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: Coral Reef Conservation Program International Coral Reef Conservation Cooperative Agreements

Announcement Type: Initial

Funding Opportunity Number: NOAA-NOS-OCM-2016-2004570

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

Dates: Pre-applications in electronic form must be received via email at coral.grants@noaa.gov by 11:59 p.m. U.S. Eastern Standard Time on Thursday, November 19, 2015. Pre-applications in paper form must be postmarked or submitted to a delivery service that provides a tracking number and receipt on or before 11:59 p.m. U.S. Eastern Standard Time on Thursday, November 19, 2015. Selected pre-applicants will be notified by Wednesday, January 20, 2016 of an invitation to submit a final application. Final applications by invitation only in electronic form must be received and validated through www.grants.gov by 11:59 p.m. U.S. Eastern Standard Time, on Thursday, February 18, 2016. Final applications in paper form must be postmarked or submitted to a delivery service that provides a tracking number and receipt by 11:59 p.m. U.S. Eastern Standard Time, on Thursday, February 18, 2016. Paper applications submitted via U.S. Postal Service must have an official postmark; private metered postmarks are not acceptable. In any event, paper applications sent by surface mail or delivery service and received more than 10 business days following the closing date will not be accepted.

When developing your submission timeline, keep in mind the following information necessary to submit a final application on Grants.gov: (1) a free annual registration process in the electronic System for Award Management (SAM) may take between three and five business days or as long as several weeks (see Section IV.F. of this Federal Funding Opportunity (FFO), and (2) if you submit an application via Grants.gov you will receive a series of e-mail notifications for up to two business days before learning via validation or rejection whether NOAA has received your application.

Funding Opportunity Description: The NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program (CRCP) provides matching grants for international coral reef conservation projects. CRCP solicits proposals that will support the NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program's International Strategy 2010-2015 (International Strategy). The International Strategy focuses on supporting existing

regional efforts in four priority regions based on their interconnections with U.S. reef ecosystems and existing initiatives and partnerships. Two of these four priority regions will be considered under this Federal Funding Opportunity: the Wider Caribbean and Micronesia.

Funding for the Fiscal Year 2016 competition is subject to the availability of Congressional appropriations and is expected to be approximately $600,000. NOAA expects each applicant will request between $75,000 and $300,000 annually for an award with a project period up to two years. Funding after the first year generally depends on future Congressional appropriations, NOAA/CRCP priorities, and recipient performance in the first year(s) of the award.

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 closely 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, destructive fishing practices, sedimentation, recreational overuse and misuse, and impacts from climate change and ocean acidification.

To address these threats, Congress passed the Coral Reef Conservation Act of 2000 (Act), codified at 16 U.S.C. §§ 6401-6409, 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 U.S. and internationally. As required in the Act, one of the primary functions of the CRCP is to provide matching grants of financial assistance to external partners for coral reef conservation projects consistent with the Act and CRCP priorities. CRCP implements several financial assistance programs under the Act's authority, including the Coral Reef Conservation Program International Coral Reef Conservation Cooperative Agreements solicited in this announcement. More information about CRCP is available at http://coralreef.noaa.gov/.

NOAA has established Coral Reef Conservation Program International priorities, which were refined and redirected in 2009 to focus program investments on effectively reducing threats to coral reefs internationally. The CRCP's approach for addressing these threats is described in more detail in the NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program International Strategy 2010-2015 (International Strategy), available at http://coralreef.noaa.gov/aboutcrcp/strategy/currentgoals/resources/intl_strategy.pdf. Please refer to the Program Priorities in Section I.B. for details on the International Strategy's relevance to this funding announcement.

As directed by the Act, NOAA also issued Coral Reef Conservation Grant Program Implementation Guidelines, most recently published at 75 Fed. Reg. 48934 (Aug. 12, 2010) and available at http://go.usa.gov/3FT7z. The most recent Guidelines cover 2010-2015 but their approach generally remains in effect until further notice unless otherwise stated in a

NOAA CRCP funding announcement posted on Grants.gov. Please note that CRCP funding announcements will be issued only on Grants.gov, not in the Federal Register as stated in the Guidelines, and the Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notice referenced in the Guidelines is updated as described in Section VI.B. of this FFO.

In Fiscal Year 2016, the CRCP intends to initiate new awards in the following funding categories:

1) CRCP Domestic Coral Reef Conservation Grants;

2) CRCP International Coral Reef Conservation Cooperative Agreements; and

3) CRCP Coral Reef Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) Partnership Cooperative Agreements.

All of the information in this funding opportunity announcement pertains only to the International Coral Reef Conservation Cooperative Agreements funding category.

B. Program Priorities

In FY 2016, the CRCP will accept applications for cooperative agreements of up to a two-year project period focused on building international capacity for the effective ecosystem-based management of coral reef ecosystems. Priority will be given to proposals that support the International Strategy available at http://coralreef.noaa.gov/aboutcrcp/strategy/currentgoals/resources/intl_strategy.pdf

CRCP's international efforts focus on strategic goals, objectives, regions, and specific coral reef conservation activities where the CRCP can have the greatest impact while building on NOAA strengths, partnerships, resources, and expertise.

Depending on the availability of funds, CRCP intends to support cooperative agreements in each of two priority regions, the Wider Caribbean and Micronesia, through this competition. To be competitive, a proposal should effectively address (1) the priority Goals and Objectives of the CRCP International Strategy for this competition, (2) guidance specific to the targeted priority region, and (3) general policies applicable to all applications, as described below. Note that some International Strategy Objectives were not included below intentionally as they are not considered priorities for this funding competition.

1. International Strategy Goals and Objectives. The four broad Goals of the CRCP International Strategy are to:

(a) Work with regional initiatives to build Marine Protected Area (MPA) networks and strengthen local management capacity to improve and maintain resilience of coral reef

ecosystems and the human communities that depend on them;

(b) Develop and implement tools and practices to more effectively observe, predict, communicate, and manage climate change impacts in priority international locations;

(c) Strengthen local and national capacity and policy frameworks to reduce impacts of fishing on coral reef ecosystems; and

(d) Strengthen policy frameworks and institutional capacities to reduce impacts to coral reef ecosystems from pollution due to land-based activities.

Within these goals, the following Objectives are the focus of this competition:

Goal 1. Objective I1.2: Develop and implement comprehensive long-term capacity building programs for existing MPAs, based on capacity assessments to provide training, technical assistance, and follow-up support specifically for:

a. management planning and effectiveness evaluations;

b. community engagement program development;

c. integrated biophysical and socioeconomic monitoring linked to site management

goals, including data analysis and interpretation;

d. use of climate change tools and crisis response planning; and

e. other topics as needed.

Goal 1. Objective I1.3: Increase local enforcement capacity to improve compliance with MPA regulations and conservation-oriented customary practices.

Goal 1. Objective I1.4: Support the development of sustainable finance tools and site implementation of sustainable finance plans to ensure long-term support for conservation efforts.

Goal 1. Objective I1.5: Use regionally appropriate biophysical and socioeconomic monitoring and evaluation protocols to:

a. establish baselines and detect changes over time in an adaptive management framework; and

b. identify priority sites for conservation and assess community support for designation of new MPAs and MPA networks.

Goal 2. Objective I2.1: Collaborate with global partners to broaden the international

delivery of coral bleaching prediction and warning tools and improve the science and technology for predicting climate impacts on global coral reef ecosystems.

Goal 2. Objective I2.2: Expand observing networks to identify and monitor priority coral reef areas that are especially resilient or vulnerable to climate change.

Goal 2. Objective I2.3: Develop international case studies on impacts of climate change and ocean acidification in order to encourage global greenhouse gas reductions and to encourage greater incorporation of climate change impacts on coral reefs into future global assessments.

Goal 2. Objective I2.4: Build local capacity to test, implement and evaluate management strategies to respond to climate change impacts.

Goal 3. Objective I3.1: Provide support and technical assistance to strengthen fisheries policy, governance and regulatory measures at national and regional levels to foster an ecosystem-based approach to fisheries management.

Goal 3. Objective I3.2: Facilitate local cooperative enforcement partnerships and socioeconomic monitoring to address community concerns and to assess and improve compliance with sustainable fishing regulations and customary practices.

Goal 4. Objective I4.1: Support national-level and regional initiatives to identify priority coral reef areas threatened by pollutants and assess pollutant sources to those areas.

Goal 4. Objective I4.2: Collaborate with U.S., regional and local partners to develop and implement coastal and watershed management plans to reduce land-based pollution.

Goal 4. Objective I4.3: Support national-level and regional initiatives to determine gaps in policy and legislation preventing the effective management of land-based pollutants.

2. Regional Guidance. In addition, proposals should address policies specific to the targeted priority region. Proposed projects must fall under one of three categories: Wider Caribbean Management Capacity, Wider Caribbean National or Regional Scale, or Micronesia.

(a) Wider Caribbean Management Capacity Proposals: Applicants with projects involving Wider Caribbean Management Capacity must take into account the following NOAA-Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute Assessment at the Caribbean Marine Protected Area Management Network and Forum (CaMPAM) web site, "A Management Capacity Assessment of Selected Coral Reef Marine Protected Areas in the Caribbean" (NOAA-GCFI Assessment), which can be found at http://campam.gcfi.org/CapAssess/CaMPAMCapacityAssessment2011.pdf. Accordingly, competitive applications would address the following region-specific approaches:

(1) Proposed activities must take place in at least two (2) of the following countries and/or territories: Bahamas; Belize; British Virgin Islands; Grenada; Honduras; Mexico; Saba and St. Eustatius; St. Lucia; St. Vincent and the Grenadines; and Turks and Caicos Islands; and

(2) Proposed activities must take place in a minimum of three (3) of the following 27 MPA sites, which are addressed by the CaMPAM Assessment:

Bahamas: Andros Barrier Reef National Park; Pelican Cay Land and Sea Park; South Berry Islands Marine Reserve

Belize: Half Moon Caye and Blue Hole Natural Monuments; Port Honduras Marine Reserve; South Water Caye Marine Reserve

British Virgin Islands: Hans Creek Fisheries Protected Area; Horseshoe Reef Fisheries Protected Area; Wreck of the Rhone Marine Park

Grenada: Molinière/Beauséjour Marine Protected Area; Sandy Island - Oyster Bed Marine Protected Area

Honduras: Monumento Natural Marino Archipiélago Cayos Cochinos; Zona de Protección Especial Marina Sandy Bay; Zona de Protección Especial Marina Turtle Harbour/Rock Harbour

Mexico: Parque Nacional Arrecife Alacranes; Parque Nacional Arrecifes de Xcalak; Parque Nacional Costa Occidental de Isla Mujeres Punta Cancún y Punta Nizuc

Saba and St. Eustatius: Saba Marine Park; St. Eustatius National Marine Park

St. Lucia: Pitons Management Area; Point Sable Environmental Protection Area; Soufriere Marine Managed Area

St. Vincent and the Grenadines: South Coast Marine Park; Tobago Cays Marine Park

Turks and Caicos Islands: Columbus Landfall National Park; Princess Alexandra Land and Sea National Park; West Caicos Marine National Park.

(3) Activities proposed for each MPA must directly address at least two Management Capacity Priority Needs identified for that MPA in the NOAA-GCFI Assessment.

(b) Wider Caribbean National or Regional Scale (Involving two or more countries): Applications for Cooperative Agreements in the Wider Caribbean that do not address the NOAA-GCFI Assessment should propose activities that are focused at national or regional scales and only for International Strategy Goals numbers 2 and 3. These proposed activities must occur ONLY in at least one of the following non-US countries and territories of the

Wider Caribbean: Antigua & Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent & Grenadines, Sint Maarten, Suriname, Trinidad & Tobago, Venezuela, France Caribbean Territories, Netherlands Caribbean Territories and United Kingdom Caribbean Territories.

(c) Micronesia: To be competitive, applications for Cooperative Agreements in Micronesia should address at least two International Strategy goals and at least two of their corresponding objectives. The proposed project/s may include: 1) management planning and effectiveness evaluations; 2) community engagement program development; 3) integrated biophysical and socioeconomic monitoring that will inform decision makers; and 4) communication to the public, stakeholders and policy makers about project impacts and lessons learned on coral reef conservation. Applicants should describe how they intend to work closely with policy/decision makers and other relevant stakeholders to ensure that, to the greatest extent possible, the information is considered when making decisions about coral reef conservation.

(3) ALL proposals should address the following:

(a) All applications should address at least one of the four goals, i.e., 1, 2, 3, and/or 4 of the International Strategy; however, proposals that address multiple goals of the Strategy will be evaluated more effectively to meet the application evaluation criteria;

(b) Involvement of two or more countries that are actively engaged in regional marine conservation initiatives, such as Micronesia Challenge and the Caribbean Challenge;

(c) Enclosure of a letter of support from each affected country's government agency responsible for planning and/or management of coastal and marine resources. If the letter cannot be obtained by the pre-application deadline, describe the reason and name the government official who has certified that they will sign one for the final application stage. The letters should be attached to the final application in grants.gov.

(d) Engagement from each country's key government agencies in the implementation of the cooperative agreement.

NOAA CRCP does not allow NOAA employees or associates to assist in writing an application or otherwise provide an unfair advantage to applicants in this competitive program. If a letter of support from NOAA staff or associates is included, it will not be considered. If an applicant proposes to collaborate with specific NOAA programs or staff, however, the applicant may include a statement from NOAA staff verifying that they would collaborate with the project applicant if the project receives an award, confirming the degree and nature of the collaboration, and acknowledging the utility of the proposed work. Such specific collaboration does not confer any competitive advantage on the application;

applicants may propose general collaboration with NOAA or not mention collaboration in a project, or NOAA may propose collaborating on a project in funding negotiations or an award offer. Federal agencies are not eligible to receive Federal assistance under this announcement, including travel or salary costs, without specific statutory authority. Refer any questions about application procedures, proper completion of forms, the selection process, and potential collaboration or support by NOAA or non-NOAA Federal employees or contractors to the official listed in Agency Contacts, Section VII. of this FFO.

All projects funded through this competition are expected to result in tangible improvements in the condition of coral reef ecosystems and to increase benefits to stakeholders who depend on them for income, safety and security. To achieve this outcome, applicants should specify the activities they will undertake as well as the specific outputs and products that are expected to result from funded proposals. Specific outputs may include: 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.

C. Program Authority

The statutory authority for the NOAA CRCP is 16 U.S.C. § 6403.

II. Award Information

A. Funding Availability

Anticipated funding for International Coral Reef Conservation Cooperative Agreements is approximately $600,000 in FY 2016 and approximately $600,000 in FY 2017 and is subject to funding availability for both years.

For Cooperative Agreements in the Wider Caribbean and Micronesia with a project period of up to two years, NOAA expects proposals between the range of $75,000 and $300,000 for Year 1 and between the range of $75,000 and $300,000 for Year 2. NOAA anticipates funding two to four awards in FY 2016, subject to the policies described below in Section II.B., Project/Award Period and Multi-Year Funding.

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, the applicant does so at its own risk of not receiving an award or of these costs not being

included in a subsequent award. Applicants should not include proposal preparation costs within the project application budget, and NOAA and DOC will not be responsible for proposal preparation costs in any circumstance or any other costs if this program fails to receive funding.

B. Project/Award Period

Pre- and final applications should use an anticipated start date of October 1, 2016. The period of performance for projects in this program is ordinarily up to 24 months. NOAA anticipates multi-year or incremental funding, that is, funding for approved projects will usually only be provided for the amount budgeted for the first year of the program, and NOAA has no obligation to provide any additional funding in connection with that award. Continuation of an award to increase funding or extend the period of performance is at the sole discretion of NOAA. Continued funding is contingent upon satisfactory performance, continued relevance to the CRCP mission and priorities, and the availability of funds.

C. Type of Funding Instrument

The anticipated funding instrument for NOAA CRCP projects under this announcement will be a cooperative agreement, which is similar to a grant, but NOAA will be "substantially involved" in the project. The recipient should expect agency collaboration, participation, and/or intervention in project performance. Additional information about substantial involvement is described in Section 5.C. of the Department of Commerce Grants and Cooperative Agreements Manual, currently available at http://www.osec.doc.gov/oam/grants_management/policy/.

III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants are institutions of higher education, non-profit organizations, non-U.S. government natural resource management agencies, foreign public entities and foreign organizations, and for-profit organizations. An eligible organization may include proposed sub-recipients, contractors, or other collaborators, which may include governmental authorities, effectively forming a team.

Federal agencies and employees may participate in projects as collaborative project

partners at the agency's expense, as this announcement does not cover their funding. Federal agencies' and employees' in-kind services and equipment are generally not allowed as part of an applicant's match on shared costs. If an applicant proposes federal agency collaborators, applicants should provide detail on the expected level of federal engagement in the application. Examples might include, but are not limited to partnership services; serving in a review capacity; or participating in priority task teams, working groups, or leadership teams.

Proposals are expected to target the following specific countries:

1) For proposals that address the NOAA-GCFI Assessment, projects must be conducted in the following Non-US countries and territories of the Wider Caribbean: Bahamas, Belize, British Virgin Islands, Grenada, Honduras, Mexico, Saba and St. Eustatius, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and Turks and Caicos Islands. For eligible MPA sites in each country please refer to the above Section B., Program Priorities.

2) For other regional/national scale Caribbean projects, the activities must occur ONLY in at least two of the following non-US countries and territories of the Wider Caribbean: Antigua & Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Sint Maarten, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent & Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad & Tobago, Venezuela, France Caribbean Territories, Netherlands Caribbean Territories and United Kingdom Caribbean Territories.

3) For Micronesia proposals, the project should be conducted only in the following independent countries under compacts of free association with the United States: the Republic of the Marshall Islands; the Republic of Palau; and the Federated States of Micronesia.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement

NOAA CRCP financial assistance awards are subject to statutory and regulatory matching fund policies. Federal funds for any coral conservation project under 16 U.S.C. § 6403(b) 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.

"Cost sharing or matching" is defined by 2 C.F.R. § 200.29 as "the portion of project costs not paid by Federal funds (unless otherwise authorized by Federal statute)." Any shared costs or matching funds and all contributions, including cash and third party in-kind contributions of property and services, will be accepted as part of an applicant's cost sharing

or matching when the contributions meet the criteria listed in 2 C.F.R. § 200.306(b). That is, the contributions: (1) Are verifiable from the non-Federal entity's records; (2) Are not included as contributions for any other Federal award; (3) Are necessary and reasonable for accomplishment of project or program objectives; (4) Are allowable under Subpart E—Cost Principles of this part; (5) Are not paid by the Federal Government under another Federal award, except where the Federal statute authorizing a program specifically provides that Federal funds made available for such program can be applied to matching or cost sharing requirements of other Federal programs; (6) Are provided for in the approved budget when required by the Federal awarding agency; and (7) Conform to other provisions of this part, as applicable. Contributions can come from a variety of public and private sources and can include third party in-kind goods and services such as private boat use and volunteer labor. In addition, applicants are permitted to combine contributions for allowable costs from multiple non-Federal partners in order to meet the 1:1 match requirement, consistent with the standards described in 2 C.F.R. § 200.306.

Applicants should specify the source(s) of match in the budget narrative and may provide or 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. Applicants must be prepared to carefully document matching contributions for each project selected for funding. Valuation of proposed cost sharing is described in 2 C.F.R. § 200.306(d)-(k).

Applicants may choose to designate part or all of their Federally-negotiated indirect costs as match. This may be convenient because the valuation of such costs has already been Federally-approved and documentation is readily available. Refer to the “Indirect Costs” policies in Section IV.B.3. of this FFO.

The NOAA Administrator or designee may waive all or part of the matching requirement if the Administrator determines that the project meets the following two requirements identified in 16 U.S.C. § 6403(b)(2):

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 should 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 should be submitted as part of the final application

package.

C. Other Criteria that Affect Eligibility

This section is intentionally left blank.

IV. Application and Submission Information

A. Address to Request Application Package

Application materials are available at http://www.grants.gov as part of the electronic application package which includes the federal forms. For a preview and for paper applications, these forms can be accessed at http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/forms/sf-424-family.html#sortby=1. The pre-application does not require the federal forms. Final applications with the federal forms will be received by invitation only and must include the Federal financial assistance forms SF 424, SF4 24A, SF 424B, and CD 511. For such invited final applicants unable to access the application package, it may be requested by contacting Scot Frew, NOAA/OCM Coral Reef Program, 1305 East West Highway, 10th Floor, N/OCM6, Silver Spring, MD 20910, Phone: 301-563-1143 or e-mail: Scot.Frew@noaa.gov.

B. Content and Form of Application

The application process of this FFO requires a pre-application, and some applicants will be invited to submit a final application. Each pre-application and final application submitted in response to this FFO must be written in English and include the following information:

1. A one-page coversheet that includes:

a. Title of the proposed Cooperative Agreement project and requested start date;

b. Applicant organization name, address, phone number and classification (nonprofit, university, government, etc.);

c. Principal investigator responsible for conducting the project and their contact information;

d. The applicant organization Authorized Representative and their contact information including address, phone and fax numbers, and e-mail address;

e. Grant Program category: CRCP International Coral Reef Conservation Cooperative Agreements;

f. Geographic locations of the project and the site names;

g. Amount of grant funds requested per year (FY2016 and FY2017);

h. Amount of matching funds provided per year (FY2016 and FY2017); and

i. One paragraph project summary emphasizing the project objectives and activities.

2. Proposal Narrative

Each pre- and final application narrative should clearly describe the proposed work including the budget narrative in 30 pages or less in 12 point font with one inch margins on all four sides, excluding attachments (letters of support, resumes, maps, appendices, and support documents), which should not exceed 30 pages in total. Files that are larger than five megabytes may not be properly downloaded, uploaded, or received by the agency or the reviewers. Acceptable electronic formats for narratives, attachments, and images are limited to Adobe Acrobat (.PDF), or Microsoft Word files. Applicants should not submit images like JPG files, which may not be fully compatible with electronic systems in use. Files that cannot be opened or downloaded will not be reviewed and NOAA will not review content that exceeds the page limits. Paper pre- and final applications should not be bound or stapled, but can be bundled, for example, by rubber bands or binder clips. All pre- and final applications and attachments must be written in English. Letters of support in other languages should be accompanied by English language translations. In addition to the cover sheet, each pre- and final application should include the following elements in order to be competitive:

a. International Strategy: The specific NOAA CRCP International Strategy goals and objective addressed by the Cooperative Agreement;

b. Justification for proposed activities: The proposal narrative should describe each of the discrete projects or tasks proposed in the application. Applicants should provide sufficient detail to enable reviewers to evaluate the relevance and applicability of proposed work to program priorities described in Section I.B. of this announcement; 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 may raise 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 should clearly describe how each activity or project will directly benefit the coral reef management efforts of the countries' agencies and identify how the proposal fits into applicant and government strategy for site management.

Applicants should describe their past experience in the selected sites or countries and whether there are any environmental conservation agreements in place with the local partners and government authorities. It is strongly recommended that applicants collaborate with local government authorities in the project design and preparation of the application.

c. Proposal Goals and Objectives: what the application seeks to accomplish;

d. Implementation strategy (methods and activities in relation to Proposal Goals and Objectives): if any bio-physical and/or socio-economic monitoring activities are proposed, the description should include details of proposed methodologies;

e. Timetable: A task timetable with interim benchmarks linked to clearly defined work products or objectives;

f. Local needs: A paragraph that describes how the proposal will address relevant local management needs in the project area. It should include a clear means to incorporate the results into management needs of the agencies with authority over coral reef ecosystems in the project location;

g. Outcomes: A table with a column for project outcomes and another column for their corresponding concrete outputs/products; NOAA will track these to ensure that they are appropriate for public dissemination;

h. Partner justification and roles: Evidence of support for the project from the local management authority where the work is conducted at specific sites must indicate that the project supports local management objectives. In those cases where training is proposed, indication that participants will apply these techniques at their local sites is requested. To be competitive, an application should include evidence of coordination with relevant national and regional project partners, including a list of agencies consulted in developing the proposal and assurances that any necessary permits will be secured prior to the use of U.S. Federal funds. If the applicant is not a regional organization (involving two or more countries), please include evidence of support from a regional organization that has a working relationship and demonstrated experience working with the local government authorities that manage the marine areas addressed;

i. Evaluation method: A methodology to evaluate the success of the cooperative agreement activities;

j. Qualifications: Summary description of the qualifications of the individuals and principal investigators who will conduct the cooperative agreement;

k. Permits and Approvals: It is the applicant's responsibility to obtain all necessary national, state, and local government permits and approvals for the proposed work.

Applicants are expected to design their proposals so that they minimize the potential adverse impact on the environment. If applicable, documentation of requests or approvals of environmental permits should be included in the proposal package supplementary materials. Failure to apply for and/or obtain national, state, and local permits, approvals, letters of agreement, or to provide environmental analyses where necessary (i.e., NEPA environmental assessment) may delay or prevent the award of funds for projects that have been preliminarily selected for funding.

l. Other submissions: The pre- and final applications should also state in the Project Narrative or supporting material whether the project has been submitted for funding consideration elsewhere.

m. Revisions: In final applications only, invited applicants are expected to respond to any recommendations and comments NOAA may provide.

3. Budget Narrative

a. General: The Budget narrative must include a detailed breakdown and justification of costs for both the Federal and non-Federal shares as they relate to specific aspects of the cooperative agreement using the following categories from Federal Form 424A: Personnel, Fringe Benefits, Travel, Equipment (items over $5,000), Supplies (items under $5,000), Contractual and Other. For further definitions of these budget categories, refer to Subpart E. Cost Principles of the 2 C.F.R. 200 Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (Uniform Guidance). For specific guidance on developing a budget narrative, please review the budget guidance provided at: http://coast.noaa.gov/funding/_pdf/forms/budget-narrative-guidance-GMD-04.09.2015.pdf.

Applicants should describe, by Federal category of expenditure, the total cost of the overall work plan for the entire project period. Categories in the Budget Narrative should correspond to the Object Class Categories listed in Section B of the SF-424A application form that will be submitted with final applications. To facilitate the accounting of project costs and minimize potential math errors, the budget narrative may be submitted in MS Excel or a comparable spreadsheet application with figures in whole dollars and no cents. For multi-year applications, applicants should provide a separate budget narrative for each year. Applicants must also provide a separate budget narrative for each identified sub-award of $25,000 or more, for each year of the sub-award. For acquisition contracts, award recipients are subject to policies described in 2 C.F.R. § 200.317-.326.

The Federal application forms do NOT have to be included in the pre-application. For the final application, the submitted Budget Narrative must match the dollar amounts on the Federal application forms. For the final application, a SEPARATE 424A and Budget Narrative should be submitted for each year. Extra forms can be downloaded at:

http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/forms/sf-424-family.html#sortby=1. These forms will be generated only once automatically when you apply through grants.gov.

b. INDIRECT COSTS: Indirect or Facilities and Administration 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. See 2 C.F.R. §§ 200.56-57 and 200.412-.415. Indirect costs may be requested as described below.

(1) If the applicant has an established indirect cost rate with the Federal government, a copy of the current, approved negotiated indirect cost agreement with the Federal Government should be included with the final application package.

(2) If an applicant has not previously established an indirect cost rate with a Federal agency it may choose to negotiate a rate with the Department of Commerce or use the de minimis indirect cost rate of 10% of Modified Total Direct Costs as described in 2 C.F.R. § 200.68 and §200.414. MTDC means all direct salaries and wages, applicable fringe benefits, materials and supplies, services, travel, and up to the first $25,000 of each subaward (regardless of the period of performance of the subawards under the award). MTDC excludes equipment, capital expenditures, charges for patient care, rental costs, tuition remission, scholarships and fellowships, participant support costs and the portion of each subaward in excess of $25,000. Other items may only be excluded when necessary to avoid a serious inequity in the distribution of indirect costs, and with the approval of the cognizant agency for indirect costs." The negotiation and approval of a rate is subject to the procedures required by NOAA and the Department of Commerce Standard Terms and Conditions, Section B.06. The 10% rate may be used indefinitely or until the establishment of a Federally negotiated rate. The NOAA contact for indirect or facilities and administrative costs is:

Lamar Revis, Grants Officer

NOAA Grants Management Division

1325 East West Highway 9th Floor

Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

lamar.revis@noaa.gov

c. MATCHING FUNDS: Intended sources of cost sharing or matching funds and whether they have been secured should be described in the pre- and final application. Final applications for invited pre-applicants whose pre-applications are recommended for funding should include letter(s) of commitment to provide cost share from the organization(s)

providing matching funds or third party in-kind contributions. Refer to Section III.B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement, for more information.

4. Data Sharing Plan

Environmental data and information, collected and/or created under NOAA grants/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 (2) years after the data are collected or created), except where limited by law, regulation, policy or by security requirements.

a. A Data/Information Sharing Plan of no more than two pages should be part of the Project Narrative. A typical plan may include the types of environmental data and information to be created during the course of the project; the tentative date by which data will be shared; the standards to be used for data/metadata format and content; policies addressing data stewardship and preservation; procedures for providing access, data, and security; and prior experience in publishing such data. The Data/Information Sharing Plan will be reviewed as part of the NOAA Standard Evaluation Criteria, Item 1 -- Importance and/or Relevance and Applicability of Proposed Project to the Mission Goals.

b. The Data/Information Sharing Plan (and any subsequent revisions or updates) will be made publicly available at time of award and, thereafter, will be posted with the published data.

c. Failing 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.

Principal Investigators (PI) involved in research should indicate how and when they have made their data accessible and usable by the community in the past.

5. National Environmental Policy Act and Environmental Compliance

NOAA will analyze the potential environmental impacts of highly meritorious projects or proposals to ensure fulfillment of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

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.nepa.noaa.gov/procedures.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 should provide detailed information in the Project Narrative, which may be supported in the supplementary materials, 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., use and disposal of hazardous or toxic chemicals, introduction of non-indigenous species, impacts to endangered and threatened species, etc.).

After an application is submitted, NOAA may require additional information to make a NEPA assessment. 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 for the NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Grant Program (PEA; http://coralreef.noaa.gov/aboutcrcp/workwithus/funding/grants/resources/coral_pea_final_05.pdf) will be notified after the technical review stage, if still in consideration for funding, and may be requested to assist in the preparation of an environmental assessment prior to offer of an award.

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 may 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.

NOAA plans to ask finalist applicants under consideration for funding to complete sections A, B, C, D, E, and F of the Environmental Compliance Questionnaire for National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Federal Financial Assistance Applicants, accessible at http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/questionnaire.pdf, 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).Sections G and H are generally not required with the application because NOAA anticipates that most projects funded through this competition would not have impacts related to damage assessment and restoration or fisheries sampling and analysis.

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 at https://ceq.doe.gov/ceq_regulations/regulations.html or http://go.usa.gov/3FUxd.

C. Submission Dates and Times

PRE-APPLICATIONS in electronic form must be received via email at coral.grants@noaa.gov on or before 11:59 p.m., U.S. Eastern Standard Time, on Thursday, November 19, 2015. Pre-applications in paper form must be postmarked or submitted to a delivery service providing a tracking number and receipt on or before 11:59 p.m., U.S. Eastern Standard Time, on Thursday, November 19, 2015. Federal financial assistance forms are NOT required to be submitted with the pre-application.

FINAL APPLICATIONS by invitation only in electronic form must be received and validated through www.grants.gov on or before 11:59 p.m. U.S. Eastern Standard Time, on Thursday, February 18, 2016. Final applications in paper form must be postmarked or submitted to a delivery service providing a tracking number and receipt on or before 11:59 p.m. U.S. Eastern Standard Time, on Thursday, February 18, 2016.

Paper applications, applications submitted via U.S. Postal Service must have an official postmark; private metered postmarks are not acceptable. In any event, paper applications sent by surface mail or delivery service and received more than 10 business days following the closing date will not be accepted.

When developing your submission timeline, keep in mind the following information necessary to submit a final application on Grants.gov: (1) a free annual registration process in the electronic System for Award Management (SAM) may take between three and five business days or as long as several weeks (see Section IV.F. of this FFO), and (2) if you submit an application via Grants.gov you will receive a series of e-mail notifications for up to two business days before learning via validation or rejection whether NOAA has received your application. The validation time is the time NOAA receives the application, which may be after the required deadline if the application is submitted via Grants.gov near the deadline.

If submitting by paper, address to: Scot Frew, NOAA/OCM Coral Reef Program, 1305 East West Highway, 10th Floor, N/OCM6, Silver Spring, MD 20910.

D. Intergovernmental Review

Funding applications may be subject to Executive Order 12372, "Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs." Applicants are responsible for contacting their state's Single Point of Contact (SPOC) to find out about and comply with the state's process under EO 12372, if applicable. To assist the applicant, the names and addresses of the SPOCs are listed on the Office of Management and Budget's website https://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants_spoc.

E. Funding Restrictions

1. The following project types will not be considered for funding: (a) Activities that constitute legally required mitigation for the adverse effects of an activity regulated or otherwise governed by state or Federal law; (b) Activities that constitute mitigation for natural resource damages under Federal or state law; (c) Activities that are required by a separate consent decree, court order, statute or regulation; (d) Construction projects; and (e) Large equipment and/or infrastructure acquisitions.

2. Consistent with 2 C.F.R. § 200.458, pre-award costs will not be authorized without the written approval of NOAA, or unless terms applicable to research are applied. Applicants should plan to initiate costs within the proposed award period starting on October 1, 2016.

3. Federal and cost-shared funds cannot necessarily pay for all project expenses. Allowable costs for awards and sub-awards are determined by the cost principles referenced in Subpart E of 2 C.F.R. Part 200, Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards. Generally, costs that are allowable include salaries, fringe benefits, equipment, supplies, and contracts, as long as these are necessary and reasonable. Refer to http://go.usa.gov/3FFYY.

F. Other Submission Requirements

1. Additional Instructions

Please note that late pre-applications cannot be considered under any circumstances including email transmission malfunctions. Electronic files of pre-applications must arrive without viruses. If the pre-application and its attachments cannot be opened due to a virus or if they arrive with a virus, NOAA will not be able to review the pre-applications and they will be disqualified. In any event, paper applications received more than 10 business days following the postmarked closing date will not be accepted.

FINAL applications will be accepted ONLY from those applicants who are invited by NOAA to submit a final application. Applicants may be required to make modifications or revisions to the project and budget narratives and must submit revised materials with a Federal financial assistance award application package (Federal forms). Only applicants who submitted pre-applications by the deadline will be eligible to be considered for invitations to submit a final application. In any event, paper applications received more than 10 business days following the postmarked closing date will not be accepted.

For both pre-applications and final applications, if a local natural disaster prevents

timely electronic or paper submission, submit a paper application and contact the Federal Program Officer for this opportunity.

The standard NOAA funding application package is available at www.grants.gov (Grants.gov); and electronic final application packages, including all letters of collaboration, must be submitted through the "Apply" function on Grants.gov. Applicants must register with Grants.gov before any application materials can be submitted. To use Grants.gov, an applicant must have a Dun and Bradstreet Data Universal Number System (DUNS) number and be registered in the System for Award Management (SAM). Refer to Section IV.F. below of this FFO. Allow a minimum of five days to complete the SAM registration; it may take longer if complications arise. Your organization's Employer Identification Number (EIN) will be needed on the application form. An organization's one time registration process may take up to three weeks to complete, and periodic renewals are required, so allow sufficient time to ensure applications are submitted before the closing date. Applicants will be able to download a copy of the application package, complete it offline, and then upload and submit the application via the Grants.gov site. For application submission inquiries, Grants.gov may be contacted 24 hours a day, seven days a week, excluding Federal holidays, toll free locally at 1-800-518-4726 or Internationally at 1-606-545-5035. NOAA may be contacted during regular business hours, 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday-Friday, excluding Federal holidays.

After electronic submission of the application through Grants.gov, the person submitting the application will receive within the next 24 to 48 hours two email messages from Grants.gov updating them on the progress of their application. The first email 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 before transmission to the grantor agency or has been rejected because of errors. After the application has been validated, this same person will receive a third email when the application has been downloaded by the Federal agency.

As the Grants.gov validation process for an application can take up to two business days to complete following submission through Grants.gov, applicants should plan time accordingly to avoid late submissions, which will be rejected. Only validated applications are sent to NOAA for review.

If electronic submission is not feasible, one set of an original (with signed federal forms) paper application may be submitted by mail or delivery to the attention of Scot Frew, NOAA/OCM Coral Reef Program, 1305 East West Highway, 10th Floor, N/OCM6, Silver Spring, MD 20910. No email or fax copies will be accepted. Proposal application packages,

including all letters of collaboration and any letters of support, should be submitted together in one package.

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

Applicants are also required to use the Dun and Bradstreet Universal Numbering System and will be subject to reporting requirements, as identified in OMB guidance published at 2 CFR Subtitle A, which may be accessed online at http://go.usa.gov/3FHPA. Organizations can receive a DUNS number at no cost by calling the dedicated toll-free DUNS Number request line at 1-866-705-5711 or online at http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform.

Accordingly, each applicant (unless the applicant is an individual or Federal awarding agency that is excepted from those requirements under 2 CFR §25.110(b) or (c), or has an exception approved by the Federal awarding agency under 2 CFR §25.110(d)) is required to: (i) Be registered in SAM before submitting its application; (ii) provide a a valid unique entity identifier in its application; and (iii) continue to maintain an active SAM registration with current information at all times during which it has an active Federal award or an application or plan under consideration by a Federal awarding agency. It also must state that the Federal awarding agency may not make a Federal award to an applicant until the applicant has complied with all applicable unique entity identifier and SAM requirements and, if an applicant has not fully complied with the requirements by the time the Federal awarding agency is ready to make a Federal award, the Federal awarding agency may determine that the applicant is not qualified to receive a Federal award and use that determination as a basis for making a Federal award to another applicant.

V. Application Review Information

A. Evaluation Criteria

The following evaluation criteria are used for pre-applications.

1. Importance and/or relevance and applicability of proposed project to the program goals (25%): Reviewers will assess the extent to which there is intrinsic value in the

proposed work and/or relevance to NOAA, Federal (other than NOAA), regional, state, or local activities. For this competition, reviewers will assess whether the proposal demonstrates the need for the proposed coral reef management activity to fill gaps in the country/region. Reviewers will assess the extent to which the project would fulfill and advance the Program Objectives and Program Priorities in Section I of this FFO and the extent to which the project is likely to yield information or data that will directly influence decision making and management. All applications should address at least one of the four goals, i.e., 1, 2, 3, and/or 4 of the International Strategy; however, proposals that address multiple goals of the Strategy will more effectively meet this evaluation criterion.

2. Technical/scientific merit (20%): Reviewers will assess the extent to which the approach is technically sound and/or innovative, if the methods are appropriate, and whether there are clear project goals and objectives. Reviewers will assess the extent to which the proposed approach would be effective in fulfilling Program Objectives and Program Priorities in Section I of this FFO. For this competition, reviewers will assess whether the proposal demonstrates coordination with applicable ongoing local, regional, and international coral reef management activities.

3. Overall qualifications of applicants (20%): Reviewers will assess the extent to which the applicant possesses the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project. Regional organizations that work in multiple countries and have a working relationship and demonstrated experience working with the local government authorities that manage the marine areas addressed will be highly qualified.

4. Project costs (20%): Reviewers will assess the proposed project budget to determine the extent to which it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time-frame. For this competition, the budget should reflect the ability of the applicant to complete the work with the funding and in the timing proposed.

5. Outreach and education (15%): NOAA assesses whether this project provides a focused and effective education and outreach strategy regarding NOAA's mission to understand and protect the Nation's natural resources. The following factors will be considered: Will the project have a plan for dissemination of the data and outcomes to the decision makers and the stakeholders impacted by management decisions? Are there key audiences identified who will benefit from the project outcomes?

B. Review and Selection Process

NOAA will conduct an initial review of timely received pre-applications to determine eligibility, completeness, and responsiveness to this FFO and the scope of stated program

objectives. Ineligible, incomplete, and/or non-responsive pre-applications may be eliminated from further review. NOAA, in its sole discretion, may continue the review process for pre-applications with non-substantive issues that can easily be rectified or cured. Applications will then undergo a technical review, ranking, and selection process.

Each pre-application will receive a technical review by a minimum of three individuals with knowledge of the subject of the proposal based on the Evaluation Criteria in Section V.A. of this FFO. Each reviewer will submit a separate and individual review; reviewers will not provide a consensus opinion. The identities of peer reviewers will be kept anonymous to the degree permitted by law.

NOAA may also request and consider written comments on proposed cooperative agreements from agencies with jurisdiction over coral reef ecosystems in the area where the project is to be conducted, as described in Section X(1) of the Guidelines. NOAA may request and consider written comments on a proposal from relevant U.S. government agencies such as the Agency for International Development and the Department of the Interior; foreign governments and their coral management agencies; and other international entities as necessary.

Based on the results of the technical evaluations, CRCP officials will rank order the pre-applications. CRCP will select the number of applicants invited to submit final applications based on the quality and quantity of proposals and availability of funding. CRCP will provide preliminary funding recommendations and summary comments on each proposal to those applicants invited to submit a final application. These comments will include input from all reviewers and the CRCP and any input obtained from government agencies, and are intended to strengthen the application. Applicants should clearly address the reviewers' comments in their final applications to be competitive.

Upon receipt of final applications, complete with the requisite Federal forms, the CRCP will review the final application packages and make further recommendations based on the incorporation of, and response to, comments that were returned to the applicant, which may result in adjustments to the rank order. The CRCP will submit these funding recommendations to a NOAA review panel for final review as described in Section X(4) of the Guidelines to ensure that Coral Reef Conservation Act requirements have been met, including geographic funding distribution, and for consistency with the overall CRCP goals. This may result in further adjustments to the rank order that will be presented to the Selecting Official, who is the NOAA NOS Director of the Office for Coastal Management or designee. Based on the rank order and the Selection Factors below in Section V.C. of this FFO, the Selecting Official will make recommendations for awards to the Grants Officer, who is authorized to obligate the funds. During this process, if an insufficient number of highly meritorious final applications are received, NOAA may reallocate residual funds from this Grant Program area to a different funding category.

NOAA reserves the right to negotiate the budget and scope of work with any applicant, which may include requesting that the applicant remove certain costs. NOAA may recommend alternate activities or partial funding. NOAA may request that the applicant modify objectives or work plans and provide supplemental information required by the agency prior to award. NOAA may select some, all, or none of the applications, or part(s) of any particular application. NOAA may ask applicants to work with other applicants or may delay projects given program objectives or funding considerations.

After applications are proposed for funding by the Selecting Official and prior to the issuance of an award, the NOAA Grants Management Division will conduct an assessment of the risk posed by the applicant in accordance with 2 C.F.R. § 200.205. In addition to reviewing repositories of government-wide eligibility, qualification or financial integrity information, the risk assessment conducted by NOAA may consider items such as the financial stability of an applicant, quality of the applicant's management systems, an applicant's history of performance, previous audit reports and audit findings concerning the applicant and the applicant's ability to effectively implement statutory, regulatory, or other requirements imposed on non-Federal entities. Applicants should be in compliance with the terms of any existing NOAA grants or cooperative agreements and otherwise eligible to receive Federal awards in order to be considered for funding under this competition. All reports due should be received and any concerns raised by the agency should be timely addressed in order to receive a new award. Upon review of these factors, if appropriate, specific award conditions that correspond to the degree of risk may be applied by the NOAA Grants Officer pursuant to 2 C.F.R. § 200.207. In addition, NOAA reserves the right to reject an application in its entirety where information is uncovered that raises a significant risk with respect to the responsibility or suitability of the applicant. The final approval of selected applications and issuance of awards will be by the NOAA Grants Officer. The award decisions of the NOAA Grants Officer are final.

When an award decision has been made (whether an award or declination), anonymous copies of mail merit review comments or summaries of panel deliberations, can be made available to the applicant upon request.

C. Selection Factors

Based on the process described in Section V.B., a rank order will be provided to the Selecting Official for final funding recommendations. CRCP Program Officers may make selection recommendations to the Selecting Official based on application of the selection factors listed below. The Selecting Official shall select in rank order unless a proposal is justified to be selected out of rank order based upon one or more of the following factors:

1) Availability of funding

2) Balance/distribution of funds:

a. Geographically

b. By type of institutions

c. By type of partners

d. By research areas

e. By project types

3) Whether this project duplicates other projects, grants or cooperative agreements funded or considered for funding by NOAA or other Federal agencies.

4) Program priorities and policy factors

5) Applicant prior award performance

6) Partnerships and/or participation of targeted groups

7) Adequacy of information necessary for NOAA to make a National Environmental Policy Act determination and draft necessary documentation before funding recommendations are made to the Grants Officer.

D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

Pre-applications are due on Thursday, November 19, 2015, as described in Section IV.C. of this FFO. CRCP plans to contact selected pre-applicants by Wednesday, January 20, 2016, and will invite them to submit a final application by Thursday, February 18, 2016. This notification may include a request to make modifications or revisions to the project proposal and budget narrative. Subject to the availability of funds, the NOAA Grants Management Division will notify selected recipients of an award through the official Form CD 450 by September 30, 2016. NOAA anticipates awards to selected applicants will begin October 1, 2016.

VI. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notices

When CRCP forwards applications recommended for funding to the NOAA Grants Management Division, the applicant will be notified by the program office by email that its application was recommended for funding. This notification by the CRCP Federal Program Office is not an official award notice and funding is not assured. The exact amount of funds to be awarded, final scope of activities, project duration, and specific NOAA substantial involvement with the activities of each project will be determined in pre-award negotiations between the applicant, the NOAA Grants Management Division, and NOAA program staff. Projects should not be initiated in expectation of Federal funding until an electronic notice of award with Standard Form CD-450 is received from the NOAA Grants Management Division.

Award notification will only be made electronically by the NOAA Grants Management Division via Grants Online, NOAA's online grants management program. The award cover page, i.e., CD-450, Financial Assistance Award, is available at http://go.usa.gov/SNMR. The Internet Explorer browser should be used.

Unsuccessful pre- and final applications will be destroyed and not returned to the applicant. NOAA CRCP Program Officers plan to provide written notice to unsuccessful applicants after successful applicants have received their awards.

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

1. Pre-Award Notice: Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements contained in the Federal Register notice of December 30, 2014 (79 FR 78390) are applicable to this solicitation and may be accessed online at http://go.usa.gov/3F62A . In addition, recipients and sub-recipients are subject to all Federal laws and agency policies, regulations, and procedures applicable to Federal financial assistance awards.

2. Uniform Administrative Guidance: Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (Uniform Guidance) at 2 C.F.R. Part 200, adopted by the Department of Commerce through 2 C.F.R. § 1327.101, apply to awards in this program. Refer to http://go.usa.gov/SBYh and http://go.usa.gov/SBg4.

3. Department of Commerce Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions: Successful applicants who accept a NOAA award under this solicitation will be bound by Department of Commerce Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions. A current

version of this document is available at http://www.osec.doc.gov/oam/grants_management/policy/. These terms will be provided in the award package in Grants Online at https://grantsonline.rdc.noaa.gov. In addition, award documents provided by the NOAA Grants Management Division in the Grants Online award package may contain special award conditions unique to a project, including conditions that may limit the use of funds for activities that have outstanding environmental compliance requirements and/or stating other compliance requirements for the award as applicable.

4. Limitation of Liability

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 the NOAA Grants Management Division Grants Officer, they do so at their own risk of not receiving an award or 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. Publication of this announcement does not oblige NOAA to award any specific project, obligate any available funds, or provide special fishing privileges.

5. National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). See the NEPA information in Section IV.B. of this announcement.

6. Unpaid or delinquent tax liability.

In accordance with current Federal appropriations law, NOAA will provide a corporate applicant that may be recommended for funding a form to be completed by its authorized representatives making certifications about whether the corporation has Federally-assessed unpaid or delinquent tax liability or recent felony criminal convictions under any Federal law.

7. Public Access to Award Products and Documents

Products resulting from funded projects may be made available to the public by NOAA as described in this FFO. Data generated by award recipients will be shared according to the provisions included in the award's data sharing plan as described in Section IV.B.4.

Applications that are supported with Federal funds may be provided to members of the public under certain circumstances. Once an application has been selected for funding and an award has been extended to the applicant, application materials may be considered public documents and may be released to individuals outside the agency pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). The CRCP reserves the right to share application materials with relevant individuals and organizations for the purposes of improved coordination and collaboration.

Applicants can use a NOAA public search feature to find out information about NOAA awards < https://grantsonline.rdc.noaa.gov/flows/publicSearch/begin.do > 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.noaa.gov/foia/

Department of Commerce regulations implementing FOIA are found at 5 U.S.C 552. These regulations set forth rules for the Department regarding making requested materials, information, and records publicly available under the FOIA. Applications submitted in response to this FFO may be subject to requests for release under the Act. In the event that an application contains information or data that the applicant deems to be confidential commercial information which is exempt from disclosure under FOIA, that information should be identified, bracketed, and marked as Privileged, Confidential, Commercial or Financial Information at the top of the page to assist NOAA in making disclosure determinations. Based on these markings, the confidentiality of the contents of those pages will be protected to the extent permitted by law.

C. Reporting

Awards are subject to reporting requirements in 2 C.F.R. Part 200 and the Department of Commerce Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions, as described generally below. Reports shall be submitted to the NOAA Program Officer through the recipient's NOAA Grants Online account (https://grantsonline.rdc.noaa.gov/).

Progress on each award is communicated to NOAA in the form of performance progress reports, described at 2 C.F.R. § 200.328 and Commerce Term A.01. Performance reports are due 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 per 2 C.F.R. § 200.327 and Commerce Term A.02 are due every six 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 90 days after the award expiration along with copies of all products that are developed under the award as part of Closeout, per 2 C.F.R. § 200.343. 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 sub-recipients and contractors 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 appropriate for public dissemination and

acknowledge the support provided by NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program as described at: http://coralreef.noaa.gov/aboutcrcp/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.access-board.gov/guidelines-and-standards/communications-and-it/about-the-section-508-standards/section-508-standards). 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 pubic release; distribution is unlimited."

In addition, the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act, 31 U.S.C. 6101 Note, includes a requirement for awardees of applicable Federal grants to report information about first-tier sub-awards and executive compensation under Federal assistance awards.. All awardees of applicable grants and cooperative agreements are required to report to the Federal Sub-award Reporting System (FSRS) available at www.FSRS.gov on all sub-awards over $25,000.

Equipment requirements are set out at 2 C.F.R. § 200.313. As applicable, the recipient may be asked to submit Form SF-428 (Tangible Personal Property Report) periodically and with the final progress report. Form SF-428 may be attached as an appendix to any progress report. The CRCP program office recommends that if the equipment is no longer needed, recipients are encouraged to request disposition instructions for equipment approximately 150 days before the project period ends to allow sufficient time to have equipment disposition requests addressed before a project ends. Equipment disposition instructions typically require that recipients complete an "other" award action request in Grants Online. NOAA will provide instructions for disposition in accordance with 2 C.F.R. Part 200.

When applicable, the recipient must report on real property at periodic intervals and at award closeout, by completing Form SF-429 (Real Property Status Report), consistent with 2 C.F.R. § 200.329 and Department of Commerce Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions A.02 and D.02.

VII. Agency Contacts

The Federal Program Officer and technical point of contact for the International Coral Reef Conservation Cooperative Agreements is Scot Frew, who can be reached at 301-563-1143, by e-mail at scot.frew@noaa.gov or address at: NOAA/OCM Coral Reef Program, 1305 East West Highway, 10th Floor, N/OCM6, Silver Spring, MD 20910.

VIII. Other Information

NOAA reserves the right to implement corrective or enforcement action per 2 C.F.R. § 200.328-.342 if a recipient fails to fulfill the requirements of the project as described in the scope of work incorporated into the award, which is based on the final negotiated application submitted to the agency. Non-compliance with award terms may also result in corrective or enforcement action, including suspension or termination of the award.