2017 Partnerships for Hawaiian Monk Seal Species in the Spotlight Priority Recovery Actions

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ANNOUNCEMENT OF FEDERAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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

Funding Opportunity Title: 2017 Partnerships for Hawaiian Monk Seal Species in the Spotlight Priority Recovery Actions

Announcement Type: Initial

Funding Opportunity Number: NOAA-NMFS-PIRO-2017-2005112

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 11.454, Unallied Management Projects

Dates: Proposals must be received by http://www.Grants.gov, postmarked, or provided to a delivery service by 5:00 p.m., Hawaii Standard Time, on February 28, 2017. Use of Grants.gov is preferred. If Grants.gov cannot reasonably be used, use of U.S. mail or another delivery service must be documented with a receipt; private metered postmarks are not acceptable. Postmarked applications received more than 5 business days following the closing date will not be accepted. No facsimile or electronic mail applications will be accepted.

When developing your application submission timeline, please keep in mind that you are encouraged to apply through the www.grants.gov website. This electronic submission system is relatively complex for first time users and involves several preliminary registrations to be completed before your application can be submitted. If you have already used the grants.gov website, the required registrations may have already been completed. Please allow sufficient time for the application to be submitted electronically and for possible computer delays. Please note: Validation or rejection of your application by Grants.gov may take up to 2 business days after submission. Please consider this process in developing your submission timeline. Applications not adhering to postmark or submission deadlines will be rejected and returned to the sender without further consideration.

Funding Opportunity Description: The National Marine Fisheries Service (hereinafter, "NMFS") is soliciting competitive applications for the fiscal year 2017 Partnerships for Hawaiian Monk Seal Species in the Spotlight Priority Recovery Actions. Projects are being solicited to support specific programmatic activities related to 1) detecting and preventing disease-related mortality, 2) development and implementation of a strategic communications plan and social marketing strategy, and 3) encouraging citizen science in the main Hawaiian Islands.

FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Program Objective

NMFS is soliciting competitive proposals for grants and cooperative agreements that will support specific programmatic activities (including education and outreach projects) related to Hawaiian monk seal recovery or marine mammal response. Priority will be given to projects that will support specific programmatic activities related to Priority Actions highlighted in the Hawaiian Monk Seal Species in the Spotlight plan. The plan can be downloaded here: http://go.usa.gov/xksYe
For this competition, the specific program objectives include: disease prevention and control, strategic social marketing, and citizen science efforts contributing to monk seal recovery in the main Hawaiian Islands.

B. Program Priorities

Applicants should ensure that proposals address one (1) of the three (3) stated priorities, which are listed in no particular rank order of preference (i.e., no one factor carrying a higher priority than any another). The application should clearly identify which priority it falls within on the title page of the application.

PRIORITY 1: Detection and Prevention of Catastrophic Disease Outbreak and Disease-Related Mortality ($15,000 per project maximum)

Mortality from disease-causing pathogens is one of the leading causes of mortality for the main Hawaiian Islands (MHI) population of seals. Currently, the most significant disease threat to MHI monk seals is the protozoal pathogen Toxoplasma gondii. To address the emerging threat of toxoplasmosis, for which there is currently no vaccine, a multi-pronged approach will be required including a strong outreach effort, reduction of host species, early detection efforts, and research into understanding the prevalence, spread, and treatment of the disease in monk seals and other wildlife. We are looking to support small research proposals to address the issue of Toxoplasma in the environment. Examples of potential study areas are:

- Examining prevalence of exposure of sentinel species as an indicator of environmental contamination and spread of Toxoplasma
- Better understanding the spatial distribution of risk of exposure of monk seals to Toxoplasma using component such as cat distribution and abundance, island hydrology, monk seal movements, etc.

- Better understanding of the circulating genotypes of Toxoplasma gondii amongst cats, monk seals, and other infected wildlife.

Other related research questions will be considered as well.

PRIORITY 2: Development and Initial Implementation of a Strategic Communications Plan and Social Marketing Strategy ($40,000 per project maximum)

In order to effectively promote human behavior change and foster a culture of human-monk seal coexistence, a multifaceted strategic communications plan, including a social marketing strategy targeting both Hawaii residents and visitors, has been identified as a Species in the Spotlight Priority Action for monk seal recovery. Preference will be given to projects that (1) present a communications plan and social marketing strategy that incorporate the elements listed below, and (2) produce sample communications and marketing products and/or include a pilot implementation effort.

- Identification of user groups that have the potential to encounter or interact with monk seals, what the needs and priorities of these groups are, and the most effective ways to communicate messages to each group. Consult existing plans (e.g., Main Hawaiian Islands Monk Seal Management Plans) and other resources to identify where work has already been invested into identifying these groups, synthesize existing information, and build upon this work. Applicants may elect to focus on a plan targeted at multiple user groups, or a single user group identified as being of highest priority.
- Moves beyond basic outreach and presents targeted, effective messaging and communication strategies that will be meaningful for different target audiences and influence widespread sustainable behavior change.
- Emphasizes common ground and values that are beneficial to communities and monk seal conservation.
- Develops long-term media and public relations strategies for conveying monk seal messaging to the public (e.g., television, radio, print media, social media).
- Incorporates a performance monitoring/evaluation system and adaptive management mechanisms to increase longevity and effectiveness of the plan.

PRIORITY 3: Encourage Community-led Monk Seal Stewardship via Citizen Science App ($40,000 per project maximum)

Stabilization and recovery of Hawaiian monk seals will not be possible without engagement and investment from local communities. When communities feel included in the management and protection of species, they are more likely to take a proactive stewardship role in the recovery of those species. By encouraging a broad cross-section of the public to

participate in data collection and contribute to recovery efforts, we hope to not only foster a culture of human-seal coexistence, but also expand our ability to collect quality population and distribution data across the state, and increase our capacity to respond in the case of an injured or sick seal. The Species in the Spotlight Priority Action plan has identified the development of a mobile application (app) and website for citizen scientists to enter their monk seals sightings as a means to achieve this. Preference will be given to projects that met this identified need within the Action Plan and demonstrate capacity to:

- Produce an app that is user-friendly that is available to tourists, residents, scientists, and other users through multiple platforms (iOS, Android, etc.).
- Capture the critical components of scientific data collection, and translate them into easy-to-understand, bounded variables so that members of the public are able to contribute high quality, useable data, no matter what their background or experience in the natural sciences may be.
- Facilitate two-way communication, so app users are not just submitting data to NOAA, they are also learning how their data contributes to our improved understanding of monk seal ecology and management, as well as receiving news, updates, and educational information disseminated by NOAA via the app.
- Ensure flexibility so the app can be modified if data collection needs evolve and change, additional protected species sightings data could be added, the app could be linked with other apps or social media outlets such as Facebook, Instagram, etc.
- Provide ongoing app support and maintenance.

C. Program Authority

16 U.S.C. §661

II. Award Information

A. Funding Availability

Total funding available under this notice is not anticipated to exceed $150,000. Actual funding availability for this program is contingent upon FY 2017 Federal appropriations. The maximum funding per project is dependent on priority area.

PRIORITY 1: Proposals are limited to $15,000 per project. If a multi-year project is proposed, funding can be no more than $15,000 per year. The maximum funding available for this priority is anticipated to be $50,000.

PRIORITY 2 and 3: Proposals are limited to $40,000 per project. If a multi-year project is proposed, funding can be no more than $40,000 per year.

Actual funding availability for this program is contingent upon FY 2017 Federal appropriations. Award amounts will be determined by the proposals and available funds. There is no limit on the number of applications that can be submitted by the same applicant; however, multiple applications submitted by the same applicant must clearly identify different projects. If an application for a financial assistance award is selected for funding, NOAA/NMFS has no obligation to provide any additional funding in connection with that award in subsequent years. Notwithstanding verbal or written assurance that may have been received, pre-award costs are not allowed under the award unless approved by the NOAA Grants Officer.

B. Project/Award Period

The project budget period is recommended to be 6 to 18 months in duration. September 1, 2017 is the earliest recommended start date to be used on proposals, unless otherwise directed by the NOAA Program Officer. Applications for renewal or supplementation of existing projects are eligible to compete. Multi-year applications will be considered. If a multi-year application is selected for initial funding, NOAA/NMFS has no obligation to provide additional funding in connection with that award in subsequent years.

C. Type of Funding Instrument

NOAA/NMFS will fund the projects under this competition as grants and/or cooperative agreements. The government will be substantially involved in the management and/or operation of the program if a project is funded through a cooperative agreement. This substantial involvement may include but is not limited to partnering in collaborative efforts and/or alignment of activities to meet program priorities. Substantial involvement may also include NMFS staff assisting in trainings; development of outreach materials and activities; development of meeting agendas and participant lists; conduct and facilitation of meetings; and recruitment, training and management of volunteers.

III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants are individuals, institutions of higher education, nonprofits, commercial organizations, state, local, and Indian tribal governments. Federal agencies, Federal instrumentalities, or employees of Federal agencies, are not eligible to apply.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement

No cost sharing or matching is required under the program.

C. Other Criteria that Affect Eligibility

None.

IV. Application and Submission Information

A. Address to Request Application Package

The standard application package, consisting of the standard forms, i.e., SF-424, SF-424A, SF-424B, SF-LLL, and the CD-511, is available at http://www.grants.gov. Users of Grants.gov will be able to download a copy of the application package, complete it off line, and then upload and submit the application via the Grants.gov site. If an applicant has problems downloading the application forms from Grants.gov, contact Grants.gov Customer Support at 1-800-518-4726 or support@Grants.gov. If you do not have internet access, an application package may be received by contacting: Penny Larin, NOAA Federal Program Officer, Pacific Islands Regional Office, 1845 Wasp Blvd, Building 176, Honolulu, HI 96818, Phone: (808) 725-5057.

B. Content and Form of Application

Application Format

All application materials should be submitted in Adobe PDF or a common word processing format, and when printed out should meet all format requirements. All pages must be no less than double-spaced printed or typed, printed or typed in at least 12-point font, and printable on 8.5-inch x 11-inch paper, with 1-inch margins. Any PDF or other attachments that are included in an electronic application must meet the above format requirement when printed out. Failure to follow these requirements will result in the rejection/return of the application.

A complete standard NOAA grant application package is required in accordance with the guidelines in this document. Applications that are not complete on the closing date of this announcement will not be reviewed. Your application must contain all required forms; if these forms are not signed via the www.Grants.gov application process, they MUST be signed in ink. Paper applications without inked signatures on their forms will be considered incomplete and will not be reviewed.

Each application must include:

- Federal application forms, including:
  - SF-424
  - SF-424A, Budget Information, Non-construction Programs must be completed, and also include all matching funds.
  - SF-424B, Assurances, Non-construction Programs must be completed for each

submitted non- construction application.

- CD-511, Certification Regarding Lobbying
- SF-LLL, Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (if applicable).
- Title page (Proposal cover sheet, limit 1 page)
- Narrative Project Description (described below, limit 15 pages)
- Budget Justification (described below, limit 2 pages). Provide justifications (in narrative format) for all budget items in sufficient detail to enable the reviewers to evaluate the appropriateness of the funding requested. The budget justification should be broken out and detailed using the same budget categories as noted on the SF-424A budget form.
- Attachments (limit 10 pages). Other Supporting Documentation and relevant attachments the applicant deems important to the overall understanding and evaluation of the proposed project (combined into one PDF document). All combined attachments must be no longer than 10 pages. Attachment information can include: charts, graphs, maps, photographs, and other pictorial presentations; abbreviated CVs or resumes of key personnel; letters of endorsement, support, or collaboration; an indirect cost rate agreement; permit information; or any other supporting information.

If an applicant does not have Internet access or if Grants.gov is inaccessible, paper applications will be accepted. Paper applications must be submitted with completed, signed inked signature, original forms in hard copy and an electronic copy of the entire application on CD, including scanned signed forms. If the applicant has completed the entire application in Grants.gov but is unable to submit it via Grants.gov, then this application package should be provided via CD along with printed and signed versions of forms SF-424, SF-424B, and CD-511. The authorized representative MUST sign and date these forms over the printed signature that will appear in the signature box. Paper applications should not be bound in any manner.

Content Requirements

1. Title Page (Proposal Cover Sheet, 1 page maximum)

(a) Project title

(b) Principal Investigator (or Project Manager) and Financial Representative with complete contact information (address, fax, email, and phone number)

(c) Any co-investigators (or Co-managers) with contact information

(d) Start and end dates of proposed project

(e) Identification of programmatic priority applicable to the project (Priority 1, 2, or 3)

(f) Funding type request (grant or cooperative agreement)

(g) Total cost of the project, including federal and non-federal funding requested

2. Project Summary (1 page maximum): Provide a brief summary of the project goals and objectives, the program priority and associated outcomes to be addressed (see Section I.B. above), the proposed activities, the geographic area where the project would occur, and expected outcomes and benefits of the proposed activities. This summary may be posted on our website if the project is funded.

3. Narrative Project Description (limit 15 pages): Describe the project activities completely and accurately. The Project Description should be a clear statement of all work to be undertaken and must include the information listed below. Multi-year applications must include such information for each year of the proposed activity.

(a) Goals and Objectives: Identify one (and only one) program priority (either priority 1, or 2 or 3 in Section 1.B above). State expected project accomplishments and their significance to the stated program priority. Objectives should be attainable within the specified time period and with the available monetary and human resources. Objectives should be simple, understandable, and as specific and quantitative as possible.

(b) Project Management: Describe how the proposed project will be organized and managed, including financial management of the project. Describe who will be responsible for carrying out project activities. The lead organization/individual and person listed as the technical contact should be identified as the Project Manager (PM). Use of sub-contractors or volunteer staff time to complete project activities and oversight of those individuals should be discussed. The PM is responsible for all technical oversight and implementation of the approved work plan as delineated in the proposal. One PM must be designated on each project, but the PM may or may not be the applicant. However, if the applicant is not the PM, there must be an explanation of the relationship between the applicant and PM (e.g., applicant will be responsible for managing the grant funds and the PM will be responsible for completing the project milestones on time and within budget, etc.). Project participants or organizations that will have a significant role in conducting the project should be listed as Co-Managers. Organizations or individuals that support the project, for example, researchers contributing data or materials, should be referred to as Cooperators. Copies of the PM's and all Co-Manager's current resumes or curricula vitae must be included as appendices.

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

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

ii. A list of the activities that will be conducted by project personnel, volunteers, community members, etc. Describe the oversight of volunteers and how their time will be used to complete project activities.

iii. List project milestones and a description of the specific activities and associated

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

iv. Identify the outcomes, results, or products, and how they relate to the program priorities. Describe how the project outcomes, results, or products will be applied and/or made available to any appropriate user groups through outreach and education efforts.

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

vi. Federal, State and local government activities: List any plans or activities (Federal, State, or local government activities) this project would affect and describe the relationship between the proposed project and those plans or activities.

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

viii. Participation by persons or groups other than the applicant: Describe how governmental and non-governmental entities will participate in the project and the nature of their participation.

4. Budget Justification (not to exceed 2 pages in length)

(a) Each application must include clear and concise budget information covering total project cost, both on the required Federal forms and in the narrative detail of this section. Multi-year applications must include detailed budget information for each year of the proposed activity.

(b) Applications must include OMB standard form 424A, "Budget information - Non Construction Programs." All instructions should be read before completing the form, and the amounts per category and total amounts indicated on the form should correspond with amounts indicated in the budget narrative and justification.

(c) On a separate sheet or spreadsheet, list itemized costs per category and the corresponding Federal and non-Federal share and direct and indirect cost totals. Describe and justify the requested budget. For the non-Federal share, the itemized costs should be separated into cash and in-kind contributions. If in-kind contributions are included, describe briefly the basis for estimating the value of these contributions.

(d) If an applicant has not previously established an indirect cost rate with a Federal agency they may choose to negotiate a rate with the Department of Commerce or use the de minimis indirect cost rate of 10% of MTDC (as allowable under 2 C.F.R. §200.414). The negotiation and approval of a rate is subject to the procedures required by NOAA and the

Department of Commerce Standard Terms and Conditions Section B.06. The NOAA contact for indirect or facilities and administrative costs is:

Lamar Revis, Grants Officer
NOAA Grants Management Division
1325 East West Highway
9th Floor
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910
lamar.revis@noaa.gov

5. Data Sharing or Management Plan (up to 2 pages, if the project collects environmental data. The data sharing plan will not count towards any other page limits)

(a) Environmental data and information collected or created under NOAA grants or cooperative agreements must be made discoverable by and accessible to the general public, in a timely fashion (typically within two years), free of charge or at no more than the cost of reproduction, unless an exemption is granted by the NOAA Program. Data should be available in at least one machine-readable format, preferably a widely-used or open-standard format, and should also be accompanied by machine-readable documentation (metadata), preferably based on widely used or international standards.

(b) If projects submitted in response to this announcement collect or manage environmental data, then applications must include a Data Management Plan of up to two pages describing how these requirements will be satisfied. The Data Management Plan should be aligned with the Data Management Guidance provided by NOAA in the Announcement. The contents of the Data Management Plan (or absence thereof), and past performance regarding such plans, will be considered as part of proposal review. A typical plan should include descriptions of the types of environmental data and information expected to be created during the course of the project; the tentative date by which data will be shared; the standards to be used for data/metadata format and content; methods for providing data access; approximate total volume of data to be collected; and prior experience in making such data accessible. The costs of data preparation, accessibility, or archiving may be included in the proposal budget unless otherwise stated in the Guidance. Accepted submission of data to the NOAA National Centers for Environmental Information (NCEI) is one way to satisfy data sharing requirements; however, NCEI is not obligated to accept all submissions and may charge a fee, particularly for large or unusual datasets.

6. Appendices (maximum 10 pages): Abbreviated curricula vitae or resumes of the PM and any Co-Managers should be included with the application. Additional material that is necessary or useful to the description of the project may also be provided (e.g., letters of endorsement, tables or visual materials). Letters of endorsement are strongly recommended.

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

See section G. Other submission requirements for additional information.

D. Submission Dates and Times

Proposals must be received by http://www.Grants.gov, postmarked, or provided to a delivery service by 5:00 p.m., Hawaii Standard Time, on February 28, 2017. Use of Grants.gov is preferred. If Grants.gov cannot reasonably be used, use of U.S. mail or another delivery service must be documented with a receipt; private metered postmarks are not acceptable. Postmarked applications received more than 5 business days following the closing date will not be accepted. No facsimile or electronic mail applications will be accepted.

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E. Intergovernmental Review

Applications submitted by state and local governments are subject to the provisions of 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 (SPOC) established as a result of EO 12372. To find out about and comply with a State's process under EO 12372, the names, addresses and phone numbers of participating SPOC's are listed in the Office of Management and Budget's home page at: http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants_spoc.

F. Funding Restrictions

NOAA will not consider expenses associated with fees, fund-raising activities, travel for activities not directly related to project implementation, travel or salaries for Federal employees, or profit as allowable costs in the proposed budget. The total costs of a project consist of all allowable costs incurred in accomplishing project activities during the project period. Project costs can only include support for activities conducted between the effective

start date and end date of the award, and cannot include activities undertaken either before or after the agreed upon dates. Applicants will not be reimbursed for time expended or costs incurred in developing a project or in preparing an application, or in any discussions or negotiations with the agency prior to the award. Such expenditures may not be considered as part of the applicant's cost share or matching contribution.

G. Other Submission Requirements

Full Applications should be submitted through www.grants.gov. If you do not have internet access, an application package may submitted to Penny Larin, Federal Programs Officer, NOAA/NMFS/PIRO; 1845 Wasp Blvd., Building 176, Honolulu, Hawaii, 96818.
Registration Process

1. Required registrations: You must complete and maintain the following registrations to be eligible to submit an application using the Grants.Gov website. All registrations must be completed prior to the application being submitted. Registration can take between 3 days to 4 weeks or more, so applicants should begin the registration process as soon as possible.

(a) Grants.Gov: The first step in submitting an application online is to complete a onetime registration process. Individuals wishing to submit a grant application, using Grants.Gov, are required to complete this one time registration process. Neither a Data Universal Number System (DUNS) number nor the System for Award Management (SAM) registration is necessary for Individual Registration.

(b) Dun and Bradstreet Universal Numbering System (DUNS) - All Applicant Organizations (optional for Individual Applicants) must be issued a DUNS number. A DUNS number is a unique nine-digit identification number provided by Dun and Brad Street. It will be used as the Universal Identifier when applying for federal awards or cooperative agreements. You may request a DUNS number by calling 1-866-705-5711 (toll free) or through the internet at http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform.
Your DUNS Number assignment is free.

(c) System for Award Management (SAM) – All Applicant Organizations (optional for Individual Applicants) must complete and maintain an active registration. New registrations take an average of fourteen (14) business days. The renewal process may require as much time as the initial registration. SAM registration includes the assignment of a Commercial and Government Entity (CAGE) Code for domestic organizations which have not already been assigned a CAGE Code. To register, go to: http://www.SAM.gov.
Registration is free.
You must renew and revalidate your entity’s registration at least every 12 months from the date you last certified to and submitted the registration in SAM - and sooner, if your entity’s information changes. The primary point of contact email address will receive a message alerting them to the entity’s/entities’ renewal requirements at 60 days, 30 days and 15 days prior to expiration. If you do not renew your registration, it will expire. You must have an

active SAM registration in order to be eligible to receive contract awards or payments, submit assistance award applications via Grants.gov, or receive certain payments from some federal government agencies.

2. Only authorized individual(s) will be able to submit the application, and the system may need time to process a submitted application. After you electronically submit your application, you will receive from Grants.gov an automatic acknowledgment of receipt that contains a Grants.gov tracking number. (This notification indicates receipt by Grants.gov only, not receipt by NOAA.) Applications submitted through Grants.gov will be accompanied by THREE automated responses (the first confirms receipt; the second confirms that there are no errors with an application submission; and the third validates that the application has been forwarded to NOAA for further processing). You should save and print the proof of submission. If all notifications are not received, applicants should follow up with both the Grants.gov help desk and the NOAA Pacific Islands Regional Office, Federal Programs Office staff to confirm NOAA receipt of the complete submission. You must obtain a Grants.gov support number.

3. Federal employees are not allowed to assist in the preparation of an application or proposal, except that these individuals may provide you with information on program goals, funding priorities, application procedures, and completion of application forms. Because this is a competitive program, Federal employees will not provide assistance in conceptualizing, developing, or structuring proposals, or write letters of support for an application or proposal.

V. Application Review Information

A. Evaluation Criteria

Reviewers will assign scores to applications ranging from 0-100 points based on the following five standard NOAA evaluation criteria. The maximum score for each criterion is indicated in parentheses. Each criterion also includes the factors that the reviewers will consider to determine how well an application meets the criterion. We encourage applicants to make explicit connections to the evaluation criterion and factors in their applications. Written comments are required to justify provided scores in each section of the review. Applications that best address these criteria will be most competitive.

Three technical review/merit panels will be convened - one panel for each of the three program priorities. The applications will be evaluated under either program priority number 1, 2 or 3, depending on which priority is specified in the project proposal. Applications will not be evaluated under more than one program priority. Each panel will evaluate proposals by assigning scores up to the maximum indicated for each of the criteria below.

1. Importance and/or Relevance and Applicability of Proposed Project to Program Objective and Priority (40 points). This criterion ascertains whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and/or relevance to NMFS, Federal, regional, state, or local activities. Applications will be evaluated to determine if the project goals and objectives are: clear; relate to project activities; and relate to the program's funding priorities (Section 1.B above). What is the likelihood of meeting project milestones and achieving anticipated results in the stated time period? Does the project have meaningful outcomes, results, or products? Does the project include an appropriate level of local community participation and collaboration?

2. Technical/Scientific Merit (20 points). This criterion assesses whether the approach is technically sound and/or innovative, if the methods are appropriate, and whether there are clear project goals and objectives. Proposals should provide a clear definition of the project design, strengths and/or weaknesses and the means that are to be employed for securing productive results (e.g., evaluation criteria). Proposals should have sufficient information to enable reviewers to provide a technical evaluation of the project. Does the project have a strong technical design to ensure that the project will produce productive and meaningful results?

3. Overall Qualifications of the Applicants (20 points). This criterion ascertains whether the applicant possesses the necessary education, experience, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project. Reviewers will consider previous related performance experience and qualifications of the project's PM, Co-Manager(s) and other personnel, including designated contractors, consultants, and cooperators. Reviewers will also consider past award performance of the applicant(s) and PM and whether the proposed project is a status quo continuation of past efforts under a previous award or if it is expected to achieve new or enhanced project results or outcomes.

4. Project Costs (10 points). This criterion evaluates the budget to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time-frame. This includes reviewing the reasonableness of the costs associated with the required tasks to be performed, and the overall relationship with the cost effectiveness for successfully completing the project. Are all cost itemized and directly support the project goals, objectives, and activities? Is the overall budget justified and appropriately allocated?

5. Outreach and Education (10 points). This criterion assesses whether the project provides a focused and effective education and outreach strategy regarding NOAA's mission to protect the Nation's natural resources. Applications will be evaluated on whether project results or products will be shared appropriately given the nature of the proposed work and whether sufficient detail is provided to make this determination. Depending on the nature of

the project, outreach and education may include: postings on websites and social media, presentations meetings and community events, development of brochures, education materials or training manuals. Is there an appropriate outreach/education plan or products for the type and nature of the proposal? Will the outreach/education plan or products be expected to be effective?

B. Review and Selection Process

Screening, review, and selection procedures will take place in 3 steps: initial screening; technical review/merit panel; and final selection by the Selecting Official (the NOAA/NMFS Regional Administrator).

1. Initial Screening - An initial administrative review is conducted on each application to determine compliance with application requirements and completeness of application materials. Applications determined to be ineligible, incomplete or non-responsive will be eliminated from further review. When applications are received they will be screened to ensure that they were received by the deadline date (see Section IV. C. Submission Dates and Times); the applicant is eligible to apply; the proposed project addresses one of the funding priorities; and includes a title page, project description, budget, and supporting documentation as outlined in Section IV.B. Content and Form of Application. We do not have to screen applications before the submission deadline in order to identify deficiencies that would cause your application to be rejected so that you would have an opportunity to correct them. However, should we do so and provide you information about deficiencies, or should you independently decide it is desirable to do so, you may correct any deficiencies in your application before the deadline.

After the deadline, the application must remain as submitted; no changes can be made to it. If your application does not conform to the requirements listed above, and the deadline for submission has passed, the application will be returned and rejected without further consideration.

2. Technical Review/Merit Panel - After the initial screening, independent written technical evaluations from three or more appropriate federal, private or public sector experts (e.g. industry, academia, or governmental experts) with subject matter expertise will be obtained to determine the technical review and merit of each proposal. The technical reviewers and merit panel members will be the same reviewers. Their evaluation will be based solely on the information included in the application based on the criteria described in Section V. A. Evaluation Criteria.

Each reviewer will independently evaluate each project and provide an individual score prior

to a Panel Meeting or Webinar. There will be one panel for each priority. No consensus advice will be given. These reviewers will be required to certify that they do not have a conflict of interest concerning the application(s) they are reviewing. NOAA will protect technical reviewer identity to the maximum extent permitted by law. During the Panel Meeting or Webinar reviewers can revise their scores and comments. Panelists must individually submit their final score to the competition manager by the end of the panel meeting or Webinar. After the panel scores are submitted, a compilation of all proposals in rank order is developed based on the average score from the technical review and panel.

C. Selection Factors

The NOAA PIRO Regional Administrator, as the Selecting Official, will review the funding recommendation and comments of the technical merit review to determine which applications will be recommended to the NOAA Grants Officer. The Selecting Official shall recommend proposals to the Grants Officer for funding in the rank order unless the proposal is justified to be selected out of rank order based on one or more of the following factors listed in no order of significance:

1. Availability of funds;
2. Balance/distribution of funds;
   a. By research area;
   b. By project type;
   c. By type of Applicant;
   d. By type of partners;
   e. Geographic distribution;
3. Duplication of other projects funded or considered for funding by NOAA/federal agencies;
4. Program priorities as noted in Section I A. and B..
5. Applicant's prior award performance in conducting a previous award, such as the applicant’s use of funds, achievement of project objectives, and compliance with grant conditions. The Selecting Official may also consider whether the applicant failed to submit a timely performance report or submitted a report of unacceptable quality:
6. Partnerships with/Participation of targeted groups; and
7. Adequacy of information necessary for NOAA staff to make a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) determination and draft necessary documentation before

D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

The competitive selection process and subsequent notification of applications being considered for funding are expected to be complete by June of 2017. The earliest start date for projects will be September 1, 2017, dependent upon availability of Federal funding, acceptable completion of all NOAA/applicant negotiations including NEPA analysis and

permit requirements, and the provision of other supporting documentation as requested.

VI. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notices

Upon completion of the review and selection process, successful applicants will receive notification from a NMFS Regional representative that the application has been recommended for funding selection to the NOAA Grants Management Division. This notification is not an authorization to begin performance of the project, and is not a guarantee of funding. Official notification of funding, signed by the NOAA Grants Officer, is the authorizing document that allows the project to begin. This notification will be issued to the Authorizing Representative of the project either electronically through use of Grants Online or in hard copy. Projects should not be initiated in expectation of Federal funding until the Applicant's Authorized Representative has received official notice of the award from the NOAA Grants Officer and has reviewed and accepted the terms of the award.

Unsuccessful applicants will be notified that their proposal was not recommended for funding or was not reviewed because it did not meet the minimum requirements described in IV.B (Content and Form of Applications). Unsuccessful paper applications will be returned to the applicant. Successful applicants may be asked to modify objectives, work plans, or budgets prior to final approval of an award. The exact amount of funds to be awarded, the final scope of activities, the project duration, and specific NOAA cooperative involvement with the activities of each project will be determined in pre-award negotiations among the applicant, the NOAA Grants Office, and NOAA program staff.

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

Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements

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

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

1. Administrative Requirements - Successful applicants that accept a NOAA award under this solicitation will be bound by the Department of Commerce and NOAA standard terms and conditions. This document will be provided in the award package in Grants Online, NOAA's financial assistance management system. In addition, award documents provided by the NOAA grants office though the Grants Online award package may contain program-specific special award conditions.

2. NEPA Requirements - As required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), NOAA must analyze the potential environmental impacts, of applications that request Federal funding. Detailed information on NOAA compliance with NEPA can be found at the following NOAA NEPA website: http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/, including our NOAA Administrative Order 216-6 for NEPA and the Council on Environmental Quality implementation regulations. Consequently, as part of an applicant's package, and under their description of their program activities, applicants are required to provide detailed information on the activities to be conducted, locations, sites, species and habitat to be affected, possible construction activities, and any environmental concerns that may exist (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). Program applications should, to the best extent, provide what they know about their projects at the time of submitting their grant application. Examples of the level of detail to be incorporated into proposals to assist in the environmental review can be found in http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/questionnaire.pdf.

In addition to providing specific information that will serve as the basis for any required impact analyses, applicants may also be requested to assist NOAA in drafting of an environmental assessment, if NOAA determines an assessment is required. Applicants will also be required to cooperate with NOAA in identifying and implementing feasible measures to reduce or avoid any identified adverse environmental impacts of their proposal. The failure to do so shall be grounds for not selecting an application. Funds will not be released until NOAA completes the requisite NEPA analysis and documentation. Funds may 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. It is the applicant's responsibility to obtain all necessary federal, state, and local government permits and approval for the proposed work to be conducted. Applicants are expected to design their proposed activities to minimize the potential for adverse impacts to the environment. If applicable, documentation of requests for, or approval of required environmental permits

should be included in the application package. Applications will be reviewed to ensure that they contain sufficient information to allow NOAA staff to conduct a NEPA analysis so that appropriate NEPA documentation, required as part of the application package, can be submitted to the NOAA Grants Management Division along with the recommendation for funding for selected applications. Applicants whose proposed projects may have an environmental impact must furnish information requested to assist proposal reviewers in assessing the potential environmental consequences of supporting the project.

3. Limitation of Liability - Funding for programs listed in this notice is contingent upon the availability of Fiscal Year 2017 appropriations. Applicants are hereby given notice that amount of funds have not yet been determined for the program described in this notice and are advised that the competition described herein may be subject to cancellation due to unavailability of funding or revision of agency priorities. In no event will NOAA or the Department of Commerce be responsible for preparation costs. Publication of this announcement does not oblige NOAA to award funding for specific projects or obligate available funds. You should not initiate your project in expectation of Federal funding until you receive a grant award document signed by an authorized NOAA official. If you incur any costs prior to receiving an award agreement signed by an authorized NOAA official, you do so solely at your own risk of these costs not being included under the award. Recipients and sub-recipients are subject to all Federal laws and agency policies, regulations and procedures applicable to Federal financial assistance awards.

4. Paperwork Reduction Act - This collection of information contains requirements subject to the Paperwork Reduction Act. The use of Standard Forms 424, 424A, 424B, and SFLLL and CD-346 has been approved by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) under control numbers 0348-0040, 0348-0044, 0348-0043, 0348-0046 and 0605-0001. 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.

5. Administrative Procedure Act/Regulatory Flexibility Act - Prior notice and an opportunity for public comment are not required by the Administrative procedure Act or any other law for rules concerning public property, loans, grants, benefits, and contracts (5 U.S.C. 553(a)(2)). Because notice and opportunity for comments are not required pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 553 or any other law, the analytical requirements of the Regulatory Flexibility Act (5 U.S.C. 601 et seq.) are inapplicable. Therefore, a regulatory flexibility analysis has not been prepared, and none has been prepared. It has been determined that this notice does not contain policies with Federalism implications as that term is defined in Executive Order

13132.

6. Executive Order 12866 - It has been determined that this notice is not significant for purposes of Executive Order 12866.

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

C. Reporting

1. Award recipients will be required to submit financial and performance (technical) reports. Financial Status Reports (SF-425) are required to be submitted to the Grants Officer semi-annually, or as outlined in the award conditions. Financial Status Reports should be entered directly into the Grants Online system.

2. The Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006 - This Act (FFATA) includes a requirement for awardees of Federal grants to report information about first-tier subawards and executive compensation under Federal assistance awards. All grant recipients awarded a new Federal grant greater than or equal to $25,000, are subject to FFATA subaward reporting requirements. All awardees of applicable NOAA 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.

3. Performance Progress Reports: - Basic information that should be in all report submissions includes the project title, award number, dates of the award period, dates of the reporting period, and the name(s) of the grantee and the principal investigator. Inclusion of media such as photography and statistics (tables, graphs, etc.) to help document programmatic activities in report submissions is also encouraged. Pertinent, captioned photographs of project activities are requested, and may be included within the progress report document submitted via Grants Online. Semi-annual progress reports should describe the tasks scheduled for the reporting period (from the proposal and amendments) and the tasks that were actually accomplished in the period. The report should also explain any special problems or differences between the scheduled and accomplished work.

(a) Report title, reporting period, organization, project manager/investigator, grant number, date

(b) Executive Summary: A brief and succinct summary of the project.

(c) Purpose:

- Detailed description of problem or impediment that was addressed by the project.
- Objectives of the project.

(d) Approach: Detailed description of the work that was performed.

(e) Project Management: List individuals and/or organizations actually performing the work and how it was done.

(f) Findings/Results:

- Actual accomplishments and findings.
- If significant problems developed which resulted in less than satisfactory or negative results, these should be discussed.
- Description of need for additional work, if any.
- Collected data during the course of the performance period should be included in tabular format (e.g., spreadsheet). Final reports must include a complete dataset of data collected during performance period.

(g) Evaluation:

- Describe the extent to which the project goals and objectives were attained. This description should address the following: Were the goals and objectives attained? How? If not, why? Were modifications made to the goals and objectives? If so, explain.

(h) Dissemination of project results:

-Explain, in detail, how the project's results have been and will be disseminated.

4. Publications, Videos and Acknowledgement of Sponsorship: Publication of the results or findings of the funded award activities in appropriate professional journals, outreach materials, or press releases, and production of video or other media is encouraged as an important method of recording and reporting scientific information. These are also constructive means to expand access to federally funded research. The recipient is required to submit a copy of any publication to the funding agency, and when releasing information related to a funded project, include a statement that the project or effort undertaken was or is sponsored by NOAA Fisheries Service. The recipient is also responsible for assuring that every publication of material (including Internet sites and videos) based on or developed under an award, except scientific articles or papers appearing in scientific, technical or professional journals, contains the following acknowledgement and disclaimer: "This project received funding under award [number] from NOAA Fisheries PIRO. The statements, findings, conclusions, and recommendations are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of NOAA Fisheries." The final report is a public document and may be posted, partially or in its entirety, on the NOAA Fisheries website.

VII. Agency Contacts

If you have any questions regarding this proposal solicitation, please contact Ms. Penny

Larin, NOAA Fisheries Service, Pacific Islands Regional Office, 1845 Wasp Blvd, Building 176, Honolulu, HI 96818; Phone: (808) 725-5057; Email: Penny.Larin@noaa.gov.

VIII. Other Information

Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) - Department of Commerce regulations implementing FOIA are found at 15 C.F.R. Part 4, Public Information. These regulations set forth rules for the Department regarding making requested materials, information, and records publicly available under the FOIA. Applications submitted in response to this FFO may be subject to requests for release under the Act. In the event that an application contains information or data that the applicant deems to be confidential commercial information which is exempt from disclosure under FOIA, that information should be identified, bracketed, and marked as Privileged, Confidential, Commercial or Financial Information. Based on these markings, the confidentiality of the contents of those pages will be protected to the extent permitted by law.