

NOAA National Estuarine Research Reserve FY2012 Performance Progress Report and Post Award Guidelines

Introduction

This document provides guidance for the content and submission of NERR award progress performance reports. These reports are required on a semi-annual basis and provide information to the Estuarine Reserves Division (ERD) and the Grants Management Division (GMD) to determine if NERR programs are adhering to the terms of financial assistance awards, making appropriate progress toward award tasks, supporting the goals and objectives of the management plan, and addressing CZMA Section 312 Evaluation necessary actions.

OCRM's National Policy and Evaluation Division will not be conducting Section 312 Evaluations in FY12. A work group with representatives from OCRM, NERRs and CZMPs are updating the evaluation process to increase efficiency, timeliness and reduce resources used when conducting evaluations. High quality, complete, consistent progress reports will be foundational documents for understanding and evaluating progress of all CZM programs.

Reporting Requirements

Award recipients are responsible for upholding the standard terms and conditions for all NOAA awards including timely submission of semi-annual progress reports, financial reports, and post award action requests. Performance progress reports should be submitted every six months from the start of the award via NOAA's Grants Online System <https://grantsonline.rdc.noaa.gov/>. Reports must be submitted no later than 30 days after the end of the performance period. For example, if the award starts July 1, the reporting period is July 1 through December 31 and the progress report is due by January 31. Final reports are not comprehensive; they cover only the last six month period of the award and are due within 90 days after the end of the award period. All financial and progress report requirements should be met during this period so that the award can be closed out in a timely manner. Please note that post award action requests will not be processed if progress and financial reports are not up to date. NOAA's Grants Management Division will suspend payment on awards if reports are late.

Progress Report Contents

All recipients should follow the format below for consistency providing valuable, comparable information across the system. Each semi-annual report should include:

A. Report Heading

Reserve name
Report contact name, email and phone number
Grant or cooperative agreement number
Reporting period
Date of submission

B. Progress and Status of Award Tasks

The status of each task should be described following the CAMMP format of the award for the six month reporting period only. The reports should describe the activities that have taken place to achieve the outcomes outlined within each task of the grant. Outcomes, the results and/or products from conducting activities, should be described when appropriate. Given that outcomes are written for each award based on a 12 month scope of work, some outcomes may not be fully realized until the end of the award. While awards are 18 months long, most tasks should be completed and reported on within the 12 month time frame. If anticipated milestones are not being met, the challenges or obstacles should be explained. Post award action request approvals will be made based on this information.

This section should provide a summary of progress on each task. Each entry should include the task title, description of activities, status of milestones (not started, in progress/on schedule, not on schedule, completed) and challenges related to meeting milestones if appropriate, and outcomes gleaned from the tasks when appropriate.

C. Section 312 Evaluation Progress

The status and progress of any necessary actions identified in the most recent 312 Evaluation Findings should be described. Additionally, reserves are encouraged to report on how they are addressing program suggestions, but this is not mandatory. This section should be detailed enough to provide ERD notice if programs are not on schedule to meet the requirements of the Section 312 Evaluation Findings. We recognize that not every necessary action or program suggestion will need to be reported on during every performance report.

This section should provide a summary of progress on each necessary action or program suggestion. Each entry should include the title of each necessary action and/or program suggestion, description of activities to address it, and status of effort (not started, in progress/on schedule, not on schedule, completed) and challenges related to addressing the actions and suggestions. If no activity has occurred, simply indicate the status of this finding.

D. Performance Measures

The activity of collecting performance measures falls in an operations and management task. All performance measures should be reported in the performance measure database. All measures should be reported on for the first two six-month periods of each operations award, except the two research measures which are reported only at the twelve-month report period. The Performance Measure Guidance can be found in Appendix 1. The NERRS Performance Measures Database Guidance Document for Reserve Users can be found in Appendix 2. Reserve personnel can use the NERRS Performance Measures Database throughout the reporting period to keep draft reports before submitting their semi-annual reports.

Managers are expected to ensure that all required elements are submitted for a given time period. A Manager Summary Report has been created to assist you in viewing in one place all the performance measures for a given reporting period and verify that all reports are submitted.

Instructions for creating a Manager Summary Report can be found in Appendix 2, pages 28-30. Requirement: Once you have created your Manager Summary Report and verified that all reports have been submitted, select 'Print' and save the summary report as a Word document. Attach this document to your Grants Online Progress Report. This will provide verification that you have met the Performance Measures Reporting Special Award Condition of your cooperative agreement.

Overview of Performance Measures

| Report Name | Requirement | Reporting Frequency | Notes |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|--|--|
| Volunteer and Research Measures | REQUIRED | Volunteers - every six months Research - once a year at second reporting period | The Research and Monitoring Database must be up-to-date in order for accurate values to be submitted in the performance measures database report. |
| CTP Training Activities | REQUIRED | Every six months | Every training activity must be submitted. |
| CTP Outcomes | REQUIRED | One Success Story required for FY2011 grant | Reporting outcomes is optional. |
| CTP Technical Assistance | OPTIONAL | Submit as they occur | If reserves submit a CTP Success Story associated with a Technical Assistance activity, you will need to submit a CTP Technical Assistance report for that activity. |
| Education Program Description | OPTIONAL | Encouraged to submit one for FY2011 | This can be submitted at anytime during the grant period. |
| Education Output Indicators | REQUIRED | Every six months | |

E. Success Stories

Success stories that describe program impacts on coastal management are effective ways to communicate the value of our people and programs. Providing recent and relevant success stories that highlight these values to a variety of stakeholders will be important, especially in a challenging resource environment.

The Coastal Training Program sector is requiring 1 story submitted annually. The Education sector is strongly encouraging 1 success story annually. Both of these entries are submitted via the performance measure database. To capture the full breadth and value of all programs and

efforts at reserves, ERD is strongly encouraging submission of at least one story annually that illustrates the power of integrated, collaborative work making a difference in coastal management. This may be one of the following above or a different story, but should aim to illustrate integration and impact. Please see guidelines below for crafting these stories.

There are many types of stories that can be drafted for this section. You could write a story about: (1) the challenges you faced in implementing a program; (2) a story of how you got started; (3) striving-to-improve story; (4) emblematic success story; (5) making a difference story; or (6) a where you are going story. Whichever story you choose to write, make sure that you include the basics: who, what, where, when and why. Stories can also be broad or narrow in scope: impact on community or on one individual. To protect the privacy of persons, don't use names but describe them in some way that gives credibility to the data. For example, a parent, administrator, employer, etc.

What is a success story?

A success story is the *successful – favorable or desired* result or outcome of a program. In other words, you want to paint a picture as to how NERRS makes a difference in the lives of the people it serves.

Consider these factors when you write a success story:

- * Pretend the reader knows nothing whatsoever about your program. Don't assume anything!
- * Remember... you are telling a short story about what you want to achieve or have achieved.

What are the elements of a Success Story? A success story includes these elements:

Situation: What prompted the program or action? What is the coastal issue you are addressing? Why does the program exist to address this issue? What are you trying to achieve? Why is this program important to the people in the community you serve? Who cares? Who are the key stakeholders? Where is this taking place?

Response: How did NERRS respond? Briefly describe the most important actions you took, the kind of resources you used (inputs) and the products or outputs you generated. Provide any numbers that demonstrate reach or scale (where appropriate). Describe partnerships and external funding sources. In short, spell out the Reserve's role.

Results: Who benefited? What resulted? Use quantitative and qualitative data to describe important outcomes (changes and benefits) achieved as a result of the Reserve's response. Who benefited and how? Outcomes include changes in knowledge, skills, motivation, behavior, decision making, practices, policies, social action, social, economic and environmental conditions. Describe outcomes in terms of value or meaning. For example, "Thirty participants increased their knowledge of safe food-handling practices (outcome). This should lead to better food-handling practices and fewer food-borne illnesses" (expected value). In other words, help the reader understand the meaning behind the change. Link to existing research, if possible, and include future plans or lessons learned based on results.

Evidence: What's the evidence? Briefly describe how you evaluated the program to attain the reported evidence. Include the data collection method (pre- or post-test surveys, interviews, and testimonials), sample (number and how selected), response rate and the date of data collection.

Remember – a good success story depends on credible information.

F. Optional Addendum

OCRM understands that it often takes more than the NOAA federal and state cost share to operate a reserve. We encourage reserves to describe activities relevant to the mission of the reserve, but may be outside the scope of the operations grant. This information will enable ERD to capitalize on opportunities within and outside of NOAA and share this information with NOAA partners and leadership about innovative projects and challenges at the reserve. It would be advantageous to describe the partners and leveraged funds that support this work.

Annual reports

Annual comprehensive reports are not required by ERD per the award reporting guidelines. For those sites that produce an “annual report”, please make them available to the NERR community.

Post award requests

List of Award Action Requests

The actions below may be initiated by the recipient within NOAA's Grants Online System.

*indicates that an amendment is required

Bold indicates most commonly conducted actions. Additional guidance on these actions is provided below.

| | |
|---|---|
| * No Cost Extension – Prior Approval Required | No Cost Extension - Prior Approval Waived (Research Terms and Conditions) |
| Reprogram or Rebudget | Satisfied Special Award Conditions |
| Extension to Close Out | Equipment Purchase |
| * Change in Scope | Foreign Travel |
| * Transfer of Award | Sole Source Contract |
| Change in Principal Investigator | Other |
| Change in Institution Name | Absence of more than 3 months or 25% by project director or PI |
| Change in Key Person Specified in the Application | Inclusion of cost that require prior approval based on cost principles |
| Transfer of funds allotted for training to other categories of expenses | * Sub award, transfer or contracting out of any work under the award if not described in the approved application |
| Pre-Award Cost | *Termination for Convenience |

No-Cost Extension (GMD Approval Required- i.e. Prior Approval Required)

A formal request to extend an award must be submitted by the award recipient authorized representative via the NOAA Grants Online System 30 days prior to the end date of the award. Approval by the Federal Program Office (ie.ERD) and Grants Management Division (GMD) is required. The recipient proceeds at its own risk of incurring costs beyond the award expiration if the request is not submitted to NOAA at least 30 days prior to the expiration.

Any extension request submitted to NOAA after the expiration of the award will be denied. Requests for reconsideration of extreme circumstances that resulted in failure to request an extension before the end of the award period must be submitted in writing and will only be considered by the Grants Officer on a case- by-case basis. Awards which are not in compliance with all terms and conditions of the award, including submission of all required reports, will not be reconsidered.

All no-cost extension requests must clearly justify why the extension is needed and explain what activities are remaining to be accomplished under the award and what funds are still available to support the activity. In addition, the award must be in compliance with all terms and conditions of the award, including submission of all required reports. The justification block within the GOL system must be filled out, and a budget (SF424A) of remaining funds must be attached. See example below.

Key Points

Due to a State Department of Environmental Affairs hiring freeze, we have been unable to hire an education assistant to complete activities within the education and outreach task, specifically production of the estuary literacy concepts brochure, community outreach product and completion of the K-12 Estuary Education Program market analysis and needs assessment. The hiring freeze has been lifted and we will be able to hire the education assistant and complete the project within the next six months. Additionally, the State Department of Environmental Affairs is requiring additional review of equipment purchases and we have not been able to purchase the YSI 6600 instrument, as indicated in the System-wide Monitoring Program task. We have recently gotten preliminary approval for this purchase and will be able to complete the acquisition shortly. Hence, we request a six-month no-cost extension, extending the award from December 31, 2010 to June 30, 2010. The budget of remaining funds is below.

← State reason for request- need to say more than “we need more time to expend funds.”

← State specifically the work that has yet to be achieved. This should be commensurate with what is designated in the award. If a new activity will be performed, a reprogramming request should be made. If there is a departure from original intent, a change of scope may be warranted.

← Indicate the length of extension request and dates.

| Object Class Categories | Federal | State | Total |
|--------------------------------------|---------|--------|--------|
| a. Personnel | 20,000 | 15,000 | 35,000 |
| b. Fringe Benefits | 2,000 | 1,500 | 3,500 |
| c. Travel | | | |
| d. Equipment | 7,000 | | 7,000 |
| e. Supplies | | | |
| f. Contractual | | | |
| g. Construction | | | |
| h. Other | | | |
| i. Total Direct Charges (sum of a-h) | 29,000 | 16,500 | 45,500 |
| j. Indirect Charges | | | |
| k. TOTALS (sum of 6 and j) | 29,000 | 16,500 | 45,500 |

← Provide a budget of remaining funds showing federal and non- federal amounts by object class category that clearly relate to the text above.

Re-Programming or Re-budgeting Request

Creation of a new direct cost line item category within an approved budget for costs allowable under the applicable cost principles will not require prior approval from the Grants Officer unless the new direct cost category exceeds 10% of the total Federal share of the award.

A reprogram request must be submitted for NOAA approval when:

- reprogramming funds to a new, not identified in the original budget, direct cost line item category where the amount exceeds 10% of the total Federal share of the award.
- reprogramming a cumulative amount greater than 10% of the total (Federal and non-Federal shares) budget last approved for awards with a Federal share exceeding \$100,000. If you reprogram 10% or less, you do not need to request GMD approval; however, an account of reprogram activities under 10% needs to be maintained for when you exceed the 10%, you are combining what you have done and what you intend to do over the 10% so the cumulative transfer is transparent.

These requests shall include an SF-424A showing the total budget for the award along with a detailed budget narrative explaining the funds transferred. It is advisable to submit the last approved 424A and the new 424A for a clear comparison of last approved budget and proposed budget. All remaining federal and non-federal shares should be illustrated on the revised 424A as this will serve as the budget for the rest of the award. The supporting text should clearly describe where the funds are moving from and to and the activities that will take place that support the intent of the award. The narrative request needs to describe the reason for these changes and ensure that the original scope of work is not being altered. If the scope of work is changing, then a change of scope request is required.

The reprogramming request is submitted to the Program Officer who forwards the request, along with a recommendation, to the Grants Officer, who will make the final determination.

The approval of a reprogram request does not normally result in an amendment to the award. The recipient's Authorized Representative(s) will be notified by Grants Online of the approval or rejection of the request.

NOTE: A reprogram request and a no-cost extension request may be submitted under one action – a reprogram request. A detailed justification for the scope of the request should be included and be accompanied by the revised 424A as well as detailed budget narrative explaining the funds transferred.

Extension to Close-Out Period

The close-out period starts the day after the award has closed and provides 90 days to submit all reports required by the terms and conditions of the award and liquidate all obligations incurred. Once the award is closed, the only action you can take in Grants Online is to extend the close-out period. You can do this at any point during the 90 day close-out period and the maximum request for extension is 60 days.

An extension to the closeout period should only be requested to complete the preparation of final reports and make final payments. During this time, you can draw down funds from the Department of Treasury ASAP payment system.

An approval of the Extension to Closeout does not result in an amendment to the award. The recipient's Authorized Representative will be notified by Grants Online of the approval or rejection of the request. Additional work on the award project is prohibited during the closeout period.

Satisfied Special Award Conditions

Some awards contain Special Award Conditions that require evidence of completion. Examples are environmental assessments, property deeds and associated documents, and building permits.

The Special Award Conditions are available in a drop-down list on the Award Action Request details page. Once selected, the SAC Description text box will automatically be filled out with the Special Award Condition details. You will need to fill out the justification in the provided text area and attach associated files.

The approval of a Satisfied Special Award Conditions request does not normally result in an amendment to the award. The Recipient Authorized Representative(s) will be notified by Grants Online of the approval or rejection of the request.

No-Cost Extension (GMD approval waived –i.e. Prior Approval Waived)

All recipients covered under 15 CFR Part 14 (e.g., educational institutions/non-profits), with non- construction awards are herein granted authority to initiate a one-time no-cost extension to the award period of up to one year without prior approval as long as the recipient notifies the Grants Officer through Grants Online using the “No-cost Extension Prior Approval Waived (Research Terms and Conditions)” link least 10 days prior to expiration of the award with an explanation of the reason for the extension. Grants Online will prohibit you from requesting an extension any less than 10 days in advance of award expiration. If an additional no-cost extension is required, you must request a no-cost extension GMD approval required. The FPO and GMD review and approve this request.

Only certain organizations, which are conducting research, are eligible for No-cost Extension Prior Approval Waived (Research Terms and Conditions). Grants Online enforces this business rule. If your organization is not an eligible type, the link to create the No Cost Extension – Prior Approval Waived (Research Terms and Conditions) will be disabled. The following organization types are eligible for Research Terms and Conditions:

- Public/State Controlled Institution of Higher Education
- Nonprofit with 501C3 IRS Status (Other than Institution of Higher Education)
- Private Institution of Higher Education
- Individual
- For-Profit Organization (Other than Small Business) and Small Business

- Hispanic-serving Institutions, Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian Serving Institutions
- Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Tribally Controlled Colleges and Universities
- Non-domestic (non-US) Entity

The execution of the No Cost Extension - Prior Approval Waived (Research Terms and Conditions) by the recipient is completely automatic in Grants Online. Once the notification is submitted to NOAA by the recipient's Authorized Representative, the new award end date is immediately reflected in Grants Online and in the ASAP system. Notifications are sent to the Program Officer and the Grants Officer of the new award end date. This action does not result in an amendment to the Award.

Resources

NOAA's Acquisition and Grants Home Page

<http://www.ago.noaa.gov/ago/index/cfm>

The grantee link includes information and links to policies, manuals, Grants.Gov, Grants Online, training, federal forms and the ASAP (Automated Standard Application Program). The Department of Treasury Financial Management Services ASAP allows grantee organizations receiving federal funds to draw from accounts pre-authorized by NOAA and other federal agencies.

NERRS Intranet

<https://www8.nos.noaa.gov/nerrsintranet/>

All guidance documents and reporting tools can be found on the intranet under the Grants and Performance Measurement tab within the 'NERRS Guidance, Policy and Planning Documents' section.

NERRS Research Database

<https://www8.nos.noaa.gov/nerrs/>

The NERRS Research Database houses reserve research and monitoring projects and products. Products should be entered using "add publication" function. There will soon be the capability of generating a brief report for each project, which can be attached to the progress report.

NERRS Performance Measure Database

<https://www8.nos.noaa.gov/ERDPM>

Reserves will submit all performance measures through the NERRS Performance Measures Database and will no longer use the spreadsheet reporting tool. Reports should be submitted in accordance with the Grants Online reporting timeline: reports are due thirty days after the reporting period ends. Reserve personnel can use the NERRS Performance Measures Database throughout the reporting period to before submitting performance measures reports to ERD.

Appendices

1. Performance Measure Guidance
2. NERRS Performance Measures Database Guidance Document for Reserve Users