

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: FY13-14 CRCP State and Territorial Coral Reef Conservation Cooperative Agreements

Announcement Type: Initial

Funding Opportunity Number: NOAA-NOS-OCRM-2013-2003453

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

Dates: Pre-applications must be received no later than 5:00 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time on Friday, October 19, 2012. Final applications must be received no later than 5:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time on Friday, February 15, 2013.

Funding Opportunity Description: The NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program, as authorized by the Coral Reef Conservation Act of 2000, provides matching grants of financial assistance to State, Territorial and Commonwealth resource management agencies that were appointed by their respective Governors to serve as the primary point of contact agencies for coral reef conservation activities in each of the jurisdictions of American Samoa, Florida, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. The awards are administered as cooperative agreements to enable the collaboration and involvement of NOAA in the planning and implementation of the work. The objective of these Cooperative Agreements is to support coral reef management and monitoring programs and conservation projects that seek to improve the condition of coral reef ecosystem resources located in these seven U.S. States, Territories and Commonwealths.

Funding for this program is subject to the availability of Congressional appropriations and is expected to range between \$3,500,000 and \$4,500,000 in FY 2013. Funding made available from NOAA's Coral Reef Conservation Program is intended to support priority coral reef management activities as described in section I(B) of this Federal Funding Opportunity announcement. Support in out-years following FY 2013 is likewise contingent upon the availability of future funding; the recipient's ability to administer Federal funds provided by NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program; and the performance of the recipient during the initial year of the award. NOAA expects that each eligible applicant will request Federal funding at a funding level between \$200,000 and \$900,000 under this solicitation and that the average award size will be approximately \$500,000.

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. Stresses in the coral reef environment include poor water quality from runoff and inadequate sewage treatment, destructive fishing practices, sedimentation, recreational overuse and misuse, and impacts from climate change.

To address 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 financial assistance to external partners 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.

Coral Reef Conservation Program priorities were refined and redirected in 2008-2009 and are described in the CRCP Goals and Objectives 2010-2015 (http://coralreef.noaa.gov/aboutcrp/strategy/currentgoals/resources/3threats_go.pdf), the seven Jurisdictional Coral Reef Management Priorities documents (<http://coralreef.noaa.gov/aboutcrp/strategy/reprioritization/managementpriorities>), and the CRCP International Strategy (http://coralreef.noaa.gov/aboutcrp/strategy/currentgoals/resources/intl_strategy.pdf). These documents are relevant to all CRCP grant programs, but some may be more or less relevant to particular applicants. Please refer to the Program Priorities in Section B for details on which of these documents is/are most applicable for this funding announcement.

As required under the Act, NOAA published the NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Grant Program (Grant Program) Implementation Guidelines (Guidelines) in Federal Register Vol.

67, No. 76, page 19396, on Friday, April 19, 2002. Based on CRCP efforts to realign the grant programs with updated program priorities, revised Guidelines were published on Thursday, August 12, 2010 in Federal Register Vol. 75, No. 155, pages 48934-48939 and are available at: <http://coralreef.noaa.gov/aboutcrcp/workwithus/funding/grants/welcome.html>.

All applications submitted in response to this FFO must be consistent with the requirements stated herein and the Guidelines. Funding is subject to the availability of Federal appropriations.

In FY13, the CRCP intends to initiate new awards in the following 2 funding categories:

1. CRCP State and Territorial Coral Reef Conservation Cooperative Agreements
2. CRCP Domestic Coral Reef Conservation Grants

All of the following information in this funding opportunity pertains only to the CRCP State and Territorial Coral Reef Conservation Cooperative Agreements funding category.

B. Program Priorities

Since 2001, CRCP has provided annual funding to eligible State, Territorial, and Commonwealth agencies for conservation projects in coral reef jurisdictions. This funding, in the form of annual cooperative agreements, was dedicated to development and implementation of numerous projects and activities, based on guidance provided by the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force, NOAA, and various strategic objectives and guidance documents, such as Local Action Strategies and the National Coral Reef Action Strategy.

Subject to Congressional Appropriations, NOAA's National Ocean Service (NOS), Coral Reef Conservation Program (CRCP) anticipates being able to continue to provide funding for cooperative agreements in Fiscal Year 2013 (FY13) to support state and territorial coral reef ecosystem management, monitoring and other conservation activities which lead to or support an improvement in the condition of U.S. coral reef ecosystems. Activities funded under this announcement are intended to focus on shallow water coral reefs and associated ecosystems, including those found at mesophotic depths, which occur in U.S. States, Territories, and Commonwealths and are subject to local management authority. Applicants are also able to propose conservation projects in watersheds immediately adjacent to or directly influencing U.S. coral reef ecosystems where such ecological linkages are present.

Between 2008-2009, the CRCP convened working groups to develop overarching goals and objectives for the program to guide future funding investments. The resulting document, CRCP Goals and Objectives 2010-2015

(http://coralreef.noaa.gov/aboutcrcp/strategy/currentgoals/resources/3threats_go.pdf)

was published in June 2009. At the same time, the CRCP sponsored priority-setting processes at the jurisdictional level to help local coral reef managers articulate a set of common priority goals and objectives upon which local coral reef management efforts would focus; these Jurisdictional Coral Reef Management Priorities are captured in a series of documents that were published in the spring of 2010 (<http://coralreef.noaa.gov/aboutcrcp/strategy/reprioritization/managementpriorities>)

Subsequently, some jurisdictions have developed more action-oriented strategies, site-based management plans and conservation action plans, and have updated their coral reef Local Action Strategies based on these priorities. Together, these documents will be used to narrow and sharpen the focus of CRCP investments toward addressing the specific priorities articulated by the CRCP and jurisdictional partners, particularly in instances where the priorities of both overlap. As such, CRCP expects that the majority of projects proposed in applications to this competition will involve the development and implementation of projects that address both the CRCP Goals and Objectives and Jurisdictional Coral Reef Management Priorities. CRCP also anticipates that applications will focus effort in the discrete areas identified in the Jurisdictional Coral Reef Management Priorities documents as priority sites for coral reef management. Projects that do not specifically address these priorities may be proposed, but applicants should anticipate that fewer resources would be allocated for projects that have not been previously identified as priorities.

In an effort to explain how these strategic documents will influence preferences in funding determinations, the CRCP has developed a tiered approach scheme, which the CRCP will apply to both external (e.g., grants and cooperative agreements) and internal funding decisions. The amount of investment will decline from Tiers 1 through 4.

* Tier 1 consists of projects that address BOTH a National Goal and Objective AND a Jurisdictional Priority.

*Tier 2 consists of projects that address a Jurisdictional Priority. Funding for projects that are identified as a jurisdictional priority but do not meet a National Goal and Objective are included because the CRCP recognizes that circumstances and management issues are not the same in every jurisdiction.

*Tier 3 includes management goals or objectives that appear in the relevant Jurisdictional Priority Setting document but are not identified as a priority. The CRCP understands jurisdictions require flexibility to effectively manage their reefs, and certain opportunities might make working on these off-priority goals important in a given year.

*Tier 4 includes management needs not included in the Jurisdictional Priority Setting documents. These would likely include emerging issues or significant new threats.

Cooperative agreements between the CRCP and governor-appointed coral reef agencies in each of seven U.S. States, Territories, and Commonwealths are intended to provide programmatic support for coral reef management in each location as well as funding for various specific conservation projects and studies that will be undertaken by local agency staff in collaboration with NOAA and other partners. NOAA will allocate funding competitively among eligible recipients based on the merits of the scope of work as described in the applications and according to the tiered approach described above.

1. Programmatic funding:

Programmatic funding may be provided to eligible applicants to support local program staff. Types of costs anticipated in this section would include salary and fringe benefits for key program staff (e.g., local program coordinator, grant administration staff, monitoring staff, and/or other specialist positions that provide ongoing legal support or outreach or education services); training; computers and supplies; staff travel, including for relevant regional and national meetings focused on coral reef conservation; purchase, care and maintenance of equipment; etc. Application materials should indicate which staff will work on each project and the percentage of time they expect to spend on each. Funding requests for all staff positions, whether included as a Federal expense or matching contribution, must be accompanied by a specific scope of work as described in Section IV(B).

Funding for long-term coral reef monitoring efforts that collect, analyze and report on the condition of coral reef ecosystem components based on scientifically defensible methodologies may be incorporated into applications as part of the programmatic funding section. Priorities for long-term coral reef monitoring efforts include continuation of programs to collect data that document trends in the condition of near shore benthic habitats (seafloor communities), associated biological communities (including reef-associated fish and invertebrates), and water and substrate quality in coral reef habitats. The monitoring data collected through the program should focus primarily on key reef species subject to local management authority, and projects should include regular communication of results to, and/or the direct involvement of staff from such agencies. Monitoring data are intended to complement national-level monitoring efforts and to inform local coral reef conservation and management decisions, particularly with regard to fisheries management and efforts to manage marine protected areas. Summarized results and data must be made available to management authorities and the interested public on a regular basis through the publication of periodic assessment reports and other communication methods, in addition to any peer-reviewed publications. Funding requested for the coral reef monitoring component of the application is expected to fall within a range of \$120,000 to \$200,000 per year in FY 2013 and FY 2014.

2. Project funding:

In addition to programmatic funding, the CRCP will consider supporting a number of conservation projects undertaken by state, territorial, and Commonwealth agencies in collaboration with other local partners to promote greater local participation in coral reef conservation management efforts. Proposed activities should be coordinated, where appropriate, with ongoing and proposed NOAA coral reef mapping, monitoring, coastal zone and fishery management initiatives, and other Federal, state and local coral reef conservation activities.

All projects proposed for funding under this funding opportunity should be clearly linked to CRCP and/or Jurisdictional priorities and/or other specific local coral reef management priorities or initiatives (e.g., watershed management plans, conservation action plans, Local Action Strategies, communication and outreach strategies, and MPA management plans), and linkages should be clearly explained in application materials. Project proposal narratives must also clearly articulate links to programmatic and project-specific goals and objectives and include quantifiable performance indicators to demonstrate progress toward conservation goals.

To ensure that the results of funded projects are communicated to other relevant resource management agencies at local, State and Federal levels, all projects must include a description of the specific ways in which these agencies will be informed of project results and recommendations for how results can be applied to coral reef management. This requirement may be accomplished in a number of ways, from the involvement of additional coral reef manager(s) on the project team during planning and implementation phases to presentation of interim and final results during meetings that allow managers and interested stakeholders to interact with principal investigators.

Monitoring efforts may include both continued long-term monitoring programs (mentioned in programmatic funding section above) and targeted studies or assessments. Targeted studies or assessments that supplement long-term monitoring efforts may receive funding under this program in an effort to: provide recent, reliable information about the condition of particular coral reef ecosystem components in a given location (i.e., near a disposal site or sediment source); build capacity in local monitoring expertise; investigate and respond to disturbance events; and produce reliable scientific information that has a direct application for pressing coral reef management concerns.

CRCP recognizes that scientific studies and research projects can be an important part of coral reef management strategies and programs, however, research projects are not a priority under this funding category. Only those scientific studies and research projects that have a clear linkage and application to urgent management priorities are eligible for consideration under this funding category. Furthermore, the following criteria must be satisfied for research studies or projects to be eligible for funding:

a) The project results must contribute to pressing coral reef management decisions or actions under consideration by local management authorities;

b) The project must be an integral component of a broader management initiative and the proposal narrative must clearly explain the management need for the research project; and

c) The project/task description must include a clear and concrete plan for how the research findings or observations data will translate into management action including:

1) Identification of the management authority or organization that will take action;

2) A letter of support from the management authority or organization identified if different from the applicant organization;

3) A list of management-relevant deliverables that will result from the project; and

4) A plan for communicating and providing research results to the identified management authority or organization as well as other appropriate managers and key stakeholders.

3. Expected Outcomes and Outputs:

CRCP Coral Reef Conservation Cooperative Agreements are intended to support programmatic activities and projects that result in tangible and significant improvements in the condition of coral reef ecosystems. To achieve this outcome, the activities proposed under this competition must be coordinated with local program staff throughout the duration of the project(s), including the provision of project updates, interim results, and final project results in a timely manner. Approaches for accomplishing this type of communication could include periodic workshops and/or meetings of management and technical advisory committees that involve a broad spectrum of regional stakeholder interests. Some activities and projects funded through these cooperative agreements may contribute toward CRCP performance metrics; in such instances, CRCP will help the applicant in determining how to measure the contribution of the project to specific CRCP performance metrics.

Specific outputs that are expected to result from funded proposals include:

a) Specific management actions that support the Jurisdictional Coral Reef Management Priorities

(<http://coralreef.noaa.gov/aboutcrcp/strategy/reprioritization/managementpriorities/>) and/or CRCP Goals and Objectives

(http://coralreef.noaa.gov/aboutcrcp/strategy/currentgoals/resources/3threats_go.pdf), such as developing and implementing management plans in priority areas, developing new laws, regulations or policies to conserve coral reef resources, addressing gaps in local capacity, outreach and education initiatives, applying best management practices to reduce threats to

coral reef ecosystems, and conducting research that addresses specific information gaps. Actions should lead to improved coral reef ecosystem condition through novel and/or traditional approaches, and management recommendations should be communicated via methods mentioned previously in this section;

b) Environmental data, including recorded and derived observations and measurements of the physical, chemical, biological, geological, and geophysical properties and conditions of the oceans and atmosphere, as well as correlative data, such as socio-economic data and media (recordings, photos, videos etc.), and their accompanying metadata files, must comply with standards developed or endorsed by the Federal Geographic Data Committee (<http://www.fgdc.gov>). The FGDC has recently endorsed the use of International Standards Organization (ISO) 19115 Parts 1 and 2 and representation standard ISO 19139 for documenting environmental data and information (<http://www.ncddc.noaa.gov/metadata-standards/>). If you are documenting geospatial data in accordance with the FGDC Content Standard for Digital Geospatial Data this template identifies the minimum fields CRCP required for a complete record (http://coris.noaa.gov/data/examples/bamf_min_crsp_fields.txt). All data products must be archived in multiple locations and provided to CRCP for long-term storage in accordance with the terms of the award and the award's Data/Information Sharing Plan, as described in Section IV(B)13.

(c) Other outputs, such as assessments, publications, summary reports, outreach and education materials, and other useful products, that provide resource managers and the public with timely and readily understandable information on coral reefs. These outputs must be identified in the original application as described in Section IV(B)4 and must be provided to NOAA at the end of the award period; products may be made available to the public via NOAA's Coral Reef Information System. As such, all products should be of publishable quality and include appropriate acknowledgement of the support provided by NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program as described at: <http://coralreef.noaa.gov/aboutcrsp/howeare/graphic/>

C. Program Authority

Authority for the NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Grant Program is provided by Section 6403 (Coral Reef Conservation Program) of the Coral Reef Conservation Act of 2000 (16 U.S.C. 6401 et seq).

II. Award Information

A. Funding Availability

Funding for this program is subject to the availability of Congressional appropriations and is expected to range between \$3,500,000 and \$4,500,000 in FY 2013. Funding made available from NOAA's Coral Reef Conservation Program is intended to support priority coral reef management activities as described in section I(B) of this Federal Funding Opportunity announcement. Support in out-years following FY 2013 is likewise contingent upon the availability of future funding; the recipient's ability to administer Federal funds provided by NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program; and the performance of the recipient during the initial year of the award. NOAA expects that each eligible applicant will request Federal funding at a funding level between \$200,000 and \$900,000 under this solicitation and that the average award size will be approximately \$500,000.

In certain instances, when requested by the applicant and agreed upon by NOAA, NOAA may hold back a portion of any awarded funds in order to provide specific coral reef conservation technical assistance in the form of contractual or other services. Such requests will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis with respect to the specific management objectives of the local coral reef program. NOAA will work with recipients to ensure the greatest degree of success in meeting local, state, territorial and national coral reef management needs.

B. Project/Award Period

Applicants are asked to submit multi-year applications covering a 24-month period with an anticipated start date of either July 1, 2013 or October 1, 2013.

Multiple-year applications must specify the budget and activities for each year, including separate SF-424A budget forms for each year to account for all Federal funding and matching funds. Awards made in FY13 will only provide funding for the first year of activities and are expected to cover 12 months of expenses. Funding for the second year is contingent on subsequent years' appropriation and acceptable performance in administering the funds and implementing the funded positions and activities in the first year. Provided NOAA receives continued funding for this program in FY14, CRCP intends to implement out-year activities as described in the original multi-year application unless there is a need to reprogram funds or significantly alter the original scope of work.

C. Type of Funding Instrument

Cooperative agreements will be awarded to each eligible jurisdiction selected for funding. Federal cooperative agreements are different from traditional grants in that they allow for 'substantial federal involvement' in the planning and implementation of funded projects. Substantial involvement on the part of NOAA may include the participation of NOAA Coral Reef Management Liaisons and other CRCP staff in project development, planning and implementation, technical monitoring of award activities and coordination of funded projects with other CRCP-funded efforts as needed.

III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants are the State, Territorial and Commonwealth resource management agencies that were appointed by their respective Governors to serve as the primary point of contact agencies for coral reef conservation activities in each of the jurisdictions of American Samoa, Florida, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

NOAA employees are not permitted to assist in the preparation of applications or write letters of support for any application. NOAA CRCP staff is available to provide general information on programmatic goals and objectives, ongoing coral reef conservation programs/activities, and regional funding priorities. For proposals that involve collaboration with current NOAA projects or staff, NOAA employees should provide a statement verifying that they are collaborating with the project applicant and confirming the degree and nature of the collaboration. Federal employee travel and salaries are not allowable costs under this competition. All questions about this competition, including application procedures and materials and selection criteria, should be directed to the official Federal Program Officer listed under section VII. Agency Contacts.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement

All awards of financial assistance provided by the NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Grant Program (Grant Program) under the authority of the Coral Reef Conservation Act (Act) of 2000 are subject to the matching fund requirements described below. As per section 6403(b)(1) of the Act, Federal funds for any coral conservation project funded under this Grant Program may not exceed 50 percent of the total cost of the award. Therefore, any coral conservation project under this Grant Program requires a 1:1 contribution of non-Federal matching funds. Matching funds 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 as 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 Federal funds received under another award.

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

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: applicants who are eligible to claim the matching funds exemption contained in 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 their respective pre- and final applications. Please contact the individual listed in section VII. Agency Contacts for more information about eligibility for this exemption.

C. Other Criteria that Affect Eligibility

This section was intentionally left blank.

IV. Application and Submission Information

A. Address to Request Application Package

The standard application package is available at: <http://apply07.grants.gov/apply/FormLinks?family=15>. The following federal forms will be required: SF424, SF424a, SF424b, CD-511 and SF-LLL. For applicants without Internet access, an application package may be requested by contacting Jenny Waddell, 1305 East West Highway, 10th Floor, N/ORM1, Silver Spring, MD 20910, Phone: 301-713-3155 extension 150; or e-mail: Jenny.Waddell@noaa.gov. Please contact Ms. Waddell with any administrative questions about this competition.

B. Content and Form of Application

This funding category requires that each applicant submit a project list and pre-application several months in advance of the submission of final applications. Project lists, which are comprised of a simple table of project titles and one-paragraph descriptions of

proposed projects, should be submitted to the appropriate NOAA Coral Reef Management Liaison with a copy to Jenny.Waddell@noaa.gov by September 7, 2012.

Pre-applications should include fully developed drafts of the application coversheet, summary table, project narrative, products table, and budget narrative (items 1-5 below) but do not require the Federal forms that must be submitted as part of the final application. Applicants may request an optional pre-application template by contacting Jenny Waddell at Jenny.Waddell@noaa.gov. Pre-applications will be reviewed by technical experts and a CRCP review committee according to the process described in Section V of this announcement. Initial funding allocations will be communicated to the applicant along with summarized reviewer comments in advance of the final application due date to allow time for the applicants to respond to comments and/or adjust their final application.

Final applications should respond to and/or incorporate changes suggested by the reviewers into their final project and budget narratives, including providing additional detail where requested. Applicants may request a conference with CRCP staff to review and discuss the necessary modifications to the final application. Final applications are comprised of the 13 items described below, including all required Federal forms.

In general, pre- applications and final applications must not exceed 70 pages exclusive of the required Federal financial assistance forms and other documentation that is part of the final grant application package. Applications that exceed the 70-page limit will be shortened by removing pages at the end of the proposal narrative (element 3 below) before it is forwarded to merit reviewers. Because the pages excised from lengthy applications will not be reviewed, activities described therein will not be eligible for funding consideration. Reviewers will be instructed to deduct points from applications that are incomplete, unclear, or contain numerous typographical errors, so applicants are advised to review their application materials closely before they are submitted to the agency for consideration.

Application materials, including the application cover sheet, summary table, project narrative, products table and budget narrative must be in 11-point font with 1-inch margins on all four sides. Scopes of work for staff funded through the Cooperative Agreements or included as a matching contribution (and spending 50% or more of their time working on the award) should be included as appendices if available at the time of application submission, otherwise a Special Award Condition will be placed on the award to prevent expenditure of salary and fringe benefits until complete and acceptable scopes of work for all positions have been provided. Scopes of work should describe all of the efforts and activities to be completed by funded personnel during the first 12 months of the award and indicate the percent of their time represented in this proposal. If not submitted with the final application, a Special Award Condition will require complete scopes of work to be submitted via NOAA Grants Online by October 1, 2013.

Applications must include the following information in this order:

1. Application Coversheet

- a. Applicant Name and Contact Information;
- b. Applicant organization;
- c. Primary and alternate points of contact; and,
- d. Contact information including address, phone and fax numbers, and e-mail address;
- e. Project title;
- f. Geographic Location;
- g. Amount of federal funding requested;
- h. Amount of matching funds provided;
- i. Requested award start date and award period;
- j. A brief, two-paragraph application summary that provides an overview of the types of projects and tasks that are proposed for funding in each year; provide one paragraph for each year of funding, indicating the year in which each of the projects is expected to occur.

2. Summary Table

Each application should include a table that summarizes the projects and tasks contained in the application. Each task or project title should include information about the total cost and matching funds provided as well as key work products or outcomes. Multi-year projects should specify the expected products, tasks and budget requested for each year. The summary table should be organized by year to easily track the projects that are initiated or ongoing for each year. Thus, multi-year projects will appear multiple times in the table (e.g., programmatic expenses would be listed in each year).

3. Proposal Narrative

The proposal narrative must include complete descriptions of all programmatic efforts and projects being proposed in the application. Sufficient detail must be provided to enable reviewers to evaluate the relevance and applicability of proposed work to program goals; the technical/scientific merit of the proposed work; and the qualifications of the applicants, and to clearly describe how each activity or project will directly benefit coral reef management efforts.

a. Introduction: The introduction should provide a brief and succinct overview of current coral reef conservation efforts and explain how proposed projects will contribute toward improving local coral reef management.

b. Programmatic activities: The programmatic activities section should describe the resources needed to continue implementation of local coral reef management programs, including descriptions of key programmatic elements, such as staff positions supported by the award; purchase, care and maintenance of equipment; supplies requested for general program use; travel for program staff, etc. All staff positions supported through this funding, whether included as a Federal expense or matching contribution, must be accompanied by a specific scope of work.

c. Projects: The projects section should describe all projects and activities being proposed for funding as part of the award. Each project should be listed separately and include:

i. A project title and task number.

ii. A brief summary justifying the need for the proposed task and explaining the relationship of the proposed project to previous efforts. Please explain how the project will be coordinated with activities other related activities of local governmental and nongovernmental agencies and organizations, if applicable. Please also identify the specific CRCP Goal/Objective and/or Jurisdictional Priority each project will address, as appropriate.

iii. Task Description and Methodology - Provide a detailed project description that describes, to the extent possible, the scope and detail of the project and the work to be accomplished. Clearly describe or explain: project goals and objectives, proposed activities, methods, procedures and any special equipment that will be used in support of the project goals.

iv. Outcomes and Products - Identify and describe in as much detail as possible the expected benefits of the project and the specific products that will result from the project, and explain how project success will be measured.

v. Schedule - Indicate when each project is expected to begin (month and year) and include a timeline for key project activities and benchmarks. Provide a Task timeline in a narrative or table format.

vi. Project Management and Personnel - Identify the project manager or Principal Investigator (PI). Identify other individual(s), either by name or by position title, who are responsible for completing the objectives and performing the activities proposed, and describe their specific roles and responsibilities as related to the proposed project.

vii. Task Budget Summary Table - A summary budget must be provided for each project or task, including when the project is listed as a contract or subcontract. Applicants must include a detailed breakdown of costs by category of expenditure so that reviewers understand how the estimated costs were derived and can determine if those costs are reasonable. The table should also include information regarding the amount of matching funds available to the applicant for each project. As required by the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA; <https://www.fsrs.gov/>), all subawards of \$25,000 or more per year must also be accompanied by a separate SF-424A form to fully document the subaward budget.

4. Table of Products and Deliverables

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

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

5. Budget Narrative and Justification

In order to allow reviewers to evaluate the appropriateness of costs, all applications must include a detailed budget narrative and a budget justification for all proposed budget categories for each fiscal year. Budget narratives should be provided separately from the project narrative if the recipient does not wish to make the financial information contained in the budget narrative available to the public.

The budget narrative submitted with the application must match the dollar amounts on all required forms and clearly link to the project narrative. Please explain each calculation and provide a narrative justification to support each budget category. Further guidance is provided below:

a. Describe, by category of expenditure, the total cost to accomplish the purposes and objectives contained in the overall work plan for the entire grant period. Categories should correspond to the following object class categories listed in Section B of the SF-424A.

i. Personnel costs, including salary and wages, 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 project timeline. 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. Fringe benefits should be identified separately from salary and wages, should be applied consistently, and should apply equally to both Federal and non-Federal (matching) funds.

ii. Travel costs should be broken out by number of people traveling, destination and purpose of travel, and projected costs per person. Briefly describe the travel involved, its purpose, and explain how the proposed travel is necessary for successful completion of the activity or project. If travel details of a particular trip are unknown, you must explain the basis for proposed costs (i.e., historical costs) instead of providing a lump sum estimate. Please also be aware of the provisions of the 'Fly America Act' and use U.S.-flagged vessels for transport, unless a waiver to this provision has been secured.

iii. "Equipment" is non-expendable, tangible personal property with a unit cost of \$5,000 or more and a useful life of more than one year. Items that do not meet the equipment definition may be included under supplies. Each piece of equipment should be described separately and reference the type/model to be purchased and its contribution to the achievement of the project goals. General use equipment (i.e., computers, printers, etc.) must be used 100% for the proposed project if charged directly to the award.

iv. Supplies should be itemized to the level of detail known or may be based on established historical costs.

v. Contractual costs should be itemized separately by contract, according to standard budget categories; all types of contractual costs should be included in aggregate in the Contractual line item on the SF 424A. Indicate the basis for each contract's cost estimate in the narrative. As required by the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA; <https://www.frs.gov/>), all subawards of \$25,000 or more per year must also be accompanied by a separate SF-424A form to fully document the subaward budget. Products or services to be obtained via contract should be described in detail.

vi. Other costs should be listed by type of material or nature of expense and should be broken down by quantity and cost per unit if applicable. A description of allowable costs can be found in the document listed under Section IV(E)2 'Cost Principles.'

vii. Indirect costs may be requested if the applicant has negotiated an indirect cost rate with the Federal government for the period of performance. Indirect costs are essentially overhead costs for basic operational functions (e.g., utilities, rent, and insurance) that are incurred for common or joint objectives and, therefore, cannot be identified specifically within a particular project. For this solicitation, the Federal share of the indirect costs awarded may not exceed 25 percent of the Federal direct costs proposed. For those situations in which the use of the applicant's indirect cost rate would result in indirect costs greater than 25 percent of the Federal direct costs proposed, the difference may be counted as part of the non-Federal share. A copy of the current, approved negotiated indirect cost agreement with the Federal Government must be included with the final application package. If the applicant does not have a current negotiated rate and plans to seek reimbursement for indirect costs, documentation necessary to establish a rate must be submitted within 90 days of receiving an award.

b. Provide an explanation and justification for how the categorical costs are derived (federal and non-federal expenditures) in sufficient detail to help reviewers determine if costs are 'allowable and reasonable' according to the cost principles listed in Section IV(E)2.

6. Standard Form 424

At the time of final application submission, all applicants requesting funding must submit a copy of Standard Form SF-424, 'Application for Federal Assistance' to indicate the total amount of funding proposed for their institution for the entire project period. If a hard copy final application is submitted, it must be dated, signed by the organization's authorized representative, and used as the cover page for the final application. Electronic signatures will automatically be included on SF-424 forms submitted via Grants.gov.

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 application. Please place the budget for each fiscal year on a separate SF-424A form so that a two-year application package includes two SF-424A forms. The budget represented in these forms must correspond with the descriptions contained in the budget narrative and must add up to the amount requested on Standard Form 424. As required by the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA; <https://www.frs.gov/>), all subawards or subcontracts of \$25,000 or more per year must also be accompanied by a separate SF-424A form to fully document the subaward budget.

8. Standard Form 424B

At time of application submission, all applicants are required to submit a signed SF-424B, 'Assurances for Non-Construction Programs'.

9. Standard Form CD-511

The applicant must also include a completed form CD-511, 'Certifications Regarding Debarment, Suspension, and other Responsibility Matters: Drug Free Workplace Environment.'

10. Permits

Please provide a list of all applicable permits that will be required to perform the proposed work. You must respond to this required element whether or not permits are required.

11. Match waiver request (if needed)

If sufficient matching funds are unavailable for the project, please include 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 should be addressed to Jenny Waddell, NOAA National Ocean Service, 1305 East West Highway, 10th Floor, SSMC4, N/ORM, Silver Spring, MD 20910 and provide a detailed justification explaining the need for the waiver, the total amount of matching funds requested to be waived, attempts to obtain sources of matching funds, how the benefit of the project outweighs the public interest in providing match, and any other extenuating circumstances preventing the availability of local matching funds for the proposal.

12. Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (if applicable)

The budget may include an amount for indirect costs if the applicant has an established indirect cost rate with the Federal government. Indirect costs are essentially overhead costs for basic operational functions (e.g., utilities, rent, and insurance) that are incurred for common or joint objectives and, therefore, cannot be identified specifically within a particular project.

For this solicitation, the Federal share of the indirect costs awarded will not exceed the lesser of either the indirect costs that the applicant would be entitled to if the negotiated Federal indirect cost rate were used or 25 percent of the Federal direct costs proposed. For those situations in which the use of the established indirect cost rate would result in indirect costs greater than 25 percent of the Federal direct costs proposed, the difference may be counted as part of the non-Federal matching share. A copy of the current, approved negotiated indirect cost agreement with the Federal Government must be included with the final application package. If the applicant does not have a current negotiated rate and plans to seek reimbursement for indirect costs, documentation necessary to establish a rate must be submitted within 90 days of receiving an award.

13. Data/Information Sharing Plan

Environmental data and information collected and/or created under NOAA grants or cooperative agreements must be made visible, accessible, and independently understandable to general users, free of charge or at minimal cost, in a timely manner (typically no later than two years after the data are collected or created), except where limited by law, regulation, policy or by security requirements. To comply with NOAA Administrative Order 212-15, a Data/Information Sharing Plan of no more than two pages is required as part of the Project Narrative, and should include:

- a. descriptions of the types of environmental data and information to be created during the course of the project [environmental data includes recorded and derived observations and measurements of the physical, chemical, biological, geological, and geophysical properties and conditions of the oceans and atmosphere, as well as correlative data, such as socio-economic data and media (recordings, photos, videos etc.)];
- b. the tentative date by which data will be shared (typically no later than two years after the data are collected or created);
- c. the standards to be used for data/metadata format and content (NOAA has endorsed the use of ISO Standards for documenting environmental data and information);
- d. policies addressing data stewardship and preservation;
- e. procedures for providing access, data, and security (all data products must be archived in multiple locations and provided to NOAA for long-term storage); and
- f. where possible, prior experience in publishing such data.

The Data/Information Sharing Plan will be reviewed as part of the evaluation criteria described in Section V(A). The Data/Information Sharing Plan (and any subsequent revisions or updates) will be made available publicly at time of award and will be posted with the published data. The Data Sharing Plan provided in the final application will be made available by NOAA on behalf of the recipient at the start of the award period. Failure 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.

In addition to the thirteen (13) required elements described above, applicants may upload additional supporting documentation in to the 'Optional Form' box under 'Other Attachments' in Grants.gov.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to consult with Federal Program Officers 30-60 days before the pre-application due date to maximize the efficiency of the pre-application

development process. These consultations are intended to facilitate open conversation and discussion of project ideas, and to eliminate time and effort spent on the development of projects that do not represent a funding priority for the program.

Pre-applications and final applications must be submitted to NOAA by the due dates specified in Section IV(C) 'Submission Dates and Times'. Pre-applications must be submitted electronically via email to coral.grants@noaa.gov. Acceptable formats are limited to Adobe Acrobat (.PDF) or Microsoft Word (.doc) files. All applications must meet the information and formatting requirements specified in this announcement. Federal financial assistance forms are not required to be submitted with the pre-application; however, final applications must include a complete Federal financial assistance award application package in addition to final revised versions of the pre-application materials. The required Federal financial assistance forms, which include SF-424, SF-424A, SF-424B, CD-511, and if applicable, SF-LLL, can be requested by mail, email or telephone (see Section IV(A) 'Address to Request Application Package' above), or obtained from the NOAA grants Website at: <http://apply07.grants.gov/apply/FormLinks?family=15>.

When submitting your final application via Grants.gov, we recommend that you 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/or call the Grants.gov help desk at the phone number posted on the Grants.gov web site. The Federal Program Officer associated with this competition will use programmatic discretion in accepting applications due to documented electronic submission problems. Please note: If more than one submission of an application is received, the last application submitted before the due date and time will be the 'official' version.

We also encourage all applicants to consider submitting a hard copy paper application by mail to avoid any potential for disqualification due to technical problems with the Grants.gov website or other technology. When submitting a paper application, please note that the SF-424 form requires an authorized representative of the applicant organization to sign and date the form; please submit the original signed and dated copy of the document to NOAA as the cover page for the rest of the application materials.

Applicants to this funding category may request an application template by contacting Jenny Waddell, 1305 East West Highway, 10th Floor, N/ORM1, Silver Spring, MD 20910, Phone: 301/713-3155 extension 150; or e-mail: Jenny.Waddell@noaa.gov.

C. Submission Dates and Times

Applications must be submitted no later than 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time on the dates specified below. Late applications will not be reviewed or considered for FY 2013 funding.

1. Project lists should be submitted via coral.grants@noaa.gov by Friday, September 7, 2012.

2. Pre-applications are due to NOAA by 5:00 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time on Friday, October 19, 2012. Applicants must submit an electronic copy of their pre-applications via email to coral.grants@noaa.gov with a copy to their NOAA Coral Reef Management Liaison as appropriate.

3. Final Applications are due to NOAA by 5:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time on Friday, February 15, 2013 and should be submitted via <http://www.Grants.gov>. For applications submitted through Grants.gov, a date and time receipt indication is automatically included and will be the basis of determining timeliness.

If for any reason applicants are unable to submit through www.Grants.gov or are concerned about possible problems associated with the Grants.gov system, they may provide a copy of their full application by mail. Applications submitted by mail must include all relevant application elements described above, including a signed and dated SF-424 form, and must be stamped with an official U.S. Postal Service postmark on or before 5:00 pm EST on Friday, February 15, 2013; private metered postmarks are not acceptable. Please address all hard-copy mailed applications to: ATTN: Jenny Waddell, NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program, 1305 East West Highway, SSMC4, 10th floor, Silver Spring, MD 20910. If an applicant chooses to submit their application exclusively by mail, the program requests that electronic copies of the project narrative and budget narrative be provided by email to expedite the review and selection process; however applications submitted by email without a corresponding mailed hard copy or Grants.gov application that was submitted before the deadline will not be accepted.

Important: All applicants, both electronic and paper, should be aware that adequate time must be factored into applicant schedules for delivery of the application. We recommend allowing no less than 48 hours for the application to be accepted and validated in Grants.gov. Electronic applicants are advised that volume on Grants.gov may be 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 as described above. Paper applicants should allow adequate time to ensure a paper application will be postmarked and 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.'

E. Funding Restrictions

1. Ineligible projects:

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

2. Cost Principles

Funds awarded cannot necessarily pay for all the costs that the recipient might incur in the course of carrying out the project. Allowable costs are determined by reference to 2 CFR Part 225, 'Cost Principles for State, Local and Indian Tribal Governments.' Generally, costs that are allowable include salaries, equipment, supplies, and training, as long as these costs can be justified as 'necessary and reasonable.'

3. Permits and Approvals

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

Applicants are expected to design their proposals so that they minimize the potential adverse impact on the environment. If applicable, documentation of requests or approvals of environmental permits must be included in the proposal package. 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 to conform to the requirements of NEPA. For those applications needing an environmental assessment, applicants will be informed after the peer review stage and will be requested to assist in the preparation of the assessment. Final approval of the award and authorization for expenditure of funds are dependent on the applicant obtaining the necessary permits and approval of the NEPA analysis by NOAA. Applicants are encouraged to review the Coral Program's Programmatic Environmental Assessment (PEA) to confirm that their activities will fall within the scope of the PEA in advance of formal NEPA review and approval; the Coral Program PEA is available at: http://coralreef.noaa.gov/aboutcrp/workwithus/funding/grants/resources/coral_pea_final_05.pdf.

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

4. Other

Expenditures on large equipment and/or infrastructure are not a priority for funding under this program. Such purchases proposed herein will be reviewed on a case by case basis with respect to the specific management objectives of the local coral reef program and the CRCP's capital expenditures policy.

F. Other Submission Requirements

This section was intentionally left blank.

Jenny Waddell, NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program, 1305 East West Highway, SSMC4, 10th floor, 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 (35%): This ascertains whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and/or relevance to NOAA, federal, regional, state, or local activities.

Reviewers will assess whether the proposed work contributes to relevant goals and priorities and will result in direct benefits to coral reef resources and ecosystems. Applications will be evaluated based on the potential of the project(s) to meet goals and objectives stated in section 6403(g) of the Coral Reef Conservation Act. In addition, the application should demonstrate that the proposed coral reef management activities are part of a comprehensive and integrated approach to support a logical, short, medium- or long-term plan to address national and jurisdictional coral reef conservation program goals (e.g., watershed management plans, conservation action plans, Local Action Strategies, and MPA management plans, etc.). It should also clearly describe the goal of the respective plan and how the activity specifically will help to achieve the objectives;

2) Technical/scientific merit (25%): 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.

The applications will be evaluated in terms of the degree to which the proposed work (a) will result in project success in terms of meeting the proposed objectives; (b) will produce conservation benefits that will be sustainable and long-lasting; (c) uses scientifically-defensible methods or approaches in implementation of programs and/or projects; and (d) can be implemented in accordance with all state environmental laws and Federal consistency requirements.

3) Overall qualifications of applicants (10%): This ascertains whether the applicant possesses the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project.

For this competition, the application should also demonstrate coordination with applicable ongoing local, state, territorial, and Federal coral reef management activities. Additionally, applications will be evaluated based on their previous accomplishments in achieving coral reef conservation objectives outlined in Section I(B) Program Priorities of this funding announcement;

4) Project costs (20%): The budget is evaluated to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time-frame.

For this competition, the budget should reflect the ability of the work to be completed for the funding and timing proposed. Applications will be evaluated on their ability to demonstrate that significant benefit will be generated for the most reasonable cost. Projects will also be reviewed in terms of their need for funding and the ability of NOAA funds to act as a catalyst to implement projects and precipitate partnerships and other sources of funding to achieve conservation objectives.

5) Outreach and education (10%): 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.

B. Review and Selection Process

Once a pre-application has been received by NOAA, an initial administrative review is conducted to determine compliance with requirements and completeness of the application. A merit review will also be conducted to produce a rank order of the proposals. Complete pre-applications will be peer-reviewed by a minimum of three individuals with coral reef and/or fisheries management experience. Applications will be evaluated and scored individually in accordance with the assigned weights of the evaluation criteria listed above, as evidenced by the information included in the application. Reviewers will be instructed to score each application individually on a scale of one to five, where scores represent respectively: Excellent (5), Very Good (4), Good (3), Fair (2), Poor (1). Merit reviewers' ratings are used to produce a rank order of the applications.

Once the peer review process has been completed, a committee of CRCP representatives will meet to review the pre-applications, pursuant to the criteria described above and in Section X(3) of the Coral Reef Conservation Program Implementation Guidelines. The committee will consider the comments of the peer reviewers as well as all available information about the applicant's past performance, quality of work, and success under previous awards. Based on this review and the peer review evaluations, the committee will make a preliminary funding recommendation for each jurisdiction. Written comments will be provided to each selected applicant and will include a preliminary funding recommendation and a summary of reviewer comments on the application as a whole and on individual projects or tasks proposed in the pre-application. Comments will be provided to applicants at least four weeks in advance of the final application due date and will include input from peer reviewers and the committee. Upon receipt of the comments, the applicant may request a meeting to discuss the comments with committee representatives and clarify the changes to the application that are necessary. Applicants must address reviewer and committee comments in their final application in order to strengthen the applicant's proposal to NOAA.

Upon receipt of the complete and final application package, the CRCP committee will review the full application and make final funding recommendations based on the responses to reviewer comments and improvements made to the pre-application. The committee will submit these funding recommendations to the CRCP Grants team for final review, pursuant to Section X(4) of the Guidelines. The CRCP Grants team may review the ranking of the applications and make recommendations to the Selecting Official based on the mail and/or committee review(s) and selection factors listed below. The Selecting Official selects applications for funding after considering the comments and recommendations of the committee. 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 upon one or more of the selection factors below. The committee and/or Selecting Official may negotiate the funding level of the application, and applicants may be asked to modify objectives, work plans or budgets, and provide supplemental information required by the agency prior to the award. The Selecting Official makes final recommendations for award selection to the NOAA Grants Officer, who is authorized to obligate Federal funding.

C. Selection Factors

The merit review ratings will be used to provide a rank order to the Selecting Official for final funding recommendations. A Program Officer may make selection recommendations to the Selecting Official based on application of the selection factors listed below. The Selecting Official shall award in rank order unless the proposal is justified to be selected out of rank order based upon one or more of the following factors:

1. Availability of funding;

2. Balance/distribution of funds;

a. Geographically

b. By type of institutions

c. By type of partners

d. By research areas

e. By project types

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

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

5. Applicant's prior award performance;

6. Partnerships and/or Participation of targeted groups

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

D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

Anticipated award start dates will be either July 1, 2013 or October 1, 2013 as requested by applicants. Unsuccessful applicants will be notified of the status of their applications within 180 days of the final application due date.

VI. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notices

Successful applicants under this competitive program will be notified by the NOAA Grants Management Division through the NOAA Grants Online system prior to the award start date. The official notification and all award documents will be made available to the authorized representative named on the proposal for review and formal acceptance of the cooperative agreement.

Projects should not be initiated in expectation of Federal funding until the applicant has received official notice of an award from the NOAA Grants Officer and has reviewed and accepted the terms of the award. Applicants are hereby given notice that funds have not yet been appropriated for the program described in this notice and are advised that the

competition described herein may be subject to cancellation due to unavailability of funding or revision of agency priorities. In no event will NOAA or the Department of Commerce be responsible for proposal preparation costs. Publication of this announcement does not oblige NOAA to award funding for specific projects or obligate available funds.

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

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

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

1. Indirect Costs:

The budget may include an amount for indirect costs if the applicant has an established indirect cost rate with the Federal government. Indirect costs are essentially overhead costs for basic operational functions (e.g., utilities, rent, and insurance) that are incurred for common or joint objectives and, therefore, cannot be identified specifically within a particular project. For this solicitation, the Federal share of the indirect costs awarded will not exceed the lesser of either the indirect costs that the applicant would be entitled to if the negotiated Federal indirect cost rate were used or 25 percent of the Federal direct costs proposed. For those situations in which the use of the applicant's indirect cost rate would result in indirect costs greater than 25 percent of the Federal direct costs proposed, the difference may be counted as part of the non-Federal matching requirement. A copy of the current, approved negotiated indirect cost agreement with the Federal Government must be included with the application. If the applicant does not have a current negotiated rate and plans to seek reimbursement for indirect costs, documentation necessary to establish a rate must be submitted within 90 days of receiving an award.

2. Multi-year Funding:

If an application is selected for multi-year funding, NOAA has no obligation to provide any additional prospective funding in connection with that award in subsequent years. Any subsequent proposal to continue work on an existing project must be submitted to the

competitive process for consideration and will not receive preferential treatment. Renewal of an award to increase funding or to extend the period of performance is at the total discretion of NOAA.

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 that 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.nepa.noaa.gov/NAO216_6.pdf, and the Council on Environmental Quality implementation regulations, <http://ceq.hss.doe.gov/>. 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).

Applicants proposing coral reef conservation activities that cannot be categorically excluded from further NEPA analysis or that are not covered by the Programmatic Environmental Assessment for the NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Grant Program (PEA) and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) will be informed after the peer review stage and may be requested to assist in the preparation of an environmental assessment prior to an award being made, or review a copy of an environmental assessment that covers proposed activities if one exists. Applicants will also be required to cooperate with NOAA in identifying feasible measures to reduce or avoid any identified adverse environmental impacts of their proposal. The failure to do so shall be grounds for not selecting an application. In some cases if additional information is required after an application is selected, funds can be withheld by the NOAA Grants Officer under a special award condition requiring the recipient to submit additional environmental compliance information sufficient to enable NOAA to make an assessment on any impacts that a project may have on the environment. The Coral Reef Conservation Program's PEA and FONSI can be found at: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/habitat/ead/ecosysdocs/CoralPEAFinal.pdf>.

In addition to providing specific information that will serve as the basis for any required impact analyses, applicants may also be requested to assist NOAA in drafting of an environmental assessment, if NOAA determines an assessment is required. Applicants will also be required to cooperate with NOAA in identifying and implementing feasible measures to reduce or avoid any identified adverse environmental impacts of their proposal. The failure to do so shall be grounds for the denial of an application.

4. Digital Geospatial Data

Recipients must comply with Executive Order 12906 as amended by E.O. 13286 regarding any and all geospatial data collected or produced with funding awarded through this competition. This includes documenting all geospatial data in accordance with standards developed or endorsed by the Federal Geographic Data Committee (FGDC). Executive Order 12906 can be found at: <http://www.archives.gov/federal-register/executive-orders/pdf/12906.pdf>, and Executive Order 13286 can be found at: <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2003-03-05/pdf/03-5343.pdf>.

The FGDC has recently endorsed the use of International Standards Organization (ISO) 19115 Parts 1 and 2 and representation standard ISO 19139 for documenting environmental data and information (<http://www.ncddc.noaa.gov/metadata-standards/>). A set of the minimum metadata fields required for all data products produced via awards under this competition can be found at: http://coris.noaa.gov/data/examples/bamf_min_crpc_fields.txt.

5. Financial Assistance Award Package

The CRCP uses only the existing NOAA Federal financial assistance awards package requirements per 15 CFR parts 14 and 24.

6. Paperwork Reduction Act

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, 44 U.S.C. 3501 et seq., unless that collection of information displays a currently valid OMB control number. Forms SF-424, SF-424A, SF-424B, and SF-LLL and CD-346 have been approved by OMB under the respective control numbers 0348-0043, 0348-0044, 0348-0040, 0348-0046 and 0605-0001, respectively.

This notice also contains a collection-of-information requirement subject to the Paperwork Reduction Act and which has been approved by OMB under control number 0648-0448. The public reporting burden is estimated to average one hour per response for comments on a proposed project from each agency with jurisdiction over coral reef ecosystems in the area where the project is to be conducted and one hour per response for a request for a waiver of matching funds. This estimate includes 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 aspect of these data collections, including suggestions for reducing the burden, to the NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program, N/OCRM, National Ocean Service, 1305 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910.

7. 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 February 11, 2008 (Vol. 73, No. 28 page 7696) are applicable to this solicitation via: <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/>

8. Award Standard Terms and Conditions

Successful applicants that accept a NOAA award under this solicitation will be bound by Department of Commerce, Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions. This document can be found at:

http://www.osec.doc.gov/oam/grants_management/policy/documents/DOC_Standard_Terms_and_Conditions_03-01-2008.pdf.

9. Public Access to Award Documents and Products

Applications that are supported with Federal funds may be provided to members of the public under certain circumstances. Products resulting from funded projects may be made available by NOAA as described previously and in the next section. Data generated by award recipients will be shared according to the specific provisions included in the award's data sharing plan [see Section IV(B)13].

C. Reporting

All performance and financial reports shall be submitted through the recipient's NOAA Grants Online account in accordance with the Department of Commerce, Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions. Progress on each award is communicated to NOAA in the form of performance progress reports, which are outlined in 15 CFR Part 24: Grants and Cooperative Agreements with State and Local Governments. An optional progress reporting template can be requested by the applicant by contacting Jenny Waddell, 1305 East West Highway, 10th Floor, N/ORM1, Silver Spring, MD 20910, Phone: 301-713-3155 extension 150; or e-mail: Jenny.Waddell@noaa.gov. Performance reports must be submitted on a semi-annual schedule no later than 30 days following the end of each 6-month period from the start date of the award. A comprehensive final report is due 90 days after the award expiration date along with copies of all products that are developed under the award.

Copies of all materials (such as but not limited to brochures, posters, videos, DVDs, publications, reports, management plans, workshop proceedings etc.) produced through the award, along with copies of any reports submitted by subcontractors as part of the award, must be provided to the program office within 90 days of the end of the award. All products should be of publishable quality, should include a citation, and should include appropriate acknowledgement of the support provided by NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program as

described at: <http://coralreef.noaa.gov/aboutcrp/howeare/graphic/>. Because products may be made available to the public via the Coral Reef Information System (CoRIS, <http://coris.noaa.gov>), it is the recipient's responsibility to ensure that products are professionally written and edited; they do not contain sensitive financial information; and that media products are 508 compliant (<http://www.section508.gov/index.cfm?fuseAction=stdsSum>). Except where limited by law, regulation, policy or security, recipients are requested to include a statement on the front page of all products to indicate the material is "Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited."

Financial reports must be submitted every 6 months by the end of April and October during the period of the award in accordance with the Department of Commerce, Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions.

The Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006 requires that recipients of Federal financial assistance awards provide detailed information about all subawards and executive compensation provided through awards made by the Federal government. As of March 1, 2011, all first-tier subawards over \$25,000 must be described in detail and accompanied by a separate SF-424A budget form to account for all subaward expenses.

VII. Agency Contacts

The Federal Program Officer and technical point of contact for CRCP State and Territorial Coral Reef Conservation Cooperative Agreements is Jenny Waddell. She can be reached by phone at 301-713-3155, extension 150 or by email at Jenny.Waddell@noaa.gov. Her mailing address is: Jenny Waddell, NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program, 1305 East West Highway, SSMC4, 10th floor, Silver Spring, MD, 20910.

VIII. Other Information

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