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ANNOUNCEMENT OF FEDERAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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

Funding Opportunity Title: John H. Prescott Marine Mammal Rescue Assistance Grant Program (Prescott Grant Program) for Fiscal Year 2016

Announcement Type: Initial

Funding Opportunity Number: NOAA-NMFS-PRPO-2016-2004558

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

Dates: Applications must be postmarked, provided to a delivery service, or received by Grants.gov by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time on October 7, 2015. Use of a delivery service other than U.S. mail must be documented with a receipt. PLEASE NOTE: When developing your submission timeline, keep in mind that (1) a free annual registration process in the electronic System for Award Management (SAM) may take 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 a Federal agency's electronic system has received your application.

Funding Opportunity Description: NOAA NMFS' Marine Mammal Health and Stranding Response Program is directed under the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) to facilitate the collection and dissemination of reference data on stranded marine mammals and health trends of marine mammal populations in the wild. The John H. Prescott Marine Mammal Rescue Assistance Grant Program is administered by NOAA to provide Federal assistance to eligible members of the National Marine Mammal Stranding Network to: 1) support basic needs of organizations for response, treatment, and data collection from living and dead stranded marine mammals, 2) fund scientific research objectives designed to answer questions about marine mammal strandings, health, or rehabilitation techniques utilizing data from living and dead stranded marine mammals, and 3) support facility operations directly related to the recovery, treatment, and data collection from living and dead stranded marine mammals. This document describes how to submit proposals for funding in fiscal year (FY) 2016 and how NMFS will determine which proposals will be funded. This document should be read in its entirety, as some information has changed from the previous year.

FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Program Objective

The John H. Prescott Marine Mammal Rescue Assistance Grant Program (hereafter referred to as the Prescott Grant Program) was established under the Marine Mammal Rescue Assistance Act of 2000 (16 U.S.C. 1421f-1), an amendment to the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA). The Prescott Grant Program is administered through the Marine Mammal Health and Stranding Response Program (MMHSRP) of the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS).

The Prescott Grant Program provides Federal assistance to eligible Stranding Network participants for: (1) basic needs of organizations for response, treatment, and data collection from living and dead stranded marine mammals; (2) scientific research objectives designed to answer questions about marine mammal strandings, health, or rehabilitation techniques utilizing data from living and dead stranded marine mammals; and (3) facility operations directly related to the recovery, treatment, and data collection from living and dead stranded marine mammals. A stranded marine mammal is a marine mammal in the wild that is (1) dead and on a beach, shore, or in waters under the jurisdiction of the United States or (2) is live and on a beach or shore of the United States and unable to return to the water, is in apparent need of medical attention, or is in waters under the jurisdiction of the United States but is unable to return to its natural habitat under its own power or without assistance.

The MMHSRP, through close coordination with Regional Stranding Networks, has the following objectives: (1) improve the rescue, care and treatment of stranded marine mammals; (2) reduce the health risk to animals, humans, and the ocean environment during response to, and rehabilitation and release of, stranded marine mammals; (3) collect life history, biological, and biomedical data from live and dead stranded marine mammals; (4) develop baseline reference data on the health of wild marine mammal populations, normal stranding rates, and causes of morbidity and mortality; improve the rapid detection of morbidity and mortality events; (5) collect archival samples for future retrospective studies on causes of mortality or illness, including genetics and genomics, and for placement in the National Marine Mammal Tissue (and Serum) Bank and other properly curated, professionally accredited archival facilities; and (6) refine and/or utilize comprehensive and consistent guidance for the rescue and rehabilitation of stranded marine mammals, collection of specimens, quality assurance, and analysis of tissue samples.

A portion of Prescott funding may be available at the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) to provide assistance for emergency marine mammal stranding events throughout FY 2016 on an as-needed basis, until expended. Emergency proposals should not be submitted on Grants.gov. Please submit a proposal online through the NFWF Easygrants

system (http://www.nfwf.org/easygrants). Additional guidance on emergency grant requirements and the application process is available on the Prescott Grant Program website (http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/health/prescott/emergency.htm).

B. Program Priorities

For this solicitation, all applications must fall within one of the three categories described below. The applicant must select one category to apply under. Since some projects could be designed to meet more than one category, you should determine which category best fits the goals of your proposed project. For each of the proposal categories the MMHSRP has identified multiple national and regional funding priorities. These program priorities pertain only to marine mammal species under the jurisdiction of the Department of Commerce (DOC) (cetaceans and pinnipeds, except walrus).

Category A - Fund marine mammal health, stranding, and rehabilitation scientific objectives. Data or samples may be collected from stranded animals as well as bycaught, subsistence hunted, or live animals in the wild, which serve as controls or for comparisons in specific study designs. If proposals under Category A are using live animals in the wild, subsistence or by-caught animals, the proposal must link the use of these animals to known or suspected health issues of stranded marine mammals and ultimately to the health of the population or to the development and validation of new tools and techniques to assess such health conditions.

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

1. National Funding Priorities

a. Improve understanding of health and health trends in populations of cetaceans and pinnipeds, with emphasis on infectious (i.e., zoonotic, epidemic, emerging) agents and diseases utilizing the infectious disease priority list developed by the Working Group for Marine Mammal Unusual Mortality Events by:

• Developing new tools and/or treatments (with the intent to operationalize);
• Validating new or existing tools and/or treatments;
• Using tools and/or treatments; or
• Assessing antibiotic resistance.

The infectious disease priority list is available on the Prescott Grant Program website (http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/pdfs/health/pathogens_prioritization.pdf). The National Action Plan for Combating Antibiotic-Resistant Bacteria is available on the White House website (https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/national_action_plan_for_combating_antibotic-resistant_bacteria.pdf).

b. Conduct analyses and interpretation of baseline information, trends, and correlations between population demographics, diet, health (e.g. disease state or infectious disease), environmental parameters (e.g., environmental oscillations, distribution of prey, or harmful algal blooms) or types and frequency of anthropogenic interactions, as they relate to strandings and overall marine mammal population health.

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

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

1. National Funding Priorities

a. Increase Stranding Network diagnostic capabilities (see definitions in Section VIII of this federal funding opportunity (FFO) announcement) by providing diagnostics, disease surveillance, or histopathology services.

b. Performance and interpretation of additional services to improve understanding of marine mammal health and strandings. Examples of services include: hearing testing, imaging, gas analyses, tooth aging, genetics, stomach content analyses, parasites, stable isotopes, sample archiving/preservation, etc.

c. Provide tags, post-release monitoring, analysis and interpretation of stranded, out-of-habitat, entangled or rehabilitated, and released cetaceans and pinnipeds including large whales (except North Atlantic right whales).

d. Increase Stranding Network incident management and coordination capabilities for major events such as Unusual Mortality Events (UME), natural disasters, disease outbreaks and oil spills to enhance data collection and analyses.

e. Enhance regional and trans-regional logistical support, data collection and analyses for response to large whale stranding events by:

• Obtaining additional Incident Command System (ICS) training;
• Acquiring and maintaining supplies and equipment;
• Developing cooperative plans with local, state, or federal agencies to identify carcass landing/necropsy sites;
• Identifying and securing towing/transport and disposal services by promoting partnerships with local businesses/contractors; or
• Supporting costs of large whale responses as appropriate.

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

Category B- Support basic and enhancement needs of organizations for response to, treatment of, and data collection from living and dead stranded marine mammals.

Organizations should apply under Category A1 if the budget request for scientific research is more than 50% of the total Federal budget. If research objectives are included in Category B proposals, the objectives must be designed with testable hypotheses. Organizations should

apply under Category B2 if the budget request to modify or upgrade facilities is less than 20% of the total federal budget, if greater than 20% see Category C. NOTE: All organizations applying under Category B must be authorized to conduct Stranding Network activities as of October 7, 2015, either through a Stranding Agreement, official designee status from the applicable NMFS Region, or under Section 109(h) of the MMPA (16 U.S.C. § 1379(h)).

B1. Further the development of organizations for response, treatment, and data collection from living and dead stranded marine mammals. Organizations (in existence for any amount of time) may only apply under Category B1 if they have never had a Prescott application accepted and reviewed during the Prescott technical reviewer process of an annual Prescott competition.

1. National Funding Priorities

a. Build capacity and infrastructure for basic stranding response and marine mammal rehabilitation activities in areas of low, intermittent or no coverage. This may include: the collection of Level A data and samples for analyses from a majority of stranded animals and outreach/education to raise community awareness for stranded animals.

b. Train new responders to improve consistency and quality of clinical care and treatment, assessments, necropsies, documentation, and data management for live and/or dead stranded marine mammals. Enhance participation in Regional or National Marine Mammal Stranding Network Conferences.

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

a. Alaska Region

i. Alaska Region high priority areas include: Western and Northern Alaska, as well as other areas of low and/or intermittent coverage in the state.

ii. Assist with community development, support, and training (e.g., regional and statewide meetings, training, etc.) for the Alaska Regional Stranding Network.

b. Greater Atlantic Region

i. Provide stranding response coverage for Level A data collection and increase capability to conduct live animal response and post-mortem examinations following established protocols in the following areas: Massachusetts' Northshore (Salem to New Hampshire border), Martha’s Vineyard, MA and Nantucket, MA.

ii. Develop (or enhance) reporting and documentation of live entangled pinnipeds in high sightings area with limited response coverage: Martha’s Vineyard, MA and Nantucket, MA.

iii. Increase public outreach and messaging through Public Service Announcements, online tools or printed materials to address and manage public expectations surrounding stranding responses to abundant pinniped species.

c. Pacific Islands Region

i. Support of outreach and training for Hawaiian monk seal stranding response and readiness

in the Main Hawaiian Islands.
d. Southeast Region
i. Southeast Region high priority geographic areas are: Florida (Citrus County through Franklin County).
ii. Establish capabilities to collect Level A data and perform necropsies on dead stranded marine mammals and/or respond quickly and humanely to live stranded marine mammals.
iii. Establish permanent and/or mobile necropsy facilities.
iv. Establish capabilities to perform diagnostics on live or dead stranded marine mammals.
v. Establish capabilities to humanely euthanize live stranded marine mammals.
vi. Increase collaboration with state and local government organizations (e.g. law enforcement, fire departments, life guards, environmental management agencies) to more effectively respond to stranding events.
e. West Coast Region
i. Provide coverage for Level A data collection in areas where coverage is sporadic or unknown by building volunteer or collaborative partnerships to establish marine mammal stranding response and investigation capabilities on all accessible beaches in the participants authorized response area. This may include: building additional volunteer base or negotiating collaborative partnerships and opening or enhancing communication and working relationships with local governments. An emphasis on education and outreach, addressing and managing public expectations, and distributing informational materials (handouts, permanent signage, promotion of Share the Shore, etc.) for public outreach is extremely important. Mendocino, Humboldt and Sonoma Counties in California and Curry, Coos, and Douglas Counties in Oregon are high priority areas.
B2. Support basic and enhancement needs of organizations (in existence for any amount of time) that have previously applied for or received Prescott funding for response to, treatment of, and data collection from living and dead stranded marine mammals. Collaborative proposals are encouraged.
1. National Funding Priorities
a. Enhance the quality, consistency, quantity, reporting, and sharing of Level A, B, and C data collected from stranded marine mammals, especially for NOAA Fisheries' Species in the Spotlight (http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/stories/2015/05/05_14_15species_in_the_spotlight.html) and post-UME monitoring and analyses. This includes: completing diagnostic screening, collecting and analyzing samples and scientific data and detecting/reporting emerging diseases, new lesions or uncommon findings. Projects involving non-Endangered Species Act (ESA) listed or non-MMPA depleted species should provide data/information for conservation management needs such as establishing or maintaining baseline information and identifying human interactions, fisheries interactions habitat threats or other threats to co-occurring species.

b. Enhance attendance and participation by professional staff and facility volunteers in training, particularly in: Regional or National Marine Mammal Stranding Network Conferences; Incident Command System relative to oil spill response and natural disasters involving marine mammals; public health in relation to marine mammals; marine mammal disease and treatment issues; and veterinary care.
c. Improve capacity for responses such as mass strandings, hazardous material spills, UMEs, natural disasters, out-of-habitat situations, and disease outbreaks. Responses may include necropsy and sample analyses, live animal triage, treatment, short- and long-term care, correcting rehabilitation facility non-compliance issues, and tagging to assess, monitor and analyze post-release success of rehabilitated animals.
2. Regional Funding Priorities - In addition to the above national priorities, each region has identified the following priorities of particular interest:
a. Alaska Region
i. Increase capacity to collect, archive, and analyze data from stranded marine mammals to investigate overall health parameters, prey types, diseases, and immune and reproductive functions.
ii. Enhance the quality and consistency of data collected and reported from stranded marine mammals (e.g., standardized necropsy examinations and reports, standardized sample analyses, increase supply of gear caches).
iii. Address underlying causes of pinniped entanglement in Alaska to reduce injury and mortality due to interactions with fishery gear and marine debris.
iv. Analyze and publish data related to historical Alaska marine mammal strandings and health.
v. Continue development, support, and training (e.g., regional and statewide meetings, training, etc.) for the Alaska Regional Stranding Network.
b. Greater Atlantic Region
i. Develop (or enhance) reporting and documentation of live and dead entangled pinnipeds.
ii. Analyze and publish data related to historical marine mammal strandings and health.
iii. Increase and enhance public outreach and messaging through Public Service Announcements, online tools or printed materials to address and manage public expectations surrounding stranding responses to abundant pinniped species.
iv. Enhance local logistical support for response to large whale stranding events by:
• Obtaining additional ICS training;
• Acquiring and maintaining supplies and equipment;
• Developing cooperative plans with local, state, or federal agencies to identify carcass landing/necropsy sites; or
• Identifying and securing towing/transport and disposal services by promoting partnerships with local businesses/contractors.
c. Pacific Islands Region

i. Increase quality of dead cetacean disease and cause of death surveillance (focusing on cetacean morbillivirus, brucellosis and other diseases of concern within the region) in the main Hawaiian Islands and U.S. Pacific Islands (e.g., Guam, American Samoa, and Northern Mariana Islands). This includes enhancing: veterinary participation, data collection, and necropsies during stranding events.
ii. Organize outreach and training for stranding response and readiness for dead stranded cetaceans (in the Main Hawaiian Islands) and both live and dead stranded cetaceans in the U.S. Pacific Islands (e.g., Guam, American Samoa, and Northern Mariana Islands).
iii. Improve access to veterinary care for stranded marine mammals including: facility improvements and instruments for treatment monitoring for existing rehabilitation facilities as well as on-site (laboratory or field) equipment and instruments for more rapid medical assessments for live stranded cetaceans and pinnipeds.
d. Southeast Region
i. Southeast Region high priority areas are: Florida (Citrus County through Franklin County), areas where there are ongoing UMEs, repeated UMEs, or areas that may need to conduct post-UME surveillance, and areas where stranding/human interaction data are utilized by a Take Reduction Team.
ii. Enhance capabilities to rapidly perform thorough necropsies on dead stranded marine mammals in good condition prior to degradation- particularly during large whale stranding events, human interaction events (e.g. potential gunshot or entangled animals) and UMEs.
iii. Enhance or upgrade permanent and/or mobile necropsy facilities.
iv. Enhance capabilities to perform diagnostic tests on dead stranded marine mammals.
v. Enhance capabilities to triage live stranded marine mammals, including performing thorough diagnostics, such as hematology, histopathology and cytology, and euthanasia.
vi. Enhance capabilities to rapidly and effectively respond to mass strandings. This may include equipment caches, herding capabilities, triage, euthanasia, thorough necropsy, carcass disposal, and resources for potential release (immediate release or post-rehabilitation).
vii. Provide support for disentanglement of free-swimming small cetaceans. This may include capture resources and tools and methods for boat-based disentanglement.
viii. Increase collaboration with state and local government organizations (e.g. law enforcement, fire departments, life guards, environmental management agencies) through training and outreach to more effectively respond to stranding events.
e. West Coast Region
i. Provide coverage for Level A data collection in areas where coverage is sporadic or unknown by building volunteer or collaborative partnerships to establish marine mammal stranding response and investigation capabilities on all accessible beaches in the participants authorized response area. This may include: building additional volunteer base or negotiating collaborative partnerships and opening or enhancing communication and working

relationships with local governments. An emphasis on education and outreach, addressing and managing public expectations, and distributing informational materials (handouts, permanent signage, promotion of Share the Shore, etc.) for public outreach is extremely important. Mendocino, Humboldt and Sonoma Counties in California and Curry, Coos, and Douglas Counties in Oregon are high priority areas.

ii. Determine if public reports to the Stranding Network are an accurate indication of actual marine mammal stranding events in areas with consistent response coverage. This may include: conducting systematic and/or periodic beach surveys to identify areas where marine mammal strandings are not being reported to the Stranding Network, and compiling the data to enhance future planning and outreach efforts.

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

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

v. Develop a cooperative regional plan (includes California, Oregon, and Washington) to enhance large whale response and necropsies. This plan may include:

• Identifying suitable necropsy sites where large whale carcasses can be towed, beached, examined, left to decompose or removed for burial or landfill;

• Identifying processes for obtaining prior authorization/permission to use the identified sites on short notice and identify any pre-existing jurisdictional, permitting or other regulatory requirements;

• Researching and securing towing/transport services at minimal cost by promoting partnerships between the Stranding Network and local businesses that addresses leaving carcasses at the site for natural decomposition;

• Creation of a West Coast-wide database to house the above information on potential necropsy sites, points of contact, current/needed authorizations, and local resources for every stretch of beach along the west coast; or

• Providing funds for carcass disposal costs and network travel for necropsies. Collaborative proposals of one to three years are encouraged.

vi. Expand rehabilitation facilities and/or response areas to rehabilitate live pinnipeds in Los Angeles, Ventura, and Santa Barbara. This may include: enhancement, repairs, or upgrading existing facilities to meet or exceed NMFS' Policies and Best Practices – Standards for Rehabilitation Facilities.

Category C - Support needed modifications and/or upgrades to rehabilitation facilities

(existing and new) to meet or exceed the NMFS' Policies and Best Practices- Rehabilitation Facility Standards (http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/health/publications.htm#policies). Organizations should apply under Category C if the budget request to modify or upgrade facilities is more than 20% of the total federal budget. NOTE: All organizations applying under Category C must be authorized to conduct Stranding Network activities as of October 7, 2015, either through a Stranding Agreement or official designee status from the applicable NMFS Region, or under Section 109(h) of the MMPA (16 U.S.C. § 1379(h)).

1. National Funding Priorities

a. Enhance, repair, or upgrade existing and new facilities to address non-compliance issues and deficiencies identified during the 2011- 2015 NMFS rehabilitation facility inspections for a total cost of more than 20% of the Federal budget request.

b. Enhance, repair, or upgrade existing and new facilities to meet (or exceed) NMFS' Policies and Best Practices - Standards for Rehabilitation Facilities.

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

a. Alaska Region - No additional priorities.

b. Greater Atlantic Region - No additional priorities.

c. Pacific Islands Region

i. Enhance, repair, or upgrade existing necropsy or monk seal rehabilitation facilities in Hawaii.

d. Southeast Region - No additional priorities.

e. West Coast Region

i. Expand rehabilitation facilities and/or response areas to rehabilitate live pinnipeds in Los Angeles, Ventura, and Santa Barbara. This may include: enhancement, repairs, or upgrading existing facilities to meet or exceed NMFS' Policies and Best Practices – Standards for Rehabilitation Facilities.

ii. Enhance facilities, equipment, and staff to increase rehabilitation and holding capabilities in Washington for ESA listed species or human interaction cases.

C. Program Authority

16 U.S.C. 1421 f-1

II. Award Information

A. Funding Availability

NOAA anticipates that up to $4,000,000 may be available for distribution under the FY 2016 annual competitive Prescott Grant Program. The exact amount of funds that may be awarded will be determined during pre-award negotiations between the applicant and NOAA

representatives. Funds have not yet been appropriated for this program, and there is no guarantee that funds will be appropriated or that sufficient funds will be available to make awards for all qualified projects or any projects. Publication of this notice does not obligate NOAA to award any specific project or to obligate any available funds. If an application for a financial assistance award is selected for funding, NOAA has no obligation to provide any additional funding in connection with that award in subsequent years beyond the award period. Notwithstanding verbal or written assurance that may have been received, there is no obligation on the part of NOAA to cover pre-award costs unless approved by the Grants Officer as part of the terms when the award is made or Research Terms are applied to the award.

The maximum Federal award for each grant cannot exceed $100,000 (16 U.S.C. § 1421f-1). If funds become available, NOAA estimates that approximately ten to 40 awards may be made, depending on the level funds that may be appropriated. Funds may be set aside from the annual appropriation to provide for emergency assistance awards to eligible stranding network participants. These emergency funds will be available until expended during the period of fiscal availability.

There is no limit on the number of proposals that can be submitted by the same Stranding Network participant during the FY 2016 competitive grant cycle. However, Stranding Network participants will receive no more than two awards per year as part of the competitive program. The two awards must be for completely independent projects that are clearly separate in their objectives, goals, and budget requests and must be successful in the competitive review process. Eligible researchers applying as Principal Investigators, but not independently authorized under Sections 112(c) or 109(h) of the MMPA (16 U.S.C. §§ 1382(c) and 1379(h), respectively, or the National Contingency Plan for Response to Marine Mammal Unusual Mortality Events, can only receive one award per year as part of the competitive grant cycle.

B. Project/Award Period

Prescott awards may have a maximum project period of three years, but the total federal award cannot exceed $100,000 for each award regardless of the length of the project period. Proposals requesting incrementally funded projects exceeding $100,000 will not be accepted. If an applicant would like to continue work on a project funded through this program beyond the approved award period, the applicant may notify the assigned Grants Officer no less than 30 days prior to the end of the period to determine eligibility for a no-cost extension, or follow in the award terms if Research Terms have been applied to the award. If the money is expended and funds are needed to continue the project, the applicant should submit another proposal during the next competitive award cycle (FY 2017) or seek an alternate source of funding.

C. Type of Funding Instrument

Under this solicitation, NOAA will fund Prescott projects as grants or cooperative agreements, as appropriate for the nature of the project. Where a cooperative agreement is issued, the nature of NOAA's "substantial involvement" will generally be collaboration between NOAA and a Recipient on the scope of work. Additional forms of substantial involvement that may arise are described in Chapter 5.C of the Department of Commerce (DoC) Grants and Cooperative Agreements Manual, which is available at http://go.usa.gov/SNJd.

III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applicants

All eligible applicants must currently be an active, authorized participant or researcher in the National Marine Mammal Stranding Network. Eligible applicants must be: 1) Stranding Agreement (SA) holders or their designee organizations; or 2) holders of researcher authorization letters issued by a NMFS Regional Administrator and/or an MMPA and/or ESA scientific research or enhancement permit (when applicable); or 3) an eligible Federal, state, or local government personnel or tribal personnel (pursuant to Section 109(h) of the MMPA (16 U.S.C. 1379(h)); or 4) diagnostic laboratories performing services for the stranding network. Federal agencies in the DOC or Department of the Interior (DOI) are not eligible to receive Federal assistance under this notice.

1. "In Good Standing" Criteria. All eligible applicants must meet the following "in good standing" criteria:

a. If the applicant is a designated Principal Investigator of an MMPA and/or ESA scientific research or enhancement permit, the applicant must have fulfilled all permit requirements. The applicant must not have any pending or outstanding enforcement actions under the MMPA or ESA.

b. The applicant must have complied with the terms and responsibilities of the appropriate SA, MMPA Section 109(h) authorization, or researcher authorization letter. This includes, but is not limited to: 1) completion of all reporting requirements; 2) cooperation with state, local, and federal officials; 3) cooperation with state and local officials in the disposition of stranded marine mammals; and 4) cooperation with stranding network participants.

c. The applicant must have cooperated in a timely manner with NMFS in collecting and submitting Level B and Level C data and samples, when requested.

d. The applicant must not have any current enforcement investigation for the take of marine mammals contrary to MMPA/ESA regulations.

e. The applicant must not have any pending NMFS notice of violation(s) regarding the policies governing the goals and operations of the Stranding Network and SA, if applicable

(e.g., probation, suspension, or termination).
2. Category Specific Criteria. Organizations and individuals must meet all of the following eligibility criteria specific to their category of participation in order for a proposal to be considered for funding:
a. SA Holder Participant or SA Designee Participant - SA participants must hold a current, active SA for stranding response and/or rehabilitation from a NMFS Regional Administrator or the Assistant Administrator. SA Designee participants must be holding a current, active letter of designation from a NMFS SA holder. Designees cannot request authorization for activities beyond the scope of what is authorized by the SA to the agreement holder.
b. Researcher Participant - Researcher participants must hold a current, active authorizing letter for the proposed award period from the appropriate NMFS Regional Administrator or the Assistant Administrator to salvage stranded marine mammal specimens, parts and samples for the purpose of utilization in scientific research (50 CFR 216.22). Persons authorized to salvage dead marine mammal specimens under this section must register the salvage with the appropriate NMFS Regional Office within 30 days after the taking occurs. Researchers who are authorized under an MMPA/ESA Scientific Research Permit must still obtain an authorizing letter from the Regional Stranding Coordinator in order to use parts or specimens from stranded animals. Researcher participants that would not require an authorizing letter from the NMFS Regional Administrator (i.e., they will be working with data only and not possessing samples or specimens) must still provide a letter of eligibility from the Regional Stranding Coordinator (see section III.A.3. of this FFO). Researcher participants must also have designated Co-Investigator(s) that are active NMFS authorized Stranding Network participants in good standing, and provide documentation to this effect.
c. State, Local, Federal Government Employees or Tribal Participants - State and local government officials or employees participating pursuant to Section 109(h) of the MMPA (16 U.S.C. 1379(h)) for marine mammal species not listed under the ESA must fulfill reporting obligations outlined in 50 CFR § 216.22.
d. Diagnostic Laboratories – While diagnostic laboratories performing analyses for Stranding Network members do not need authorization from NMFS to receive and possess samples or specimens from stranded marine mammals (50 CFR § 216.22(c)(8)), diagnostic laboratory applicants must still provide a letter of eligibility from the MMHSRP at NMFS Headquarters (see section IV.B.7.a. of this FFO). When requesting a letter of eligibility, laboratories should submit examples of their diagnostic capabilities, diagnostic services proposed and their testing turn-around time to the MMHSRP (see section VII of this FFO for contact information).
3. Letter of Eligibility. All applicants must submit a letter of eligibility issued by the appropriate NMFS Regional Stranding Coordinator or the MMHSRP at NMFS Headquarters. This letter is required in order to be considered for an award in this funding cycle. The letter of eligibility states that you are: 1) an eligible Stranding Network

participant, diagnostic laboratory or researcher at the time of the application submission and during the award period; 2) in good standing; 3) have a history of participation in/with the Stranding Network or that your organization is from a local area with no pre-existing stranding response and/or rehabilitation capabilities or your organization provides diagnostic services. A copy of your SA or research authorization will not be considered as proof of eligibility. Any proposal that does not provide a letter from the NMFS Regional Stranding Coordinator (or NMFS Headquarters) will not be considered eligible and will not be considered for further review. Contact the NMFS Regional Stranding Coordinators (http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/health/coordinators.htm) or the Prescott Grant Program at the address in the Agency Contacts, Section VII of this FFO to request this letter.
Federal agencies in the DOC or DOI are not eligible to receive Federal assistance under this notice. In addition, NOAA employees shall not provide assistance in writing any application, writing letters of support for any application, or otherwise confer any unfair advantage on a particular application. However, for activities involving collaboration with current NOAA programs, NOAA employees can write a letter verifying that they are collaborating with the project. MMHSRP staff and other Federal Program Officers can provide guidance on application procedures and proper completion of required forms. Applications encompassing activities conducted under the authority of a MMPA Scientific Research Permit issued to the DOC or DOI should include a copy of the permit and a letter from the Principal Investigator (DOC/DOI employee) verifying that the work is being conducted with their approval. Federal employee travel costs or salaries are not allowable costs under this program. Refer any questions about potential collaboration or support by non-DOC/DOI Federal employees to the official listed in Agency Contacts, Section VII. of this FFO.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement

All proposals submitted must provide a minimum non-Federal cost share of 25% of the total budget (i.e., 0.25 x total project costs = total non-Federal share). Therefore, the total Federal share will be 75% or less of the total budget. For a proposed total Federal share of $100,000, the minimum non-Federal share is $33,334 (total budget of $133,334; .25 x $133, 334 = $33,334). Cost share must be an integer, so please round up. The applicant may include a non-Federal cost share for more than 25% of the total budget, but this obligation is a binding offer. In order to reduce calculation errors when determining the correct cost share amounts, we urge all applicants to use the cost share calculator on the Prescott Program website (http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/health/prescott/proposals/costshare.htm). If a proposal does not comply with these cost share requirements, it will not be considered for further review in this annual funding cycle. Pursuant to 48 U.S.C. 1469a, the match requirement does not apply to the U.S. insular areas (Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the U.S. Virgin Islands).
NOAA will review the valuation of the applicant’s proposed non-Federal cost share

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

C. Other Criteria that Affect Eligibility

Permits and Approvals

It is the applicant's responsibility to obtain all necessary Federal, state, and local government permits and approvals. The applicant must include in the application package either: 1) an application cover letter from the Prescott applicant to the appropriate authorizing entity requesting permits (e.g., MMPA scientific research/enhancement permit, etc.) or approvals, or 2) a copy of the cover letter of the final permit or approval. The applicant must be able to provide the entire permit or approval if requested by the Prescott Grant Program.

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

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

state, and local permits are not obtained.
For proposals involving construction projects, it is the applicant's responsibility to request or obtain all necessary permits and include documentation of such requests or approvals in the application package. Documentation must, to the extent possible, include environmental information that has been, or will be, submitted to the appropriate Federal, state, and local government offices (see Section IV, Application and Submission Information, for required information for each proposal category). These documents will help the Prescott Grant Program in determining the potential for environmentally significant activities and ensure NMFS compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).
Applications will be reviewed to determine if the proposed activities were analyzed in the Final Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (FPEIS) for the MMHSRP. For those activities analyzed in the FPEIS, no further environmental documentation will be required. For applications whose activities were not analyzed in the FPEIS, program staff will ensure sufficient environmental documentation has been provided to determine the appropriate level of environmental analysis needed to comply with NEPA. Proposal activities maybe be categorically excluded or an Environmental Assessment (EA) may be necessary. For those applications needing an EA, affected applicants will be informed after the peer review stage. Applicants will be requested to assist in the preparation of an EA by providing all necessary information to complete the assessment (prior to the award).

IV. Application and Submission Information

A. Address to Request Application Package

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

B. Content and Form of Application

Proposals must adhere to the following instructions and requirements by the proposal submission deadline. Failure to follow these instructions may be reflected in lower scoring by reviewers. Proposals should be submitted via the Grants.gov website. Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit proposals early (at least one week prior to the deadline) in the event that the Federal Program Officers are able to pre-screen applications for any deficiencies, contact applicants, and obtain revised applications by the solicitation deadline. Please note that a pre-screening is not guaranteed even if an application is submitted before the deadline. If you cannot submit your application via Grant.gov, a hard copy of the

application will be accepted. One signed original (may be printed double-sided) of the complete proposal package must be sent to the address listed in Section IV.F. of this FFO and postmarked by the submission deadline.
The following forms are required as part of each application and are available on Grants.gov:

• Application for Federal Assistance (SF-424)
• Budget Information, Non-Construction Programs (SF-424A)
• Assurances, Non-Constructions Programs (SF-424-B)
• Certifications Regarding Lobbying (CD-511), and
• Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (SF-LLL) (if applicable)

Proposals and all attachments must be in 10-point font, double-spaced with one inch margins. For applicants submitting proposals by mail, the SF-424 must be signed in ink (preferably blue ink).
Applicants must choose and identify one category and the specific funding priority or priorities within the identified category to which the proposal is addressing. Applicants may choose national, regional or a combination of both funding priorities. If the proposal addresses more than one priority, clearly identify and list first the priority that most closely reflects the objective of the proposal. Applicants should not assume prior knowledge on the part of the Prescott Grant Program or the reviewers as to the relative merits of the project described in the application.
All applications must include the following information:
1. Budget Information (no page limit): Applications must include the SF-424A (Budget Information, Non-Construction Programs) form. All instructions should be read before completing the form. The amounts per category and total amounts indicated on the form must correspond with the amounts indicated on all other proposal documents. The Federal and non-Federal columns must be filled in completely and separately.
Each application must have a detailed budget narrative and corresponding spreadsheet describing the total project costs, including contributions and donations. The narrative must justify the itemized costs per category between Federal and non-Federal shares and the corresponding direct and indirect cost totals. For the non-Federal share, the itemized costs in the budget narrative and spreadsheet should be separated into applicant and third party in-kind contributions. If third party in-kind contributions are included, briefly describe the method for calculating the value of these contributions. A sample budget spreadsheet is available on the Prescott Program website (http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/health/prescott/faqs.htm).
Indirect costs may be included in the budget. Applicants proposing to use an approved negotiated indirect cost rate agreement (NICRA) are required to submit a copy of the signed NICRA with the application package (see Section IV.B.7.f.). This copy will not be included in the page limit requirements. If an applicant has not previously established an indirect cost

rate with a Federal agency, they may choose to use the de minimis indirect cost rate of 10% of Modified Total Direct Costs (MTDC) (as allowable under 2 C.F.R. §200.414).
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. If funds are requested for a staff position that is not currently filled by personnel, a position description must be provided with the Supporting Documentation (see Section IV. B.7.i).
Funds are allowed for travel to professional meetings and conferences should be directly related to the project goals and objectives. The budget narrative should list each piece of equipment, the cost, and a description of how it will be used and why it is necessary to the successful completion of the proposed project. An applicant may choose to attach Supporting Documentation (see Section IV. B.7.h) regarding any piece of equipment and/or the basis for its cost without affecting the page limits. Fees, fundraising activities, travel for Federal employees, salaries for Federal employees, or profits are not allowable costs.
2. Title Page (one page limit): Provide the project title, project duration (with a start date no earlier than August 1, 2016), applicant name, name of Principal Investigator or Contact, address and phone number of the Principal Investigator or Contact, the Prescott Grant Program Category under which the project fits (see Section I.B. of this document), the project's objective(s), and a list of the Federal, non-Federal, and total costs of the project. A sample title page is available on the Prescott Program website (http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/health/prescott/faqs.htm).
3. Proposal Narrative (ten-page limit): Describe the project activities completely and accurately. The Project Description should be a clear statement of all work to be undertaken and must include the information listed below in (a)-(g).
a. Goals and Objectives: Identify one Prescott Grant Program Category and the national and/or regional funding priorities (listed in Section I.B.) relevant to the project. State expected project accomplishments and their significance to the marine mammal health, stranding response, and rehabilitation community. Objectives should be attainable within the specified time period and with the available monetary and human resources. Objectives should be simple, understandable, and as specific and quantitative as possible. Historic stranding data in the region of proposed activities should be used to assess season, species, and likelihood of future strandings. The data are critical in linking the proposed project objectives with the Prescott Grant Program's goals and priorities. Applicants are encouraged to provide stranding data and statistics by year and geographic area in sufficient detail to provide a regional context to the project.
b. Project Management: Describe how the proposed project will be organized and managed, including financial management of the project. An application may only have one designated Principal Investigator. Other project participants or organizations that will have a significant role in conducting the project should be listed as Co-Investigators. Organizations

or individuals that support the project should be referred to as Cooperators. If any portion of the project will be conducted through subcontracts, follow the procurement guidance found in 2 C.F.R. Part 200. Describe how provisions for competitive subcontracting will be met, if applicable. If the contractor has been identified, please provide a statement of their qualifications or background.

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

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

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

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

iv. Identify the outcomes, results, or products, and how they relate to the Prescott Grant Program goals (those goals under your chosen Category A, B, or C, and National or Regional funding priorities). Describe how the project outcomes, results, or products will be applied and/or made available to any appropriate user groups through outreach and education efforts.

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

d. Project Impacts: Describe the potential impacts of activities on the recovery and treatment of stranded marine mammals or the collection of data from living/dead stranded marine mammals for use in marine mammal health research. Identify any other potential project impacts, including environmental impacts.

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

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

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

and non-governmental entities, particularly other members of the marine mammal health and stranding response community will participate in the project and the nature of their participation.

4. Organizational Summary (three-page limit): Provide a summary of your facility and the role your organization plays in the Marine Mammal Stranding Network. The summary must include: a map of your response area; response statistics (number of strandings/year); organizational overview (number of paid staff, volunteers, researchers, etc.); size and capacity of your facility; a summary of your relationship with neighboring Stranding Network responders; and a financial overview of your facility, including what funds are available for the proposed work. A sample organizational summary is available on the Prescott Program website (http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/health/prescott/faqs.htm).

5. Data Sharing Plan (two-page limit): Provide a data sharing plan that includes descriptions of the types of environmental data and information 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, sharing, and security; and prior experience in publishing such data. The plan is required as part of NOAA's data sharing policy described in Section VI.B below, and will be reviewed as part of the Evaluation Criteria under V.A.1.

6. Appendices (15 page limit): Additional material may be provided including: tables, charts, graphs, maps, photographs, slide shows, and other pictorial presentations.

7. Supporting Documentation (no page limit): The following supporting documentation is required for all proposals:

a. Letter of Eligibility: See requirements in Section III, Eligibility Information.

b. Results of Previous Prescott Awards: If any Principal Investigator/Co-Investigator on the project has received support from the Prescott Grant Program the following information is required for each annual competitive and emergency grant received in the past 3 years: 1) NOAA award number, amount, and period of support; 2) title of the project; 3) summary of the results of the completed work including a brief description of available data, samples, physical collections, and other related research projects (1-2 paragraphs); 4) publications resulting from the award (copies are requested for documentation, if available); and 5) if the current application is for renewed or continuing support, a description of the relation of the completed work to the proposed work. If the most recent Prescott grant was awarded more than three years ago, the information listed above is required for the most recent grant. Do not submit copies of progress or final reports.

c. Curriculum Vitae for Named Investigators (maximum four pages each): Abbreviated Curriculum Vitae are required from the Principal Investigator, Co-Investigators, and named collaborators.

d. Letters of Cooperation: Letters of cooperation between the Principal Investigator and all named participants in the project, describing and agreeing to the specific activities each

participant would perform. A letter of cooperation is required from any organization that is supplying marine mammal samples/specimens for the proposed activities.
e. Letters of Support: Letters of support (optional, up to five letters) include any endorsements or letters of support for the project from other National Marine Mammal Stranding Network participants (e.g., participants in adjacent geographical areas).
f. Indirect Cost Rate Agreement: Applications including negotiated indirect costs rates in the budget, must include a copy of the current, approved, NICRA with the Federal government.
g. Permits, Authorizations, IACUC Approvals, and Complete Environmental Analyses: Applicants requiring MMPA/ESA scientific research and enhancement permits must include a copy of the cover letter of their permit(s) or their request for such permit. Projects requiring IACUC review must include a copy of their IACUC approval or request for such approval.
h. Equipment Descriptions: The budget narrative should list each piece of equipment, the cost, and a description of how it will be used and why it is necessary to the successful completion of the proposed project. An applicant may choose to attach supporting documentation regarding any piece of equipment and/or the basis for its cost without affecting the page limits. Equipment is defined as an item of property that has an acquisition cost of $5,000 or more (unless the applicant organization has established lower levels) and an expected service life of more than one year. Any items that do not meet the threshold for equipment can be included under the supplies line item. Please note that any general use equipment (computers, etc.) that is charged directly to the award should be allocated to the award according to the expected usage on the project. Equipment procured for the project is subject to requirements in 2 C.F.R. §§ 200.317-.326.
i. Position Descriptions: Applicants requesting funds for new staff positions or staff positions that are vacant at the time of application submission must provide a detailed position description for each vacancy. The position description should include the qualifications, skills and requirements necessary to fill the vacancy.

C. Submission Dates and Times

Applications must be received and validated by Grants.gov, postmarked, or provided to a delivery service and time-stamped on or before 11:59 p.m. EDT, October 7, 2015. To apply on Grants.gov, you must first have an up-to-date registration in the System for Award Management described in Section IV.F. below. Applications submitted through Grants.gov are automatically stamped with the date and time of submission and will be the basis of determining timeliness. For applications submitted through Grants.gov, there will be three automated email receipts sent to the application submitter with the date and time of submission. The first email confirms initial receipt of the application by the Grants.gov portal. The second email confirms that there are no errors with the application submission and the third email confirms the application has been forwarded to NOAA for further

processing. If email confirmation receipts are not provided within two business days of application submission, contact the Grants.gov Help Desk (800-518-4726) and Jaclyn Taylor, at Jaclyn.Taylor@noaa.gov. PLEASE NOTE: It may take Grants.gov up to two business days to validate or reject the application. Please consider this when developing your submission timeline. Applicants are responsible for ensuring that all required application elements have been appropriately submitted. Applications received after the Grants.gov deadline will be rejected without further consideration. Use of U.S. mail or another delivery service for hard copy applications must be documented with a receipt. No facsimile or electronic mail applications will be accepted.
Important note on Grants.gov application attachment file names: Attachment file names may only include the following UTF-8 characters: A-Z, a-z, 0-9, underscore (_), hyphen (-), space ( ) and period (.). If applicants use any other characters when naming their attachment files, their applications will be rejected.

D. Intergovernmental Review

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

E. Funding Restrictions

Indirect Cost: The budget may include an amount for indirect costs if the applicant has an established indirect cost rate with the Federal government. Indirect costs are essentially overhead costs for basic operational functions (e.g., utilities, rent, and insurance) that are incurred for common or joint objectives and, therefore, cannot be identified specifically within a particular project. A copy of the current, approved negotiated indirect cost agreement with the federal government must be included in the application.
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 MTDC (as allowable under 2 C.F.R. §200.414). The negotiation and approval of a rate is subject to the procedures required by NOAA and the Department of Commerce Standard Terms and Conditions Section B.06. The NOAA contact for indirect or facilities and administrative costs is:
Lamar Revis, Grants Officer
NOAA Grants Management Division
1325 East West Highway
9th Floor
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910
lamar.revis@noaa.gov
Allowable Costs: Allowable Costs: Funds awarded cannot necessarily pay for all the costs that the recipient might incur in the course of carrying out the project. Allowable costs are

determined by reference to the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements at 2 C.F.R. Part 200. Generally, costs that are allowable include salaries, equipment, supplies, and training, as long as these are "necessary and reasonable."

F. Other Submission Requirements

First-time registration with Grants.gov may take up to three to six weeks. It is strongly recommended that this registration process be completed as soon as possible. To use Grants.gov, applicants must have a Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number and registration within the Federal System for Award Management (SAM). To enable the use of a universal identifier and to enhance the quality of information available to the public as required by the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006, to the extent applicable, any proposal awarded in response to this announcement will be required to use the Central Contractor Registration and Dun and Bradstreet Universal Numbering System and be subject to reporting requirements, as identified in OMB guidance published at 2 CFR Parts 25, 170 (2013), http://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?SID=1ccffb4c1d4de03addd6a041113460f9&mc=true&node=se2.1.200_1300&rgn=div8

Applicants should allow a minimum of five days to complete the SAM registration; registration is required only once, but must be renewed periodically. Grants.gov will not accept submissions if the applicant has not been authorized or if credentials are incorrect. Authorizations and credential corrections can take several days to establish. Please plan your time accordingly to avoid late submissions as such submissions will be rejected.
The Grants.gov validation process for a submitted application can take up to two business days to complete (following submission through Grants.gov). Only validated applications are sent to NOAA for review. To ensure successful submission of an application, it is strongly recommended that a final and complete application is submitted at least two business days prior to the submission deadline.
Application Submission: Applications should be submitted electronically through the Grants.gov website at http://www.grants.gov. If on-line submission is not possible, hard copy applications may be submitted by postal mail or commercial delivery to NOAA/NMFS/Office of Protected Resources (F/PR), ATTN: Jaclyn Taylor, 1315 East-West Highway, Room 13620, Silver Spring, MD 20910. No facsimile or electronic mail applications will be accepted.
Unique Entity Identifier and System for Award Management (SAM): 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 valid unique entity identifier in its application; and

(iii) continue to maintain an active SAM registration with current information at all times during which it has an active Federal award, application or plan under consideration by a Federal awarding agency. The Federal awarding agency may not make a Federal award to an applicant until the applicant has complied with all applicable unique entity identifier and SAM requirements and, if an applicant has not fully complied with the requirements by the time the Federal awarding agency is ready to make a Federal award, the Federal awarding agency may determine that the applicant is not qualified to receive a Federal award and use that determination as a basis for making a Federal award to another applicant.

V. Application Review Information

A. Evaluation Criteria

The Category A1, A2, B2 and C proposals will be evaluated by reviewers based on the following criteria (with their relative weights):
1. Importance/relevance and applicability of proposed project to the program goals (30%). This criterion ascertains whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and/or relevance to NOAA, Federal, regional, state, or local activities, and assesses the broader impacts of the project. Applications will be evaluated to determine if the project goals and objectives are: clear; relate to project activities; and relate to the Prescott Grant Program goals and funding priorities. Reviewers will consider: the likelihood of meeting project milestones and achieving anticipated results in the stated time period; the Data Sharing Plan; the contribution of potential outcomes, results, or products to the marine mammal stranding and rehabilitation communities; and the amount of collaboration with other stranding network participants. (Score = 1-100 points)
2. Technical/scientific merit (35%). This criterion assesses whether the approach is technically sound and/or innovative, if the methods are appropriate, and whether there are clear project goals and objectives. Proposals will be scored on their clear identification of goals and objectives and appropriate performance evaluation methods. Proposals should have sufficient information to enable Reviewers to provide a technical evaluation of the project. The evaluation will be based upon the strengths and/or weaknesses of the technical design relative to obtaining productive and meaningful results. (Score = 1-100 points)
3. Overall qualifications of applicants (15%). This criterion ascertains whether the applicant possesses the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project. Project management will be evaluated based upon documentation of related experience and qualifications of the Principal Investigator, Co-Investigator(s), and other personnel. Other personnel include designated contractors, consultants, and Cooperators. The results of any previous Prescott awards will be considered when evaluating applicant qualifications. Reviewers may take into consideration if the proposal followed the application content and form instructions and requirements.

(Score = 1-100 points)
4. Project costs (15%). This criterion evaluates the budget to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time-frame. The proposed costs and overall budget of the project will be evaluated according to the proposed work. Itemized costs and the overall budget must be justified and appropriately allocated. (Score = 1-100 points)
5. Outreach and education (5%). This criterion assesses whether the project provides a focused and effective education and outreach strategy regarding NOAA's mission to protect the Nation’s natural resources. Applications will be evaluated on whether project results or products will be shared appropriately given the nature of the proposed work and whether sufficient detail is provided to make this determination. Depending on the nature of the project, outreach and education may include: peer reviewed publications, presentations at professional meetings and Stranding Network conferences, development of brochures, education materials, training manuals or websites, or distribution of project results to the Stranding Network. Proposals should be rated on whether the outreach/education discussed is appropriate for the type and nature of the proposal and whether the outreach/education is expected to be effective. (Score = 1-100 points)
The Category B1 proposals will be evaluated by reviewers based on the following criteria (with their relative weights):
1. Importance/relevance and applicability of proposed project to the program goals (30%). This criterion ascertains whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and/or relevance to NOAA, Federal, regional, state, or local activities, and assesses the broader impacts of the project. Applications will be evaluated to determine if the project goals and objectives are: clear; relate to project activities; and relate to the Prescott Grant Program goals and funding priorities. Reviewers will consider: the project’s likelihood of meeting basic stranding response needs, the amount of communication and collaboration with neighboring stranding network participants, and the Data Sharing Plan. (Score = 1-100 points)
2. Technical/scientific merit (35%). This criterion assesses whether the approach is technically sound, if the methods are appropriate, and whether there are clear project goals and objectives. Recognizing applications are from new organizations (in existence less than three years) and have never applied for Prescott Grant funding, proposals will be scored on their clear identification of goals and objectives and appropriate performance evaluation methods. Proposals should have sufficient information to enable reviewers to provide a technical evaluation of the project. (Score = 1-100 points)
3. Overall qualifications of applicants (15%). This criterion ascertains whether the applicant possesses the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project. Project management will be evaluated based upon documentation of related experience and qualifications of the Principal Investigator, Co-Investigator(s), collaborators, and other personnel. Other personnel include designated

contractors, consultants, and Cooperators. Reviewers may take into consideration if the proposal followed the application content and form instructions and requirements. (Score = 1-100 points)
4. Project costs (15%). This criterion evaluates the budget to determine if it is realistic and commensurate basic stranding response operations. Recognizing applications are from new organizations (in existence less than three years), the proposed costs and overall budget of the project will be evaluated according to the proposed work. Itemized costs and the overall budget must be clear and appropriately justified. (Score = 1-100 points)
5. Outreach and education (5%). This criterion assesses whether the project provides a focused and effective education and outreach strategy regarding NOAA's mission to protect the Nation’s natural resources. Applications will be evaluated on whether project results or products will be shared appropriately given the nature of the proposed work and whether sufficient detail is provided to make this determination. Outreach and education may include: public lectures, presentations at schools or Stranding Network conferences, and development of brochures, pamphlets or websites. Proposals should be rated on whether the outreach/education discussed is appropriate for the type and nature of the proposal. (Score = 1-100 points)

B. Review and Selection Process

Review and selection of applications will take place in five steps: initial evaluation, technical review, merit review, selection by the Selecting Official (the Deputy Director, NMFS Office of Protected Resources, or designee), and approval by the NOAA Grants Officer.
1. Initial Evaluation of the Applications. Applications received in the NMFS Office of Protected Resources will be screened to ensure that they were received on time; provide for at least a 25% non-Federal cost share; and provide the letter of eligibility. Applications that pass the initial screening will be grouped based on the applicant’s chosen category (Category A1, A2, B1, B2 or C).
2. Technical Review. EEach accepted application will undergo a technical review by participants in the National Marine Mammal Stranding Network or other qualified persons (scientists, researchers, stranding network participants from foreign countries, etc., consistent with 16 U.S.C. § 1421f-1(c)). Technical reviewers will be asked to evaluate individual proposals based on the Prescott Grant Program National or Regional funding priorities identified by the applicant and the Evaluation Criteria. Each category of proposals will be reviewed by at least three individual reviewers. Category B and Category C applications will be reviewed and scored by individuals from a different NMFS region than the applicant to avoid any potential conflicts of interest. Technical review will be conducted in panel format with reviewers providing individual, independent reviews for each proposal, not as a consensus. There may be panel members present for the discussion that are from the same

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

To determine the appropriateness of each proposal to the Prescott Grant Program's goals and/or National or Regional funding priorities, the technical reviewers will provide independent reviews using the weighted criteria outlined in Section V.A. An average weighted score will be generated from each review using the numeric score per criteria and the weights assigned to each criteria. Proposals with an average weighted score of less than 60 points will not move on to the program review panel. These proposals will not be reviewed further.

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

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

to the NOAA Grants Officer regarding which proposals will be funded based on recommendations of the Program Review Panel as well as the selection factors set forth in Section V.C. (Selection Factors) below.
5. Grants Management Division Approval. NOAA reserves the right to negotiate the budget and scope of work with any applicant that has been selected for an award, which may include requesting that the applicant remove certain costs. Additionally, NOAA may request that the applicant modify objectives or work plans and provide supplemental information required by the agency prior to award. NOAA may select some, all, or none of the applications, or part(s) of any particular application. 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. 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.

C. Selection Factors

The merit review panel shall provide a rank order to the Selecting Official for final funding recommendations. The Selecting Official shall award in the rank order, unless the proposal is justified to be selected out of rank order based 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. Duplicates other projects funded or considered for funding by NOAA or other Federal agencies.
4. Program priorities and policy factors as set out in Section I.
5. Applicant's prior award performance (including report submission).
6. Partnerships and/or participation of targeted groups.
7. Adequacy of information necessary for NOAA to make a NEPA determination and draft

necessary documentation before recommendations for funding are made to the Grants Officer.
Therefore, the highest scoring proposals may not necessarily be selected for an award.

D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

Subject to the availability of funds, review of proposals will occur during the four months following the proposal due date given in this announcement. Funding should begin during summer 2016 for most approved projects. Projects should not be expected to begin prior to August 1, 2016, unless otherwise directed by the Federal Program Officer.

VI. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notices

Successful applicants will receive notification of funding from the NOAA Grants Management Division. The award cover page, i.e., CD-450, Financial Assistance Award is available at http://go.usa.gov/SNMR. Applicants should not initiate any project in expectation of Federal funding until they receive a grant award document signed by an authorized NOAA Grants Officer. A cooperative agreement will be utilized if the proposed work entails substantial involvement between the applicant and NMFS. The final determination of the funding instrument (grant or cooperative agreement) will be made by the NOAA Grants Management Division. After successful applicants have been notified, a Federal Program Officer will notify unsuccessful applicants. Comments and scores from the Technical Review will be provided to unsuccessful applicants. Unsuccessful applications will be kept on file in the Program Office for a period of 12 months and will then be destroyed.

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles and Audit Requirements. Through 2 C.F.R. § 1327.101, the Department of Commerce adopted Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards at 2 C.F.R. Part 200, which apply to awards in this program. Refer to http://go.usa.gov/SBYh and http://go.usa.gov/SBg4.
Department of Commerce Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions. The Department of Commerce will apply the Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions dated December 26, 2014 to this award. Refer to http://go.usa.gov/hKbj. If the Department of Commerce publishes revised Standard Terms and Conditions prior to issuance of awards under this FFO, the revised Standard Terms and Conditions will apply.
Prescott Grant Program Award Conditions: Prescott Grant Program Award Conditions will

apply to these awards. Previous Prescott Grant Award Conditions are available upon request from the Prescott Grant Program (see section VII of this FFO for contact information) and are subject to update prior to the issuance of any award.

Department of Commerce (DOC) Pre-Award Notification Requirements: The Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements contained in the Federal Register notice of December 30, 2014 (79 FR 78390), are applicable to this solicitation.

Freedom of Information Act (FOIA): Department of Commerce regulations implementing FOIA are found at 15 C.F.R. Part 4, Public Information. These regulations set forth rules for the Department regarding making requested materials, information, and records publicly available under the FOIA. Applications submitted in response to this 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. Based on these markings, the confidentiality of the contents of those pages will be protected to the extent permitted by law.

Limitation of Liability:In no event will NOAA or the DOC be responsible for proposal preparation costs. Publication of this announcement does not oblige NOAA to award any specific project or to obligate any available funds. Recipients are subject to all Federal laws and agency policies, regulations, and procedures applicable to Federal financial assistance awards.

Universal Identifier: Applicants should be aware that they are required to provide a Dun and Bradstreet Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number during the application process. See the October 30, 2002, Federal Register notice (67 FR 66177) issued by the Office of Management and Budget for additional information and 2 C.F.R. Subtitle A. 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.

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

Applicants are required to provide detailed information on the activities to be conducted, locations, sites, species and habitat to be affected, possible construction activities, and any environmental concerns that may exist. Applicants may be asked to assist NOAA in the drafting of an EA, if NOAA determines one is required. Applicants will also be required to cooperate with NOAA in identifying and implementing feasible measures to reduce or avoid

any identified adverse environmental impacts of their project. Failure to do so shall be grounds for the denial of an application.
NOAA's Data Sharing Policy: Environmental data and information collected 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 years after the data are collected or created), except where limited by law, regulation, policy or security requirements. The Data/Information Sharing Plan (and any subsequent revisions or updates) must be made publicly available at the time of award and, thereafter, will be posted with the published data. 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. More information about the Data Sharing Policy is available on NOAA's Environmental Data Management Committee website at: www.nosc.noaa.gov/EDMC/PD.DSP.php.
Unpaid or delinquent tax liability: In accordance with current Federal appropriations law, NOAA will provide a successful corporate applicant a form to be completed by its authorized representatives certifying that the corporation has no federally-assessed unpaid or delinquent tax liability or recent felony criminal convictions under any federal law.

C. Reporting

Grant recipients will be required to submit financial and performance (technical) reports. All financial reports (SF-425) shall be submitted electronically via NOAA Grants Online to the NOAA Grants Management Division in accordance with the award conditions. Progress reports should be submitted via NOAA Grants Online to the Prescott Grant Program Officers in accordance with the award conditions. All progress reports will be submitted on a semi-annual schedule and must be submitted no later than 30 days following the end of each six-month period from the start date of the award. The comprehensive final report is due 90 days after the award expiration. Additional reporting on project details may be required at the request of the Program Office. Grant recipients must submit any copies of publications printed with award funds (e.g., manuals, surveys, etc.) to the NMFS Federal Program Officer for dissemination to the public. Publications should be submitted either as three hard copies or in an electronic version.
Based on the location of the projected work, NMFS Regional Stranding Coordinators or MMHSRP staff will serve as Technical Monitors to advise the Program Officer. For projects taking place in more than one region, the Technical Monitor will be MMHSRP Headquarters staff.
The Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006 includes a requirement for awardees of applicable Federal grants to report information about first-tier sub-awards and executive compensation under Federal assistance awards issued in FY 2011 or later. 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. Refer to 2 C.F.R. Part 170 and Sec. K.03.n. of the Department of Commerce Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions, referenced in Section VI.B. of this FFO.

VII. Agency Contacts

The points of contact are: Jaclyn Taylor and Sarah Wilkin, Prescott Grant Program, NOAA/NMFS/Office of Protected Resources (F/PR), 1315 East-West Highway, Room 13620, Silver Spring, MD 20910; Phone: (301) 427-8402; or e-mail at Jaclyn.Taylor@noaa.gov or Sarah.Wilkin@noaa.gov.

VIII. Other Information

The following definitions apply to Category A funding priorities.

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

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

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