

ANNOUNCEMENT OF FEDERAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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

Funding Opportunity Title: International Coral

Announcement Type: Initial

Funding Opportunity Number: NOS-IPO-2009-2001458

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 11.463, Habitat Conservation.

Dates: Pre-applications must be received by NOAA by 5 p.m., U.S. Eastern Time, on Monday, November 3, 2008. Final applications must be received by NOAA by 5 p.m. U.S. Eastern Time, on Friday, February. 13, 2009.

Funding Opportunity Description: The NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Grant Program, as authorized under the Coral Reef Conservation Act of 2000, provides matching grants of financial assistance for international coral reef conservation projects. The Program solicits proposals under four funding categories: 1) Promote Watershed Management in the Wider Caribbean, Brazil, and Bermuda; 2) Support Planning for Effective Marine Protected Area Management; 3) Encourage the Development of National Networks of Marine Protected Areas in the Wider Caribbean, Bermuda, Brazil, Southeast Asia, and the South Pacific; and 4) Promote Regional Socio-Economic Training and Monitoring in Coral Reef Management in the Wider Caribbean, Brazil, Bermuda, the Western Indian Ocean, the Red Sea, the South Pacific, South Asia, and Southeast Asia. Each funding category has specific applicant and project eligibility criteria.

FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Program Objective

Pursuant to the Coral Reef Conservation Act of 2000 (Act), the Secretary of Commerce (Secretary), through the NOAA Administrator (Administrator), and subject to the availability of funds, is authorized to provide matching grants of financial assistance for coral reef conservation projects through the Coral Reef Conservation Program (Program). As such, the objective of the Program is to provide financial assistance for coral reef conservation projects consistent with the Act and "A National Coral Reef Action Strategy" (Strategy). A copy of the Strategy and the Act can be found at: <http://www.coralreef.noaa.gov/>.

As required under the Act, NOAA published the NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Grant Program Implementation Guidelines (Guidelines) in the Federal Register Vol. 67, No. 76, page 19396, on Friday, April 19, 2002. The Guidelines can be also found at: <http://www.coralreef.noaa.gov/>.

The Guidelines provide broad eligibility criteria, pursuant to Section 6403(g) of the Act, for coral reef conservation activities, and also created the following six program categories under the Program for awarding financial assistance:

1. State and Territory Coral Reef Management;
2. State and Territory Coral Reef Ecosystem Monitoring;
3. Coral Reef Ecosystem Research;
4. General Coral Reef Conservation;
5. Projects to Improve or Amend Coral Reef Fishery Management Plans; and,
6. International Coral Reef Conservation.

From year to year, specific priorities of the above listed program categories change due to Congressional appropriations and direction, and priorities of NOAA, the Program, and the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force. Each of the categories listed above has its own FFO announcement, which describes the following specific requirements and criteria: program priorities, applicant and project eligibility, funding availability, application content and submission, application review and selection, and award administration.

Only the International Coral Reef Program description is included in this FFO, which describes the following specific requirements and criteria: program priorities, applicant and project eligibility, funding availability, pre- and final application content and submission, pre- and final application review and selection, and award administration.

All pre- and final applications submitted pursuant to this FFO must be consistent with the requirements stated herein, the Guidelines and the Strategy. Applicants may also request copies of the Strategy from the contacts listed below. Funding is subject to the availability of Federal appropriations.

B. Program Priorities

The purpose of the International Coral Reef Conservation Program is to support the National Action Plan to Conserve Coral Reefs which calls on the United States & to exercise global leadership in the international arena in shaping and developing environmentally sound and comprehensive coral reef policy, strengthen international conventions and foster strategic partnerships with other countries, international organizations and institutions, the public and private sectors, and non-governmental organizations to address international threats to coral reef ecosystems.

In FY 2009, the International program consists of the following four project categories:

1. Promote Watershed Management in the Wider Caribbean, Brazil, and Bermuda: In 2004, the United Nations Environment Program-Global Program of Action (UNEP-GPA) and NOAA entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to provide assistance to countries in the Wider Caribbean to promote, develop, and implement National Programs of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment against Land-based activities. The MOU emphasizes a cross-sectoral approach to watershed and marine resources management. Effects of watershed on the near shore marine environment may affect coral ecosystems, including those in marine protected areas. This view of integrating watershed and coastal management approaches, also helps to implement international and regional agreements, such as the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, the Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean Region (the Cartagena Convention) and its protocol concerning Pollution from Land-based Sources and Activities, and the International Coral Reef Initiative.

Specific guidance for Watershed Management is noted below. Failure to meet these criteria will eliminate pre-applications from the review process:

IPO will fund activities that promote integrated watershed and coastal management practices that reduce or control runoff to near shore coral reef ecosystems, including programs that prioritize marine protected areas and the conservation of biodiversity within watershed planning and management, assess effectiveness of these management practices, engage stakeholders and government agencies in collaborative partnerships to implement these practices; and recommend a set of best management practices that can be applied to the Wider Caribbean region, Brazil and Bermuda. Projects previously funded under this category are not eligible for follow up pre-applications

unless they have been completed per the previous grant agreement. Allowable activities consist of the following:

- a. Analyses of regulatory and legislative frameworks to identify areas needing strengthening;
- b. Education and outreach to promote integrated watershed and coastal management practices;
- c. Workshops to train stakeholders in implementation of integrated watershed management;
- d. Identify national/sub-national goals, objectives, and activities toward the development of an action plan to integrate watershed and coastal management activities.
- e. Assessments of land use impacts that threaten to degrade near-shore coral reefs and development of management practices to reduce and/or eliminate the identified threats;
- f. Demonstrations of best management practices or implementation of at least one best management practice for the agricultural sector to control nutrients, sediments and pesticides that threaten near-shore reefs.
- g. Development of watershed management plans for identified watersheds.
- h. Follow-up activities of previously funded projects related to the topics in a-g.

Projects proposed under Promote Watershed Management in the Wider Caribbean, Brazil, and Bermuda must include:

- a. In the case of the Wider Caribbean countries, activities that support the implementation of the annexes of The Protocol concerning Pollution from Land Based Sources and Activities to the Cartagena Convention (for details, refer to <http://ipo.nos.noaa.gov/coralgrants.html>). In the case of Brazil and Bermuda, activities must support the UNEP-GPA framework conducting to the development of a (or supporting an existing) National Program of Action;
- b. Letter of support for the proposed project from the government agency responsible for planning and development;
- c. Project site that includes near shore fringing reef system (with description of project site uniqueness) that is impacted by agricultural runoff or intensive land based development associated with tourism sector activities; project site/s including watershed must be identified by name and exact location;
- d. Evidence of local stakeholder support, for example, agricultural businesses, NGOs, tourism sector, and port facilities;
- e. Demonstration of local or national potential for developing enforceable policies and mechanisms for long term watershed management; and,
- f. Evidence of potential organizational capacity to promote coordination of governmental agencies and stakeholder involvement.

2. Planning for Effective Marine Protected Area Management: The 2006-2012 Plan of Action for Marine Section of the World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA-Marine) identifies the priority need to assist governmental and non-governmental organizations in the planning, development, and implementation of marine protected areas (MPAs), worldwide. In response, NOAA has launched a strategic partnership with the World Conservation Union (IUCN), WCPA-Marine, and several international conservation organizations to assist MPA managers in the management planning process. As one component of this assistance, the NOAA International Coral Grant Program is inviting project proposals aimed at creating or revising MPA management plans for coral reef ecosystems. Such projects can be aimed at creating or adapting MPA management plans for a single site, or across a national system of sites. For the purpose of this funding opportunity, a marine protected area (MPA) is defined as any area of the intertidal or subtidal terrain, together with its overlying water and associated flora, fauna, historical and cultural features, which has been reserved by law or other effective means to protect part or all of the enclosed environment (IUCN).

Specific guidance for Effective MPA Management is noted below. Failure to meet these criteria will eliminate pre-applications from the review process:

Through this category, IPO will fund the development of management plans or revision of existing plans for single MPA sites or multiple sites within a specific national system, using a documented and relevant management planning process that is internationally accepted and recognized by MPA managers and/or other conservation professionals. Priority will be given to proposals that rely heavily on consistent and meaningful engagement of and input by diverse stakeholder interests, including indigenous groups and local communities, throughout the proposed management planning process.

Projects proposed under Planning for Effective Marine Protected Area Management must include:

- a. A clearly identified legally and finally designated MPA site (or set of sites) for which the proposed management planning activities are to take place. All sites must be identified by name and geographic location. Include a copy of the enabling legislation or formal administrative documentation that designates/declares the MPA site(s) in question.
- b. Documented legal authority and/or administrative mandate to create or adapt the MPA management plan(s) proposed for planning support through this funding announcement, including evidence (letter of support) that the named principal investigator or project lead on the proposal: (i) is authorized by the management body to lead development of the management plan; or (ii) is a direct representative of the official management body/authority (whether national, municipal, local, traditional, or indigenous)

c. A pre-designated and pre-defined management planning team that includes representation from: (i) the official management body/entity with legal authority and/or mandate to develop or refine the MPA management plan in question, (ii) relevant stakeholder groups with a high level of interest or influence over the MPA site in question, and (iii) any coastal community(ies) or residents located in, adjacent to, or near the MPA site.

d. Evidence of sufficient management program capacity to see the proposed MPA management planning process through its entirety, including a functional management body with the authority and means to convene and complete the planning process at each of the named MPA sites, including a final management plan.

e. A clearly defined MPA management planning process, set of specified planning activities (for ex., exercises, sessions, and/or workshops), and work plan timeline that follows or draws upon the guidance and methods developed through a documented and relevant management planning process that is internationally accepted and recognized by MPA managers and/or other conservation professionals. The management planning process selected must identify the major environmental and social challenges to be addressed by the management plan.

f. Identify the strategy for facilitating the formal adoption of the new/revised management plan pursuant to its legal and institutional framework.

g. In addition, for MPA management plans that are being proposed for revision through this funding announcement, please:

(i) include a formal reference (preferably a URL site) of the existing MPA management plan requiring revision;

(ii) Identify and document the methodology and process to be used in assessing and revising the current management plan, which may include for example, application of the Management Effectiveness methodology developed by the WCPA-Marine/WWF International MPA Management Effectiveness Initiative, *How is Your MPA Doing? Guidebook for Evaluating Effectiveness of MPA*, posted at <http://effectiveMPA.noaa.gov>;

(iii) identify which goals, objectives, and activities within the existing management plan will be assessed and revised and in addition, identify the current management challenges that are a catalyst for this revision; and

(iv) document the process by which the results of the assessment will be incorporated into a revised management plan, including developing adaptive management strategies, sharing results with target audiences including a communications plan.

Projects previously funded under this category are not eligible for follow up pre-applications unless they have been completed per the previous grant agreement.

3. Encourage the Development of National Networks of Marine Protected Areas in the Wider Caribbean, Bermuda, Brazil, Southeast Asia, and the South Pacific: Over the last decade increased recognition has been given to the contribution of national systems of marine protected areas (MPAs) to biodiversity conservation and the sustainable use of marine resources. However, most MPAs have been developed at national or sub-national levels through myriad agencies with diverse objectives, authorities, organization structures, management approaches, and capacities. While many MPAs do well to serve local needs or national programs, they do not constitute a comprehensive national MPA network planning approach nor are they integrated with other forms of coastal governance, i.e., coastal management and fisheries management. Nor do these individual sites and programs allow for ecosystem-scale priority setting planning to ensure ecological connectivity and the most efficient and effective management of important resources. For the purpose of this funding opportunity, an MPA Network is: A collection of individual marine protected areas operating cooperatively and synergistically, at various spatial scales, and with a range of protection levels, in order to fulfill ecological aims more effectively and comprehensively than individual sites could alone. The network will also display social and economic benefits, although the later may only become fully developed over long time frames.

Specific guidance for National Networks is noted below. Failure to meet these criteria will eliminate pre-applications from the review process:

Through this program, IPO will fund the implementation of national MPA network design and planning processes that contribute to an integrated plan that can result in comprehensive and effective networks of MPAs. Priority will be given to proposals that rely heavily on consistent, meaningful engagement of and input by diverse stakeholder interests, including indigenous groups and local communities in the planning process. Projects previously funded under this category are not eligible for follow up pre-applications unless they have been completed per the previous grant agreement. The following activities will be considered:

- a) Visioning exercises that include development and coordination of dialogues and partnerships with key agencies, academic institutions, and diverse stakeholders;
- b) feasibility assessment of existing MPAs in order to recommend approach for MPA network development through a review of objectives, types of resources protected, an analysis of the levels of protection afforded through existing legal and policy frameworks, and an assessment of patterns and potential impacts from human use;
- c) National and sub-national (where appropriate) syntheses of information on the distribution and status of key resources and habitats of marine ecosystems utilizing the MPA network design principles;
- d) Assessments of gaps in protection for important marine areas with recommendations for MPA network design and planning;
- e) Recommend priority areas for consideration in planning for inclusion in a national utilizing the design principles as a basis for MPA network design; and

f) Identifying opportunities and process for engaging transboundary planning and collaboration.

Projects under Encourage the Development of Networks of Marine Protected Areas in the Wider Caribbean, Brazil, Bermuda, Southeast Asia, and the South Pacific must include:

a. Representativeness. MPA networks should represent the range of marine and coastal biological diversity (from genes to ecosystems) and the associated physical environment within the given area.

b. Replication. All habitats in each region should be replicated within the network and distributed spatially throughout the network.

c. Viability. MPA networks should incorporate self-sustaining, geographically dispersed component sites of sufficient extent to ensure population persistence through natural cycles of variation. These sites should be independent (as far as possible) of activities in surrounding areas.

d. Precautionary design. Network designers should base their decisions on the best information currently available, rather than delaying the process to await more and better information. Where information is limited, designers should adopt a precautionary approach.

e. Permanence. Network design must provide long-term protection to effectively conserve diversity and replenish resources.

f. Maximum connectivity. MPA network design should seek to maximize and enhance the linkages among individual MPAs, groups of MPAs within a given eco-region, or networks in the same and/or different regions.

g. Resilience. MPA networks must be designed to maintain ecosystems_ natural states and to absorb shocks, particularly in the face of large-scale and long-term changes (such as climate change).

h. Size and shape. Individual MPA units within the network must be of sufficient size to minimize adverse impacts from activities outside the protected area (avoiding what is called the edge effect).

i. National commitment to commence development of MPA networks;

j. A letter of support from each country_s government agency responsible for planning and/or management of marine protected areas; and

k. Engagement from key government agencies in the planning process.

Projects previously funded under this category are not eligible for follow up pre-applications unless they have been completed per the previous grant agreement.

4. Promote Regional Socio-Economic Training and Monitoring in Coral Reef Management in the Wider Caribbean, Brazil, Bermuda, the Western Indian Ocean, the Red Sea, the South Pacific, South Asia, and Southeast Asia: The National Action Plan highlights that the human dimension is often overlooked in developing coral reef management strategies and calls for measures to enhance understanding of stakeholder benefits and resolve important user conflicts.

Recognizing the importance of the human dimension, the Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network (GCRMN), in partnership with NOAA, World Commission on Protected Areas, and the Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMS), published The Socioeconomic Manual for Coral Reef Management, a guide to conducting socioeconomic assessments of reef user groups. As follow-up, the GCRMN and NOAA have worked with regional organizations to develop socioeconomic monitoring programs specific to Southeast Asia, the Wider Caribbean, the South Pacific, Western Indian Ocean, and Red Sea. Region-specific guidelines have been published for the Caribbean, Southeast Asia, and Western Indian Ocean. For information about the SocMon regional initiatives, please refer to the following web site: www.reefbase.org/socmon.

Specific guidance for Regional Socio-Economic Training and Monitoring is noted below. Failure to meet these criteria will eliminate pre-applications from the review process:

Under this category, IPO will fund activities that support these regional initiatives and include both a capacity-building component and implementation of socioeconomic monitoring programs at three or more sites. The implementation of socioeconomic monitoring programs may include follow-up assessments for sites that have previously undertaken socioeconomic monitoring using the SocMon protocol. Regional is defined either as three or more sites in a single country or three or more sites between two or more countries. See <http://ipo.nos.noaa.gov/coralgrants.html> for more information and for copies of the global and regional guidelines. Projects may be classified as (1) new projects where SocMon assessments have not previously been conducted or as (2) follow-up projects to previous SocMon projects, which will be allowed for continued monitoring, data collection, and quantification of changes in socioeconomic conditions.

Projects proposed under Promote Regional Socio-Economic Training and Monitoring in Coral Reef Management in the Wider Caribbean, Brazil, Bermuda, the Western Indian Ocean, the Red Sea, the South Pacific, South Asia, and Southeast Asia must:

a. Clearly state the purpose of conducting the project, including how it will benefit reef management in the region and how the project relates to the priority activities identified by the relevant regional SocMon initiative.

b. Demonstrate collaboration with the SocMon initiative, including a letter of support for the project from the SocMon regional lead organization. The SocMon regional lead organizations are: Conservation International-Philippines (Southeast Asia), the University of West Indies (English-speaking Caribbean), Zamorano University (Spanish-speaking Caribbean), the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (Pacific), the Coral Reef Degradation of the Indian Ocean-CORDIO (Western Indian Ocean), and the Regional Organization for the Conservation of the Environment of the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden-PERSGA (Red Sea and Gulf of Aden). See www.reefbase.org/socmon for regional lead contact information.

c. Include a capacity building component. For Southeast Asia, the capacity building must be based on the Socioeconomic Monitoring Guidelines for Coastal Managers in Southeast Asia. Likewise, for the Caribbean (including Brazil and Bermuda) the capacity building must be based on the Socioeconomic Monitoring Guidelines for Coastal Managers in the Caribbean and for the Western Indian Ocean, capacity building must be based on the Socioeconomic Monitoring Guidelines for Coastal Managers in the Western Indian Ocean. In the South Pacific, capacity building must be based on the SEM-Pasifika regional socioeconomic monitoring guidelines. In the Red Sea and South Asia, capacity building must be based on an adaptation of these existing protocols and follow the guidelines in Socioeconomic Manual for Coral Reef Management (2000). To view the regional SocMon guidelines, including a draft of the Pacific regional guidelines and the Manual please refer to www.reefbase.org/socmon under Monitoring Tools. For new projects, the capacity-building project might include a training workshop or apprenticeship, while follow-up projects may not require training workshop if conducted as part of the previous project. The project may also use funds for provision of technical support for data analysis, data management and implementation of a plan for each site that provides for data analysis.

d. Include site socioeconomic monitoring in at least three sites. All sites must be identified by name and exact location. In Southeast Asia, the Caribbean, Western Indian Ocean, and South Pacific the monitoring programs must be based on the regional SocMon guidelines. In the Red Sea and South Asia, the monitoring programs must be based on adaptations of these existing protocols and follow the guidelines in Socioeconomic Manual for Coral Reef Management (2000). Include a plan for each site that: (a) explains the purpose of the socioeconomic monitoring in terms of how the socioeconomic results will be used to benefit reef management; (b) describes how the reef managers at the sites will be engaged in the socioeconomic monitoring to ensure the results are useful and used; and (c) states how an identified social scientist will be actively engaged in the project either from staff or elsewhere (e.g. sociologist, anthropologist, etc.). Results from the socioeconomic monitoring must be reported to the Global Socioeconomic Monitoring Database within six months of completion of the monitoring project; and (d) describes how the results will be used for adaptive management.

e. Include a letter of support for the project from each of the site management

authorities. Describe how the authority will be involved in the project if the agency is not proposing the work. Eligibility criteria are also contingent upon whether activities undertaken with respect to the pre- and final application would be consistent with any applicable conditions or restrictions imposed by the U.S. government.

Projects previously funded under this category are not eligible for follow up pre-applications unless they have been completed per the previous grant agreement.

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

NOAA announces the availability of up to \$500,000 in FY 2009 to support grants and cooperative agreements under the International Coral Reef Grant Program. These funds will be used to support financial assistance awards under the program categories listed in section I. B. Program Priorities and III.C. Other Criteria that Affect Eligibility. Applicants that are invited to submit a final application may be requested to revise award objectives, work plans, or budgets prior to submittal of the final application. The amount of funds to be awarded and the final scope of activities will be determined in pre-award negotiations among the applicant, NOAA Grants Management Division (GMD) and relevant NOAA staff.

Up to approximately \$500,000 may be available in FY 2009 to support grants and cooperative agreements under this program. Approximately \$75,000-\$100,000 may be allocated to each of the four project categories listed below, with the following award ranges:

1. Watershed Management: \$30,000-\$50,000
2. Planning for Effective Marine Protected Area Management: Single sites: up to \$50,000; Multiple sites: up to \$80,000
3. MPA National Networks: \$40,000-\$50,000
4. Regional Socio-Economic Monitoring projects: \$15,000 - \$30,000

Pre- and final applications with requests over the limit of each category will NOT be accepted. Pre- and final applications must be submitted under only one of the above mentioned categories. Funding will be subject to the availability of federal appropriations. Support in outyears after FY 2009 is contingent upon the availability of funds. Applicants should never begin a project in expectation of funds under this program. IPO reserves the right to transfer any given proposal to another category within the International program if the proposal better addresses the criteria of another category.

B. Project/Award Period

Awards under this program will have an 18 month project period. Pre- and final applications must cover an 18-month period with an anticipated start date of October 1, 2009.

C. Type of Funding Instrument

Recipients will enter into a grant agreement with the NOAA NOS International Program Office, the office responsible for the International Coral Grant Program.

III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants include institutions of higher education, U.S. and international non-profit organizations, and commercial organizations. U.S. federal agencies and individuals are not eligible. For specific country eligibility per category, please refer to individual category descriptions in Section V of the Federal Funding Opportunity. The proposed work must be conducted at a non-U.S. site. Eligible countries are defined as follows: The Wider Caribbean includes the 37 States and territories that border the marine environment of the Gulf of Mexico, the Caribbean Sea, and the areas of the Atlantic Ocean adjacent thereto, and Brazil and Bermuda, but excluding areas under U.S. jurisdiction. The South Pacific Region includes South Pacific Regional Environment Program's Pacific island countries and territories, including the Federated States of Micronesia, Republic of Palau, and the Republic of the Marshall Islands, but excluding U.S. territories and four developed country members. South Asia includes India, Sri Lanka, the Maldives, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. Southeast Asia Region includes Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste, and Vietnam. The Western

Indian Ocean Region includes Comoros, France (La Reunion), Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mozambique, Seychelles, the United Republic of Tanzania, and South Africa. The Red Sea Region includes five member countries of the Regional Organization for the Conservation of the Environment of the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden (PERSGA): Djibouti, Egypt, Jordan, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and Yemen.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement

The International Coral Grant Program is subject to the matching fund requirements described below. 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 recommendation, as long as such contributions are not being used to match any other funds.

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 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.

Notwithstanding any other provisions herein, and in accordance with 48 U.S.C. 1469a(d), the Program shall waive any requirement for local matching funds for any project under \$200,000 (including in-kind contribution) to the governments of Insular Areas, defined as the jurisdictions of the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

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 pre- and final applications.

C. Other Criteria that Affect Eligibility

This section is left blank intentionally.

IV. Application and Submission Information

A. Address to Request Application Package

For those applicants who are invited to submit a final application, the Federal financial assistance forms are available as part of the electronic application package through www.grants.gov. For final applicants without internet access, an application package may be received by contacting Scot Frew, 1315 East West Highway, 5th Floor, N/IP, Silver Spring, MD 20910, Phone: 301-713-3078 extension 220; or e-mail: Scot.Frew@noaa.gov.

B. Content and Form of Application

The application process required by this FFO requires both a pre-application and final application. Each pre-application and final application submitted in response to this FFO must be written in the English language and must include a 1-page cover sheet with the following information:

1. Project title;
2. Applicant organization: nonprofit, university, government, etc;
3. Principal investigator or contact responsible for conducting the project;
4. Contact information including address, phone and fax numbers, and e-mail address;
5. Program category: International Coral Reef Conservation;
6. The one specific International Grant Category (Watershed, MPA Networks, etc);
7. Geographic location of the project (countries and sites);
8. Amount of grant funds requested;

9. Amount of matching funds provided; and,
10. One paragraph project summary emphasizing the project objective and activities.

Each pre- and final application narrative must clearly describe the proposed work in 20 pages or less, including letters of support and attachments. Font size should be 12 point. Paper pre- and final applications should not be bound or stapled, but can be bundled, for example, by rubber bands or binder clips. All pre- and final applications, letters of support and attachments must be written in the English Language and letters of support in other languages must be accompanied by English language translations. In addition to the cover sheet, each pre- and final application must include the following elements:

1. Description of the qualifications of the individual(s) who will conduct the project;
2. Project Description that must address the specific project category eligibility criteria described in International section V. and that must include:

- (a) Project need;
- (b) Objectives;
- (c) Implementation strategy (please include methods, activities in relation to objectives;
- (d) A task timetable with interim benchmarks linked to clearly defined work projects or objectives;
- (e) Identification of how project fits into applicant and government strategy for site management;
- (f) A table with a column for project outcomes and another column for their corresponding products;
- (g) Partner justification and roles;
- (h) A methodology to evaluate the success of the project;
- (i) A Budget narrative that includes a detailed breakdown and justification of costs following the categories on the Federal Form 424A for both the Federal and non-Federal shares as they relate to specific aspects of the project. The federal forms do NOT have to be included in the pre-application. The forms can be downloaded at: <http://www.grants.gov>; If internet access is not available, please request copies from: Scot Frew, NOAA/NOS International Program Office, 1315 East West Highway, 5th Floor, N/IP, Room 5735, Silver Spring, MD 20910, or Scot.Frew@noaa.gov, telephone 301_713_3078 ext. 220; or fax 301_713_4263.
- (j) Intended sources of matching funds and whether they have been secured must be stated in the pre- and final application. The pre- and final application must also state whether the project has been submitted for funding consideration elsewhere.

Applicants whose pre-applications are recommended for funding will be required to submit with the final application, letter(s) of commitment to fund from the organization(s) providing matching funds.

3. Evidence of support for the project from the local management authority where the

work is conducted at specific sites must indicate that the project supports local management objectives. In those cases where training is proposed, indication that participants will apply these techniques at their local sites is requested. Please include evidence of coordination with relevant national and regional project partners, including a list of agencies consulted in developing the proposal and assurances that any necessary permits will be secured prior to the use of U.S. Federal funds.

4. A copy of the applicant's federal negotiated indirect cost agreement, if applicable. If the applicant currently has a negotiated indirect cost rate with the Federal Government, up to 25% of the total indirect costs can be included in the budget supported by federal funds. Indirect costs are overhead costs for basic operational functions (e.g., lights, rent, water, insurance) that are incurred for common or joint objectives and, therefore, cannot be identified specifically within a particular project.

C. Submission Dates and Times

Pre-applications must be received by NOAA by 5 p.m., U.S. Eastern Time, on Monday, November 3, 2008. Final applications must be received by NOAA by 5 p.m. U.S. Eastern Time, on Friday, February 13, 2009.

D. Intergovernmental Review

Applications under the International Coral Reef Grant program are not subject to Executive Order 12372, Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs.

E. Funding Restrictions

Large equipment and/or infrastructure acquisitions are not a priority for funding under this program.

F. Other Submission Requirements

1. Pre-application Submission Information

a. Pre-applications may be submitted by surface mail or e-mail by 5 p.m., U.S.

Eastern Time, November 3, 2008. Submissions by e-mail are preferred to coral.grants@noaa.gov. Acceptable electronic formats for narratives, attachments, and images are limited to Adobe Acrobat (.PDF), or Microsoft Word files. If submitting by surface mail, please include an electronic copy of the pre-application on CD. Federal financial assistance forms are NOT required to be submitted with the pre-application. If surface mail is selected, paper pre-applications must be submitted to: David Kennedy, NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program Coordinator, Office of Response and Restoration, N/ORR, Room 10102, NOAA National Ocean Service, 1305 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910. Fax submittals will also be accepted for pre-applications (Fax: 301-713-4389).

b. Please note that late applications cannot be considered under any circumstances including email transmission malfunctions. Electronic files of pre-applications must arrive without viruses. If attachments cannot be opened due to a virus or they arrive with a virus, the pre- and final applications will be disqualified. You may call us at 301-713-3078 x218 before the deadline to ensure that your pre- or final application arrived.

2. Final Application Submission Information

Applicants who are invited to submit a final application may be required to make modifications or revisions to the project and budget narratives and must submit these narratives with a Federal financial assistance award application package (federal forms described below). Only applicants who submitted pre-applications by the deadline will be eligible to be considered for invitations to submit a final application by 5 p.m., U.S. Eastern Time, on February 13, 2009. The applicant may submit the final application (narratives, federal forms, and supporting documentation) in one of two ways:

Applications must be submitted through www.grants.gov, unless an applicant does not have internet access. In that case, hard copies with original signatures may be sent to: Scot Frew, NOAA/NOS International Program Office, 1315 East West Highway, 5th Floor, N/IP, Room 5735, Silver Spring, MD 20910. Applicants should consider the delivery time when submitting their pre- and final applications from international or remote areas. Late applications by any method cannot be accepted under any circumstances.

V. Application Review Information

A. Evaluation Criteria

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. IPO will provide for a merit-based peer review and standardized documentation of that review for proposals that meet the eligibility requirements.

Each pre-application will be reviewed by a minimum of three individuals with knowledge of the subject of the proposal. Each reviewer will submit a separate and individual review and reviewers will not provide a consensus opinion. The identities of the peer reviewers will be kept anonymous to the degree permitted by law. Each reviewer will individually evaluate and rank proposals using the evaluation criteria provided below. The merit reviewers ratings are used to produce a rank order of the proposals.

1. Importance and/or relevance and applicability of proposed project to the program goals (25%): This ascertains whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and/or relevance to NOAA, regional, state, or local priorities. For this competition, the proposal should demonstrate the need for the proposed coral reef management activity to fill gaps in the country/region.
2. Technical/scientific merit and adequacy of implementation plan (25%): This assesses whether the approach is technically sound and feasible, if the methods are appropriate, and whether there are clear project goals and objectives for the proposed management activity.
3. Overall qualifications of applicants (20%): This ascertains whether the applicant possesses the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project. For this competition, the proposal should demonstrate coordination with applicable ongoing local, regional, and international coral reef management activities;
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.
5. Outreach and education (10%): NOAA assesses whether this project provides a focused and effective education and outreach strategy.

NOAA may also request and consider written comments on proposed projects from agencies with jurisdiction over coral reef ecosystems in the area where the project is to be conducted, as described in Section X(1) of the Guidelines. Under the international grant program, NOAA may request and consider written comments on the proposal from relevant U.S. government agencies such as the Agency for International Development and Department of the Interior; foreign governments and their coral management agencies; and other international entities as necessary. Each entity will be provided 21 days to review and comment on subject proposals. Comments submitted will be part of the public record.

B. Review and Selection Process

IPO will review the pre- and final applications, consistent with the equally weighted criteria listed in Section X(3) of the 2002 Coral Reef Conservation Program Implementation Guidelines in the Federal Register Vol. 67, No. 76, page 19396, on Friday, April 19, 2002. The Guidelines can be also found at <http://www.coralreef.noaa.gov/grants.html#documents>. IPO will take into consideration comments received from peer, agency, and jurisdiction reviewers.

Based on these reviews, IPO will rank order the pre-applications, and provide preliminary funding recommendations and summary comments on each proposal to those applicants selected for the final application process. These comments will include input from peer reviewers, agencies, jurisdictions, and IPO, and are intended to be used in the applicant's development of the final proposal. Upon receipt of the final application, complete with the requisite Federal forms, IPO will review the complete package and make final funding recommendations based on the incorporation of, and response to, comments that were returned to the applicant. IPO will submit these funding recommendations to the NOAA review panel for final review, pursuant to Section X(4) of the Guidelines to ensure that the Coral Reef Conservation Act requirements for geographic funding distribution and consistency with the overall program goals outlined in the Strategy. In making the final selections, the Selecting Official will identify final applications in rank order unless the proposal is justified to be invited out of rank order based upon one or more of the selection factors listed below. The Program Officials and/or Selecting Official reserve the right to reduce funding requested amounts. The Selecting Official makes final recommendations for award to the Grants Officer who is authorized to obligate the funds.

C. Selection Factors

In addition to the to equally weighted criteria described in Section X(3) of the Guidelines and comments received from peer reviewers, the following selection factors will be used:

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 as described in Section I.B. Program Priorities
- 5. Applicant_s prior award performance
- 6. Partnerships and/or Participation of targeted groups

The Program Officer and/or Selecting Official may negotiate the funding level of the proposal. The Selecting Official makes final recommendations for award to the Grants Officer who is authorized to obligate the funds. If insufficient eligible projects are received, NOAA may reallocate residual funds from this program area to a different funding category under the Program.

D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

On Friday, January 16, 2009, IPO will invite selected pre-applicants to submit a final application by Friday, February 13, 2009. This notification may include a request to make modifications or revisions to the project proposal and budget narratives. Subject to the availability of funds, final funding selection will be made and selected recipients notified on or before September 30, 2009. NOAA intends to provide funding to selected applicants no later than September 30, 2009. Projects should not be initiated in expectation of Federal funding until a notice of award document is received from the NOAA Grants Officer at the NOAA Grants Management Division. Publication of this document does not obligate NOAA to award any specific project or obligate all or any part of the available funds.

VI. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notices

The NOAA Grants Officer will provide electronic notification of the award to the appropriate business office of the recipient. Unsuccessful pre- and final applications will be destroyed and not returned to the applicant. It is the goal of the NOAA Program Officer to also provide written notice to each unsuccessful applicant before June 30, 2009.

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

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_TOC.pdf, and the Council on Environmental Quality implementation regulations, http://ceq.eh.doe.gov/nepa/regs/ceq/toc_ceq.htm). 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.

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 share. A copy of the current, approved negotiated indirect cost agreement with the Federal Government must be included with the pre- and final 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.

If an application is selected for 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.

The recipients must comply with Executive Order 12906 regarding any and all geospatial data collected or produced under grants or cooperative agreements. This includes documenting all geospatial data in accordance with the Federal Geographic Data Committee Content Standard for digital geospatial data.

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

Executive Order 12866 - This action has been determined to be Not Significant for purposes of Executive Order 12866, Regulatory Planning and Review.

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 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.

Notice and Comment are not required under 5 U.S.C. 553(a)(2), or any other law, for rules relating to public property, loans, grants, benefits or contract. Because notice and comment are not required, a regulatory flexibility analysis is not required and has not been prepared for this notice 5 U.S.C. 601 et seq.

The Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements: The Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements contained in the Federal Register notice of February 11, 2008 (73 FR 7696) are applicable to this solicitation.

Limitation of Liability: In no event will NOAA or the Department of Commerce be responsible for proposal 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.

C. Reporting

Performance and Financial Reports: Recipients receiving funding will be required to submit semiannual performance reports and copies of all products that are developed under the award. The specific information, products, or data contained in the performance report can be determined by the NOAA office responsible for the program and applicant in pre-award negotiations or, the recipient will submit performance reports according to the Department of Commerce, Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions. Performance reports must be submitted to the NOAA office responsible for the program within 30 days after each semiannual performance period.

Unless otherwise authorized, semi-annual financial reports will be submitted in accordance with the Department of Commerce, Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions to the Grants Officer at NOAA Grants Management Division.

VII. Agency Contacts

Technical point of contact for International Coral Reef Conservation is Scot Frew, NOAA/NOS International Program Office, 301-713- 3078, extension 220 or e-mail at scot.frew@noaa.gov.

VIII. Other Information

There is no other information for this announcement.