

ANNOUNCEMENT OF FEDERAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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

Funding Opportunity Title: National Estuarine Research Reserve System Collaborative Science Program

Announcement Type: Initial

Funding Opportunity Number: NOAA-NOS-OCRM-2014-2003980

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 11.419, Coastal Zone Management Administration Awards

Dates: The deadline for receipt of full applications at Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management (OCRM) is 11:59 p.m., Eastern Time on March 31, 2014. Applications received after the closing date and time will not be accepted. Please note: Validation or rejection of your application by Grants.gov may take up to 2 business days after submission. Please consider this process when developing your submission timeline.

Funding Opportunity Description: The purpose of this document is to advise the public that NOAA/NOS/OCRM is soliciting applications to conduct a 5-year, applied research program that supports collaborative research in the National Estuarine Research Reserve System (NERRS). The goal is to develop a national program that will fund/support collaborative research projects that increases the capacity for effective coastal resource management and decision making in the NERRS. This funding opportunity is not intended to support individual research projects or short term activities focused on local coastal and estuarine problems, but instead is meant to support development of a comprehensive national program to fund competitive, collaborative extramural science projects that are directly relevant to the priorities of the NERRS, and includes professional training, communications, and information and product transfer activities in partnership with NOAA and the 28 reserves around the country. Funding is contingent upon the availability of Fiscal Year 2014 Federal appropriations. It is anticipated that final recommendations for funding under this announcement will be made in April 2014, and that the program funded under this announcement will have an October 1, 2014 start date. Total funding for this 5-year collaborative research program: approximately up to \$20,000,000 or \$4,000,000 annually.

Electronic Access: The following web sites furnish supplementary information:

- General information about the NERRS can be found at <http://NERRS.NOAA.gov>

- Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit applications through Grants.gov, <http://www.grants.gov>

FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Program Objective

Estuaries are complex and diverse ecosystems. They support important fishing and recreational industries, protect coastal communities from storm damage, and provide local communities with a source of food. As shallow-water, near shore communities, estuarine ecosystems are closely linked to adjacent watersheds and are vulnerable to human activity.

In response to the water quality degradation and habitat loss threats posed by human activities in the coastal United States, Congress passed the Coastal Zone Management Act in 1972 that established, among other things, the National Estuarine Research Reserve System (NERRS). The NERRS is a system of place-based, estuarine protected areas across the U.S. and Puerto Rico that are managed in a partnership between NOAA and the coastal states for long-term research, ecosystem monitoring, education and coastal stewardship. Over 1.3 million acres of estuarine and coastal habitat is managed and protected in the 28 reserves.

The purpose of this federal funding opportunity is to support the implementation of a 5-year collaborative science program that operates in partnership with the NERRS. The goal is to develop a national program that will fund/support collaborative research projects that increases the capacity for effective coastal resource management and decision making in the NERRS. Through a cooperative agreement with NOAA's OCRM, a comprehensive national program will be established to fund competitive collaborative science projects that are directly relevant to the priorities of the NERRS and include professional training, communications, and information and product transfer activities in partnership with the 28 reserves around the country and NOAA's OCRM and Coastal Services Center.

Collaborative science is defined for the purposes of this Federal Funding Opportunity (FFO) as a process that integrates intended users (i.e., the individuals or organizations most likely to use the results of a project) of the science in all aspects of a research project from problem definition to project implementation.

NOAA's goal in funding this collaborative science program is to provide highly credible, valid, and relevant scientific results and products in a timely manner that can be used by the reserves and coastal managers to enhance their coastal management effectiveness. To meet this goal, highest priority will be given to proposals that incorporate a management-driven research approach involving both natural and social sciences, with participation by reserves, and as appropriate, local, state, or federal resource management users. Proposed collaborative science programs shall utilize the best available natural and social science

approaches that allow resource managers to make informed decisions on managing complex estuarine ecosystems.

B. Program Priorities

Activities funded under this announcement must focus on the system of 28 National Estuarine Research Reserves (see NERRS.NOAA.gov for information about the research reserve system) and associated estuarine habitat, watersheds and ecosystems immediately adjacent to or directly influencing reserve-based natural resources. NOAA is looking for an organization or group of organizations to manage an applied research program that funds individual, extramural projects that are problem-focused and actively engage intended users in the definition and scoping of the management and research questions to be addressed. The interactions between scientists and intended users of the science will be maintained continuously through the collaborative research enterprise in each project that is funded by this program. A successful collaborative, applied research program must include:

1. Significant funding for a competitive, peer-reviewed, collaborative extramural research projects that addresses important system-wide research and management priorities in the NERRS to improve understanding of the impacts of human activities on coasts and estuaries. Current research and monitoring priorities in the reserves that should be reflected in the focus of a collaborative, applied research program include:

- Furthering our understanding of biophysical and socio-demographic impacts of climate change on estuarine systems, including, but not limited to, sea level rise, marsh sustainability, and estimating community risk to climate change.
- Understanding how to utilize ecosystem valuation to characterize the benefits and tradeoffs to preserving estuarine ecosystems.
- Understanding the impacts and tradeoffs of shoreline stabilization, and which factors communities need to consider when adopting such measures.
- Understanding how to mitigate the impacts of land use change and estuarine eutrophication and contamination in estuarine ecosystems.
- Understanding how to restore estuarine habitat once it has been degraded or lost.
- Support the active engagement of intended users in the development of System-wide Monitoring Program (SWMP) and Sentinel Site data and information products, particularly the development of regional and national data syntheses that address coastal management needs in the NERRS and NOAA.
- Encouraging the utilization of SWMP or Sentinel Site data as appropriate in activities that support the research priorities listed above.

2. Increasing the reserve system's capacity to transfer science and communicate project results to local decision makers through:

- Increased understanding of collaborative science as it applies to their coastal management needs;
- NERRS staff training and capacity building to facilitate communications between scientists and local natural resource managers;
- Use of a range of collaborative practices to support reserve-to-reserve transfer of new and existing reserve science and monitoring-based information across the NERRS, as well as the regional and national transfer of information related to best practices, lessons learned, and techniques and tools; and
- Engaging both the NERRS' coastal training and education programs to transfer collaborative science project information to local communities and user groups.

3. Adaptively managing the national collaborative science program to achieve the goals and objectives identified in the perspective proposals.

In addition to the above general project components, NOAA's OCRM will work closely with the collaborative science program through the cooperative agreement to leverage the programs abilities to further the office's goals of healthy coastal ecosystems and resilient coastal communities.

C. Program Authority

Section 310 of the Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972, as amended, 16 U.S.C. 1456c. Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA Number: 11.419, Coastal Zone Management Administration Awards.

II. Award Information

A. Funding Availability

Funding is subject to the availability of fiscal year (FY) 2014 appropriations. This solicitation announces that award amounts will be determined by the applications and available funding. It is anticipated that total funding for this research will be approximately \$20,000,000 or \$4,000,000 annually.

In no event will NOAA or the Department of Commerce be responsible for application preparation. 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. If one incurs any costs prior to receiving an award agreement signed by an authorized NOAA official, one would do so solely at one's own risk of these costs not being included under the award. Recipients and subrecipients are subject to all Federal laws and agency policies, regulations and procedures applicable to Federal financial assistance awards.

B. Project/Award Period

Full applications must cover a project/award period of five (5) years with an anticipated start date of October 1, 2014.

During the implementation phase of the research program funded under this announcement, regardless of the funding mechanism used, OCRM Program Managers will analyze financial statements and progress reports for the multi-year award, and will have dialogue with the Principal Investigators and Authorized Representatives of the recipient institutions to discuss research progress and expected time lines for the remaining award period. If the OCRM experiences reduced funding, tasks to be completed, the overall pace of the research and length of time remaining on the grant and/or across the board reductions in the NERRS annual budget will all be factors considered in determining the funding amount for this program in any given fiscal year.

C. Type of Funding Instrument

The funding instrument used will be a cooperative agreement. A cooperative agreement implies that the federal government will consult with, and as appropriate and needed, assist recipients in conducting the proposed research program. The application should be presented in a manner that demonstrates the applicant's ability to address the research and associated activities in a collaborative manner with the Federal government or Federal researchers. A cooperative agreement is appropriate when substantial Federal government involvement is anticipated. This means that the recipient can expect substantial agency collaboration, participation, or intervention in project performance. Substantial involvement exists when: responsibility for the management, control, direction, or performance of the project is shared by the assisting agency and the recipient; or the assisting agency has the right to intervene (including interruption or modification) in the conduct or performance of project activities.

The OCRM program manager will participate in important activities that may include evaluation and selection of applicants for funding, education about and discussion of research activities, participation in meetings, guidance on NOAA philosophy, directions, and priorities, and research strategy discussions.

In an effort to maximize the use of limited resources, all applications will be evaluated in a single competition. Non-NOAA federal and NOAA federal applicants cannot be lead investigators on proposals but may be Co-Principle investigators. If the grantee is at an institution that has a NOAA Cooperative Institute (CI), they may submit applications that reference the CI by attaching a cover letter to the application stating their desire to have the application associated with the CI. This letter shall specify the name of the cooperative institute, the CI cooperative agreement number, and the NOAA-approved research theme and task that applies to the proposal. The application will use the facilities and administrative cost (F&A) rate associated with main CI agreement. If the application is selected for funding, NOAA will notify the university that a separate award will be issued with its own award number. However, the award will include two Special Award Conditions (SACs): (1) the existing University/NOAA Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) would be incorporated by reference into the terms of the competitive award, and (2) any performance report(s) for the competitive project must follow the timetable of the funding program and be submitted directly to the funding program. Report(s) will be copied to the CI's administrator when due, to be attached to the main cooperative agreement progress report as an appendix. This will allow the CI to coordinate all the projects submitted through the CI, since the terms of these awards will specify that this is a CI project via the MOA.

The research program application selected for funding from non-Federal researchers will be funded through a cooperative agreement. Research applications selected for funding from non-NOAA Federal applicants will be funded through an interagency transfer, provided legal authority exists for the Federal applicant to receive funds from another agency. PLEASE NOTE: Before non-NOAA Federal applicants may be funded, they must demonstrate that they have legal authority to receive funds from another Federal agency. Because this announcement is not proposing to procure goods or services from the applicants, the Economy Act (31 U.S.C. section 1535) is not an appropriate basis for passing funds between federal agencies. Support may be solely through the OCRM or partnered with other Federal offices and agencies.

III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants are institutions of higher education, other non-profits, state, local, Indian Tribal Governments, and commercial organizations. Federal agencies can be a party to an application to this competition but can't be the lead institution and must possess the statutory authority to receive financial assistance. DOC/NOAA supports cultural and gender

diversity and encourages women and minority individuals and groups to submit applications. In addition, DOC/NOAA is strongly committed to broadening the participation of historically black colleges and universities, Hispanic serving institutions, tribal colleges and universities, and institutions that work in underserved areas. DOC/NOAA encourages applications involving any of the above institutions to apply.

Please note that:

(1) OCRM will not fund any Federal Full Time (FTE) salaries, but will fund travel, equipment, supplies, and contractual personnel costs associated with the proposed work. If an applicant thinks that they are eligible for an exception (e.g., a full time contractor working in a Federal agency), they must provide the Program Manager with appropriate documentation and obtain approval prior to submitting an application.

(2) Researchers must be employees of an eligible entity listed above and applications must be submitted through that entity. Non-federal researchers shall comply with their institutional requirements for application submission.

(3) Non-NOAA federal applicants will be required to submit certifications or documentation showing that they have specific legal authority to accept funds for this type of research.

(4) Foreign researchers may apply as subawards through an eligible US entity.

(5) Non-Federal researchers affiliated with NOAA-University Cooperative/Joint Institutes shall comply with joint institutional requirements; they will be funded through grants either to their institutions or to joint institutes.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement

There is no requirement for cost sharing.

C. Other Criteria that Affect Eligibility

Each application must substantially comply with the fifteen elements listed under Required Elements, (1)-(15). A checklist with the required and requested application elements can be found in the Section VIII. OCRM adheres to the principals of scientific integrity. This policy can be found; <http://nrc.noaa.gov/scientificintegrity.html>.

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

If an award recipient has not previously established an indirect cost rate with a Federal agency, the negotiation and approval of a rate is subject to the procedures required by NOAA and the Department of Commerce. The U.S. Department of Commerce, Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions (pages 4-6) state Within 90 days of the award start date, the recipient shall submit to the address listed below documentation (indirect cost proposal, cost allocation plan, etc.) necessary to perform the review. The recipient shall provide the Grants Officer with a copy of the transmittal letter and proposed cost rate agreement sent to the U.S. DOC:

Office of Acquisition Management
U.S. Department of Commerce
14th Street and Constitution Avenue, N.W.
Room 641
Washington, DC 20230

IV. Application and Submission Information

A. Address to Request Application Package

Application packages for proposals are available through the apply function on Grants.gov. If an applicant does not have Internet access, application packages can be requested from Marie Bundy at NOAA, Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management, 1305 East West Hwy, SSMC 4, Room 10653, Silver Spring, MD 20910; or contact her at 301-563-7101 or via email at Marie.Bundy@noaa.gov.

B. Content and Form of Application

1. Applications

The provisions for full applications preparation provided here are mandatory. Applications received after the published deadline or applications that deviate from the prescribed format will be returned to the sender without further consideration.

2. Required Elements

For clarity in the submission of applications, the following definitions are provided for applicant use:

Funding and/or Budget Period - The period of time when Federal funding is available for obligation by the recipient. The funding period must always be specified in multi-year awards, using fixed year funds. This term may also be used to mean budget period. A budget period is typically 12 months.

Award and/or Project Period - The period established in the award document during which Federal sponsorship begins and ends. The term award period is also referred to as project period in 15 CFR 14.2(cc).

Applications with multi-institutions - Collaborative applications with more than one institution requesting direct funding by NOAA. Each multi-institution must send their application documents to the lead institute for submission via grants.gov. If funded, each institution receives a separate award from NOAA.

Applications with subcontractors - Collaborative applications with only the lead institution requesting direct funding by NOAA. If funded, the lead institution will disburse funds to the subcontractor institutions.

Each application must substantially comply with the following fifteen elements or it will be returned to sender without further consideration. The Summary, Title page, Abstract, Project Description, References, Biographical Sketch, Budget Narrative and Collaborators List must be single spaced in 12-point font with 1-inch margins. The fifteen elements are as follows:

(1) Standard Form 424. At the time of application submission, all applicants requesting direct funding must submit the Standard Form, SF-424, "Application for Federal Assistance," to indicate the total amount of funding proposed for their institution for the whole project period. This form is to be the cover page for the original application and is the first required form in the grants.gov application package. Multi-institutional applications must include signed SF-424 forms from all institutions requesting direct funding. Original signatures are required on SF-424 forms provided to a lead institution by a collaborating institution for grants.gov submission.

(2) Summary title page (1 page maximum). The Summary title page identifies the project's title, the Principal Investigator's (PI) name and affiliation, complete address, phone, fax and E-mail information. The requested funding amounts for each fiscal year must be included on the Summary title page. Multi-institution applications must also identify the lead investigator for each institution and the requested funding for each fiscal year for each institution on the title page. Lead investigator and separate budget information is not requested on the title page for institutions that are proposed to receive funds through a subaward to the lead institution; however, an accompanying budget narrative must be submitted for each subaward. For further details on budget information, please see Section (14) Standard Form SF-424A of this part.

(3) One-page abstract/project summary. The summary (abstract) must appear on a separate single page, headed with the proposal title, institution(s), investigator(s), total proposed cost, and budget period. It shall be written in the third person. The summary is

used to help compare proposals quickly and allows the respondents to summarize these key points in their own words. Project summaries of applications that receive funding may be posted on program related websites.

The project summary shall include an introduction of the problem, rationale, scientific objectives and/or hypotheses to be tested, and a brief summary of work to be completed.

(4) Program description. The description of the 5-year research program must include narratives of the proposed research and not be more than 25 pages in length.

The program overview must be thorough and explicitly indicate its relevance to the program goals and scientific priorities by:

(a) Identifying how the RFP's Program Priorities will be addressed in a 5-year collaborative research program that integrates applied science and collaborative processes.

(b) Describing the proposed research program objectives, research activities and expected outcomes in relation to the present state of knowledge in the field and in relation to previous and current work by the proposing principal investigator(s). The program description shall include clear descriptions of the collaboration and applied science objectives, methods and expected outcomes. How will applied sciences and collaborative processes be integrated? What type of activities will be conducted to implement collaborative research in the NERRS? What are the technical and human barriers to addressing the Program Priorities listed in the RFP and how will the barriers be addressed? How will the project team work with NOAA and the reserves to prioritize and define the focus of the coastal management problems listed in the RFP? The program description must be clear on how the planned work is divided into annual increments of meaningful work representing solid accomplishments.

(c) Assuring intended users are actively engaged collaboratively in the research program's applied research process. How will the collaborative research program facilitate user engagement and establish the connection between resource management needs and the applied research activities and questions?

(d) Describing the science transfer objectives and outcomes of the proposed collaborative research program and how the transfer program integrates with the proposed collaborative research activities. How will the reserve's science transfer capacity be improved and enhanced through the proposed program's transfer activities? How will the results from the collaborative research activities in the reserves be disseminated through the transfer program locally, regionally and nationally? What type of activities will be implemented to conduct science transfer? How will NERRS education programs be engaged and leveraged to transfer reserve-based science to local user groups?

(e) Describing how collaborative research and transfer programs will encourage, support, and facilitate the use of NERRS System-wide Monitoring Program and Sentinel site data in research and transfer projects at the local, regional and national level.

(f) Identifying the function of each PI. The Lead PI(s) will be responsible for communicating with the Federal Program Manager on all pertinent verbal or written information.

(g) Providing a data management and communications plan which describes how metadata and data generated as part of the project and project subawards will be disseminated to the broader community, and plans for longer term archiving of these data. Principal Investigators that propose to collaborate with data centers or networks are advised to obtain letters of commitment that affirm the collaboration. Where possible, all PIs are strongly encouraged to use existing data centers and data portals to archive and disseminate their data. Costs associated with use of data centers, or data archiving, must be included in the application budget. See the section on the NOAA Data Reporting requirements below (Section VI. B.).

(5) References cited. Reference information is required. Each reference must include the names of all authors in the same sequence they appear in the publications, the article title, volume number, page numbers, and year of publications. While there is no established page limitation, this section must include bibliographic citations only and shall not be used to provide parenthetical information outside of the 25 page proposal descriptions.

(6) Milestone chart. Provide time lines of major tasks covering the duration of the proposed project.

(7) Biographical sketch. All principal and co-investigators must provide summaries of up to 2 pages that include the following:

(a) A listing of professional and academic credentials and mailing address;

(b) A list of up to five publications most closely related to the proposed project and five other significant publications. Additional lists of publications, lectures, and should not be included;

(8) Current and pending support. Describe all current and pending federal financial/funding support for all principal and co-investigators, including unfunded collaborators making a substantial contribution to the research. Continuing grants must also be included. The capability of the investigator and collaborators to complete the proposed work in light of present commitments to other projects must be addressed. Therefore, please discuss the percentage of time investigators and collaborators have devoted to other Federal or non-Federal projects, as compared to the time that will be devoted to the project solicited

under this notice. You must respond to the requirement whether or not you have any current and/or pending support.

(9) A list of all applicable permits that will be required to perform the proposed work. You must respond to this requirement whether or not permits are required

(10) Accomplishments from Prior Federal Support. If any PI or co-PI identified on the project has received federal funding from NOAA in the past five years for research, information on the award(s) is required. Each PI and co-PI who has received more than one award (excluding amendments) must report on the award most closely related to the current proposal.

The following information must be provided:

- a) the award number, amount and period of support;
- b) the title of the project;
- c) a one to two paragraph summary of the results of the completed work;
- d) publications resulting from the award;
- e) a brief description of outputs and outcomes; and
- f) as appropriate, a description of the relation of the completed work to the proposed work.

Reviewers will be asked to comment on the quality of the prior work described in this section of the proposal. You must respond to the requirement whether or not you have accomplishments from prior NOAA support.

(11) Budget narrative. In order to allow reviewers to fully evaluate the appropriateness of costs, all applications must include a detailed budget narrative to justify and support all proposed budget categories for each fiscal year. Personnel costs shall be broken out by named PI and number of months and percentage of time requested per year per PI. Support for each PI shall be commensurate with their stated involvement each year in the milestones chart (see (6) Milestone chart).

Any unnamed personnel (graduate students, post-doctoral researchers, technicians) must be identified by their job title, and their personnel costs explained similar to PI personnel costs above. The contribution of any personnel to the project goals shall be explained. Travel costs must be broken out by number of people traveling, destination and purpose of travel, and projected costs per person. Equipment costs shall describe the equipment to be purchased, and its contribution to the achievement of the project goals.

A separate budget narrative is required for each institution in a multi-institutional project and for each subcontract. Signed approval from each subaward and contractor's institution is also required.

(12) CD 511. Certification Regarding Lobbying. Lead institutions can submit these forms through the grants.gov CD511 document placeholder without a hard signature because electronic signatures are allowed on documents from the submitting institution. However, these forms submitted through grant.gov as "Optional Documents" must have hard signatures i.e. collaborating institutions sending this form to the lead.

(13) SF 424B. Assurances - Non-Construction Programs. Lead institutions can submit these forms through the grants.gov SF 424B document placeholder without a hard signature because electronic signatures are allowed on document from the submitting institutions. However, these forms submitted through grants.gov as "Optional Documents" must have hard signatures i.e. collaborating institutions sending this form to the lead.

(14) Standard Form 424A. At time of application submission, all applicants are required to submit a SF-424A Budget Form which identifies the budget for each fiscal year of the proposal. Place each fiscal year in separate columns in Section B of page 1 on the SF424A. (Note that this revised 424A Section B format is a NOAA requirement that is not reflected in the Instructions for the SF 424A). For 5 year projects, use two SF424As. Place the first four years on one form in Section B columns one through four. The first four years will total in column five. Place the total from the first form onto the second form in Section B column one and use column two for the fifth year budget figures. The budget figures must correspond with the descriptions contained in the proposal. Multi-institution applications must include a SF-424A for each institution, and multi-investigator applications using a lead investigator with a subaward approach must submit a SF-424A for each subaward. Each subaward must be listed as a separate item.

Provide separate budgets for each subaward and contractor regardless of the dollar value and indicate the basis for the cost estimates. Describe products/services to be obtained and indicate the applicability or necessity of each to the project. List all subaward and contractor costs under line item 6.f. contractual on the SF-424A. Signed approval from the institution of each subaward and contractor must be provided. Indirect cost may not be applied to ship costs.

(15) Provide one list that includes all (US and Foreign) collaborators, advisors, and advisees for each investigator (principal and co-principal investigators, post-docs, and subawardees), complete with corresponding institutions. Submit only one, combined and alphabetized list per application. Collaborators are individuals who have participated in a project or publication within the last 48 months with any investigator, including co-authors on publications in the resumes. Collaborators also include those persons with which the

investigators may have ongoing collaboration negotiations. Advisees and Advisors do not have a time limit. Advisees are persons with whom the individual investigator has had an association as thesis advisor or postdoctoral sponsor. Advisors include an individual's own graduate and postgraduate advisors. Unfunded participants in the proposed study shall also be listed (but not their collaborators). This information is critical for identifying potential conflicts of interests and avoiding bias in the selection of reviewers.

Application format and assembly. Applications submitted via Grants.gov APPLY shall follow the format guidelines below:

Attachments must be submitted in Adobe Acrobat PDF format to maintain format integrity. Please submit the required documents as described below. Follow the instructions found on the Grants.gov web site for application submission into the Grants.gov system. All required forms that do not have specific placeholders in the Mandatory Document box must be submitted in the Optional Form box as Other Attachments and labeled with the document name: i.e., combine all of the required documents for the individual institution into one PDF file.

Save your completed application package with two different names before submission to avoid having to re-create the package should you experience submission problems. If you experience submission problems that may result in your application being late, send an e-mail to support@grants.gov and call the Grants.gov help desk. Their phone number is posted on the Grants.gov web site. The Program Manager associated with the Request For Applications will use programmatic discretion in accepting applications due to documented electronic submission problems. Please note: If more than one submission of an application is performed, the last application submitted before the due date and time will be the official version.

In addition to the fifteen required elements, it is requested that the SF-424B, CD511, Key Contact form and the indirect rate agreement be provided upon application submission. It is allowable for applicants to suggest merit reviewers on a page after the Summary Title Page. These forms can be uploaded to the Optional Form box under Other Attachments in Grants.gov.

Collaborative applications must be submitted by the lead institution and the following documents must be attached to the application for each collaborating institute:

Multi-institutional submissions - SF424, SF424A, Budget Narrative, and current and pending funding are required. PLEASE NOTE: Signed SF424s from each applicant requesting direct funding is a submission requirement. We also request submission of the SF-424B, CD-511 and the Key Contact form.

Subcontractor submissions - SF424A, Budget Narrative, and current and pending are required. Signed approval from the institution of each subaward and contractor must be provided. We also request submission of the SF-424B, CD-511 and the Key Contact form.

Permits, accomplishments, Biographical sketches and the collaborators list must also be supplied to the lead institution in order for them to be combined within the lead application information.

C. Submission Dates and Times

The deadline for receipt of full applications at the NOS/OCRM office is 11:59 p.m., Eastern Time on March 31, 2014. Note that late-arriving hard copy applications will be accepted for review only if the applicant can document that:

- 1) The application was provided to a delivery service with delivery to the National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration, 1305 East-West Highway, SSMC4, Room 10653, 10th Floor, Silver Spring, Maryland 20910-328;
- 2) Delivery was guaranteed by 4 pm, Eastern Time on the specified closing date; AND,
- 3) The application was received in the OCRM office by 4 p.m., Eastern Time no later than 2 business days following the closing date.

Investigators submitting applications electronically are advised to submit well in advance of the deadline.

Important: All applicants should be aware that adequate time must be factored into applicant schedules for delivery of the application, both electronic and paper. Applicants are advised that volume on Grants.gov can be extremely heavy at times, and if Grants.gov is unable to accept applications electronically in a timely fashion, applicants are encouraged to exercise their option to submit applications in paper format. Applicants submitting paper applications must allow adequate time to ensure a paper application will be received on time, taking into account that guaranteed overnight carriers are not always able to fulfill their guarantees.

D. Intergovernmental Review

Applications under this program are not subject to Executive Order 12372,

"Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs." It has been determined that this notice is not significant for purposes of Executive Order 12866. Pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 553(a) (2), an opportunity for public notice and comment is not required for this notice relating to grants, benefits and contracts. Because this notice is exempt from the notice and comment provisions of the Administrative Procedure Act, a Regulatory Flexibility Analysis is not

required, 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.

E. Funding Restrictions

Indirect Costs: Regardless of any approved indirect cost rate applicable to the award, the maximum dollar amount of allocable indirect costs for which DOC will reimburse the recipient shall be the lesser of (a) the line item amount for the Federal share of indirect costs contained in the approved budget of the award or (b) the Federal share of the total allocable indirect costs of the award based on the indirect cost rate approved by a cognizant or oversight Federal agency and current at the time the cost was incurred, provided the rate is approved on or before the award end date. OCRM will not fund start up or operational costs for private business ventures and neither fees nor profits will be considered as allowable costs.

F. Other Submission Requirements

Electronic application packages shall be submitted through the apply function on Grants.gov. The standard NOAA funding application package is available at <http://www.grants.gov>. This announcement will also be available by contacting the program official identified below. Potential funding applicants submitting electronic applications must register with Grants.gov before any application materials can be submitted. An organization's one time registration process may take up to three weeks to complete so allow sufficient time to ensure applications are submitted before the closing date. The Grants.gov site contains directions for submitting applications, the application package (forms), and is also where the completed application is submitted.

If an applicant does not have Internet access, one set of originals (signed) and an electronic, copy in PDF format (on CD or DVD) of the proposals and related forms shall be mailed to the attention of Marie Bundy, NOAA, Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management, 1305 East West Highway, SSMC-4, Room 10653, Silver Spring, MD 20910. No email or fax copies will be accepted. All proposal application materials shall be submitted together in one package.

The closing dates will be the same as for the paper submissions noted in this announcement. NOAA strongly recommends that you do not wait until the application deadline date to begin the application process through Grants.gov.

Please refer to important information in Submission Dates and Times (Section IV.C.) to help ensure your application is received on time.

V. Application Review Information

A. Evaluation Criteria

All full proposals will undergo an initial review to make sure they are complete. A complete list of materials that must be submitted can be found in section IV. Application and Submission Information. Incomplete proposals will be eliminated from the competition without further review and the applicants will be notified.

A. Evaluation Criteria

1. Importance and/or relevance and applicability of the proposed collaborative research program outlined in the RFP: This ascertains how well the proposal addresses the system-wide research and management priorities in the RFP and whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work with relevance to NOAA and the NERRS. Does the program demonstrate collaborative research principles in the proposed research activities? Does the program effectively utilize the 28 reserves in the NERRS? Does the program address the NERRS research and monitoring priorities? Does the program engage local, regional, and national stakeholders? Does the transfer program reach local, regional and national users? Does the program engage the NERRS education and coastal training program? (10 percent)

2. Technical/scientific merit: This assesses whether both the applied science and collaborative approaches are technically sound, if the methods are appropriate, and whether there are clear project goals, objectives, and outcomes. Equal weighting will be given to both the applied science and collaborative aspects of the proposed work. Is the approach appropriate for the stated goals and objectives? Are the project goals and objectives achievable within the proposed time-frame? Does the proposed approach integrate collaborative research principles with sound natural science? (40 percent)

3. Overall qualifications of applicants: This ascertains whether the applicant possesses the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project. This includes the capability of the investigator and collaborators to complete the proposed work as evidenced by past research accomplishments, previous cooperative work, timely communication, and the sharing of findings, data, and other research products. Does the applicant show the capability and experience in successfully completing similar projects? Are the investigators qualified and is the organizational framework appropriate to conduct the program of the nature and scope proposed? Does the applicant demonstrate and knowledge of the NERRS? (15 percent)

4. Project costs: The Budget is evaluated to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time-frame. Is the program budget allocation between collaborative science, training and transfer reasonable and does the applicant justify the

proposed budget allocation? Are the requested funds for salaries and fringe benefits appropriate and reasonable for the scale of the proposed program? (10 percent)

5. Science Transfer and Outreach: This criterion assesses whether the proposal provides an integrated, focused and effective transfer and outreach strategy to help achieve the goals, objectives, and outcomes of the proposed work. Does the proposed program demonstrate that the information generated by the project will reach its target audience and have a positive impact local, regionally, and/or nationally? Does the proposal outline an outreach or communications strategy that will improve and sustain dialogue and information sharing around the NERRS? (25 percent)

B. Review and Selection Process

B. Review and Selection Process

Once a full application has been received by NOAA, an initial administrative review is conducted to determine compliance with requirements and completeness of the application. All applications will be evaluated and scored individually in accordance with the assigned weights of the above evaluation criteria by independent peer mail review and/or by independent peer panel review. Reviewers with expertise in applied science and expertise in collaborative processes will review those aspects of the full proposals that best matches their expertise. Both Federal and non-Federal experts may be used in this process. The peer mail reviewers will be several individuals with expertise in the subjects addressed by particular applications. Each mail reviewer will see only certain individual applications within his or her area of expertise, and score them individually on a scale of one to five, where scores represent respectively: Excellent (5), Very Good (4), Good (3), Fair (2), Poor (1).

The Program Manager will neither vote or score applications as part of the independent peer panel nor participate in discussion of the merits of the applications. Those applications receiving an average panel score of "Fair" or "Poor" will not be given further consideration, and applicants will be notified of non-selection.

For the applications scored by the reviewers as either "Excellent," "Very Good," or

"Good", the Program Manager will (a) create a ranking of the applications to be recommended for funding using the average panel scores (b) determine the total duration of funding for each application; and (c) determine the amount of funds available for each application subject to the availability of fiscal year funds. Awards may not necessarily be made in rank order. In addition, applications rated by the panel as either "Excellent," "Very Good," or "Good" that are not funded in the current fiscal period, may be considered for funding in another fiscal period without having to repeat the competitive review process.

Recommendations for funding are then forwarded to the selecting official, Director of the Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management, for the final funding decision. In making the final selections, the selecting official will award in rank order unless the application is justified to be selected out of rank order based on the selection factors listed below in C.

Investigators may be asked to modify objectives, work plans or budgets, and provide supplemental information required by the agency prior to the award. When a decision has been made (whether an award or declination), verbatim anonymous copies of reviews and summaries of review panel deliberations, if any, will be made available to the applicant. Declined applications will be held in the OCRM for the required 3 years in accordance with the current retention requirements, and then destroyed.

In accordance with current Federal appropriations law, NOAA will provide a successful corporate applicant a form to be completed by its authorized representatives certifying that the corporation has no Federally-assessed unpaid or delinquent tax liability or recent felony criminal convictions under any Federal law.

C. Selection Factors

Based on the panel review scores, the Program Manager will provide a listing of applications in rank order to the Selecting Official for final funding recommendations. A Program Manager may first make recommendations to the Selecting Official applying the selection factors below. The Selecting Official shall award in the rank order unless the application is justified to be selected out of rank order based upon one or more of the following factors:

1. Availability of funding.
2. Balance/distribution of funds
 - a. Geographically
 - b. By type of institutions
 - c. By type of partners
 - d. By research areas
 - e. By project types
3. Whether this project duplicates other projects funded or considered for funding by NOAA or other federal agencies.
4. Program priorities and policy factors. Refer to section I.B.
5. Applicant's prior award performance.

6. Partnerships and/or participation of targeted groups.

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

Awards may also be modified for selected projects depending on budget availability or according to the selection factors listed above.

D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

Subject to the availability of funds, review of applications will begin in March 2013. Applicants shall use a start date of September 1, 2014.

VI. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notices

It is anticipated that applicants will be notified of their recommendation or rejection for funding on or about mid-April 2014, via email. NOAA's Grants Management Division (GMD) is the only entity authorized to provide a grant award. Therefore, once the applicant's above mentioned financial assistance forms have been submitted and approved, GMD will make the grant award to the applicant by the requested start date. The applicant must be aware that the notification by the program office is not the official award notice. Official notification happens only when the applicant receives an award notice from the Grants Officer electronically.

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

To enable the use of a universal identifier and to enhance the quality of information available to the public as required by the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006, to the extent applicable, any applicant awarded in response to this announcement will be required to use the System for Award Management (SAM). The link is below:

<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. The link is below:

http://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?c=ecfr&tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title02/2cfr25_main_02.tpl

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

1. Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements

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

2. Limitation of Liability

Unpaid or delinquent tax liability.

In accordance with current Federal appropriations law, NOAA will provide a successful corporate applicant a form to be completed by its authorized representatives certifying that the corporation has no Federally-assessed unpaid or delinquent tax liability or recent felony criminal convictions under any Federal law.

In no event will NOAA or the Department of Commerce be responsible for application preparation costs if these programs fail to receive funding or are cancelled because of other agency priorities. Publication of this announcement does not oblige NOAA to award any specific project or to obligate any available funds.

3. National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

NOAA must analyze the potential environmental impacts, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), for applicant projects or proposals which are seeking NOAA federal funding opportunities. 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, http://www.corporateservices.noaa.gov/~ames/NAOs/Chap_216/naos_216_6.html, and the Council on Environmental Quality implementation regulations, <http://ceq.hss.doe.gov/ntf/report/htmltoc.html>.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

C. Reporting

All performance (i.e. technical progress) reports shall be submitted electronically through the Grants Online system. Instructions for submitting financial and progress reports will be provided by the NOAA Grants Management Division.

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.

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. Applicants in their final progress report will be asked to a) clearly state the resulting impact of their project and products in the coastal management community; 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)."

If equipment is purchased with grant funds, applicants may be asked to submit an equipment inventory in accordance with 15 CFR 14.34(f)(3), 15 CFR 24.32(b) or 15 CFR 24.32(d)(2) as an appendix to progress reports. Further, the program office recommends that recipients request disposition instructions for equipment approximately 150 days before the project period ends to allow sufficient time to have equipment disposition requests addressed before a project period ends. Equipment disposition instructions typically require that recipients complete an "other" award action request in Grants Online. NOAA will provide instructions for disposition in accordance with 15 CFR 14.34(g)-(h) and 15 CFR 24.32(g)(2).

Data Reporting Requirements:

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

1. Unless otherwise noted in this federal funding announcement, 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.

2. 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.

3. 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 must indicate how and when they have made their data accessible and usable by the community in the past.

Information on NOAA's Environmental Data Management Policy is available under http://www.corporateservices.noaa.gov/ames/administrative_orders/chapter_212/212-15.pdf

In conformance with the Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and

Cooperative Agreements section 15 CFR 14.36, any environmental data collected in projects supported by NOAA should be delivered to a National Data Center (NDC), such as the National Oceanographic Data Center (NODC), in a format to be determined by the institution, the NDC, and the Program Manager. Information on NOAA NDC's can be found at <http://www.nesdis.noaa.gov/EnvironmentalData.html>. It is the responsibility of the institution for the delivery of these data; the DOC will not provide additional support for delivery beyond the award. Additionally, all biological cultures established, molecular probes developed, genetic sequences identified, mathematical models constructed, or other resulting information products established through support provided by NOAA are encouraged to be made available to the general research community at no or modest handling charge (to be determined by the institution, Program Manager, and DOC).

VII. Agency Contacts

For technical questions and information contact:

Dwight Trueblood, Collaborative Science Program Manager, NOAA/OCRM; UNH, Gregg Hall, Suite 130; 35 Colovos Road; Durham, NH 03824, phone 603-862-3580, fax 603-862-2940, e-mail Dwight.Trueblood@noaa.gov

Marie Bundy, NERRS Research Coordinator, NOAA/OCRM; 1305 East West Hwy; SSMC 4, Room 10653; Silver Spring, MD 20910, phone 301-563-7101, fax 301-713-4363, e-mail Marie.Bundy@noaa.gov

For Business Management and Administrative Information:

James Lewis Free, NOAA Coastal Services Center; 2234 South Hobson Avenue, Room B-119; Charleston, SC 29405-2413, phone 843-740-1185, fax 843-740-1224, e-mail James.L.Free@noaa.gov.

VIII. Other Information

A. Paperwork Reduction Act Statement

Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 3 hours per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other suggestions for reducing this burden to Patmarie Nedelka, NOAA OCRM, SSMC 4, Room 10650, 1305 East West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910. The information collection does not request any proprietary or confidential information. No confidentiality is provided.

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 Paperwork Reduction Act, unless that collection displays a currently valid OMB control number.

This notification involves collection-of-information requirements subject to the

Paperwork Reduction Act. The use of Standard Forms 424, 424A, 424B, and SF-LLL has been approved by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) under control numbers 0348-0043, 0348-0044, 0348-0040 and 0348-0046.

B. Official Award Notice

Official notification of an award notice is provided by the Grants Management Division, not the program office. If one incurs any costs before receiving an award agreement from an authorized NOAA grant official, one would do so solely at one's own risk of these costs not being included under the award.

C. Freedom of Information Act

OCRM 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.rdc.noaa.gov/~foia/>.

D. Other Grants.gov Information

Potential funding applicants must register with Grants.gov before any application materials can be submitted. An organization's one time registration process may take up to three weeks to complete. Applicants must allow sufficient registration time to ensure applications are submitted before the proposal submission deadline. To use Grants.gov, applicants must have a Dun and Bradstreet Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number and be registered in the Central Contractor Registry (CCR). Allow a minimum of five days to complete the CCR registration. (Note: Your organization's Employer Identification Number (EIN) will be needed on the application form.)

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 (11.419). Applicants will be able to download a copy of the application package, complete it off line, and then upload and submit the application via the Grants.gov site.

After electronic submission of the application, 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 another email when the application has been downloaded by the federal agency.

E. Check List for Required and Requested Documents:

- Standard Form 424 (SF-424)
- Summary Title Page
- One-page Abstract/Project Summary
- Program Description
- References cited
- Milestone Chart
- Biographical Sketch
- Current and Pending Support
- Permits (if none, say so)
- Accomplishments from Prior Federal Support
- SF-424A (One for the lead institution and each institution in a multi-institutional project and/or each subcontract)
- Budget Narrative (One for the lead institution and each institution in a multi-institutional project and/or each subcontract).
- Alphabetized Collaborator List (ONE list for all)
- Signed Approval from subaward/contractor institutes
- SF-424B (requested)
- CD-511 (requested)
- Indirect Rate Agreement (requested)