/aboutcrctp/strategy/reprioritization/managementpriorities>) developed for each of the seven states and territories. Proposals selected for funding through this solicitation will be implemented through a grant and will require a 1:1 match of non-Federal funds.

Funding for this program is subject to the availability of FY 2015 Congressional appropriations and is expected to range between approximately \$800,000 to approximately \$1,000,000. Funding made available from NOAA's Coral Reef Conservation Program is intended to support priority coral reef management activities as described in Section I(B) of this Federal Funding Opportunity announcement. Funding will be divided among the U.S. Pacific and Atlantic regions to maintain the geographic balance of the CRCP Grant Program portfolio overall, as required by the Coral Reef Conservation Act of 2000. NOAA expects that each applicant will request Federal funding at a funding level between \$30,000 and \$80,000 under this solicitation and that the average award size will be approximately \$50,000.

FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Program Objective

Coral reefs and associated seagrass and mangrove communities are among the most complex and diverse ecosystems on earth. They support important fishing and tourism industries, protect coasts from wave and storm damage, build tropical islands, contain an array of potential pharmaceuticals, and provide essential services like food security, livelihood, and culture, among other benefits.

As shallow-water, near shore communities, coral reef ecosystems are ecologically linked to adjacent watersheds and are highly vulnerable to human activity. Stresses in the coral reef environment include poor water quality from runoff and inadequate sewage treatment, sedimentation, destructive fishing practices, recreational overuse and misuse, and impacts from climate change, including changes in ocean chemistry.

To address these and other threats, Congress passed the Coral Reef Conservation Act of 2000 (Act), which established the NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program (CRCP) and provided guidance for allocation of Federal funding toward efforts to conserve coral reef ecosystems in the United States and internationally. As described in the Act, one of the primary functions of the CRCP is to provide financial assistance to external partners for coral reef conservation projects consistent with the Act and CRCP priorities.

CRCP priorities have been outlined in to focus program investments on three of the most pressing threats to coral reefs: land-based sources of pollution, fishing impacts, and climate impacts. The CRCP's approach for addressing these threats is described in more detail in a number of documents, including:

- *the CRCP Goals and Objectives 2010-2015
(http://coralreef.noaa.gov/aboutcrcp/strategy/currentgoals/resources/3threats_go.pdf);

- *the seven Jurisdictional Coral Reef Management Priorities documents
(<http://coralreef.noaa.gov/aboutcrcp/strategy/reprioritization/managementpriorities>);

- *the Jurisdictional Capacity Assessments, which evaluate each jurisdiction's ability to implement coral reef conservation measures and identify impediments to effective coral reef conservation and management
(<http://coralreef.noaa.gov/aboutcrcp/strategy/reprioritization/capacityassessments/>); and

- *the CRCP International Strategy
(http://coralreef.noaa.gov/aboutcrcp/strategy/currentgoals/resources/intl_strategy.pdf).

These documents are relevant to CRCP grant programs, but some may be more or less relevant to particular competitions. Please refer to the Program Priorities in Section I(B) for details on which of the above documents are most relevant to this funding announcement.

As required under the Act, NOAA published the NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Grant Program Implementation Guidelines on Thursday, August 12, 2010 in Federal Register Vol. 75, No. 155, page 48934. The Guidelines are available at: <http://coralreef.noaa.gov/aboutcrctp/workwithus/funding/grants/welcome.html>.

All applications submitted in response to this Federal Funding Opportunity announcement must be consistent with the requirements stated herein and the CRCP Grant Program Guidelines. Funding is subject to the availability of Federal appropriations.

In FY 2015, the CRCP intends to initiate new awards in the following three funding categories:

1. CRCP Domestic Coral Reef Conservation Grants;
2. CRCP State and Territorial Coral Reef Conservation Cooperative Agreements; and
3. CRCP NGO Partnership Cooperative Agreement.

All of the following information in this funding opportunity announcement pertains only to the CRCP Domestic Coral Reef Conservation Grants funding category.

B. Program Priorities

The Domestic Coral Reef Conservation Grants program will accept applications for projects that fall within at least one of the following four categories: (a) Fishing Impacts; (b) Land-Based Sources of Pollution; (c) Climate Change; and (d) Local and Emerging Management Needs. The awards will support only activities associated with shallow water coral reef ecosystems, including coral reefs at mesophotic depths, in American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Florida, Guam, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, the U.S. and coral-dominated banks in U.S. portions of the Gulf of Mexico. Projects may be proposed in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands (NWHI) and the U.S. Pacific Remote Island Areas (PRIA), but these locations are not considered geographic priorities under this competition. Projects proposed in the NWHI and PRIA must include a statement explaining the relevance of project results to coral reef ecosystems located in the priority geographies noted above.

For the purpose of this solicitation, shallow water coral reef ecosystems include unconsolidated sediments (e.g., sand and mud); mangroves and other emergent vegetation; submerged vegetation (e.g., seagrass and macroalgae); hermatypic coral reefs and associated colonized hardbottom habitats (e.g., spur and groove, individual and aggregated patch reefs,

and gorgonian colonized pavement and bedrock); and uncolonized hardbottom (e.g., reef rubble and uncolonized bedrock). Projects focused on coral reef ecosystems at mesophotic depths must clearly describe how the mesophotic reefs are substantially linked to shallow water coral reefs (i.e., have a meaningful ecological connection between the mesophotic area and associated shallow water coral reefs) to be eligible under this competition.

The principal objective of this grant competition is to provide financial assistance to institutions of higher education, nonprofit organizations, commercial organizations, and local and Indian tribal governments to support domestic coral reef conservation projects in the United States. Proposals must address threats to coral reef ecosystems identified in the CRCP Goals and Objectives 2010-2015 (http://coralreef.noaa.gov/aboutcrp/strategy/currentgoals/resources/3threats_go.pdf), the Jurisdictional Coral Reef Management Priorities documents (<http://coralreef.noaa.gov/aboutcrp/strategy/reprioritization/managementpriorities>), and/or other local or regional planning documents (e.g., Endangered Species Recovery Plans, Watershed Management Plans, Local Action Strategies, or invasive species management plans). These include threats from fishery impacts, land-based sources of pollution, and climate change, and issues identified as local and emerging management needs.

Preference will be given to organizations with a demonstrated track record of conducting successful coral reef conservation projects; projects that involve community-based conservation activities; and projects that develop and disseminate high quality information and materials to relevant user groups and management agencies. Applicants must provide evidence of support (e.g., letter of support, co-principal investigator, or other indication of collaboration) for the project by appropriate representatives of States or other government jurisdictions in which the project will be conducted. Applicants are encouraged to consult with all relevant local governmental and non-governmental entities involved in coral reef conservation activities while developing the application and demonstrate collaboration among these entities.

Research activities are eligible only if: 1) the project conducts applied research that directly contributes to improved management; and 2) the project includes prompt mechanisms to disseminate information to resource managers in addition to peer-reviewed publications (e.g., training of managers to use information or direct presentations to managers on project activities and outcomes); or 3) the research activity is a listed Jurisdictional Coral Reef Management Priority, in which case the applicant must cite the specific priority and obtain a letter of support from the local coral reef management authority that will utilize the research results.

Proposed projects addressing the categories below must be consistent with CRCP Goals and Objectives 2010-2015 and the Jurisdictional Coral Reef Management Priorities documents referenced above. Applicants are also encouraged to show how the proposed

activity contributes to other management efforts and plans (e.g., watershed management plans, conservation action plans, Local Action Strategies, communication and outreach strategies, and marine protected area (MPA) management plans) if applicable, and provide a link to the specific document whenever possible.

Details of the four categories are as follows:

1. Fishing Impacts: Activities under this category must address at least one of the following topics:

a. Obtaining essential life history and ecological information on key species or functional groups to support management actions that reduce the impacts of fishing;

b. Addressing information gaps related to fishing effort on coral reef ecosystems by measuring fishing intensity, mortality, frequency, area coverage, and/or community dependence to inform management activities;

c. Identifying and characterizing spawning sites, nursery habitats, other areas critical to particular life-history stages; biodiversity hotspots; or coral reef areas with the greatest resilience;

d. Increasing participation of stakeholder or citizen groups in fisheries management planning, decision-making, and monitoring activities that improve conservation of coral reef ecosystems;

e. Working with relevant agencies, offices, and communities to create, implement, and improve the management of MPAs that protect key coral reef ecosystem components and functions;

f. Increasing public compliance with fishery regulations and MPA regulations that reduce fishing impacts on coral reef ecosystems, such as through establishment of community watch groups and provision of training workshops for enforcement personnel and/or prior violators; and

g. Developing targeted, locally-relevant outreach and communication strategies to increase community understanding and support for regulations to protect key coral reef ecosystems.

2. Land-Based Sources of Pollution (LBSP): Activities under this category must address at least one of the following topics:

a. Working with local communities and jurisdictions to develop and/or implement watershed management plans or conservation action plans in designated priority coral reef associated watersheds (priority sites have been identified for each jurisdiction in the

jurisdictional management priorities documents found at:
<http://coralreef.noaa.gov/aboutcrp/strategy/reprioritization/managementpriorities/>);

b. Conducting applied research to address strategic scientific gaps that lead to informed management decisions related to planning and implementing activities in priority coral reef ecosystems and associated watersheds (e.g., identifying the causes and sources of pollution or estimating load reductions expected from implementation of specific management measures); and

c. Conducting targeted outreach to increase awareness and understanding of ecological and socioeconomic impacts of land-based pollution on coral reefs to bolster local support for the implementation of watershed management plans or conservation action plans that have been developed for priority coral reef associated watersheds.

Preference will be given to projects that are located within priority watersheds identified in the Jurisdictional Management Priority documents that have established, approved watershed management plans, and projects that are well-coordinated with ongoing activities sponsored by the local point of contact agency. Activities proposed under this category must focus on implementing projects from approved watershed management plans that reduce LBSP inputs to coral reef ecosystems. These projects will receive preference because they contribute to CRCP performance metric L1 PM2: Number of projects completed from approved Watershed Management Plans and Conservation Action Plans to reduce LBSP in priority coral reef areas. For more information about this and other CRCP performance metrics, please visit: <http://coralreef.noaa.gov/aboutcrp/howwework/#success>.

3. Climate Change and Ocean Acidification: Activities under this category must address at least one of the following topics:

a. Conducting socioeconomic assessments of the effects of climate impacts on reef-dependent social and economic systems through the application of established assessment protocols, such as the SocMon and SEM-Pasifika regional socioeconomic monitoring guidelines found at: www.socmon.org;

b. Promoting conservation of coral reef ecosystems through identification of areas that are potentially resilient to climate change and vulnerable areas where actions are likely to increase resilience;

c. Characterizing the response of coral reef ecosystems and their related components to climate change and ocean acidification; and

d. Developing and testing intervention measures to reduce stress from climate change and ocean acidification on coral reef ecosystems.

Preference will be given to projects that contribute to CRCP performance metric C1 PM1: Number of new or enhanced tools implemented to improve management preparedness and response to climate change and ocean acidification. For more information about this and other CRCP performance metrics, please visit: <http://coralreef.noaa.gov/aboutcrcp/howwework/#success>.

4. Local and Emerging Management Needs: For this category, the applicant must identify the specific management need the proposal will address and explain how the proposed project activities and/or products will contribute to meeting the stated need. Proposals under this category may address only the following topics:

a. Reducing invasive species impacts to coral reef ecosystems, including projects that address the proliferation of lionfish (*Pterois volitans*) in Florida and the U.S. Caribbean and invasive algae and fish species in the Pacific Islands;

b. Supporting recovery of Endangered Species Act-listed coral species, through filling critical information gaps about their locations, habitats, depth ranges, early life history, and field identification methods for the 66 coral species currently proposed for listing as well as for previously listed species of *Acropora* (i.e., in Florida and the U.S. Caribbean: <http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/endangered%20species/Updated%20Recovery%20Outline.pdf>);

c. Investigating coral diseases that are directly correlated with LBSP inputs or climate change impacts; and

d. Increasing the sustainability of the marine aquarium trade involving coral reef species found in U.S. waters through quantifying the ecological impacts associated with aquarium fisheries and the removal of rare and endemic organisms, or by developing educational materials for aquarium hobbyists to reduce mortality of species kept in home aquariums.

All projects funded through this competition are expected to result in tangible improvements in the condition of coral reef ecosystems. To achieve this outcome, applicants must specify the activities they will undertake as well as the specific outputs, products and outcomes that are expected to result from funded proposals. Specific outputs may include:

a. Support to management authorities in the form of management plans, legislation, regulations or policies, best management practices, communication and outreach tools, and/or applied research aimed at enhancing local capacity to conserve coral reef resources;

b. Environmental data, including recorded and derived observations and measurements of the physical, chemical, biological, geological, and geophysical properties and conditions of the oceans and/or atmosphere, as well as correlative data, such as socio-economic data and media (e.g. recordings, photos, videos etc.), and their accompanying metadata files, which must comply with standards developed or endorsed by the Federal Geographic Data

Committee (<http://www.fgdc.gov>). The FGDC has recently endorsed the use of International Standards Organization (ISO) 19115 Parts 1 and 2 and representation standard ISO 19139 for documenting environmental data and information (<http://www.ncddc.noaa.gov/metadata-standards/>). If you are documenting geospatial data in accordance with the FGDC Content Standard for Digital Geospatial Data this template identifies the minimum fields CRCP required for a complete record:

http://coris.noaa.gov/data/examples/bamf_min_crcp_fields.txt. All data products must be archived in multiple locations and provided to CRCP for long-term storage in accordance with the terms of the award and the award's Data/Information Sharing Plan, as described in Section IV(B)15; and

c. Other outputs, such as assessments, publications, summary reports, outreach and education materials, and other useful products that provide resource managers and the public with timely and readily understandable information on coral reefs. These outputs and products must be identified in the original application as described in Section IV(B)4 and must be provided to NOAA at the end of the award period; products of awards may be made available to the public via NOAA's Coral Reef Information System. As such, all products must be of publishable quality, be written in English unless another language is specified in the application and approved by NOAA, and include appropriate acknowledgement of the support provided by NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program as described at:

<http://coralreef.noaa.gov/aboutcrp/whoweare/graphic/>.

C. Program Authority

Authority for the NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Grant Program is provided by Section 6403 (Coral Reef Conservation Program) of the Coral Reef Conservation Act of 2000 (16 U.S.C. 6401 et seq).

II. Award Information

A. Funding Availability

Funding for this program is subject to the availability of FY 2015 Congressional appropriations and is expected to range between approximately \$800,000 and \$1,000,000. NOAA will not accept proposals requesting less than \$30,000 or more than \$80,000 in Federal support under this solicitation. It is expected that the average award size will be \$50,000.

There is no limit on the number of applications that can be submitted by the same applicant during the FY 2015 competitive grant cycle. However, multiple applications submitted by the same applicant must clearly differentiate projects and must be successful in the competitive review process. The number of awards made as a result of this solicitation

will depend on the number of eligible applications received, the amount of funds requested for each project, the merit and ranking of the proposals, and the amount of funds made available to the Coral Reef Conservation Program by Congress. In addition, funding will be divided between the U.S. Pacific and U.S. Atlantic/Caribbean to meet requirements for geographic distribution of funds as described in the Coral Reef Conservation Act.

Attempts will also be made to fund one or more projects in each jurisdiction, provided that the project addresses priorities outlined above, it is identified as having sufficient merit, and it meets all other requirements as stipulated in this solicitation. Funds have not yet been appropriated for this program, and there is no guarantee that sufficient funds will be available to make awards for all qualified projects. Publication of this notice does not oblige NOAA to award any specific project or to obligate any available funds.

There is no guarantee that funds will be available to make awards for this funding opportunity or that any proposal will be selected for funding. If an applicant incurs any costs prior to receiving an award agreement signed by an authorized NOAA official, they do so at their own risk of these costs not being included in a subsequent award. In no event will NOAA or the Department of Commerce be responsible for any proposal preparation costs. Recipients and sub-recipients are subject to all Federal laws and agency policies, regulations, and procedures applicable to Federal financial assistance awards. Applicants must be in good standing with all existing NOAA awards in order to receive funds.

B. Project/Award Period

Projects with an award period of either 12- or 18-months will be considered for funding under this competition; the requested award start date must begin on the first day of the month and end on the last day of the month. Proposals may include an award start date no earlier than July 1, 2015. If an application for a financial assistance is selected for funding, the CRCP has no obligation to provide any additional funding in connection with that award in subsequent years. Funding for subsequent years will require submission of a new application, which will compete with other project proposals submitted during the subsequent competition. If an applicant wishes to continue work on a project funded through this program beyond the project period and obligated award funds have not been expended by the end of the period, the applicant must apply for a no-cost extension at least 30 days prior to the end date of the award. Renewal of an award to increase funding or to extend the period of performance is at the discretion of NOAA.

C. Type of Funding Instrument

Successful applicants will enter into a grant agreement with NOAA's Coral Reef Conservation Program.

III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applicants

Institutions of higher education, non-profit organizations, commercial organizations, and local and Indian tribal government agencies are eligible to apply for funding under this funding category. U.S. federal, state, territory, and commonwealth governments and Regional Fishery Management Councils are not eligible to apply under this funding category.

NOAA CRCP staff is available to provide general information on programmatic goals and objectives, ongoing coral reef conservation programs/activities, and regional funding priorities. However, NOAA employees or contractors are not permitted to assist in the preparation of applications or write letters of support for any application. For proposals that involve collaboration with current NOAA projects or staff, NOAA employees may provide a statement confirming the degree and nature of the collaboration. For applications working in National Marine Sanctuaries or with protected species, NOAA employees may provide a statement acknowledging the utility of the proposed work to meet management priorities. Letters of support from NOAA employees will be discarded from application materials prior to technical review. Federal employee travel and salaries are not allowable costs under this funding category. Please direct all questions about this competition, including application procedures and selection criteria, to the Federal Program Officer listed under Section VII. Agency Contacts.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement

All awards of financial assistance provided by the NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Grant Program (Grant Program) under the authority of the Coral Reef Conservation Act (Act) of 2000 are subject to the matching fund requirements described below. As per section 6403(b)(1) of the Act, Federal funds for any coral conservation project funded under this Grant Program may not exceed 50 percent of the total cost of the award. Therefore, any coral conservation project under this Grant Program requires a 1:1 contribution of non-Federal matching funds. Matching funds may come from a variety of public and private sources and may include in-kind goods and services such as private boat use and volunteer labor. Applicants are permitted to combine contributions from multiple non-federal partners in order to meet the 1:1 match requirement, as long as such contributions are not being used to match any Federal funds received under another award. Federal sources cannot be considered as matching funds, but can be described in the budget narrative to demonstrate additional leverage.

Applicants must specify in their proposal the source(s) of match and may be asked to provide letters of commitment to confirm stated match contributions. Applicants whose proposals are selected for funding will be bound by the percentage of cost sharing reflected in the award document signed by the NOAA Grants Officer and the recipient organization. Applicants must be prepared to document matching contributions for each project selected for funding.

As per Section 6403(b)(2) of the Coral Reef Conservation Act of 2000, the NOAA Administrator may waive all or part of the matching requirement if the Administrator determines that the project meets the following two requirements:

1. No reasonable means are available through which an applicant can meet the matching requirement, and
2. The probable benefit of such project outweighs the public interest in such matching requirement.

In the case of a waiver request, the applicant must provide a detailed justification explaining the need for the waiver including attempts to obtain sources of matching funds, how the benefit of the project outweighs the public interest in providing match, and any other extenuating circumstances preventing the availability of match. Match waiver requests, including the appropriate justification, must be submitted as part of the final application package.

Please Note: applicants who are eligible to claim the matching funds exemption contained in 48 U.S.C. 1469a(d) may request use of the waiver for part or all of the matching requirement. Please contact the individual listed in section VII. Agency Contacts for more information about eligibility for this exemption.

C. Other Criteria that Affect Eligibility

Applicants requesting indirect costs are required to submit a copy of their current, signed indirect cost rate agreement with their application package.

If an award recipient has not previously established an indirect cost rate with a Federal agency, the negotiation and approval of a rate is subject to the procedures required by NOAA and the Department of Commerce. The U.S. Department of Commerce, Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions require that recipients within 90 days of the award start date, submit the documentation (indirect cost proposal, cost allocation plan, etc.) necessary to perform the review to Lamar Revis, Grants Officer, NOAA Grants Management Division, 1325 East West Highway, 9th Floor, Silver Spring, Maryland 20910.

IV. Application and Submission Information

A. Address to Request Application Package

The standard application package is available at through the apply function on Grants.gov or <http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/forms/sf-424-family.html#sortby=1>. For applicants without Internet access, an application package may be requested by contacting the Federal Program Officer and technical point of contact for the CRCP Domestic Coral Reef Conservation Grants, Liz Fairey. She can be reached at 301-427-8632, or via email at Liz.Fairey@noaa.gov.

B. Content and Form of Application

The application process for this grant competition requires submission of a complete application on or before the submission date and time listed in Section IV (C) Submission Dates and Times. All application materials must use a legible 12-point font with 1-inch margins on all sides. For each application, the information provided in elements 1-6 (described below) may not exceed 30 pages total; the 30-page limit does not apply to required federal forms and other documentation (elements 7-16 below). Applications that exceed the 30-page limit will be shortened by removing pages at the end of the project narrative (element 3 below) before it is forwarded to merit reviewers. Because the pages excised from lengthy applications will not be reviewed, activities described therein will not be eligible for funding consideration. Reviewers will be instructed to deduct points from applications that are incomplete, unclear, or contain numerous typographical errors, so applicants are advised to review their application materials closely before they are submitted to the agency for consideration.

Applications must follow the format described below; failure to follow these requirements may result in the application being eliminated from the competition.

Each application must include the following information in this order:

1. Application Cover Sheet (1-page limit), which includes:

- a) Applicant name and contact information;
- b) Applicant organization;
- c) Primary and alternate points of contact;
- d) Contact information for the primary and alternate points of contact, including address, phone number, and e-mail address;
- e) Project title;
- f) Geographic location of the proposed project;

g) Amount of Federal funding requested;

h) Amount and source(s) of matching funds provided;

i) Requested award start date, which must be the first day of the month, end date, which must be the last day of the month, and an award period of either 12 or 18-months duration. Proposals may include an award start date no earlier than July 1, 2015; and

j) The specific priority or priorities (see Section I(B)) that the proposal will address. If the proposal addresses more than one priority, the applicant must list the priority that most closely reflects the overall objective of the proposal, followed by additional priorities.

k) Application summary/abstract - a brief, one-paragraph description of the application including an overview of the types of activities that are proposed for funding.

2. Project Summary (1-page limit) describing:

a. Status and magnitude of the issue(s) in the jurisdiction where the project will occur and recent actions undertaken to address the issue(s);

b. A description of how the project proposes to address the issue;

c. The partners that will be involved in the project;

d. A summary of the specific tasks to be accomplished and the proposed approach;

e. Expected outcomes of the proposed work; and

f. A description of how performance will be evaluated.

This information may be utilized during Congressional Notification and shared with the public.

3. Project Narrative

The Project Narrative comprises the majority of the application and must include a clear and thorough description of the proposed work including a timeline with milestones. Each task must be completely and accurately described. Sufficient detail must be provided to enable reviewers to evaluate the relevance and applicability of proposed work to program goals, to determine the technical/scientific merit of the proposed work, to adequately review the qualifications of the applicants, and to assess whether the proposed scope of work raises any concerns with regard to Federal policy considerations, such as those related to the National Environmental Policy Act, the Endangered Species Act, the Historic Preservation Act, etc. Applicants must clearly describe how the project will directly benefit coral reef management efforts. Elements of a good project narrative include:

a. Identification of issue(s): Identify the problem/issue the project intends to address and describe its significance to the conservation of U.S. coral reef ecosystems.

b. Project objectives: Identify the specific objective, listed under I. Funding Opportunity Description, B. Program Priorities, to which the project's objective(s) corresponds. Objectives must be simple and understandable, as specific and quantitative as possible, and attainable within the proposed timeframe, the described budget, and the human resources available. Projects must be accomplishment-oriented and identify obtainable goals, outcomes, and products. Describe expected outcomes, results, or products resulting from the specific activities undertaken during the project period; these are also summarized in the Table of Anticipated Products and Outcomes (element 4).

c. Task Description and Methodology: The project narrative is the scientific or technical plan of activities that are to be accomplished, and must be written with sufficient detail to allow reviewers to evaluate the suitability of the proposed work and the likelihood of successful completion in the stated timeframe. Please ensure your project narrative includes detailed descriptions of each activity, including the rationale for the activity, how it will be accomplished, specific milestones, and expected products. The narrative must include information on dissemination of the findings/results to resource managers, local communities, and other stakeholders as appropriate. The project narrative also needs to include information on how the project will be evaluated for success. If the work is one component of a larger project (or the activity is a pilot project for a larger initiative), and proposed activities will continue after the end of the grant period, describe future activities and potential future funding sources (and other mechanisms) to continue the work. If the goal of the project is to build capacity for improved conservation, describe proposed plans to ensure the activities continue into the future and how success will be evaluated.

d. Timeline: A description of specific activities and associated timelines necessary to meet them. Describe the time lines in increments (e.g., month 1, month 2, etc. or 1st quarter, 2nd quarter, etc.), rather than by specific dates.

e. List the programs (Federal, state, territorial or local governmental activities) this project would affect and describe how the project coordinates with relevant state, territorial, or local governmental and non-governmental agencies, and if applicable, NOAA activities.

f. Describe how the project will be organized and managed, and include the qualifications of the principal investigator(s) by providing curricula vitae or resumes. The principal investigator may or may not be the applicant. However, if the applicant is not the principal investigator, there must be an explanation of the relationship between the applicant and principal investigator (e.g., the applicant may be responsible for managing the grant funds and the principal investigator will be responsible for completing the work). Please also

include information about the specific responsibilities of other personnel funded through the proposal, including the technical and administrative points of contact as appropriate.

4. Table of Anticipated Products and Outcomes

Please provide a table to summarize the specific products and outcomes that will be produced under the award. All products resulting from Federally-funded awards must be provided to NOAA within 90 days of the end of the award period and must be of publishable quality. NOAA may make award products available to the public, so recipients are encouraged to omit sensitive information (i.e., budget or salary information) from products submitted to NOAA. All products must explicitly acknowledge the support of NOAA's Coral Reef Conservation Program according to the guidance available at: <http://coralreef.noaa.gov/aboutcrp/whoweare/graphic/>.

The information in the table must include all products and outputs that will be developed in conjunction with the award. For each entry, please provide a description of the product, a working title for the product, the type or format of the product (e.g., journal publication, public service announcement, watershed management plan, presentation, newsletter, metadata record, annual monitoring summary), and the expected date(s) when the product will be submitted to NOAA. NOAA will use this information to ensure that products are submitted to the agency in a timely manner and made available to the public whenever possible.

5. Budget Narrative and Justification

In order to allow reviewers to fully evaluate the appropriateness of proposed costs, all applications must include a detailed breakdown of costs by standard cost category in table format with separate columns showing the relative contribution of Federal and non-Federal matching funds. A detailed budget narrative must accompany the budget table to clearly explain and justify all proposed expenses. The budget narrative must also document the source(s) of all matching funds.

The information in the budget narrative must match the dollar amounts on all required forms and describe, by category of expenditure, the total cost to accomplish the work. Budget categories must correspond to the Object Class Categories listed in Section B of the Standard Form-424A (<http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/forms/sf-424-family.html#sortby=1>):

a. Personnel costs, including salary and wages, must be itemized by individual or principal investigator (PI) and indicate the number of months requested per year per PI as a percentage of their normal salary. Support for each individual must be commensurate with their stated involvement, which may or may not correspond to their current position. Any unnamed personnel (graduate students, post-doctoral researchers, technicians) must be

identified by their job title, and their personnel costs explained similar to PI personnel costs above.

b. Fringe benefits must be identified separately from salary and wages; fringe benefit rates must be applied consistently and equally to both Federal and non-Federal (matching) funds. Funds for salaries and fringe benefits may be requested only for those personnel who are directly involved in implementing the proposed project and whose salaries and fringe benefits are directly related to specific products or outcomes of the proposed project. NOAA strongly encourages applicants to request reasonable amounts of funding for salaries and fringe benefits to ensure that your proposal is competitive.

c. Travel costs must be broken out by traveler name/position, destination, purpose of travel, number of people traveling and projected costs per person. Briefly describe each travel request and explain how the proposed travel is necessary for successful completion of the project. Projected travel costs must be inclusive of transport costs, lodging costs, and per diem expenses for all travelers, which are to be described in detail in the budget narrative. If travel details for a particular trip are unknown, explain the basis for estimating proposed costs. Applicants must adhere to the provisions of the 'Fly America Act' and use U.S.-flagged vessels for transport, unless a specific waiver to this provision has been secured. Any foreign travel necessary to implement the project must be highlighted in the project and budget narratives since foreign travel requires prior approval of the agency and may require additional clearances.

d. "Equipment" is non-expendable, tangible personal property with a unit cost of \$5,000 or more and a useful life of more than one year. Items that do not meet the equipment definition may be included under supplies. Each piece of equipment must be described separately and reference the type/model to be purchased and its contribution to the achievement of the project goals. General use equipment (i.e., computers, printers, etc.) must be used 100% for the proposed project if charged directly to the award; if the equipment will be used for multiple projects, only a portion of the expense that is commensurate with the actual use of the equipment during the project may be requested. Equipment must be inventoried periodically and accounted for in progress reports; recipients must also document dispensation of equipment through submission of SF-428/429 forms as required by NOAA. Equipment purchase is not a priority under this funding announcement.

e. Supplies must be itemized to the level of detail known or may be based on established historical costs. Whenever possible, please include the quantity/number of units, cost per unit, and a justification of the expenses. Examples of items that typically fall into the 'supplies' category include office supplies, snorkel and/or dive gear, monitoring supplies, fuel for vessels, basic computer hardware and software, cameras, and outreach materials.

f. Contractual costs must be itemized separately, according to standard budget categories that appear in the SF-424A; all types of contractual costs must be aggregated in the Contractual line on the SF-424A and explained in detail in the budget narrative. Applicants must indicate the basis for each contract's cost estimate and specify the products or services to be obtained through all contracts. Based on new reporting requirements contained in the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006, all subawards of \$25,000 or greater, whether in the form of a subcontract or subgrant, must be documented per the Federal Subaward Reporting System (FSRS; www.FSRS.gov); a separate SF-424A must also be submitted for each subaward of \$25,000 or greater.

g. Other costs must be listed by type of material or nature of expense and itemized by quantity/number of units and cost per unit if applicable. Examples of costs that are typically included in the 'other' category include stipends, honoraria, and publication costs. Limited publication costs will only be considered if the resulting journal publication will be made available to the public free of charge.

h. Indirect costs may be requested if the applicant has an established a negotiated indirect cost rate agreement (NICRA) 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. For this solicitation, the Federal share of the indirect costs awarded may not exceed 25 percent of the Federal direct costs proposed. For those situations in which the use of the applicant's indirect cost rate would result in indirect costs greater than 25 percent of the Federal direct costs proposed, the difference may be counted as part of the non-Federal share. See Section III(C) for more details on establishing an indirect cost rate with NOAA.

CRCP will not consider expenses associated with fees, fund-raising activities, or travel for activities not directly related to project implementation, travel or salaries for Federal employees, or profit as allowable costs in the proposed budget. The total costs of a project consist of all allowable costs incurred in accomplishing project activities during the project period. Project costs can only include support for activities conducted between the effective start date and end date of the award, and cannot include activities undertaken either before or after the agreed upon dates. Applicants will not be reimbursed for time expended or costs incurred in developing a project or in preparing an application, or in any discussions or negotiations with the agency prior to the award. Such expenditures may not be considered as part of the applicant's cost share or matching funds.

6. Supporting Documents

This section includes the qualifications of the primary project personnel and letters of support received from the relevant jurisdictional representatives, partners or communities

involved in the project. The applicant must provide evidence of support for the proposed project from an appropriate representative of the State, Territory, Commonwealth, or non-NOAA Federal Agency or a letter acknowledging the utility of the work if it will occur within a National Marine Sanctuary. Additional letters of support are not required, but are encouraged.

7. Standard Form 424

At the time of final application submission, all applicants must submit a signed and dated copy of Standard Form SF-424, "Application for Federal Assistance," to indicate the total amount of Federal funds and non-Federal matching funds proposed for the project period. Original signatures with the date are required on all hard copy SF-424 forms submitted by mail; an electronic signature is applied automatically when an organization's authorized representative successfully submits an application via www.grants.gov.

8. Standard Form 424A

At time of application submission, all applicants are required to submit a SF-424A Budget Form. The first column of sections A and B shows the Federal funds requested, while the second column of sections A and B shows the non-Federal matching funds provided for the project. Total funding is shown in the final column of section B. Non-federal funding is broken out by source in section C. Forecasted cash needs in Section D are inclusive of all funding for the project; in the case of an 18-month project, each 'quarter' represents 4.5 months. Both Federal and non-Federal funds must be expended at a similar rate throughout the course of the project. Section E may be left blank. Section F summarizes the direct charges in line 21 and lists the indirect charges requested; please show the rate used in line 22. Please note that completion of the SF-424A form as described above represents NOAA's preference and may not be consistent with the instructions that accompany the SF-424A form. All budget figures must match the funding requested on the application cover sheet and correspond with the descriptions contained in the project and budget narratives.

9. Standard Form 424B

At time of application submission, all applicants are required to submit a signed SF-424B, Assurances for Non-Construction Programs.

10. Standard Form CD-511

The applicant must also include a completed form CD-511, Certifications Regarding Debarment, Suspension, and Other Responsibility Matters, Drug-Free Workplace Requirements, and Lobbying.

11. Permits

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

12. Match waiver request (if applicable)

Preference under this competition will be given to applicants who provide a 1:1 or greater ratio of matching funds to Federal funds in accordance with the provisions of the Coral Reef Conservation Act. If the proposal lacks sufficient matching funds, the applicant may include a separate document in which the applicant requests a waiver to the matching funds requirement as described in section 6403(b)(2) of the Act. Although the CRCP will consider these requests, in most cases, waivers of matching funds will not be provided for applicants to this competition. Please address all waiver requests to John Christensen, CRCP Manager, NOAA National Ocean Service, 1305 East West Highway, 10th Floor, SSMC4, N/ORM, Silver Spring, MD 20910 and provide a detailed justification explaining the need for the waiver, the total amount of matching funds requested to be waived, attempts to obtain sources of matching funds, how the benefit of the project outweighs the public interest in providing match, and any other circumstances preventing the availability of match. For more details see Section III(B).

13. Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (if applicable)

If the applicant requests Indirect Costs as part of their application, a copy of the current, approved negotiated indirect cost rate agreement (NICRA) with the Federal Government must be included with the final application package. If the applicant does not have a current NICRA and plans to seek reimbursement for indirect costs, documentation necessary to establish a rate must be submitted within 90 days of receiving an award. See Section III(C) for more details on establishing an indirect cost rate with NOAA.

14. Other Federal Forms (if applicable)

Applicants may be required to disclose lobbying activities by filling out form SF-LLL. Non-profit Organizations, Sole Proprietorship, Partnerships, Corporations and Joint Ventures are required to submit form CD-346 'Applicant for Federal Assistance'.

15. Data/Information Sharing Plan

Environmental data and information collected and/or created under NOAA grants or cooperative agreements must be made visible, accessible, and independently understandable to general users, free of charge or at minimal cost, in a timely manner (typically no later than two years after the data are collected or created), except where limited by law, regulation,

policy or by security requirements. To comply with NOAA Administrative Order 212-15, a Data/Information Sharing Plan of no more than two pages is required as part of the Project Narrative, and must include:

a. Descriptions of the types of environmental data and information to be created during the course of the project [environmental data includes recorded and derived observations and measurements of the physical, chemical, biological, geological, and geophysical properties and conditions of the oceans and atmosphere, as well as correlative data, such as socio-economic data and media (recordings, photos, videos etc.)];

b. The tentative date by which data will be shared (typically no later than two years after the data are collected or created);

c. The standards to be used for data/metadata format and content (NOAA has endorsed the use of ISO Standards for documenting environmental data and information);

d. Policies addressing data stewardship and preservation;

e. Procedures for providing access, data, and security (all data products must be archived in multiple locations and provided to NOAA for long-term storage); and

f. Where possible, prior experience in publishing such data.

PIs must indicate how and when they have made their data accessible and usable by the community in the past. Information on NOAA's Environmental Data Management Policy is available under:

http://www.coporatesservices.noaa.gov/ames/administrative_orders/chapter_212/212-15.pdf.

The Data/Information Sharing Plan will be reviewed as part of the evaluation criteria described in Section V(A). The Data/Information Sharing Plan (and any subsequent revisions or updates) will be made available publicly at time of award and will be posted with the published data. The Data Sharing Plan provided in the final application will be made available by NOAA on behalf of the recipient at the start of the award period. Failure to share environmental data and information in accordance with the submitted Data/Information Sharing Plan may lead to disallowed costs and be considered by NOAA when making future award decisions.

16. National Environmental Policy Act

As required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), NOAA must analyze the potential environmental impacts of applications that request Federal funding. Detailed information on NOAA compliance with NEPA can be found at the following websites:

<http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/>; NOAA Administrative Order 216-6 for NEPA

(http://www.corporateservices.noaa.gov/~ames/NAOs/Chap_216/naos_216_6.html); and Council on Environmental Quality implementation regulations

(http://ceq.hss.doe.gov/nepa/regs/ceq/toc_ceq.htm). Consequently, as part of the application package, applicants are required to provide detailed information on the activities to be conducted, locations, sites, species and habitats that may be affected, construction activities, and all other environmental concerns that may exist (e.g., the use and disposal of hazardous or toxic chemicals, introduction of non-indigenous species, impacts to endangered and threatened species, aquaculture projects, and impacts to coral reef systems, etc.).

Applicants proposing coral reef conservation activities that cannot be categorically excluded from further NEPA analysis or that are not covered by the Programmatic Environmental Assessment (PEA) and FONSI prepared for the NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Grant Program (http://coralreef.noaa.gov/aboutcrp/workwithus/funding/grants/resources/coral_pea_final_05.pdf) will be notified after the peer review stage and may be requested to assist in the preparation of an environmental assessment prior to offer of an award. Applicants are required to cooperate with NOAA in identifying feasible measures to reduce or avoid any potential adverse environmental impacts of their proposal. The failure to do so shall be grounds for rejection of an application. In some cases, if additional information is required after an application is selected, funds may be withheld by the NOAA Grants Officer under a special award condition to require the recipient to submit additional environmental compliance information sufficient to enable NOAA to make an assessment on any impacts that a project may have on the environment.

Under the NEPA, NOAA must analyze the potential environmental impacts of projects or proposals seeking funding from NOAA.

The applicant must complete the following sections of the Environmental Compliance Questionnaire for National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Federal Financial Assistance Applicants (OMB Approval No.: 0648-0538) to provide detailed information on the activities to be conducted, locations, sites, species and habitat to be affected, possible construction activities, and any environmental concerns that may exist (e.g., the use and disposal of hazardous or toxic chemicals, introduction of non-indigenous species, impacts to endangered and threatened species, aquaculture projects, and impacts to coral reef systems).

Question C1. Is the proposed activity going to be conducted in partnership with NOAA or would the proposed activity require NOAA's direct involvement, activity, or oversight? If yes, describe NOAA's involvement, activity, or oversight, including the name of the office or program that is involved.

Question C2. Would the proposed activity involve any other Federal agency(ies) partnership, direct involvement, activity, or oversight? If yes, provide the name(s) of the agency(ies) and describe its involvement, activity, or oversight.

Question D1. Provide a brief description of the location of the proposed activity.

Question E1. List any Federal, state, or local permits, authorizations, or waivers that would be required to complete the proposed activity. Provide the date the permit, authorization, or waiver was obtained or will be obtained. Provide copies of the permit, authorization, or waiver as appropriate. Was a NEPA analysis prepared for the permit, authorization, or waiver? If yes, state the title of the NEPA analysis and provide copies of the NEPA analysis.

Question F1. Is there the potential for the proposed activity to cause changes that would be different from normal ambient conditions (for example, temperature, light, turbidity, noise, other human activity levels, etc.)? If yes, describe the changes and the circumstances that would cause these changes.

After the application is submitted, NOAA may require additional information to fulfill NEPA requirements. If NOAA determines that an environmental assessment is required, applicants may also be requested to assist in drafting the assessment. Applicants may also be required to cooperate with NOAA in identifying and implementing feasible measures to reduce or avoid any identified adverse environmental impacts of their proposal. The failure to do so shall be grounds for the denial of an application. In some cases if additional information is required after an application is selected, funds can be withheld by the Grants Officer under a special award condition requiring the recipient to submit additional environmental compliance information sufficient to enable NOAA to make an assessment on any impacts that a project may have on the environment.

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 for NEPA, http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/NAO216_6.pdf and the Council on Environmental Quality implementation regulations http://ceq.hss.doe.gov/ceq_regulations/regulations.html or http://www.csc.noaa.gov/funding/_pdf/CEQ%20Regulations%20for%20Implementing%20the%20Procedural%20Provisions%20of%20NEPA.pdf

C. Submission Dates and Times

Complete applications must be submitted electronically via www.grants.gov by 11:59 PM EST on Wednesday, January 7, 2015 to be considered for funding. If Grants.gov cannot be reasonably used, hard copy applications may be submitted by mail or provided to a delivery service and documented with a receipt by 11:59 PM EST on Wednesday, January 7, 2015.

Applications postmarked or provided to a delivery service after that date and time will not be accepted. Applications submitted via U.S. Postal Service must have an official postmark; private metered postmarks are not acceptable. In any event, applications received

more than 10 business days after the postmarked closing date will not be accepted. All mailed applications must include hand signed and dated Federal forms.

There will be no extensions beyond these submission dates and times. If an application is not submitted through Grants.gov or postmarked by the deadline as described above, it will not be considered for funding.

D. Intergovernmental Review

Applications under this competition are subject to Executive Order 12372, intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs. Any applicant submitting an application for funding is required to complete item 16 on SF-424 regarding clearance by the State Single Point of Contact established as a result of EO 12372. The following states and territories have elected to require review of applications by a Single Point of Contact: American Samoa, CNMI, the District of Columbia, Florida, Guam, Puerto Rico, Texas, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. This list is not meant to be exhaustive and only includes the locations where most coral reef projects occur; applicants proposing work in alternate locations are advised to establish whether their application is subject to the EO 12372 prior to submission by reviewing the list of contacts provided at: http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants_spoc.

E. Funding Restrictions

1. Ineligible projects:

The following projects will not be eligible for funding: (1) Activities that constitute legally required mitigation for the adverse effects of an activity regulated or otherwise governed by state or Federal law; (2) Activities that constitute mitigation for natural resource damages under Federal or state law; and (3) Activities that are required by a separate consent decree, court order, statute or regulation.

2. Cost Principles

Funds awarded cannot necessarily pay for all the costs that the recipient might incur in the course of carrying out the proposed work. Allowable costs are determined by reference to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Circulars, 2 CFR, Part 220, "Cost Principles for Educational Institutions"; 2 CFR, Part 225, "Cost Principles for State, Local and Indian Tribal Governments"; and 2 CFR, Part 230 "Cost Principles for Nonprofit Organizations", respectively. By the deadline for submission to this FFO on January 7, 2015, the current cost principles will have been replaced by the new Omni-circular 2 CFR Part 200. Recipients will be subject to these new OMB Circulars and as well as any Department of Commerce implementing regulation that may be in effect if selected for award. Generally, costs that are allowable include salaries, fringe benefits, travel, equipment, supplies, and

training, as long as the costs are determined to be necessary, reasonable, and allocable to the award.

3. Permits and Approvals

It is the responsibility of the applicant to obtain all necessary Federal, state, and local government permits and approvals for the proposed work. For work within National Marine Sanctuaries, National Parks, National Seashores, and other Federally-designated managed areas, it is the responsibility of the applicant to request and obtain any necessary permits or letters of agreement from the appropriate government agencies prior to commencement of an award. For applicants who intend to conduct research or monitoring activities on any coral species that are listed as endangered under the Endangered Species Act, you will likely need a ESA Section 10(a)(1)(A) permit, for more information see:

<http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/permits/corals.htm>. Even though the agency's determination on whether to list additional coral species under ESA had not been made prior to the publication of this announcement, it is beneficial for applicants to prepare to start the permit application process as soon as possible after finalization of any new listing since the permitting process may take up to a year to complete.

Applicants are expected to design their proposals so that they minimize potential adverse impact on the environment. If applicable, documentation of requests or approvals of environmental permits must be included in the proposal package. Applications will be reviewed to ensure that they have sufficient environmental documentation to allow program staff to determine whether the proposal is categorically excluded from further National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis or whether an environmental assessment is necessary to conform to the requirements of NEPA. For those applications needing an environmental assessment, applicants will be informed after the peer review stage and will be requested to assist in the preparation of the assessment. Final approval of the award and authorization for expenditure of funds are dependent on the applicant obtaining the necessary permits and approval of the NEPA analysis by NOAA. Applicants are encouraged to review the Coral Program's Programmatic Environmental Assessment (PEA) to confirm that proposed activities fall within the scope of the PEA in advance of formal NEPA review and approval; the Coral Program PEA is available at: http://coralreef.noaa.gov/aboutcrp/workwithus/funding/grants/resources/coral_pea_final_05.pdf.

Failure to apply for and/or obtain Federal, state, and local permits, approvals, letters of agreement, or failure to provide environmental analyses where necessary (i.e., NEPA environmental assessment) will delay or prevent the award of funds for projects that have been preliminarily selected for funding.

4. Other

Expenditures on large equipment and/or infrastructure are not a priority for funding under this program.

F. Other Submission Requirements

If an application is not submitted through Grants.gov or postmarked by the deadline as described above, it will not be reviewed or considered for funding. If Internet access is unavailable, signed hard copies of applications may be submitted to: Liz Faurey, ATTN: CRCP Domestic Grant Applications, NOAA Fisheries Office of Habitat Conservation, 1315 East West Highway, SSMC3, 14th Floor, Silver Spring, MD 20910. Applications submitted by mail must include original signed and dated copies of Federal financial assistance forms.

Applications submitted through www.grants.gov include only three files in addition to the Federal forms: 1) cover sheet, project summary and project narrative; 2) budget table and budget narrative justification; and 3) all other attachments, including resumes/CVs, letters of support, and a list of permits (etc.) combined into one file. PDF is the preferred format for all application materials.

All applicants should be aware that adequate time must be factored into applicant schedules for delivery of the application. Electronic applicants are advised that volume on Grants.gov may be extremely heavy, and that applications may take up to 48 hours to validate through the system. If Grants.gov is unable to accept applications electronically in a timely fashion, applicants are encouraged to exercise their option to submit applications in hard copy format via mail as described above as a 'fail-safe' mechanism to guarantee timely receipt of the application. Please allow adequate time to ensure a paper application will be received on time, taking into account that guaranteed overnight carriers are not always able to fulfill their guarantees.

If an applicant would like NOAA to confirm that all necessary application elements have been transmitted successfully, they must submit their application at least 48 hours prior to the published due date to provide program staff sufficient time to review the application materials submitted. Program staff will attempt to identify any missing materials and notify applicants of known problems or issues prior to the application deadline.

V. Application Review Information

A. Evaluation Criteria

Applications that are deemed eligible and meet the minimum requirements established for the competition will be forwarded to independent reviewers with relevant expertise for evaluation. If necessary, project narratives will be reduced to meet the 30-page application limit as described in Section IV(B) "Content and Form of Application" before being evaluated by reviewers. Reviewers will be asked to review all of the application materials provided and assign scores to proposals ranging from 0 to 100 points based on the five standard NOAA evaluation criteria and the respective weights specified below. Reviewers will be instructed to deduct points from applications that are incomplete, confusing, unclear, or contain numerous typographical errors, so applicants are advised to review their application materials closely before they are submitted to the agency for consideration.

1. Importance and Applicability of Proposal (Score=0-30): This criterion ascertains whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and whether the project is relevant to the goals and objectives of NOAA's Coral Reef Conservation Program and jurisdictional coral reef management priorities. Applications will be evaluated on how well the project goals and objectives link to the broader goals and objectives of the program and clear identification of the direct benefits of the project to coral reef conservation. Reviewers will consider:

- Whether the proposed work directly addresses the CRCP's Goals and Objectives and/or relevant Jurisdictional Management Priorities;
- The extent to which the project is expected to deliver specific tangible results and products that relate directly to obtainable coral reef conservation goals, objectives, and outcomes; and
- The need for the proposed coral reef activity in the jurisdiction; the contribution of potential outcomes, results, or products to overall coral reef conservation and management in that jurisdiction; and the degree of collaboration with local, state and territorial governments.

2. Technical/ Scientific Merit (Score=0-30): 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. Applications will be scored based on their clear identification of project methods and the suitability of those methods in achieving the stated outcome, and for evaluating the success or failure of the project in terms of meeting its original goals and objectives. Reviewers will evaluate:

- The completeness and adequacy of detail in the project description and methodology, including a realistic implementation plan achievable in the 12 or 18-month project period, and sufficient detail to allow a NEPA analysis;

- The overall technical feasibility of the project, including whether the proposed approach is technically sound and uses appropriate methods that are likely to achieve project goals and objectives;

- Whether there are effective mechanisms to evaluate project success, including clearly stated coral reef conservation objectives and goals, the likelihood of meeting milestones and achieving anticipated results specified in the statement of work; and

- The suitability of anticipated products, including applicability to relevant audiences, innovativeness, extent of duplicity with previous work, and likelihood of producing high quality results and outcomes that benefit coral reef ecosystems and stakeholders.

3. Overall Qualification of Applications (Score=0-10): This criterion ascertains whether the applicant possesses the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project and administer Federal funds appropriately. The overall qualifications of the project will be evaluated based on:

- The capacity of the applicant and associated project personnel to conduct the scope and scale of the proposed work, as indicated by the qualifications and past experience of the project leaders and/or partners in designing, implementing and effectively managing and overseeing projects that benefit living marine resources. Reviewers will consider The success of previous awards made to the Principal Investigator and any outcomes, results, or products resulting from such awards. Communities and/or organizations submitting their first coral reef conservation project may not be able to document past experience, and therefore will be evaluated on their potential to effectively manage and oversee all project phases and on the basis of their organization's stated mission and the qualifications of the applicant(s).

- The facilities and/or administrative resources and capabilities available to the applicant to support and successfully manage coral reef conservation projects and administer Federal funds, including the availability of technical expertise to guide the project to a successful completion.

4. Project Costs (Score=0-10): This criterion evaluates the budget to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time frame. The itemized costs and the overall budget must be justified and allocated appropriately. NOAA expects that Federal funds provided under each award will leverage non-Federal funding or in-kind resources that demonstrate collaboration and encourage partnerships among government, communities, industry, non-governmental organizations, and academia. Applicants that are able to secure adequate non-Federal matching funds for the proposed project, especially those that are able to secure cash contributions, are likely to score higher on this criterion.

5. Outreach and Education (Score=0-20): This criterion assesses whether the project provides a focused and effective education and outreach strategy regarding conservation of our nation's coral reefs. The reviewers will evaluate:

- Whether information about the project's results will be disseminated promptly to the appropriate user groups and management agencies, and whether the proposed outreach/education methods are appropriate for this type of information;
- The potential of the project to foster long-term conservation, improved management, and community involvement in conservation and stewardship of coral reef resources;
- The level of support for the work, as demonstrated by letters from partners, management authorities, and relevant government agencies; and
- The extent to which local partners are involved in project activities, the availability of educational opportunities and/or trainings to build capacity for future conservation initiatives, and/or efforts to build greater public understanding of threats to coral reef conservation and instill a conservation ethic among user groups.

B. Review and Selection Process

Screening, review, and selection procedures will take place in four steps, including (1) initial evaluation by the Competition Manager; (2) external technical merit review; (3) internal program review and recommendation; and (4) final selection by the Selecting Official. The external technical merit review will generate comments for each application from at least three individual independent merit reviewers who are familiar with the type of project or subject matter addressed. The Selecting Official will make the final decision regarding which applications will be funded based upon the numerical ranking of the applications, the evaluations by the technical reviewers, internal program review and recommendations, and the selection factors listed in Section V (C) below.

1. Initial Evaluation of the Applications: The initial screening by the Competition Manager will ensure that application packages meet the minimum requirements established for the competition. Application packages will be screened to ensure that they were received by the due date (see Section IV (C) Submission Dates and Times), meet requirements regarding the Federal funding amount and non-Federal matching amounts, and include all necessary application elements described in Section IV (B). Applications that pass this initial screening will be submitted to independent merit reviewers for external technical review.

2. External Technical Review: Technical review is conducted by a minimum of three external reviewers with expertise regarding the type of work or subject matter proposed in the application. Each reviewer will individually evaluate and score applications (0-100 points) using the evaluation criteria provided in Section V(A). This review may involve

experts from both NOAA and non-NOAA organizations. The technical reviewers' ratings will be used to produce a rank order of the proposals. No consensus advice will be given by the technical reviewers. NOAA will also request and consider written comments on proposed projects from each state, territorial, or Federal agency with jurisdiction over coral reef ecosystems in the area where the project is to be conducted.

Applications may also be provided to the respective government management agency (e.g., U.S. Coral Reef Task Force Point of Contact) from the jurisdiction where the proposed project will occur for further review. The Point of Contact will be asked to prioritize proposals and provide comments on all applications submitted for work in their jurisdiction. This is intended to enhance coordination of coral reef conservation activities in each jurisdiction and to ensure proposed activities are appropriate and do not duplicate other efforts. Applicants are encouraged to coordinate with State and Territorial point of contact agencies prior to submission of their applications in order to obtain letters of support from relevant management authorities.

3. Internal Program review: The Federal Program Officer and other CRCP staff will evaluate comments and scores provided by the technical reviewers, consider the priorities identified by the state, territorial, commonwealth agencies, and conduct further analysis to identify any major issues, shortcomings or problems with the application. The Federal Program Officer will summarize comments received on each proposal and identify modifications that may be needed prior to final selection. The reviewer comments, composite project scores, rank order, and a summary of the concerns (if any) identified through the technical review process and internal review will be presented to the Selecting Official. The Selecting Official, in consultation with CRCP staff, will identify proposals to be recommended for funding.

4. Final Selection. Based on the cumulative reviews, the additional selection factors described below, and the ability of the applicant to address any concerns identified during the review process, the Selecting Official will make preliminary funding recommendations. Not all activities submitted under a single proposal may be deemed appropriate for funding, and the Selecting Official or Federal Program Officer may recommend alternate activities as appropriate. For a proposal to be selected for funding, the applicant may be required to modify objectives, work plans and budgets, and provide supplemental information required by the agency prior to the award.

C. Selection Factors

The merit review ratings will be used to provide a rank order to the Selecting Official for final funding recommendations. The CRCP competition manager may make recommendations to the Selecting Official applying the selection factors listed below. The

Selecting Official shall award in rank order unless there is justification for selecting a proposal out of rank order based upon one or more of the following factors:

1. Availability of funding;
2. Balance/distribution of funds;
 - a. Geographic distribution of funds;
 - b. By type of institutions;
 - c. By type of partners;
 - d. By research areas;
 - e. By project types;
3. Whether this project duplicates other projects funded or considered for funding by NOAA or other Federal agencies;
4. Program priorities and policy factors found in Sections I (A and B) of this announcement;
5. Applicant's prior award performance;
6. Partnerships and/or participation of targeted groups; and
7. Adequacy of information necessary for NOAA staff to make a NEPA determination and draft necessary documentation before recommendations for funding are made to the NOAA Grants Officer.

D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

Pending a timely Congressional appropriation, NOAA anticipates the competitive selection and notification process will be completed by May 31, 2015 and grant funds will likely be awarded during the late spring and summer of 2015; as such, applicants may not request an award start date prior to July 1, 2015. Unsuccessful applicants will be notified by email that their application was not recommended for funding after the final program office recommendations have been approved by the NOAA GMD. Unsuccessful applications will be kept on file for a period of approximately 12 months and then destroyed.

VI. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notices

Applicants that scored highly during the merit review process and continue to be considered for funding will be notified no later than March 28, 2015. Applicants may be

requested to modify activities, budgets or other components of the project, and possibly incorporate reduced funding levels as recommended through the review process, and submit a revised application before final decisions are made. The exact amount of funds to be awarded, the final scope of activities, the project duration, and other relevant application details will be determined in pre-award negotiations among the applicant, NOAA GMD, and CRCP staff. The earliest start date for projects will be July 1, 2015, dependent upon availability of Federal funding as provided by Congress, acceptable completion of all NOAA/applicant negotiations including NEPA analysis and permit requirements, and the provision of other supporting documentation as requested.

Projects may not be initiated in expectation of Federal funding until the applicant has received official notice of an award from the NOAA Grants Officer and has reviewed and accepted the terms of the award. Applicants are hereby given notice that funds have not yet been appropriated for the program described in this notice and are advised that the competition described herein may be subject to cancellation due to unavailability of funding or revision of agency priorities. In no event will NOAA or the Department of Commerce be responsible for proposal preparation costs. Publication of this announcement does not oblige NOAA to award funding for specific projects or obligate available funds.

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

Once an application has been selected for funding and an award has been extended to the applicant, the application materials will be considered public documents and may be released to individuals outside the agency pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act. The CRCP reserves the right to share application materials with relevant individuals and organizations for the purposes of improved coordination and collaboration.

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

1. Indirect Costs: The budget may include an amount for indirect costs if the applicant has an established, current negotiated indirect cost rate agreement with the Federal government. Indirect costs are 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. For this solicitation, the Federal share of the indirect costs awarded will not exceed the lesser of either the indirect costs that the

applicant would be entitled to if the negotiated Federal indirect cost rate were used or 25 percent of the Federal direct costs proposed. For those situations in which the use of the applicant's indirect cost rate would result in indirect costs greater than 25 percent of the Federal direct costs proposed, the difference may be counted as part of the non-Federal matching requirement. A copy of the current, approved negotiated indirect cost agreement with the Federal government must be included with the application. If the applicant does not have a current negotiated rate and plans to seek reimbursement for indirect costs, documentation necessary to establish a rate must be submitted within 90 days of receiving an award. See section III(C) for more details on establishing an indirect cost rate with NOAA.

2. System for Award Management. To enable the use of a universal identifier and to enhance the quality of information available to the public as required by the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006, to the extent applicable, any applicant awarded in response to this announcement will be required to use the System for Award Management (SAM) at: <https://www.sam.gov/portal/public/SAM/>.

3. Dun and Bradstreet Universal Numbering System. Applicants are also required to use the Dun and Bradstreet Universal Numbering System and will be subject to reporting requirements identified in OMB guidance published at 2 CFR Part 25 (http://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?c=ecfr&tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title02/2cfr25_main_02.tpl).

4. Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements. The Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements contained in the Federal Register notice of December 17, 2012 (77 FR 74634) are applicable to this solicitation. A copy of the notice may be obtained at: <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys>.

5. Limitation of Liability. In no event will NOAA or the Department of Commerce be responsible for application preparation costs. Publication of this announcement does not oblige NOAA to award any specific project.

6. Award Standard Terms and Conditions. Successful applicants that accept an award under this solicitation will be bound by Department of Commerce, Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions, which may be found at: http://www.osec.doc.gov/oam/grants_management/policy/documents/DOC_Standard_Terms_and_Conditions_01_10_2013.pdf.

7. National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Please also review the NEPA information and respond to the specific questions contained in Section IV(B)16 of this announcement.

10. Public Access to Award Documents and Products

Applications that are supported with Federal funds may be provided to members of the public under certain circumstances. Products resulting from Federally-funded projects may be made available by NOAA as described previously and in the next section. Data generated by award recipients will be shared according to the specific provisions included in the award's data sharing plan described in Section IV(B)15.

C. Reporting

All performance and financial reports shall be submitted through the recipient's NOAA Grants Online account in accordance with the Department of Commerce, Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions. Progress on each award is communicated to NOAA in the form of performance progress reports, which are outlined in 15 CFR Part 14: Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Other Agreements with Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals and Other Non-Profit Organizations or 15 CFR Part 24: Grants and Cooperative Agreements with State and Local Governments. Performance reports must be submitted on a semi-annual schedule no later than 30 days following the end of each 6-month period from the start date of the award. Financial reports must be submitted every 6 months by the end of April and October during the period of the award in accordance with the Department of Commerce, Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions.

A comprehensive final report is due no later 90 days after the award expiration date along with copies of all products developed under the award. Copies of all materials (such as but not limited to brochures, posters, videos, DVDs, publications, reports, management plans, workshop proceedings etc.) produced through the award, along with copies of any reports submitted by subcontractors as part of the award, must be provided to the program office within 90 days of the end of the award. All products must be of publishable quality and acknowledge the support provided by NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program as described at: <http://coralreef.noaa.gov/aboutcrp/whoweare/graphic/>. Because products may be made available to the public via the Coral Reef Information System (CoRIS, <http://coris.noaa.gov>), it is the recipient's responsibility to ensure that products are professionally written and edited and do not contain sensitive information. Media products must be Section 508 compliant (<http://www.section508.gov/index.cfm?fuseAction=stdsSum>). Except where limited by law, regulation, policy or security, recipients are requested to include a statement on the front page of all products to indicate the material is "Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited." Applicants in their final comprehensive progress report must: a) clearly state the resulting impacts of their project and products, and b) certify that final financial reports have been submitted to NOAA's Grants Management Division and a final funding draw-down has been made through the Automated Standard Application for Payments (ASAP).

The Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006 requires that recipients of Federal financial assistance awards provide detailed information about all subawards and executive compensation provided through awards made by the Federal government. 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 subawards over \$25,000.

VII. Agency Contacts

The Federal Program Officer and technical point of contact for the CRCP Domestic Coral Reef Conservation Grants is Liz Fairey. She can be reached by phone at 301-427-8632, by fax at 301-713-1594, by email at Liz.Fairey@noaa.gov or by mail at: Liz Fairey, NOAA Fisheries Office of Habitat Conservation, 1315 East West Highway, SSMC3, 14 Floor, Silver Spring, MD, 20910.

VIII. Other Information

Potential funding applicants must register with Grants.gov before any application materials can be submitted. An organization's one time registration process may take up to three weeks to complete so please allow sufficient time to ensure applications are submitted before the closing date. To use Grants.gov, applicants must have a Dun and Bradstreet Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number and be registered in the System for Award Management (SAM), which may be found at: <https://www.sam.gov/portal/public/SAM/>. Please allow a minimum of five days to complete the SAM registration. (Note: Your organization's Employer Identification Number (EIN) will be needed on the application.)

The Grants.gov website contains directions for submitting an application and the application package (forms); it is also where the completed application is submitted. Applicants using Grants.gov must locate the downloadable application package for this solicitation by the Funding Opportunity Number (NOAA-NOS-OCRM-2015-2004207) or the CFDA number (11.482). Applicants will be able to download a copy of the application package, complete it off line, and then upload and submit the application via the Grants.gov site.

Within 24 to 48 hours after electronic submission of the application, the person submitting the application will receive two e-mail messages from Grants.gov updating them on the progress of their application. The first e-mail will confirm receipt of the application by the Grants.gov system, and the second will indicate that the application has either been successfully validated by the system prior to transmission to the grantor agency or has been rejected due to errors. After the application has been validated, this same person will receive another e-mail to indicate that the application has been downloaded by the Federal agency.

There is no guarantee that funds will be available to make awards for this federal funding opportunity or that any proposal will be selected for funding. If an applicant incurs any costs prior to receiving an award agreement signed by an authorized NOAA official, they do so at their own risk of these costs not being included in a subsequent award. In no event will NOAA or the Department of Commerce be responsible for any proposal preparation costs. In addition, NOAA and DOC will not be responsible for proposal or project costs if this program fails to receive funding. Recipients and sub-recipients are subject to all federal laws and agency policies, regulations, and procedures applicable to federal financial assistance awards. Applicants must be in good standing with all existing NOAA grants and/or cooperative funding agreements in order to receive funds.

The NOAA program office reserves the right to immediately halt activity under the award if the recipient is not fulfilling the requirements of the project as outlined in the grant award. Non-compliance with a federally approved project may result in termination of the award.

NOAA will not release the names of applicants submitting proposals unless ordered by a court or requested to do so by an appropriate NOAA official and administrative protocol. Applicants can use a NOAA public search feature to find out information about NOAA awards:

<https://grantsonline.rdc.noaa.gov/flows/publicSearch/begin.do;jsessionid=GbZDVT7JqmXqNlm84y2DBn5CpmGR2vJvQKfnX5CLd94YvywZQTZq!-1742093309ht> or go through the Freedom of Information Act process to request more information about grant competitions. More information about the NOAA FOI process is online at: <http://www.rdc.noaa.gov/~foia/>.