

ANNOUNCEMENT OF FEDERAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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

Funding Opportunity Title: Coral Reef Institutions FY12

Announcement Type: Initial

Funding Opportunity Number: NOAA-NOS-NCCOS-2012-2003288

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 11.426, Financial Assistance for National Centers for Central Coastal Ocean Science

Dates: The deadline for receipt of full applications at the NCCOS/CSCOR office is 3 p.m., Eastern Time on April 2, 2012. 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 in developing your submission timeline.

Funding Opportunity Description: The purpose of this document is to advise the public that NOAA/NOS/NCCOS/CSCOR is soliciting research applications from the NOAA Coral Reef Institute partners for projects of 1 year in duration. Funding is contingent upon the availability of Fiscal Year 2012 Federal appropriations. It is anticipated that final recommendations for funding under this announcement will be made in July 2012, and that projects funded under this announcement will have a September 1, 2012 start date. Total funding for this research: approximately \$645,000.

Electronic Access: The following web sites furnish supplementary information:

NOAA Coral Reef Institute partners:

<http://www.cop.noaa.gov/ecosystems/coralreefs/current/institutes.html>

NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program:

<http://www.coralreef.noaa.gov>

Applications should be submitted through Grants.gov, <http://www.grants.gov>.

FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Program Objective

Coral reefs and associated seagrass and mangrove communities are among the most complex and diverse ecosystems on earth. They support important fishing and tourism industries, protect coasts from wave and storm damage, build tropical islands, contain an array of potential pharmaceuticals, and provide local communities with a source of food, materials and traditional activities. As shallow-water, near shore communities, coral reef ecosystems are ecologically closely linked to adjacent watersheds and are highly vulnerable to human activity.

Anthropogenic stresses in the coral reef environment include poor water quality from runoff and inadequate sewage treatment, over-harvesting and other fishing practices destructive of reef resources, sedimentation, shoreline development, and damage from boating activities, tourists and divers. Larger-scale changes in global climate also potentially affect coral reef ecosystems through changes in sea temperature and chemistry, sea level, irradiance, wind and precipitation patterns, and frequency and severity of tropical storms. Natural and human-induced forces act separately and in combination, to degrade coral reef ecosystems. Symptoms of stress include mass bleaching (loss of symbiotic algae) of corals, regional population reductions of certain reef framework coral species, and disease outbreaks that lead to mass mortalities of reef-building corals and associated organisms.

In response to these threats, Congress passed the Coral Reef Conservation Act of 2000 (Act), which established the NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program (CRCP) and provided guidance for allocation of Federal funding toward efforts to conserve coral reef ecosystems in the U.S. and Internationally. As required in the Act, one of the primary functions of the CRCP is to provide matching grants of financial assistance for coral reef conservation projects consistent with the Act and CRCP priorities. From 2002 to 2008, CRCP efforts were focused on priorities articulated in A National Coral Reef Action Strategy (<http://coris.noaa.gov/activities/actionstrategy/>), which outlined the efforts needed to better understand coral reef ecosystems and reduce impacts from 13 key threats that had been identified by NOAA in conjunction with the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force. In response to several factors, which include an external program review in fall 2007, a new program manager, and recent international and threat abatement working group efforts, the Coral Reef Conservation Program's priorities were refined and redirected beginning in 2008.

While recognizing that coral reefs face a multitude of threats, CRCP, in close collaboration with threat abatement working groups composed of Federal and external partners, opted to narrow and sharpen its focus to target three priority threats: Climate Change, Fishing Impacts, and Land-based Sources of Pollution. In the spring of 2009, the working groups developed goals and objectives associated

with each of the priority threats and prioritized them in an effort to guide future funding decisions for the CRCP and key partners. The results of the threat abatement working group efforts were published in June 2009 and are available on the program's website at:

http://coralreef.noaa.gov/aboutcrp/strategy/currentgoals/resources/3threats_go.pdf .

Consideration of CRCP goals and objectives by applicants is strongly encouraged, as applications will be evaluated as to whether they address these specific goals and objectives, and preference in funding determinations will be given to those applications that clearly meet the goals and objectives outlined in the documents.

Since 1998, NOAA has also partnered with several academic institutions to enhance management effectiveness through research, outreach, education and conservation activities. These partnerships, known as the NOAA Coral Reef Institutes, provide a direct link between researchers and resource managers to increase information exchange in support of sound policy and improved management decision-making. The Institutes build capacity through equipment procurement, graduate and undergraduate training, sponsoring workshops and symposia, and research collaborations. In order to continue the relationship between NOAA and the NOAA Coral Reef Institutes, this notice will make funds available to the NOAA Coral Reef Institute partners to support ongoing research, ecosystem monitoring and assessments, and outreach activities in order to fulfill the mission of NOAA's Coral Reef Conservation Program and the resource management needs of State and local agencies.

NOAA's interest is to provide timely and high-quality scientific results that can be used to develop alternative management strategies to protect and recover coral reef ecosystems. To meet this goal, highest consideration will be given to applications incorporating management-driven research studies involving both the natural and social sciences, which includes participation by the territory, state, or Federal resource management community. Because of the complex relationships among land-based activities, watershed/reef interactions, and local economies and values, the overall research proposal should consider social and economic aspects in their research as appropriate. Results from funded projects should be applicable to the development of alternative management strategies, and the prediction of changes in the ecosystem in response to such management strategies. Scientific information, syntheses, models, and ecosystem forecasting capabilities resulting from this research should be clearly usable by resource managers to make more informed decisions on managing U.S. coral reef ecosystems.

B. Program Priorities

Activities funded under this announcement should focus on shallow water coral reefs and associated ecosystems, including those found at mesophotic depths, which are under U.S. Jurisdiction or in the U.S. Freely Associated States. Applicants are encouraged to consider conducting projects in watersheds immediately adjacent to or directly influencing U.S. coral reef ecosystems.

Because of the significant number of NOAA programs currently focused on coral

reef conservation in these locations, it is expected that applicants will coordinate as appropriate with other NOAA efforts and relevant local management entities. Examples of expected coordination efforts are described in this announcement in the Expected Outcomes section.

In general, applications should include:

1) Overall statement on the background/history of the creation of the Institutes, alignment with the Executive order, Coral Reef Conservation Act, coordination with CRCP.

2) Mission statement, management structure and historical accomplishments of each Institute.

3) Activities to be included for applications:

- Oversight and outreach and communication of ongoing and previously funded research and education projects, seeing important projects to completion and dissemination of results to partners including the management community, stakeholders and scientists via website, conferences, scientific journals, LAS meetings, NOAA communications, etc.

- Maintenance and development of important strategic partnerships to plan for the future, emphasis on enhancing and applying leveraged funding and the development of future partnerships, especially with CRCP, NCCOS and other NOAA, Federal, local representatives, partners and stakeholders.

- Continued engagement of each Institutes Management Committees and Technical Advisory Committees (i.e. communication of previous research results, strategic planning for the future).

- Leadership and participation in important local and national coral collaboration meetings (i.e. Local Action Strategies and the US Coral Reef Task Force). In narrative, please clarify role and importance of participation in such meetings.

In addition to the above general project components, the CRCP wishes to work collaboratively with the Institutes to involve them in new and continuing CRCP projects in order to leverage the demonstrated abilities of the Institutes and further coral reef conservation objectives across the U.S. Institute expertise, particularly with regard to accuracy assessment of habitat maps, monitoring in support of the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, and support for scoping the North-East Corridor Natural Reserve integrated management process in Puerto Rico, are CRCP priorities for collaboration.

C. Program Authority

16 USC 6401 et. seq

II. Award Information

A. Funding Availability

Funding is contingent upon availability of Federal appropriations. NOAA is committed to continual improvement of the grants process and accelerating the award of financial assistance to qualified recipients in accordance with the recommendations of the Business Process Reengineering Team. In order to fulfill these responsibilities, 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 \$645,000.

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. Publication of this notice does not obligate any agency to any specific award or to obligate any part of the entire amount of funds available. 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 may cover a project/award period up to one year.

During the implementation phase of research projects funded under this announcement, regardless of the funding mechanism used, CSCOR Program Managers will analyze financial statements and progress reports for each continuing 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. Program Managers will consider the length of time remaining for each project, the amount of funds available, the tasks to be completed in the upcoming fiscal year, the pace of research, and any delayed progress relative to that originally proposed, before determining the amount of funds to allocate to continuing research projects in any given fiscal year.

C. Type of Funding Instrument

Funding instruments available are project grants and cooperative agreements.

(1) Research Project Grants: A research project grant is one which does not anticipate substantial programmatic involvement by the Federal government during the project period. Applicants for grants must demonstrate an ability to conduct the proposed research with minimal assistance, other than financial support, from the Federal government.

(2) Cooperative Agreements: A cooperative agreement implies that the Federal

government will assist recipients in conducting the proposed research. The application should be presented in a manner that demonstrates the applicant's ability to address the research problem 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.

NOAA will review the applications in accordance with the evaluation criteria. Before issuing awards, NOAA will determine whether a grant or cooperative agreement is the appropriate instrument based upon the need for substantial NOAA involvement in the project. If a cooperative agreement is determined to be the appropriate instrument, the CSCOR program officer will participate in important activities which 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, applications from non-Federal, non-NOAA Federal and NOAA Federal applicants will be evaluated in the same competition. If the grantee is at an institution that has a NOAA Cooperative Institute (CI), they are allowed to 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 should 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 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.

Research applications selected for funding from non-Federal researchers will be

funded through a project grant or 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. Support may be solely through NCCOS/CSCOR or partnered with other Federal offices and agencies.

III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants are the NOAA Coral Reef Institute partners: the National Coral Reef Institute at Nova Southeastern University, The Caribbean Coral Reef at University of Puerto Rico - Mayaguez, The Hawaii Coral Reef Initiative at University of Hawaii, and Western Pacific Coral Reef Institute at University of Guam.

Please note that:

(1) NCCOS/CSCOR will not normally 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, they should 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 should 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 should 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

As per section 6403(b)(1) of the Coral Reef Conservation Act of 2000, Federal funds for any coral conservation project funded under this Program may not exceed 50 percent of the total cost of the projects. Therefore, any coral conservation project under this program requires a 1:1 match. Match can come from a variety of public

and private sources and can include in-kind goods and services such as private boat use and volunteer labor. Federal sources cannot be considered for matching funds, but can be described in the budget narrative to demonstrate additional leverage. Applicants are permitted to combine contributions from multiple non-federal partners in order to meet the 1:1 match requirement, as long as such contributions are not being used to match any other funds.

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

As per section 6403(b)(2) of the Coral Reef Conservation Act of 2000, the NOAA Administrator may waive all or part of the matching requirement if the Administrator determines that the project meets the following two requirements:

1. No reasonable means are available through which an applicant can meet the matching requirement, and,
2. The probable benefit of such project outweighs the public interest in such matching requirement.

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

Please Note: eligible applicants choosing to apply 48 U.S.C. 1469a(d) should note the use of the waiver and the total amount of funds requested to be waived in the matching funds section of the respective application.

C. Other Criteria that Affect Eligibility

Each application must substantially comply with the thirteen elements listed under Required Elements, (1)-(13), or it will be returned to sender without further consideration. A checklist with the required and requested application elements can be found in the Section VIII. CSCOR adheres to the principals of scientific integrity. This policy can be found; <http://nrc.noaa.gov/scientificintegrity.html>. It is the applicant's responsibility to obtain all necessary Federal, state and local government permits and approvals where necessary for the proposed work to be conducted. Applicants are expected to design their proposals so that they minimize the potential adverse impact on the environment. If applicable, documentation of requests or approvals of environmental permits must be received by the Program Manager prior to funding. Applications will be reviewed to ensure that they have sufficient environmental documentation to allow program staff to determine whether the

proposal is categorically excluded from further National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis, or whether an Environmental Assessment is necessary in conformance with requirements of the NEPA. For those applications needing an Environmental Assessment, affected applicants will be informed after the peer review stage; and will be requested to assist in the preparation of a draft of the assessment (prior to award). Failure to apply for and/or obtain Federal, state, and local permits, approvals, letters of agreement, or failure to provide environmental analysis where necessary (e.g. NEPA environmental assessment) will also delay the award of funds if a project is otherwise selected for funding.

IV. Application and Submission Information

A. Address to Request Application Package

Laura Golden
1305 East West Hwy
SSMC 4 Station 8240
Silver Spring, MD 20910

B. Content and Form of Application

1. Applications

The provisions for full applications preparation provided here are mandatory. Applications received after the published deadline (refer to DATES) or applications that deviate from the prescribed format will be returned to the sender without further consideration. Information regarding this announcement and additional background information are available on the NCCOS/CSCOR home page. An example application can be found at:

http://www.cop.noaa.gov/opportunities/grants/pdf/sample_application.pdf and FAQs are also available.

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 sub contractors - 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 applications must include the following thirteen elements or it will be returned to sender without further consideration. The Summary title page, Abstract, Project Description, References, Biographical Sketch, Current and Pending Support, Budget Narrative and Collaborators List must be in 12-point font with 1-inch margins. The thirteen elements are as follows:

(1) Standard Form 424. At the time of applications 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 applications.

(2) Summary title page. The Summary title page identifies the project's title, starting with the acronym: [CRIs] and the Principal Investigators (PI) name and affiliation, complete address, phone, FAX and E-mail information. The requested budget for each fiscal year with and without ship funding should be included on the Summary title page. Multi-institution applications must also identify the lead investigator for each collaborating institution and their requested funding with and without ship funding for each fiscal year.

(3) One-page abstract/project summary. The summary (abstract) should appear on a separate page, headed with the proposal title, institution(s), investigator(s), total proposed cost (with and without ship funds), and budget period. It should be written in the third person and not exceed one page in length. 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) Project description. The description of the proposed project must include narratives of the Proposed Research and of the Applications to Management.

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

(a) Identifying the topic that is being addressed by the proposal;

(b) Describing the proposed scientific objectives and research activities 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);

(c) Discussing how the proposed project lends value to the program goals;

(d) 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.

The Proposed Research Narrative should provide a full scientific justification for the research, rather than simply reiterating justifications presented in this document. Specific research activities must be divided into annual increments of work that include specific objectives and methodology.

The Applications to Management Narrative should establish the connection to relevant resource management needs and potential pathways for experimental or model results to be incorporated into decision making. This narrative should provide the management justification for the research through:

(a) Articulating coordination with one or more management entities;

(b) Discussing the expected significance of the project to resource management priorities and needs; and/or

(c) Describing specific activities, such as workshops or development of outreach materials that will enhance information transfer from project scientists to relevant management entities, other end-users, or the public.

The project description must not exceed 20 pages in 12-point, easily legible font with 1 inch margins. The page limit includes figures, tables, and other visual materials, but excludes references, a milestone chart, budget narratives, data sharing plan and letters of intent from unfunded collaborators. Any information vital to the scientific objectives of the proposal should be included in the project summary, and not appear solely in the budget narratives.

(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 should include bibliographic citations only and should not be used to provide parenthetical information outside of the page limits given above for proposal descriptions.

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

(7) 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.

(8) Budget narrative and justification. In order to allow reviewers to fully evaluate the appropriateness of costs, all applications must include a detailed budget narrative and a justification to support all proposed budget categories for each fiscal

year (an example is provided at:

http://www.cop.noaa.gov/opportunities/grants/pdf/sample_application.pdf).

Personnel costs should be broken out by named PI and number of months requested per year per PI. Support for each PI should be commensurate with their stated involvement each year in the milestones chart (see Required Elements (6) Milestone chart). Any unnamed personnel (graduate students, post-doctoral researchers, technicians) should 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 should be explained. Describe products/services to be obtained and indicate the applicability or necessity of each subaward and contractor. Travel costs should be broken out by number of people traveling, destination and purpose of travel, and projected costs per person. Equipment costs should describe the equipment to be purchased, and its contribution to the achievement of the project goals. For additional information concerning each of the required categories and appropriate level of disclosure please see

http://www.cop.noaa.gov/opportunities/grants/other_instructions.aspx.

Any ship time needs must be clearly identified in the proposed budget. The applicant is responsible for requesting ship time through appropriate channels and for meeting all requirements to ensure the availability of requested ship time. Copies of relevant ship time request forms (e.g. UNOLS ship request forms at <http://www.gso.uri.edu./unols/ship/mainmenu.html>) should be included with the application.

If any NOAA personnel will be present during ship operations, vessel safety clearances must be obtained through the NOAA Office of Marine and Aviation Operations (OMAO) in advance of the cruise. Required information and procedures are detailed in a Charter Vessel Acquisition and Safety NOAA Administrative Order which can be accessed via the OMAO website at <http://www.oma.noaa.gov/charterreq.html>.

(9) 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 the rest should not be included. The lead institution should combine all Biographical sketches from each Co-PI and PI as a single attachment.

(10) Current and pending support. Describe all current and pending federal financial/funding support for all principal and co-investigators. 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 should 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. A current and pending support form is not required but is available on the CSCOR web site for your

use: http://www.cop.noaa.gov/opportunities/grants/pdf/current_pending_form.pdf. You must respond to the requirement whether or not you have any current and/or pending support.

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

(12) 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 (not paragraph) 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 collaborative 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 should 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.

(13) A separate document in which the applicant requests a waiver to the matching funds requirement contained in section 6403(b)(2) of the Coral Reef Conservation Act of 2000. This document must provide a detailed justification explaining the need for the waiver including the total amount of matching funds requested to be waived, attempts to obtain sources of matching funds, how the benefit of the project outweighs the public interest in providing match, and any other extenuating circumstances preventing the availability of match.

Application format and assembly. Applications submitted via Grants.gov APPLY should 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., budget narrative, project description, milestone chart etc. For a collaborative application: Combine all of the required documents for the individual institution into one PDF file in the Optional Form box as Other Attachments and submit the file labeled with the name of the institution. Repeat this procedure for each collaborating institution.

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 thirteen required elements, it is requested that the SF-424B, CD511, Key Contact form (available on the CSCOR web site at: http://www.cop.noaa.gov/opportunities/grants/initial_submission.aspx) 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 in to the Optional Form box under Other Attachments in Grants.gov.

Collaborative applications are 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 Justification, and current and pending 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.

Sub contractor submissions - SF424A, Budget Justification, 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 NCCOS/CSCOR office is 3 p.m., Eastern Time on April 2, 2012. 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, Mail Station 8240 8th Floor, Silver Spring, Maryland 20910-328;

2) delivery was guaranteed by 3 pm, Eastern Time on the specified closing date;

AND,

3) the application was received in the NCCOS/CSCOR office by 3 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, both electronic and paper, should be aware that adequate time must be factored into applicant schedules for delivery of the application. Electronic applicants are advised that volume on Grants.gov is currently extremely heavy, 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. Paper applicants should 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. NCCOS/CSCOR will not fund start up or operational costs for private business ventures and neither fees nor profits will be considered as allowable costs. Ship costs may not be included in indirect cost calculations. NCCOS/CSCOR will not pay for ship overhead expenses.

F. Other Submission Requirements

Full applications must include evidence of linkages between the scientific questions and management needs. Applications previously submitted to NCCOS/CSCOR FFOs and not recommended for funding must be revised and reviewer or panel concerns addressed before resubmission. Resubmitted applications that have not been revised will be returned without review.

Please refer to important information in submission dates and times above to help ensure your application is received on time.

Applications submitted in response to this announcement are strongly encouraged to be submitted through the Grants.gov web site. The full funding announcement for this program is available via the Grants.gov web site: <http://www.grants.gov>. This announcement will also be available by contacting the program official identified below. You will be able to access, download and submit electronic grant applications for NOAA Programs in this announcement at <http://www.grants.gov>. 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.

Applicants must contact the Program Manager for non-electronic submission instructions.

Facsimile transmissions and electronic mail submission of full applications will not be accepted.

Electronic submissions should be sent via grants.gov. Paper submissions should be sent to:

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

1305 East West Highway

SSMC 4 Station 8240

Silver Spring, MD 20910

V. Application Review Information

A. Evaluation Criteria

1. Importance and/or relevance and applicability of proposed project to the program goals: This ascertains whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and/or relevance to NOAA, Federal, regional, state, or local activities. (25 percent)

2. Technical/scientific merit: This assesses whether the approach is technically sound and/or innovative, if the methods are appropriate, and whether there are clear project goals and objectives (20 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. (20 percent)

4. Project costs: The Budget is evaluated to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time-frame. (10 percent)

5. Outreach and education: NOAA assesses whether this project provides a focused and effective education and outreach strategy regarding NOAA's mission to protect the Nation's natural resources. (25 percent)

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. 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, the Director of NCCOS, for the final funding decision. In making the final selections, the Director 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 NCCOS/CSCOR for the required 3 years in accordance with the current retention requirements, and then destroyed.

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 2012. Applicants should use a start date of September 1, 2012.

VI. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notices

The notice of award is signed by the NOAA Grants Officer and is the authorizing document. It is provided electronically through the Grants Online system to the appropriate business office of the recipient organization.

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 application awarded in response to this announcement will be required to use the Central Contractor Registration and Dun and Bradstreet Universal Numbering System and be subject to reporting requirements, as identified in OMB guidance published at 2 CFR Parts 25, 170 (2010),

<http://ecfr.gpoaccess.gov/cgi/t/text/text-idx?>

[c=ecfr&tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title02/2cfr25_main_02.tpl,](http://ecfr.gpoaccess.gov/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=ecfr&tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title02/2cfr25_main_02.tpl)

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

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

Administrative and national policy requirements for all Department of Commerce awards are contained in the Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements contained in the Federal Register notice of February 11, 2008 (73 FR 7696). A copy of the notice may be obtained at: <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/>.

Limitation of Liability

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.

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, 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).

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 the denial of an application.

C. Reporting

All performance (i.e. technical progress) reports shall be submitted electronically through the Grants Online system unless the recipient does not have internet access. In that case, performance (technical) reports are to be submitted to the NOAA Program Manager. All financial reports shall be submitted in the same manner. All ship time use must be reported by the PI or Chief Scientist on each cruise within the performance reports.

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.

Data Reporting Requirement

In conformance with the Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and

Cooperative Agreements section 15 CFR 14.36, any data collected in projects supported by NCCOS/CSCOR 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 NCCOS/CSCOR 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

Technical Information: David Hilmer, Program Manager for CSCOR, 301-713-3338/extension 154, Internet: David.Hilmer@noaa.gov and Jenny Waddell for CRCP, 301-713-3155 extension 150, Internet: Jenny.Waddell@noaa.gov .

Business Management Information: Laurie Golden, NCCOS/CSCOR Grants Administrator, 301-713-3338/extension 151, Internet: Laurie.Golden@noaa.gov.

Any administrative questions concerning the waiver of the matching funds requirement should also be addressed to Jenny Waddell, NOAA National Ocean Service, 1305 East West Highway, 10th Floor, SSMC4, N/ORM, Silver Spring, MD 20910, or telephone 301-713-3155 extension 150.

VIII. Other Information

Collection of information requirements

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.

Check List for Required and Requested Documents:

SF-424

Title Page

Abstract

Project Description References Milestone Chart

SF-424A (One for the lead institution and each institution in a multi-institutional project and/or each subcontract)

Budget Narrative and Justification (One for the lead institution and each institution in a multi-institutional project and/or each subcontract).

Bio Sketch

Current and Pending Support

Permits (if none, say so)

Alphabetized Collaborator List (ONE list for all)

Waiver, if applicable

Signed Approval from subaward/contractor institutes

Ship Request form, if applicable

SF-424B (requested) CD-511 (requested)

Indirect Rate Agreement (requested)

Key Contact form (requested for each institution)