ANNOUNCEMENT OF FEDERAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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

Funding Opportunity Title: FY16 Coral Reef Conservation Program, Domestic Coral Reef Conservation Grants

Announcement Type: Initial

Funding Opportunity Number: NOAA-NOS-OCM-2016-2004574

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

Dates: Applications must be postmarked, provided to a delivery service, or received by www.Grants.gov by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on January 6, 2016. See also Section IV. C and F of this FFO. When developing your submission timeline, keep in mind the following information necessary to submit an application on Grants.gov: (1) a free annual registration process in the electronic System for Award Management (SAM) may take between three and five business days or as long as several weeks (see Section IV.F. of this Federal Funding Opportunity (FFO)), and (2) if you submit an application via Grants.gov you will receive a series of e-mail notifications for up to two business days before learning via validation or rejection whether NOAA has received your application.

Funding Opportunity Description: The NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Grant Program, 16 U.S.C. §§ 6401-6409, provides matching grants of financial assistance through the Domestic Coral Reef Conservation Grant program to institutions of higher education, non-profit organizations, for-profit organizations, and local and Indian tribal government agencies. These awards are intended to support coral reef conservation projects in shallow water coral reef ecosystems, including reefs at mesophotic depths, in American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Florida, Guam, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and coral-dominated banks in U.S. portions of the Gulf of Mexico. Projects may be proposed in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands and the U.S. Pacific Remote Island Areas, but these locations are not considered geographic priorities under this announcement. Proposals submitted to this competition must address at least one of the following four categories: 1) Fishing Impacts; 2) Land-Based Sources of Pollution; 3) Climate Change; and 4) Local and Emerging Management Issues. Each category is described in more detail in the Federal Funding Opportunity announcement. All proposed work must be consistent with Coral Reef Conservation Program (CRCP) National Goals and Objectives 2010-2015 (http://coralreef.noaa.gov/aboutcrcp/strategy/currentgoals/resources/3threats_go.pdf) and/or the

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

Funding for this program is subject to the availability of FY 2016 Congressional appropriations and is expected to range between approximately $800,000 to approximately $1,000,000. Funding made available from NOAA's Coral Reef Conservation Program is intended to support priority coral reef management activities as described in Section I(B) of this Federal Funding Opportunity announcement. Funding will be divided among the U.S. Pacific and Atlantic regions to maintain the geographic balance of the CRCP portfolio overall, as required by the Coral Reef Conservation Act of 2000. NOAA expects that each applicant will request Federal funding at a funding level between $30,000 and $80,000 under this solicitation and that the average award size will be approximately $50,000, with a project period of 12 or 18 months.

FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Program Objective

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

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

To address these and other threats, Congress passed the Coral Reef Conservation Act (Act), codified at 16 U.S.C. §§ 6401-6409, which established the NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program (CRCP) and provided guidance for allocation of Federal funding toward efforts to conserve coral reef ecosystems in the United States and internationally. As described in the Act, one of the primary functions of the CRCP is to provide financial assistance to external partners for coral reef conservation projects consistent with the Act and CRCP priorities. The CRCP implements several financial assistance programs under the Act's authority, including the Domestic Coral Reef Conservation Grants solicited in this announcement. More information about CRCP is available at http://coralreef.noaa.gov/.

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

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

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

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

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

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

As directed by the Act, NOAA also issued the NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Grant Program Implementation Guidelines, most recently published at 75 Fed. Reg. 48934 (Aug. 12, 2010) and available at http://go.usa.gov/3FT7z. The most recent Guidelines cover 2010-2015, but their approach remains generally in effect until further notice unless otherwise stated in a NOAA CRCP funding announcement posted on Grants.gov. Please note that the CRCP funding announcements are issued only on Grants.gov, not in the Federal Register as stated in the Guidelines, and the Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notice referenced in the Guidelines is updated as described in Section VI.B. of this announcement.

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

i. CRCP Domestic Coral Reef Conservation Grants;

ii. CRCP International Coral Reef Conservation Cooperative Agreements; and

iii. CRCP Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) Cooperative Agreement

All of the following information in this funding opportunity announcement pertains only to the CRCP Domestic Coral Reef Conservation Grants funding category. The CRCP International Coral Reef Conservation Cooperative Agreements and the CRCP Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) Cooperative Agreement will be covered in seperate funding opportunity announcements.

B. Program Priorities

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

For the purpose of this solicitation, shallow water coral reef ecosystems include inconsolidated sediments (e.g., sand and mud); mangroves and other emergent vegetation; submerged vegetation (e.g., seagrass and macroalgae); hermatypic coral reefs and associated colonized hardbottom habitats (e.g., spur and groove, individual and aggregated patch reefs, and gorgonian colonized pavement and bedrock); and uncolonized hardbottom (e.g., reef rubble and uncolonized bedrock). Projects focused on coral reef ecosystems at mesophotic depths should clearly describe how the mesophotic reefs are substantially linked to shallow water coral reefs (i.e., have a meaningful ecological connection between the mesophotic area and associated shallow water coral reefs) to be eligible under this competition.

The principal objective of this grant competition is to provide financial assistance to institutions of higher education, nonprofit organizations, for-profit organizations, and local and Indian tribal governments to support domestic coral reef conservation projects in the United States. Proposals should address threats to coral reef ecosystems identified in the CRCP Goals and Objectives 2010-2015 (still current, http://coralreef.noaa.gov/aboutcrcp/strategy/currentgoals/resources/3threats_go.pdf) , the Jurisdictional Coral Reef Management Priorities documents (http://coralreef.noaa.gov/aboutcrcp/strategy/reprioritization/managementpriorities); and/or other local or regional planning documents (e.g Endangered Species Recovery Plans, invasive species management plans, watershed management plans, or support of NOAA Habitat Focus Areas in Guam, Hawaii, and Puerto Rico). These include threats from fishery impacts, land-based sources of pollution, and climate change, and issues identified as local and emerging management needs.

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

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

Proposed projects addressing the categories below should be consistent with CRCP Goals and Objectives 2010-2015 and the Jurisdictional Coral Reef Management Priorities documents referenced above. Applicants are also encouraged to show how the proposed activity contributes to other management efforts and plans (e.g., watershed management plans, conservation action plans, Local Action Strategies, communication and outreach strategies, and marine protected area (MPA) management plans) if applicable, and provide a link to the specific document whenever possible.

Details of the four categories are as follows:

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

a. Obtaining essential life history and ecological information on key species or functional groups including analysis of existing data and samples to support management

actions that reduce the impacts of fishing;

b. Addressing information gaps related to fishing effort (subsistence, recreational and/or commercial) on coral reef ecosystems by measuring fishing intensity, morality, frequency, area coverage, regulation compliance, and/or community dependence to inform management activities;

c. Identifying and characterizing fish spawning sites, nursery habitats, fish movement and larval connectivity, and other areas (e.g. near shore habitats) critical to particular life-history stages (e.g. juvenile); biodiversity hotspots; or coral reef areas with the greatest resilience;

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

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

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

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

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

a. Working with local communities and jurisdictions to develop and implement watershed management plans or conservation action plans in priority coral reef associated watersheds (priority sites have been identified for each jurisdiction in the 7 jurisdictional management priorities documents found at: http://coralreef.noaa.gov/aboutcrcp/strategy/reprioritization/managementpriorities/);

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

management measures); and

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

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

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

b. Characterizing the response of coral reef ecosystems and their related components to climate change an ocean acidification including bleaching resistance; and

c. Promoting conservation of coral reef ecosystems through identification of areas that are potentially resilient to climate change and vulnerable areas where actions are likely to increase resilience. Projects under this category should include: 1) collaboration with managers to assess vulnerability and/or resilience and apply the results to management and policy decisions; 2) applied research (see Resilience Workshop Report priorities http://docs.lib.noaa.gov/noaa_documents/NOS/CRCP/TM_CRCP/TM_CRCP_20.pdf); 3) development of data products to inform assessments; and 4) disseminate results of and lessons learned. Projects under this category may also address challenges to using past resilient assessment results in the management and policy arena and support managers to incorporate this information into the decision making process.

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

a. Understanding the effects of and/or reducing the impacts of invasive species to coral reef ecosystems, including projects that address the proliferation of lionfish (Pterois volitans) in Florida and the U.S. Caribbean, invasive sea grass (i.e. Halophilia) in the U.S. Caribbean, and invasive algae and fish species in the Pacific Islands;

b. Supporting the recovery of Endangered Species Act listed coral species, by

filling critical information gaps about their locations, habitats, depth ranges, early life history, and field identification methods for the 20 newly listed coral species as well as supporting the recovery of the two listed species of Acropora in Florida and the U.S. Caribbean. The Acropora recovery plan can be found here: http://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/pr/recovery/plans/final_acropora_recovery_plan.pdf;

c. Investigating coral diseases that are directly correlated with land-based sources of pollution inputs or climate change impacts or increasing our understanding of coral resilience to diseases and bleaching.

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

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

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

2. Environmental data, including recorded and derived observations and measurements of the physical, chemical, biological, geological, and geophysical properties and conditions of the oceans and/or atmosphere, as well as correlative data, such as socio-economic data and media (e.g. recordings, photos, videos etc.), and their accompanying metadata files, should comply with standards developed or endorsed by the Federal Geographic Data Committee (FGDC, http://www.fgdc.gov). The FGDC has recently endorsed the use of International Standards Organization (ISO) 19115 Parts 1 and 2 and representation standard ISO 19139 for documenting environmental data and information (http://www.ncddc.noaa.gov/metadata-standards/). If you are documenting geospatial data in accordance with the FGDC Content Standard for Digital Geospatial Data this template identifies the minimum fields CRCP required for a complete record: http://coris.noaa.gov/data/examples/bamf_min_crcp_fields.txt. All data products should be archived in multiple locations and provided to CRCP for long-term storage in accordance with the terms of the award and the award's Data/Information Sharing Plan, as described in

Section IV(B)13; and

3. Other outputs, such as assessments, publications, summary reports, outreach and education materials, and other useful products, that provide resource managers and the public with timely and readily understandable information on coral reefs.

These outputs and products must be identified in the original application as described in Section IV(B)4 and must be provided to NOAA at the end of the award period; products of awards may be made available to the public via NOAA's Coral Reef Information System. As such, all products must be of publishable quality, be written in English unless another language is specified in the application and approved by NOAA, and include appropriate acknowledgement of the support provided by NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program as described at: http://coralreef.noaa.gov/aboutcrcp/whoweare/graphic/.

C. Program Authority

Authority for the NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Grant Program is provided by Section 6403 of the Coral Reef Conservation Act of 2000, 16 U.S.C. §§ 6401-6409.

II. Award Information

A. Funding Availability

Pursuant to 16 U.S.C. § 6403, and pending Congressional appropriations in FY16 and subsequent years, CRCP expects the funding to range between approximately $800,000 and $1,000,000. NOAA will not accept proposals requesting less than $30,000 or more than $80,000 in Federal support under this solicitation. It is expected that the average award size will be $50,000. Accordingly, NOAA anticipates approximately 15 awards may be issued.

There is no limit on the number of applications that can be submitted by the same applicant during the FY 2016 competitive grant cycle. However, multiple applications submitted by the same applicant should have clearly distinct projects/activites in each application. The number of awards made as a result of this solicitation will depend on the number of eligible applications received, the amount of funds requested for each project, the merit and ranking of the proposals, and the amount of funds made available to the Coral Reef Conservation Program by Congress. In addition, funding will be divided between the U.S. Pacific and U.S. Atlantic/Caribbean to meet requirements for geographic distribution of funds as described in the Coral Reef Conservation Act.

Attempts will also be made to fund one or more projects in each jurisdiction, provided

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

Taking into account availability of funds, proposals may be considered for funding in another fiscal period without NOAA repeating the competitive process outlined in this announcement.

B. Project/Award Period

Projects with an award period of either 12 or 18 months will be considered for funding under this competition; the requested award start date should begin on the first day of the month and end on the last day of the month. Proposals may include an award start date no earlier than July 1, 2016. If an application for a financial assistance is selected for funding, the CRCP has no obligation to provide any additional funding in connection with that award in subsequent years. Funding for subsequent years will require submission of a new application, which will compete with other project proposals submitted during the subsequent competition. If an applicant wishes to continue work on a project funded through this program beyond the project period and obligated award funds have not been expended by the end of the period, the applicant should submit (through NOAA's electronic grants processing system, Grants Online) a no cost extension request to NOAA 30 or more days prior to the award end date.

C. Type of Funding Instrument

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

III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applicants

Institutions of higher education, non-profit organizations, for-profit organizations, and local and Indian tribal government agencies are eligible to apply for funding under this funding category. U.S. federal agencies, state, territory, and commonwealth governments and Regional Fishery Management Councils are not eligible to apply under this funding announcement, as NOAA funds their coral reef work in separate programs. They may

contribute cost share that does not originate from a Federal source, serve as collaborative project partners , acknowledge support, and provide any necessary licenses, permits, etc.

Federal agencies and employees are not allowed to receive funds under this announcement but may serve as collaborative project partners. Federal agencies and employees 'in-kind services cannot be considered as part of an applicant's match on shared costs. If federal agencies are collaborators, applicants should provide detail on the expected level of federal engagement in the application. Examples might include, but are not limited to partnership services; serving in a review capacity; or participating in priority task teams, working groups, or leadership teams.

The lead applicant on any proposal will be responsible for ensuring that allocated funds are used for the purposes of, and in a manner consistent with, this program, including any funds awarded to an eligible sub-awardee.

NOAA CRCP staff is available to provide general information on programmatic goals and objectives, ongoing coral reef conservation programs/activities, and regional funding priorities. However, NOAA employees and contractors are not permitted to assist in the preparation of applications or write letters of support for any application. For proposals that involve collaboration with current NOAA projects or staff, NOAA employees and contractors may provide a statement confirming the degree and nature of the collaboration. For applications working in National Marine Sanctuaries or with protected species, NOAA employees may provide a statement acknowledging the utility of the proposed work to meet management priorities. Letters of support from NOAA employees and contract staff will be discarded from application materials prior to technical review.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement

NOAA CRCP awards are subject to statutory and regulatory matching fund policies. Federal funds for any coral conservation project under 16 U.S.C. § 6403(b) may not exceed 50 percent of the total cost of the award. Therefore, any coral conservation project under this Grant Program requires a 1:1 contribution of non-Federal matching funds.

Cost sharing or matching" is defined by 2 C.F.R. § 200.29 as "the portion of project

costs not paid by Federal funds (unless otherwise authorized by Federal statute).” NOAA will accept any shared costs or matching funds and all contributions, including cash and third party in-kind contributions of goods and services, will be accepted as part of an applicant’s cost sharing or matching when they meet all of the following criteria listed in 2 C.F.R. § 200.306(b):

(1) Are verifiable from the non-Federal entity's records;

(2) Are not included as contributions for any other Federal award;

(3) Are necessary and reasonable for accomplishment of project or program objectives;

(4) Are allowable under Subpart E—Cost Principles of [2 C.F.R. Part 200];

(5) Are not paid by the Federal Government under another Federal award, except where the Federal statute authorizing a program specifically provides that Federal funds made available for such program can be applied to matching or cost sharing requirements of other Federal programs;

(6) Are provided for in the approved budget when required by the Federal awarding agency; and

(7) Conform to other provisions of [2 C.F.R. Part 200], as applicable.

Matching funds can come from a variety of public and private sources and can include third party in-kind goods and services such as private boat use and volunteer labor.

In addition, Aapplicants are permitted to combine contributions for allowable costs from multiple non-federal partners in order to meet the 1:1 match requirement, consistent with the standards described in 2 C.F.R. § 200.306. Ordinarily, Federal sources cannot be considered as matching funds, but can be described in the budget narrative to demonstrate additional leverage.

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

for funding. Valuation of proposed cost sharing is described in 2 C.F.R. § 200.306(d)-(k).

Applicants may choose to designate part or all of their Federally-negotiated indirect costs as match. This may be convenient because the valuation of such costs has already been Federally-approved and documentation is readily available. Refer to the "Indirect Costs" policies in Section IV.B.10. of this announcement .

In addition, any Program Income that may arise in the project may be put toward cost sharing or added to the project, consistent with 2 C.F.R. § 200.307.

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

1. No reasonable means are available through which an applicant can meet the matching requirement, and,

2. The probable benefit of such project outweighs the public interest in such matching requirement.

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

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

C. Other Criteria that Affect Eligibility

If indirect costs are requested, indirect-cost-rate agreements must be included for the

applicant organization and the negotiated rate must be requested. If an applicant does not have an indirect cost rate and wants to include indirect costs, the applicant has up to 90 days after the award start date to submit an indirect cost proposal or cost allocation plan. Indirect-cost-rate-agreement documentation is not required for sub-awardees, however indirect cost rates at the negotiated levels should be paid by the primary awardee. Under 2 C.F.R. § 200.414 "Indirect (F&A) Costs," any applicant that has never received a negotiated indirect cost rate may elect to charge a de minimis rate of 10% of modified total direct costs which may be used indefinitely. Costs must be consistently charged as either indirect or direct costs, but may not be double charged or inconsistently charged as both pursuant to 2 C.F.R. § 200.403 "Factors affecting allowability of costs." If chosen, this methodology once elected must be used consistently for all Federal awards until such time as a cooperator chooses to negotiate for a rate, which the non-Federal entity may apply to do at any time. 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; or lamar.revis@noaa.gov.

IV. Application and Submission Information

A. Address to Request Application Package

The standard application forms are available at through the apply function on Grants.gov or http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/forms/sf-424-family.html#sortby=1. For applicants unable to access the application package, it may be requested by contacting the Federal Program Officer and technical point of contact for the CRCP Domestic Coral Reef Conservation Grants, Elizabeth Fairey. She can be reached at 301-427-8632, or via email at Liz.Fairey@noaa.gov.

B. Content and Form of Application

The application process for this grant competition requires submission of a complete application on or before the submission date and time listed above. All application materials should use a legible 12-point font with 1-inch margins on all sides. For each application, the information provided in elements 1-6 (described below) may not exceed 30 pages total; the 30-page limit does not apply to required federal forms and other documentation (elements 7-15 below). Applications that exceed the 30-page limit will be shortened by removing pages before it is forwarded to merit reviewers. Pages excised from lengthy applications will not be reviewed and any activities described therein will not be eligible for funding consideration. Applications that are incomplete, unclear, or contain numerous typographical errors, may not be understood effectively by the reviewers, leading to lower evaluation scores; so, applicants

are advised to review their application materials closely before they are submitted to the agency for consideration. Application submitted through www.Grants.gov should have no more than three attachments in addition to the Federal Forms: 1) Cover page and project narrative (elements 1-4 below), 2) Budget table and budget narrative (element 5), and 3) all additional information (elements 6-10) combined into one file. Applications submitted in electronic format should be either Adobe Acrobat (.PDF) or Microsoft Word files. The total electronic file size of the proposal narrative and appendices combined shall not exceed 5 megabytes in storage space. Files that are larger than five megabytes may not be properly downloaded, uploaded, or received by the agency or the reviewers. Files that cannot be opened or downloaded will not be reviewed.

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

Each application should include the following information:

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

a. Applicant name and contact information;

b. Applicant organization;

c. Primary and alternate points of contact;

d. Contact information for the primary and alternate points of contact, including address, phone number, and e-mail address;

e. Project title;

f. Geographic location of the proposed project;

g. Amount of Federal funding requested;

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

i. Requested award start date, which should be the first day of the month, end date, which should be the last day of the month, and an award period of either 12 or 18-months duration. Proposals may include an award start date no earlier than July 1, 2016;

j. The specific priority or priorities (see Section I.B) that the proposal will address.

If the proposal addresses more than one priority, the applicant should list the priority that most closely reflects the overall objective of the proposal, followed by additional priorities; and

k. Application summary - a brief, one-paragraph description of the application i ncluding an overview of the types of activities that are proposed for funding.

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

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

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

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

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

e. Expected outcomes of the proposed work; and

f. A description of how performance will be evaluated.

3. Project Narrative

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

The elements of a good project narrative include:

a. Introduction: Provide a brief summary of relevant background information that justifies the need for the proposed project or task. Identify the problem/issue the project intends to address and describe its significance to the conservation of U.S. coral reef

ecosystems. Identify the specific objective, listed under I. Funding Opportunity Description, B. Program Priorities, to which the project's objective(s) corresponds. Objectives should be simple and understandable, as specific and quantitative as possible, and attainable within the proposed timeframe, the described budget, and the human resources available. Projects should be accomplishment-oriented and identify obtainable goals, outcomes, and products.

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

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

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

e. Project Management/Personnel: Describe how the project will be organized and managed, and include the qualifications of the principal investigator(s) through a summary of professional backgrounds, which may be supplemented by short biographies, curricula vitae, or resumes in Element 6 below, Supporting Documents. The principal investigator may or may not be the applicant. However, if the applicant is not the principal investigator, there should be an explanation of the relationship between the applicant and principal investigator (e.g., the applicant may be responsible for managing the grant funds and the principal investigator will be responsible for completing the work). Please also include information about the specific responsibilities of other personnel funded through the proposal, including the technical and administrative points of contact as appropriate.

4. Table of Products/Outputs and Outcomes

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

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

5. Project Budget.

In order to allow reviewers to evaluate the appropriateness of all costs, applications should include a detailed budget narrative and a budget justification. The budget narrative submitted with the final application should match the dollar amounts included on all required forms and clearly link to the project narrative. Please explain each calculation and provide a narrative justification to explain expenditures for each budget category. The budget narrative should describe, by category of expenditure, the total funding needed to accomplish the objectives described in the project narrative for the entire award period. Please explain how categorical costs are derived in sufficient detail to enable reviewers to determine if costs are 'allowable and reasonable' according to the cost principles referenced in 2 CFR part 200, Subpart E. Budget narrative categories should correspond to the standard object class categories listed in Section B of the SF-424A. For additional details, please review the budget guidance provided at:

http://www.ago.noaa.gov/grants/training.html

Include detailed budget information regarding all known contracts and subawards and indicate the basis for the cost estimates in the narrative. Describe products or services to be obtained and indicate the applicability or necessity of each to the project. Each subaward should include form SF-424A. Detailed budget information includes:

- Name of subrecipient, affiliation, and contact.
- Method of Selection.
- Period of Performance. Include the dates for the performance period. If it involves a number of tasks, include the performance period for each task.
- Scope of Work. List and describe the specific activities or tasks to be performed.
- Criteria for Measuring Accountability. Include reporting schedule.
- Itemized Budget. Include categories used in program budget.

All subawards and contracts must be made consistent with the requirements of 2 CFR §§200.330-200.332 for subawards, and §§200.317-200.326 for procurements.

For any equipment, a description of the item and associated costs is required, including a description of how it will be used in the project. Equipment purchases also require a lease vs. purchase assessment. Note that equipment is defined as tangible personal property (including information technology systems) having a useful life of more than one year and a per-unit acquisition cost which equals or exceeds the lesser of the capitalization level established by the non-Federal entity for financial statement purposes, or $5,000. See 2 C.F.R. § 200.33 Equipment, and see 2 CFR §200.313

Non-federal applicants shall identify, if this information is known when submitting the grant application, who they plan to request that NOAA transfer equipment or property ownership titles to after the project ends. The decision on grant ownership requests will be made by the Grants Officer during the grant closeout process.

The budget narrative should also provide, to the extent possible, detailed information on travel, including costs, a description of anticipated travel, destinations, the number of travelers, and a justification of how the requested travel is directly relevant to the successful

completion of the project. If actual trip details are unknown, applicants should state the basis for the proposed travel charges. Applicants should allocate travel funds for any coordination meetings at regional or national levels.

If a foreign air carrier is anticipated to be used for any portion of travel, prior approval is required under the Department of Commerce Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions, Section K.03.c., http://go.usa.gov/3zVu9, and therefore, such travel should be included in the proposal to avoid having to request prior approval after the project starts. Applicants may also factor in travel costs for participation in an annual NOAA Grants Management Division workshop for recipients. See http://go.usa.gov/3zVeH.

The cost or price and purpose of acquisition contracts should be thoroughly justified in the Budget Narrative. Procurements are subject to policies described in 2 C.F.R. § 200.317-.326.

Refer to Element 10 below regarding Indirect Costs in the Budget Narrative.

The CRCP will not consider expenses associated with fees, fund-raising activities, or travel for activities not directly related to project implementation, travel or salaries for Federal employees, or profit. The total costs of a project consist of all allowable costs incurred in accomplishing project activities during the project period. Applicants will not be reimbursed for time expended or costs incurred in developing a project or in preparing an application, or in any discussions or negotiations with the agency prior to the award, regardless of whether or not an award is received. Such expenditures will not be considered as part of the applicant's cost share or matching funds.

6. Supporting Documents

This section includes the qualifications of the primary project personnel and letters of support received from the relevant jurisdictional representatives, partners, or communities involved in the project. The applicant may provide short biographies or resumes of key personnel. The applicant should provide evidence of support for the project by appropriate representatives of State or other government jurisdictions or letter acknowledging the utility of the work from a National Marine Sanctuary in which the project will be conducted.

Letters of collaboration from partners and any letters of support should be included in the applicationto confirm their participation. Additional letters of support are not required, but are encouraged.

7. Permits

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

8. Data/Information Sharing Plan

Environmental data and information, collected and/or created under NOAA grants/cooperative agreements should be made visible, accessible, and independently understandable to general users, free of charge or at minimal cost, in a timely manner (typically no later than two (2) years after the data are collected or created), except where limited by law, regulation, policy or by security requirements.

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

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

c. Failing to share environmental data and information in accordance with the submitted Data/Information Sharing Plan may lead to disallowed costs and be considered by NOAA when making future award decisions.

principal investigators should indicate how and when they have made their data accessible and usable by the community in the past.

NOAA's Administrative Order on the Management of Environmental Data Management and Information is available online at: http://www.corporateservices.noaa.gov/ames/administrative_orders/chapter_212/212-15.html

9. Match waiver request (if applicable)

Preference under this competition will be given to applicants who provide a 1:1 or greater ratio of matching funds to Federal funds in accordance with the provisions of the Coral Reef Conservation Act. If the proposal lacks sufficient matching funds, the applicant may include a separate document in which the applicant requests a waiver to the matching funds requirement as described in section 6403(b)(2) of the Act.

Although the CRCP will consider these requests, in most cases, waivers of matching funds will not be provided for applicants to this competition. Please address all waiver requests to Jennifer Koss, Acting CRCP Manager, NOAA National Ocean Service, 1305 East West Highway, 10th Floor, SSMC4, N/ORM, Silver Spring, MD 20910 and provide a detailed justification explaining the need for the waiver, the total amount of matching funds requested to be waived, attempts to obtain sources of matching funds, how the benefit of the project outweighs the public interest in providing match, and any other circumstances preventing the availability of match.

10. Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (if applicable)

The proposed budget may include an amount for indirector Facilities and Administrative 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. See 2 C.F.R. §§ 200.56-.57 and 200.412-.415.

A copy of the current, approved negotiated indirect cost agreement with the Federal Government should be included with the final application package. If an award recipient has never established an indirect cost rate with any Federal agency, the recipient may request to use the de minimus rate described at 2 CFR § 200.414. If the applicant does not have a current negotiated rate and plans to establish a new negotiated indirect cost rate agreement,

documentation necessary to establish a rate must be submitted within 90 days of receiving an award. See Section III(C) for more information on establishing a new indirect cost rate with the Department of Commerce. If an award recipient has not previously established an indirect cost rate with a Federal agency, the negotiation and approval of a rate is subject to the procedures required by NOAA and the Department of Commerce. Documentation necessary to establish a rate (indirect cost proposal, cost allocation plan, etc.) should be submitted within 90 days of receipt of an award to:

Lamar Revis, Grants Officer

NOAAA Grants Management Division

1325 East West Highway

9th Floor

Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

11. Standard Form 424

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

12. Standard Form 424A

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

424A. All budget figures should match the funding requested on the application cover sheet and correspond with the descriptions contained in the project and budget narratives.

The Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006 includes a requirement for awardees of applicable Federal grants to report information about first-tier subawards 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 Subaward Reporting System (FSRS) available at www.FSRS.gov on all subawards over $25,000. Please see the OMB guidance published at 2 C.F.R. Part 170 (2015), which can be accessed at http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CFR-2015-title2-vol1/pdf/CFR-2015-title2-vol1-part17 0.

13. Standard Form 424B

All applicants are required to submit a signed SF- 424B, Assurances for Non-Construction Programs.

14. Standard Form CD-511

All applicants are required to submit a completed form CD-511, Certifications Regarding Debarment, Suspension, and Other Responsibility Matters, Drug-Free Workplace Requirements, and Lobbying.

15. Other Federal Forms (if applicable)

Applicants may be required to disclose certain lobbying activities by filling out form SF-LLL, regarding any. payment or agreement to make payment to any lobbying entity for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress in connection with a covered Federal action under 31 U.S.C. § 1352.

16. National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Environmental Compliance - Under NEPA, NOAA must analyze the potential environmental impacts of projects or proposals seeking funding from NOAA.

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

The applicants selected for funding may be required to complete subset sections A, B, C, D, E, F, G, or H (based on activities outlined your application as identified by the Federal Program officer) of the Environmental Compliance Questionnaire for National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Federal Financial Assistance Applicants accessible at http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/questionnaire.pdf to provide detailed information on the activities to be conducted, locations, sites, species and habitat to be affected, possible construction activities, and any environmental concerns that may exist (e.g., the use and disposal of hazardous or toxic chemicals, introduction of non-indigenous species, impacts to endangered and threatened species, aquaculture projects, and impacts to coral reef systems).

Detailed information on NOAA compliance with NEPA can be found at the following NOAA NEPA websites: http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/ including NOAA Administrative Order 216-6 for NEPA, http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/NAO216_6.pdf and the Council on Environmental Quality implementation regulations http://ceq.hss.doe.gov/ceq_regulations/regulations.html or http://coast.noaa.gov/funding/_pdf/CEQ%20Regulations%20for%20Impl

Paperwork Reduction Act - This collection of information contains requirements subject to the Paperwork Reduction Act. The use of Forms SF- 424, SF- 424A, SF-424B, and SF-LLL has been approved by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). Form CD-511 and CD-512 are also required by the DOC. Applicants shall not submit form CD-512 with their application package; this form must remain on file with the applicant only. Form SF-LLL is required only if lobbying activities are being reported; otherwise, this form shall remain on file with the applicant only and not with the federal program office. The NEPA Questionnaire has been approved by OMB under control number: 0648-0538.

This collection is further approved by OMB.

Notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person is required to respond to, nor shall any person be subject to a penalty for failure to comply with, a collection of information subject to the requirements of the PRA unless that collection of information displays a currently valid OMB control number.

C. Submission Dates and Times

Applications must be (1) received and validated by Grants.gov; or (2) postmarked or provided to a delivery service that provides a tracking number and receipt on or before the deadline of 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time, on January 6, 2016. Regardless of the method of transmission, applications received more than 10 business days after the deadline will not be reviewed.

Applications submitted via U.S. Postal Service must have an official postmark; private metered postmarks are not acceptable. All mailed applications must include hand signed and dated Federal forms, and applicants submitting by paper are responsible for tracking their applications.

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

D. Intergovernmental Review

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

to establish whether their application is subject to the EO 12372 prior to submission by reviewing the list of contacts provided at: http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants_spoc.

E. Funding Restrictions

1. Ineligible projects

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

2. Cost Principles

Funds awarded cannot necessarily pay for all the costs that the recipient might incur in the course of carrying out the project. Allowable costs are limited to costs necessary and reasonable to achieve the approved goals and objectives and are determined by reference to relevant Office of Management and Budget (OMB) requirements.

Recipients are subject to the 2 CFR 200, Subpart E “Cost Principles and as well as any Department of Commerce implementing regulations that may be in effect at the time of award. Generally, costs that are allowable include salaries, fringe benefits, travel, equipment, supplies, and training, as long as the costs are determined to be necessary, reasonable, and allocable to the award.

3. Other

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

F. Other Submission Requirements

The standard NOAA funding application package is available at www.grants.gov (Grants.gov); and application packages, including all letters of collaboration, are submitted through the "Apply" function on Grants.gov. Applicants must register with Grants.gov before any application materials can be submitted. To use Grants.gov, an applicant must have a Dun and Bradstreet Data Universal Number System (DUNS) number and be registered in the System for Award Management (SAM). Allow a minimum of five days to complete the SAM registration. (Note: Your organization’s Employer Identification Number (EIN) will be needed on the application form.). An organization's one time

registration process may take up to three weeks or more to complete, and periodic renewels are required, so allow sufficient time to ensure applications are submitted before the closing date. The Grants.gov site contains the application package (forms) and submission directions, and is also where the completed application is submitted.

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

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

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

If an application is not submitted through Grants.gov or postmarked by the deadline as described above, it will not be reviewed or considered for funding. If electronic submission is unavailable, signed hard copies of applications may be submitted to: Elizabeth Fairey, ATTN: CRCP Domestic Grant Applications, NOAA Fisheries Office of Habitat

Conservation, 1315 East West Highway, SSMC3, 14224, Silver Spring, MD 20910. Applications submitted by mail are required to include original signed and dated copies of Federal financial assistance forms.

Unique Entity Identifier and System for Award Management (SAM)

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

Applicants are also required to use the Dun and Bradstreet Universal Numbering System and will be subject to reporting requirements, as identified in OMB guidance published at 2 CFR Part 25 (http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CFR-2015-title2-vol1/pdf/CFR-2015-title2-vol1-part25.pdf), and 2 CFR Part 170 (http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CFR-2015-title2-vol1/pdf/CFR-2015-title2-vol1-part170.pdf)

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 or an application or plan under consideration by a Federal awarding agency. A 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 evaluation criteria for this program and their respective weights follow.

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

• Whether the proposed work directly addresses the Goals and Objectives of the CRCP, relevant Jurisdictional Management Priorities, and/or other management plans (0-10 points);

• The extent to which the project is expected to deliver specific tangible results and products that relate directly to obtainable coral reef conservation goals, objectives, and outcomes (0-10 points); and

• The need for the proposed coral reef activity in the jurisdiction; the contribution of potential outcomes, results, or products to overall coral reef conservation and management in that jurisdiction; and the degree of collaboration with local, state and territorial governments (0-10 points).

2. Technical/ Scientific Merit (Score=0-30): This criterion assesses whether the approach is technically sound and/or innovative, if the methods are appropriate, and whether there are clear project goals and objectives. Applications will be scored based on their clear identification of project methods and the suitability of those methods in achieving the stated outcome, and for evaluating the success or failure of the project in terms of meeting its original goals and objectives. Reviewers will evaluate:

• The completeness and adequacy of detail in the project description and

methodology, including a realistic implementation plan achievable in the 12 or 18-month project period, and sufficient detail to allow a NEPA and Environmental compliance (Endangared Species Act, Essential Fish Habitat, Historic Preservation, etc.) analysis (0-5 points);

• The overall technical feasibility of the project, including whether the proposed approach is technically sound and uses appropriate methods that are likely to achieve project goals and objectives (0-10 points);

• Whether there are effective mechanisms to evaluate project success, including clearly stated coral reef conservation objectives and goals, the likelihood of meeting milestones and achieving anticipated results specified in the statement of work (0-10 points); and

• The suitability of products, including applicability to relevant audiences, innovativeness, extent of duplicity with previous work, and likelihood of producing high quality results and outcomes that benefit coral reef stakeholders and ecosystems (0-5 points).

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

• The capacity of the applicant and associated project personnel to conduct the scope and scale of the proposed work, as indicated by the qualifications and past experience of the project leaders and/or partners in designing, implementing and effectively managing and overseeing projects that benefit living marine resources. Reviewers will consider awards previously made to the Principal Investigator and any outcomes, results, or products resulting from such awards. Communities and/or organizations submitting their first coral reef conservation project may not be able to document past experience, and therefore will be evaluated on their potential to effectively manage and oversee all project phases and on the basis of their organization's stated mission and the qualifications of the applicant(s) (0-5 points).

• The facilities and/or administrative resources and capabilities available to the applicant to support and successfully manage coral reef conservation projects and administer Federal funds, including the availability of technical expertise to guide the project to a successful completion (0-5 points).

4. Project Costs (Score=0-10): This criterion evaluates the budget to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time frame. The itemized costs and the overall budget should be justified and allocated appropriately. NOAA expects that Federal funds provided under each award will leverage non-Federal funding or in-kind resources that demonstrate collaboration and encourage partnerships among government, communities, industry, non-governmental organizations, and academia. Applicants that are able to secure adequate non-Federal matching funds for the proposed project, especially those that are able to secure cash contributions, are likely to score higher on this criterion. The budget will also be evaluated to determine whether the required non-federal match surpasses the required 1:1 level, and is confirmed or pending (no match or leverage proposed and has not requested a match waiver will be worth 0 points; a match that meets required 1:1 non-federal match or requests a waiver will be worth 5 points).

5. Outreach and Education (Score=0-20): NOAA assesses whether this project provides an effective education and outreach component that supports NOAA's mission to protect the Nation's natural resources. This criterion assesses whether the project provides a focused and effective education and outreach strategy regarding conservation of our nation's coral reefs. The reviewers will evaluate:

• Whether information about the project's results will be disseminated to the appropriate user groups, whether the proposed outreach/education methods are appropriate for this type of information; whether there is direct dissemination of results to local resources agencies (0-5 points);

• The potential of the project to foster long-term conservation, improved management, and community involvement in conservation and stewardship of coral reef resources (0-5 points);

• The level of support for the work, as demonstrated by letters from partners and relevant government agencies (0-5 points); and

• The extent to which local partners are involved in project activities, the availability of educational opportunities and/or trainings to build capacity for future conservation initiatives, and/or efforts to build greater public understanding of threats to coral reef conservation and instill a conservation ethic among user groups (0-5 points).

B. Review and Selection Process

Screening, review, and selection procedures will take place in five steps, including (1) initial evaluation by the Competition Manager; (2) external technical merit review; (3) internal CRCP review and recommendation; (4) selection by the Selecting Official; and (5)

obligation of funding by the Grants Officer.

(1) Initial Evaluation of the Applications: Application packages will be screened to ensure that they are timely, responsive, and complete. NOAA, in its sole discretion, may continue the review process for applications with non-substantive issues that can easily be rectified or cured.

(2) External Technical Review: Technical review is conducted by a minimum of three external reviewers with expertise regarding the type of work or subject matter proposed in the application. Each reviewer will individually evaluate and score applications (0-100 points) using the evaluation criteria provided in Section V.A. above. This review may involve experts from both NOAA and non-NOAA organizations. The technical reviewers' ratings will be used to produce a rank order of the proposals. No consensus advice will be given by the technical reviewers. NOAA will also request and consider written comments on proposed projects from each state, territorial, or Federal agency with jurisdiction over coral reef ecosystems in the area where the project is to be conducted.

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

(3) Internal Program review: The Federal Program Officer, CRCP Manager, and other CRCP staff will evaluate comments and scores provided by the technical reviewers, consider the priorities identified by the state, territorial, commonwealth agencies, and conduct further analysis to identify any major issues, shortcomings or problems with the application (e.g. additional informaiton needed to conduct NEPA/enivornmental compliance analysis, overlap in ongoing work, lack of key partners, etc.). The Federal Program Officer will summarize comments received on each proposal and identify modifications that may be needed prior to final selection. The reviewer comments, composite project scores, rank

order, and a summary of the concerns (if any) identified through the technical review process and internal review will be presented to the Selecting Official. The Selecting Official, in consultation with CRCP staff, will identify proposals to be recommended for funding.

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

(5) Grants Management Division Review. The Selecting Official will recommend selected applications to the NOAA Grants Management Division (GMD) for funding. NOAA GMD will review financial and grants administration aspects of the proposed award. GMD 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, qualifications or financial integrity information, the risk assessment conducted by NOAA may consider items such as the financial stability of an applicant, quality of the applicant's management systems, an applicant's history of performance, previous audit reports and audit findings concerning the applicant and the applicant's ability to effectively implement statutory, regulatory, or other requirements imposed on non-Federal entities. Applicants should be in compliance with the terms of any existing NOAA grants or cooperative agreements and other eligible to receive Federal awards, or make arrangements satisfactory to the Grants Officer, to be considered for funding under this competition. All reports due should be received an any concerns raised by the agency should be timely addressed in order to receive a new award. Upon review of these factors, if appropriate, specific award conditions that respond 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.

C. Selection Factors

Based on Section V.B., a rank order is provided to the Selecting Official for final funding recommendations. The CRCP competition staff may make recommendations to the

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

1. Availability of funding;

2. Balance/distribution of funds;

a. Geographic distribution of funds;

b. By type of institutions;

c. By type of partners;

d. By research areas;

e. By project types;

3. Whether this project duplicates other projects funded or considered for funding by NOAA or other Federal agencies;

4. Program priorities and policy factors found in sections I (A and B) of this announcement;

5. Applicant's prior award performance;

6. Partnerships and/or participation of targeted groups; and

7. Adequacy of information necessary for NOAA staff to make a NEPA determination and draft necessary documentation before recommendations for funding are made to the NOAA Grants Officer.

The Selecting Official or designee may negotiate the funding level of the proposal. NOAA may select all, some, or none of the applications, or part of any application, or ask applicants to work together. NOAA may defer applications to the future or reallocate funds to different funding categories to the extent authorized.

D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

NOAA anticipates that most grants will have a start date of August 1, 2016 dependent on funding availability, the completion of all NOAA/applicant negotiations, NEPA analysis, and documentation supporting any grant activities. Recipients should receive award notices one month before award start dates Award Administration Information.

Unsuccessful applicants will be notified by email that their application was not recommended for funding within 10 business days after the final program office recommendations have been approved by the NOAA Grants Management Division.

VI. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notices

When applications recommended for funding by the Selecting Official are forwarded to the NOAA Grants Management Division by the Program Office, the applicant may be notified by the Program Office by email that its application was recommended for funding and remains under consideration. The applicant must be aware that this notification by the Program Office is not the official award notice and funding is not assured. Official funding happens only when the applicant receives an award notice from the Grants Officer electronically. The official notice of award is the Standard Form CD-450, Financial Assistance Award, issued by the NOAA Grants Officer electronically through NOAA's online grants management system, Grants Online. The CD-450 award cover page is available at http://go.usa.gov/SNMR. The Internet Explorer browser should be used with Grants Online.

The Department of Commerce Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions will apply to awards in this program. A current version of this document is available at http://go.usa.gov/hKbj. These terms will be provided in the award package in Grants Online at http://www.ago.noaa.gov. In addition, award documents provided by NOAA in the Grants Online award package may contain special award conditions unique to this program and the applicant's project, including conditions that may limit the use of funds for activities that have outstanding environmental compliance requirements and/or stating other compliance requirements for the award as applicable and will be applied on a case-by-case basis. Applicants are strongly encouraged to review award documents carefully before accepting a Federal award to ensure they are fully aware of the relevant terms and conditions that have been placed on the award.

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

for the purposes of improved coordination and collaboration.

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

1. Pre-Award Notice

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

2. Uniform Administrative Guidance

The Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (Uniform Guidance) at 2 C.F.R. Part 200, adopted by the Department of Commerce through 2 C.F.R. § 1327,101, applies to awards in this program. Refer to http://go.usa.gov/SBYh and http://go.usa.gov/SBg4. hemselves with 2 C.F.R. Part 200, which may be found at http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CFR-2014-title2-vol1/pdf/CFR-2014-title2-vol1-subtitleA-chapII-subchap-id302.pdf. Additional information on the substance of and transition to the OMB Uniform Guidance may be found at https://cfo.gov/cofar.

3. Limitation of Liability

There is no guarantee that funds will be available to make awards for this federal funding opportunity or that any proposal will be selected for funding. If an applicant incurs any costs prior to receiving an award agreement signed by the NOAA, Grants Management Division, Grants Officer, it does so at its own risk of not receiving an award or of these costs not being included in a subsequent award. In no event will NOAA or the Department of Commerce be responsible for any proposal preparation costs. Recipients and sub-recipients are subject to all federal laws and agency policies, regulations, and procedures applicable to federal financial assistance awards. Publication of this announcement does not oblige NOAA to award any specific project, obligate any available funds, or provide special fishing privileges. Funded awards are subject to enforcement and termination provisions under 2 C.F.R. §§ 200.338-.342.

4. National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

See the NEPA information in Section IV. B of this announcement.

5. 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 making a certification regarding Federally-assessed unpaid or delinquent tax liability or recent felony criminal convictions under any Federal law.

6. Permits and Approvals

It is the responsibility of the applicant to obtain all necessary Federal, state, and local government permits and approvals for the proposed work. For work within National Marine Sanctuaries, National Parks, National Seashores, and other Federally-designated protected areas, it is the responsibility of the applicant to request and obtain any necessary permits or letters of agreement from the appropriate government agencies prior to commencement of an award.

Applicants are expected to design their proposals so that they minimize potential adverse impact on the environment. If applicable, documentation of requests or approvals of environmental permits should be included in the proposal package.

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

C. Reporting

Grant recipients are required to provide semi-annual financial and performance reports. Performance reports are required every six months from the time an award starts until it is closed. Performance reports are to be submitted to the NOAA program officer. The standard performance period is 12 or 18 months, but may be extended an additional 12 months if circumstances warrant.

All performance and financial reports shall be submitted through NOAA's electronic

grants administration system, Grants Online. Progress on each award is communicated to NOAA in the form of performance progress reports, which are outlined in 2 CFR Part 200. Performance reports must be submitted on a semi-annual schedule no later than 30 days following the end of each 6- month period from the start date of the award. Financial reports must be submitted every 6 months by the end of April and October during the period of the award in accordance with the Department of Commerce, Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions.

A comprehensive final report is due 90 days after the award expiration date along with copies of all products developed under the award. Copies of all materials (including but not limited to brochures, posters, videos, DVDs, publications, reports, management plans, public service announcements, workshop proceedings, etc.) produced through the award, along with copies of any reports submitted by subcontractors as part of the award, must be provided to the program office within 90 days of the end of the award. All products must be of publishable quality, and include a citation and appropriate acknowledgement of the support provided by NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program as described at: http://coralreef.noaa.gov/aboutcrcp/whoweare/graphic/. Because products may be made available to the public via the Coral Reef Information System (CoRIS, http://coris.noaa.gov), it is the recipient's responsibility to ensure that products are professionally written and edited; they do not contain sensitive financial information; and that media products are 508 compliant (http://www.section508.gov/index.cfm?fuseAction=stdsSum). Except where limited by law, regulation, policy or security, recipients are requested to include a statement on the front page of all products to indicate the material is "Approved for pubic release; distribution is unlimited." If the applicant has requested publication costs, resulting journal publications should be made available to the public free of charge.

Successful applicants will be requested to ensure that all interim progress reports indicate whether financial reports have been submitted to NOAA's Grants Management Division and are up-to-date. In their final progress report, applicants will be asked to a) clearly state the resulting impact of their project with respect to coral reef conservation; and b) certify that "Final financial reports have been submitted to NOAA's Grants Management Division and a final funding draw-down has been made through the Automated Standard Application for Payments (ASAP)."

The Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006 includes a requirement for awardees of applicable Federal grants to report information about first-tier subawards 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 Subaward Reporting System (FSRS) available at www.FSRS.gov on all subawards over $25,000.

As applicable, the recipient must report on real property annually and at award closeout, by completing Form SF-429 (Real Property Status Report).

VII. Agency Contacts

For administrative or technical questions regarding this announcement, contact the competition manager: Liz Fairey. She can be reached by phone at 301-427- 8632, by fax at 301-713-1594, by email at Liz.Fairey@noaa.gov or by mail at: Liz Fairey, NOAA Fisheries Office of Habitat Conservation, 1315 East West Highway, SSMC3, 14224, Silver Spring, MD, 20910.

VIII. Other Information

The Office for Coastal Management will not release the names of applicants submitting proposals unless ordered by a court or requested to do so by an appropriate NOAA official and administrative protocol. Applicants can use a NOAA public search feature to find out information about NOAA awards <https://grantsonline.rdc.noaa.gov/flows/publicSearch/begin.do> or go through the Freedom of Information Act process to request more information about grant competitions. More information about the NOAA FOI process is online at http://www.noaa.gov/foia/.

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

the FOIA. Based on the information provided by you, the confidentiality of the content of funded applications will be maintained to the maximum extent permitted by law.