

## 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: FY15 Coral Reef NGO Partnership

Announcement Type: Initial

Funding Opportunity Number: NOAA-NOS-OCRM-2015-2004211

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

Dates: Complete applications must be submitted electronically via [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov) by 11:59 PM Eastern Standard Time on Wednesday, November 19, 2014 to be considered for funding. If Grants.gov cannot be reasonably used, hard copy applications may be submitted by mail or provided to a delivery service and documented with a receipt prior to 11:59 PM EST on Wednesday, November 19, 2014. Applications postmarked or provided to a delivery service after that date and time will not be accepted. Applications submitted via U.S. Postal Service or commercial courier service must have an official postmark; private metered postmarks are not acceptable. In any event, applications received more than 10 business days after the postmarked closing date will not be accepted. All mailed applications must include hand signed and dated Federal forms.

Funding Opportunity Description: The purpose of this notice is to invite Non-Governmental Organizations with non-profit 501(c)(3) status and demonstrated expertise and experience in supporting coral reef management in the United States to submit proposals to establish partnerships with the NOAA CRCP to further the conservation of U.S. coral reefs. This document describes the coral reef conservation partnership(s) that the NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program (CRCP) envisions, identifies the qualities that NOAA desires in a partner, and describes criteria against which applications will be evaluated for funding consideration. Partnerships selected through this notice will be implemented through a cooperative agreement of 12- to 18-months in duration.

Pursuant to section 6403 of the Coral Reef Conservation Act (CRCA) (16 U.S.C. 6401 et seq), and pending Congressional appropriations, CRCP funding of approximately \$700,000 is expected to be available for initiating partnership(s) with up to four non-governmental organizations in FY 2015. CRCP will consider funding either a single proposal that includes support for all seven coral reef states and territories or up to two proposals in the Pacific Islands (benefitting Hawaii, American Samoa, Guam, and/or the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands) and up to two proposals in the Atlantic/Caribbean region (benefitting Florida,

Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands). Applications must propose a 12- or 18-month work plan, in conformance with the requirements of Section IV of this announcement, and may request between \$100,000 and \$700,000 (approximately \$100,000 per state or territory), depending on how many of the seven coral states and territories will benefit from the proposed project(s). As required by the CRCA, recipients are required to match NOAA's Federal contributions with non-Federal matching contributions at a minimum ratio of 1:1 unless the applicant is granted a waiver to the matching requirement by the agency.

## 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 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, sedimentation, destructive fishing practices, recreational overuse and misuse, and impacts from climate change, including changes in ocean chemistry.

To address these and other threats, Congress passed the Coral Reef Conservation Act of 2000 (CRCA), 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 described 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 focused on priorities articulated in “A National Coral Reef Action Strategy” (<http://coris.noaa.gov/activities/actionstrategy>), which outlined efforts needed to better understand coral reef ecosystems and reduce impacts from thirteen 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 2009 to focus program investments on three of the most pressing threats to coral reefs: land-based sources of pollution, fishing impacts, and climate impacts. The CRCP’s approach for addressing these threats is described in more detail in a number of documents, including:

- \*the CRCP Goals and Objectives 2010-2015 ([http://coralreef.noaa.gov/aboutcrp/strategy/currentgoals/resources/3threats\\_go.pdf](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>);

- \*the Jurisdictional Capacity Assessments, which evaluate each jurisdiction’s ability to implement coral reef conservation measures and identify impediments to effective coral reef

conservation and management  
(<http://coralreef.noaa.gov/aboutcrp/strategy/reprioritization/capacityassessments/>);

\*the CRCP International Strategy  
([http://coralreef.noaa.gov/aboutcrp/strategy/currentgoals/resources/intl\\_strategy.pdf](http://coralreef.noaa.gov/aboutcrp/strategy/currentgoals/resources/intl_strategy.pdf)).

These documents are relevant to CRCP grant programs, but some may be more or less relevant to particular competitions. Please refer to the Program Priorities in Section I(B) for details on which of the above documents are relevant to this funding announcement.

As required under the Act, NOAA published revised NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Grant Program Implementation Guidelines on Thursday, August 12, 2010 in Federal Register Vol. 75, No. 155, pages 48934-48939, which are available at:  
<http://coralreef.noaa.gov/aboutcrp/workwithus/funding/grants/welcome.html>.

All applications submitted in response to this Federal Funding Opportunity announcement must be consistent with the requirements stated herein and the CRCP Grant Program Implementation Guidelines. Funding is subject to the availability of Federal appropriations.

In FY15, the CRCP intends to initiate new awards in the following 3 funding categories:

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

All of the following information in this funding opportunity pertains only to the CRCP FY15 NGO Partnership Cooperative Agreements funding category.

#### B. Program Priorities

NOAA's Coral Reef Conservation Program (CRCP) developed overarching goals and objectives to help guide the program's funding investments over a 5-year horizon, and in June of 2009 articulated those goals and objectives in a document entitled, CRCP Goals and Objectives 2010-2015 ([http://coralreef.noaa.gov/aboutcrp/strategy/currentgoals/resources/3threats\\_go.pdf](http://coralreef.noaa.gov/aboutcrp/strategy/currentgoals/resources/3threats_go.pdf)). 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 and identify priority locations for conservation action; these Jurisdictional Coral Reef Management Priorities and the priority coral reef watersheds identified during the process 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 developed additional action-oriented strategies, site-based management plans and conservation action plans, and updated their coral reef Local Action Strategies based on CRCP priorities. In the past few years, CRCP has also sponsored an assessment of the capacity of each jurisdiction to help identify and eliminate bottlenecks and impediments to coral reef conservation efforts in a number of categories. The resulting Jurisdictional Capacity Assessment documents, which contain a variety of recommendations, are available at:  
<http://coralreef.noaa.gov/aboutcrcp/strategy/reprioritization/capacityassessments/>.

Together, these documents will be used to direct support toward the specific priority conservation needs identified 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, and that applications will focus effort primarily in locations previously identified as priority sites for coral reef management. Projects that do not specifically address these priorities or locations may be proposed, but are likely to be less competitive.

Through this funding announcement the CRCP seeks to better support the needs of U.S. coral reef managers by establishing up to four partnerships—one or two partnerships in the Atlantic/Caribbean and one or two partnerships in the Pacific Islands—with Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) that have demonstrated expertise and experience in implementing local coral reef conservation projects. Cooperative agreements between the CRCP and NGO partners are expected to augment the technical support provided to the governor-appointed natural resource management agencies in the seven U.S. States, Territories, and Commonwealths that have primary management authority and responsibility for conserving U.S. coral reef ecosystems: Florida, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, Hawaii, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and Guam. It is anticipated that the following types of activities will be proposed in applications submitted to this competition:

- Development of place-based management plans and strategies (e.g., watershed management plans, conservation action plans, etc.) to address major threats to coral reefs, and implementation of coral reef conservation projects identified in the plan or strategy;
- Development of resilient networks of marine protected areas based on established scientific principles, including efforts to enhance collaboration and peer-learning among locations within a network;

- Evaluation of the effectiveness of existing coral reef management efforts using established, regionally- or nationally-consistent protocols whenever possible;
- Provision of capacity building support and technical assistance, in the form of trainings, site exchanges, workshops, and peer-to-peer learning opportunities that strengthen local capacity to implement future coral reef conservation projects;
- Training managers to utilize existing tools that help them plan for and adapt to impacts from climate change and ocean acidification.

Applicants must document their previous involvement in coral conservation efforts in each jurisdiction in which they are proposing to work. If the applicant does not have previous experience or existing staff in a particular jurisdiction, they must provide specific information about how the applicant intends to fill such gaps through reassignment of existing staff or through the establishment of agreements and/or subawards with other partner organizations that have successfully worked in that location.

### C. Program Authority

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

## II. Award Information

### A. Funding Availability

Pursuant to section 6403 of the Coral Reef Conservation Act (CRCA) (16 U.S.C. 6401 et seq), and pending Congressional appropriations, CRCP funding of approximately \$700,000 is expected to be available for initiating partnership(s) with up to four non-governmental organizations in FY 2015. CRCP will consider funding either a single proposal that includes support for all seven coral reef states and territories or up to two proposals in the Pacific Islands (benefitting Hawaii, American Samoa, Guam, and/or the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands) and up to two proposals in the Atlantic/Caribbean region (benefitting Florida, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands). Applications must propose a 12- or 18-month work plan, in conformance with the requirements of Section IV of this announcement, and may request between \$100,000 and \$700,000 (approximately \$100,000 per state or territory), depending on how many of the seven coral states and territories will benefit from the proposed project(s). As required by the CRCA, recipients are required to match NOAA's Federal contributions with non-Federal matching contributions at a minimum ratio of 1:1 unless the applicant is granted a waiver to the matching requirement by the agency. The exact amount of funds to be awarded and the specific tasks under each cooperative agreement will be determined in pre-award negotiations between the applicant(s) and NOAA.

Publication of this announcement does not obligate NOAA to establish any specific partnership or to obligate available funds for partnership activities. There is no guarantee that funds will be available to make awards for this funding opportunity or that any proposal will be selected for funding. If an applicant incurs any costs prior to receiving an award agreement signed by an authorized NOAA official, they do so at their own risk of these costs not being included in a subsequent award. In no event will NOAA or the Department of Commerce be responsible for any proposal preparation costs. Recipients and sub-recipients are subject to all Federal laws and agency policies, regulations, and procedures applicable to Federal financial assistance awards. Applicants must be in good standing with all existing NOAA awards in order to receive funds under this announcement.

If no proposal is funded in the current fiscal period, a proposal may be considered for funding in another fiscal period without NOAA repeating the competitive process outlined in this announcement.

#### B. Project/Award Period

CRCP expects to initiate cooperative agreement award(s) with successful applicant(s) beginning on September 1, 2015 or October 1, 2015, and extending for a period of 12- or 18-months.

#### C. Type of Funding Instrument

Successful applicants will enter into a 12- or 18-month cooperative agreement with NOAA's Coral Reef Conservation Program as described under the terms of this document. 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 Federal Program Officers, Coral Reef Management Liaisons, Coral Reef Fisheries 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. Applications must be written as cooperative agreements and the proposal must clearly identify this funding instrument in the proposal abstract and cover sheet. The Federal government will be substantially involved in the project; applicants must clearly articulate the anticipated Federal roles and responsibilities in their proposal.

### III. Eligibility Information

#### A. Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants are limited to Non-Governmental Organizations with non-profit 501(c)(3) status that have demonstrated expertise and experience in supporting coral reef management in U. S. States and Territories. 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 may provide a limited statement verifying the nature and extent of the collaboration and confirming prior coordination activities. Letters of support from NOAA employees are not allowable and will not be included among the application materials considered by merit reviewers. Federal employee travel and salaries are not allowable costs under this funding category. All questions about this competition, including application procedures and materials and selection criteria, must 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 of 2000 (CRCA) are subject to the matching fund requirements described below. As per section 6403(b)(1) of the Act, Federal funds for any coral conservation award funded through this announcement 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 and are available within the project period stated in the application.

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. Successful applicants must be prepared to carefully document matching contributions, including the number of volunteer or community participation hours devoted to specific projects, and all other cash or in-kind contributions.

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, must be submitted as part of the final application. Please address the waiver request as described in Section IV(B)10 of this announcement.

Please Note: applicants who are eligible to claim the matching funds exemption contained in 48 U.S.C. 1469a(d) must 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

Applicants are permitted to request indirect costs only if their organization has established a valid Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement covering the period of the award. Any indirect costs in excess of the federal share limits described in Section IV(B)11 may be counted toward the matching requirement. Proposals to this competition that limit indirect costs to no more than 15% of direct costs will likely score higher on this criterion.

If an award recipient has not previously established an indirect cost rate with a Federal agency, the negotiation and approval of a rate is subject to the procedures required by NOAA and the Department of Commerce. The U.S. Department of Commerce, Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions require that within 90 days of the award start date, recipients must submit documentation (indirect cost proposal, cost allocation plan, etc.) necessary to perform the review to:

Lamar Revis, Grants Officer

NOAA Grants Management Division

1325 East West Highway, 9th Floor

Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

#### IV. Application and Submission Information

## A. Address to Request Application Package

The standard application package is available on [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov) at <http://apply07.grants.gov/apply/FormLinks?family=15>. For Applicants without internet access, an application package may be requested from Ms. Jenny Waddell, NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program, 1305 East-West Highway, SSMC4, 10th floor, Silver Spring, MD 20910, phone 301-713-3155, extension 150; or e-mail [Jenny.Waddell@noaa.gov](mailto:Jenny.Waddell@noaa.gov).

## B. Content and Form of Application

The application process for this grant competition requires submission of a final and complete application on or before the submission date and time listed in Section IV (C). Applications submitted under this competition must include a 12- or 18-month award period.

All application materials must use a legible 11- or 12-point font with 1-inch margins on all sides. The complete package must total no more than 50 pages, not including the title page, a table of contents if one is included, necessary Federal forms, or any appendices. Applications that exceed the 50-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 for evaluation. Because 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. Appendices must be limited to materials that directly support the main body of the proposal (e.g., support letters, resumes, references, lists of relevant work products or reports, data sources, etc.). Applicants must paginate their proposal and any appendices.

All applications must contain the following thirteen components:

1. Title Page (Proposal Cover Sheet). Include proposal title; complete contact information for the Principal Investigator and the organization's Authorized Representative; requested start date (either September 1, 2015 or October 1, 2015); duration of proposed project (either 12- or 18-months); the Federal funding amount requested broken out by jurisdiction; and the amount and source of non-Federal matching contributions to the project.

2. Proposal Summary. Provide a 3-5 page summary of the proposed partnership. The summary must provide a description of the applicant's capabilities, overall project goals and objectives, brief summaries of the projects that the applicant intends to complete over the award period in each geographic area, and a brief summary of the anticipated products and desired outcomes from the proposed activities. Please note that this information may be utilized during Congressional notification and shared with the public.

3. Proposal Narrative. The proposal narrative description (15-25 pages) must describe each of the discrete projects or tasks proposed in the application. Each task must be titled and assigned a separate project or task number. Sufficient detail must be provided to enable reviewers to evaluate the relevance and applicability of proposed work to program priorities described in Section I(B) of this announcement; to determine the technical/scientific merit of the proposed work; to adequately review the qualifications of the applicants; and to assess whether the proposed scope of work raises any concerns with regard to Federal policy considerations, such as those related to the National Environmental Policy Act, the Endangered Species Act, the Historic Preservation Act, etc. Applicants must clearly describe how each activity or project will directly benefit the coral reef management efforts of State and Territorial Coral Reef Management agencies. Each task description in the proposal narrative must include:

a. Introduction - Provide a brief summary of relevant background information that justifies the need for the proposed project or task. Clearly describe or explain: the relationship of the proposed project to previous efforts; how the project fits into the jurisdictions' strategies for addressing the issue; how the project would complement coral reef conservation activities of local governmental agencies, and, if applicable, other relevant CRCPC-sponsored coral conservation activities.

b. Task Description and Methodology - Provide a project description that describes 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, any special equipment that will be used in support of the project goals, and how project outcomes will directly result in improved management of coral reef resources.

c. Task Outcomes or Products - Identify and describe the anticipated project products or outcomes, explain how they will benefit local management of coral reef resources, and describe performance measures that will be used to evaluate project success. The narrative must include information on dissemination of the findings/results to resource managers, local communities, and other stakeholders as appropriate. The project narrative also needs to include information on how the project will be evaluated for success. If the work is one component of a larger project (or the activity is a pilot project for a larger initiative), and proposed activities will continue after the end of the grant period, describe future activities and potential future funding sources (and other mechanisms) to continue the work. If the goal of the project is to build capacity for improved conservation, describe proposed plans to ensure the activities continue into the future.

d. Schedule - Indicate when each task or project is expected to begin (month and year) and include a timeline for completing tasks in narrative or table format.

e. Project Management/Personnel - Identify the project manager or PI. Identify other individual(s) responsible for completing the projects and tasks proposed in the application. Describe how the project will be organized and managed, and include the qualifications of the principal investigator(s) by providing curricula vitae or resumes. The principal investigator may or may not be the applicant. However, if the applicant is not the principal investigator, there must be an explanation of the relationship between the applicant and principal investigator (e.g., the applicant may be responsible for managing the grant funds and the principal investigator will be responsible for completing the work). Please also include information about the specific responsibilities of other personnel funded through the proposal, including the technical and administrative points of contact as appropriate.

#### 4. Budget Narrative and Justification

In order to allow reviewers to evaluate the appropriateness of all costs, applications must include a detailed budget narrative and a budget justification. The budget narrative submitted with the final application must match the dollar amounts included on all required forms and clearly link to the project narrative. Please explain each calculation and provide a narrative justification to explain expenditures for each budget category. The budget narrative must describe, by category of expenditure, the total funding needed to accomplish the objectives described in the project narrative for the entire award period. Please explain how categorical costs are derived in sufficient detail to enable reviewers to determine if costs are 'allowable and reasonable' according to the cost principles referenced in Section IV(E)2. Budget narrative categories must correspond to the following object class categories listed in Section B of the SF-424A:

a. Personnel costs, including salary and wages, must be broken out by named Principal Investigator (PI) and number of weeks or months of salary (as a percentage of their normal salary), or number of hours multiplied by the PI's normal hourly rate. Support for each PI must be commensurate with their stated involvement in the project. Any unnamed personnel (graduate students, post-doctoral researchers, technicians) may be identified by their job title, and their personnel costs explained similar to PI personnel costs. Fringe benefit costs must be identified separately from salary and wages, and rates must be applied consistently and equally to both Federal and non-Federal (matching) funds.

b. Travel costs must be broken out by traveler name/position, destination, purpose of travel, and projected costs per person. Briefly describe each travel request and explain how the proposed travel is necessary for successful completion of the project. If travel details of a particular trip are unknown, explain the basis for estimating the proposed costs (i.e., historical costs) instead of providing a lump sum estimate. Please be aware of the provisions of the 'Fly America Act' and the requirement for recipients to utilize U.S. airlines for transport, unless a specific waiver has been secured from NOAA in advance.

c. "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 must be described separately and reference the type/model to be purchased and its contribution to the achievement of project goals. General use equipment (i.e., computers, printers, etc.) must be used 100% for the proposed project if charged directly to the award. Equipment must be inventoried periodically and accounted for in progress reports; recipients must also document dispensation of equipment through submission of SF-428/429 forms as required by NOAA. Equipment purchase is not a priority under this funding announcement.

d. Supplies must be itemized to the level of detail known or may be based on established historical costs. Examples of items that typically fall into the 'supplies' category include office supplies, snorkel and/or dive gear, monitoring supplies, fuel for vessels, basic computer hardware and software, cameras, and outreach materials.

e. Contractual costs must be itemized separately, according to standard budget categories that appear in the SF-424A; all types of contractual costs must be aggregated in the Contractual line on the SF-424A and explained in detail in the budget narrative. Applicants must indicate the basis for each contract's cost estimate and specify the products or services to be obtained through all contracts. As required by the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006, all subawards of \$25,000 or greater, whether in the form of a subcontract or subgrant, must be documented per the Federal Subaward Reporting System (FSRS; [www.FSRS.gov](http://www.FSRS.gov)); a separate SF-424A must also be submitted for each proposed subaward of \$25,000 or greater.

f. Other costs must be listed by nature of expense and 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.' Examples of costs that are typically included in the 'other' category include stipends, honoraria, publication costs, and printing or workshop costs not included under the contractual category. Limited publication costs will only be considered if the resulting journal publication will be made available to the public free of charge.

g. Indirect costs may be requested if the applicant has negotiated an indirect cost rate with the Federal government during the award period. 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 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. See Section III(C) of this announcement for more information on establishing a new indirect cost rate with the Department of Commerce.

#### 5. Standard Form 424

Applicants requesting Federal 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 signed and dated by the organization's authorized representative, and used as the cover page for the final application. An electronic signature and date stamp will automatically be included on SF-424 forms submitted via Grants.gov.

#### 6. Standard Form 424A

Applicants are required to submit a SF-424A Budget Form to summarize the budget for the proposed scope of work. The first column of sections A and B shows the Federal funds requested, while the second column of sections A and B shows the non-Federal matching funds provided for the project. Total award funding is shown in the final column of section B. Non-federal funding is broken out by source in section C. Forecasted cash needs in Section D must be inclusive of all funding for the project; in the case of an 18-month project, each 'quarter' represents 4.5 months. Both Federal and non-Federal funds must be expended at a similar rate throughout the course of the project. Section E may be left blank. Section F summarizes the direct charges in line 21 and lists the indirect charges requested; please show the rate used in line 22. Please note that completion of the SF-424A form as described above represents NOAA's preference and may not be consistent with the instructions that accompany the SF-424A form. All budget figures must match the funding requested on the application cover sheet and correspond with the descriptions contained in the project and budget narratives.

As required by the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA; <https://www.fsrc.gov/>), all subawards or subcontracts of \$25,000 or more must also be accompanied by a separate SF-424A form to fully document the proposed subaward budget.

#### 7. Standard Form 424B

Applicants are required to submit a signed SF-424B, 'Assurances for Non-Construction Programs'.

## 8. Standard Form CD-511

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

## 9. Permits

Applicants must provide a list of all permits that will be required to perform the proposed work and an indication of the status of any permits needed (e.g., not yet applied, permit application submitted/pending, permit granted, etc.) or a statement indicating that no permits are necessary. You must include this required element even if permits are not required.

## 10. Match waiver request (if applicable)

Preference under this competition will be given to applicants who provide a 1:1 or greater ratio of matching funds to Federal funds in accordance with the provisions of the Coral Reef Conservation Act. If the proposal lacks sufficient matching funds, the applicant may include a separate document in which the applicant requests a waiver to the matching funds requirement as described in section 6403(b)(2) of the Act. Although the CRCP will consider these requests, in most cases, waivers of matching funds will not be provided for applicants to this competition. Please address all waiver requests to John Christensen, CRCP Manager, 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 circumstances preventing the availability of match. For more details see Section III(B).

## 11. Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (if applicable)

The proposed 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 may 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. See Section III(C) for more information on establishing a new indirect cost rate with the Department of Commerce.

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

Information on NOAA's Environmental Data Management Policy is available under:  
[http://www.corporateservices.noaa.gov/ames/administrative\\_orders/chapter\\_212/212-15.pdf](http://www.corporateservices.noaa.gov/ames/administrative_orders/chapter_212/212-15.pdf)

### 13. National Environmental Policy Act

As required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), NOAA must analyze the potential environmental impacts of Federally funded awards. Detailed information on NOAA compliance with NEPA can be found at the following websites: <http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/>; NOAA Administrative Order 216-6 for NEPA (<http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/procedures.html>); and Council on Environmental Quality implementation regulations ([http://ceq.hss.doe.gov/nepa/regs/ceq/toc\\_ceq.htm](http://ceq.hss.doe.gov/nepa/regs/ceq/toc_ceq.htm)). Consequently, as part of the application package, applicants are required to provide detailed information on the activities to be conducted, locations, sites, species and habitats that may be affected, construction activities, and all other environmental concerns that may exist (e.g., use and disposal of hazardous or toxic chemicals, introduction of non-indigenous species, impacts to endangered and threatened species, etc.).

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; [http://coralreef.noaa.gov/aboutcrp/workwithus/funding/grants/resources/coral\\_pea\\_final\\_05.pdf](http://coralreef.noaa.gov/aboutcrp/workwithus/funding/grants/resources/coral_pea_final_05.pdf)) will be notified after the peer review stage and may be requested to assist in the preparation of an environmental assessment prior to offer of an award. Applicants are required to cooperate with NOAA in identifying feasible measures to reduce or avoid any potential adverse environmental impacts of their proposal. The failure to do so shall be grounds for rejection of an application. In some cases, if additional information is required after an application is selected, funds may be withheld by the NOAA Grants Officer under a special award condition to require 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 applicant must complete the following sections of the Environmental Compliance Questionnaire for National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Federal Financial Assistance Applicants (OMB Approval No.: 0648-0538) to provide detailed information on the activities to be conducted, locations, sites, species and habitat to be affected, possible construction activities, and any environmental concerns that may exist (e.g., the use and disposal of hazardous or toxic chemicals, introduction of non-indigenous species, impacts to endangered and threatened species, aquaculture projects, and impacts to coral reef systems).

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

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

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

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

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

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

Detailed information on NOAA compliance with NEPA can be found at the following NOAA NEPA website: <http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/> including NOAA Administrative Order 216-6 for NEPA, [http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/NAO216\\_6.pdf](http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/NAO216_6.pdf) and the Council on Environmental Quality implementation regulations [http://ceq.hss.doe.gov/ceq\\_regulations/regulations.html](http://ceq.hss.doe.gov/ceq_regulations/regulations.html) or [http://www.csc.noaa.gov/funding/\\_pdf/CEQ%20Regulations%20for%20Implementing%20the%20Procedural%20Provisions%20of%20NEPA.pdf](http://www.csc.noaa.gov/funding/_pdf/CEQ%20Regulations%20for%20Implementing%20the%20Procedural%20Provisions%20of%20NEPA.pdf)

In addition to the thirteen (13) required elements described above, applicants may upload additional supporting documentation, such as letters of support or statements of collaboration, by using the 'Optional Form' box under 'Other Attachments' in Grants.gov during the application submission process.

For applications submitted in electronic format, acceptable formats are limited to Adobe Acrobat (.PDF) or Microsoft Word files. All applications must meet the information and formatting requirements specified in this FFO. The required Federal financial assistance forms, which include SF-424, SF-424A, SF-424B, CD-511, and if applicable, SF-LLL, can be obtained from the NOAA grants Website at: <http://apply07.grants.gov/apply/FormLinks?family=15> or requested by mail, email or telephone (see Section IV(A) 'Address to Request Application Package').

### C. Submission Dates and Times

Partnership applications for funding in fiscal year 2015 must be received and validated by Grants.gov on or before 11:59 p.m. EST on Wednesday, November 19, 2014. PLEASE NOTE: It may take Grants.gov up to two (2) business days to validate or reject the application. Please keep this in mind in developing your submission timeline. For applications submitted through Grants.gov, a date and time receipt indication by Grants.gov will be the basis of determining timeliness.

If for any reason applicants are unable to submit their application through Grants.gov or are concerned about possible problems associated with the Grants.gov system, they may provide a paper copy of their full application by mail. Applications submitted by mail must include all relevant application elements described above, must include a SF-424 form with original ink signature and date from an authorized recipient representative, and must be stamped with an official U.S. Postal Service postmark on or before 11:59 pm EST on Wednesday, November 19, 2014; 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.

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. 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 competition are subject to Executive Order 12372, intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs. Any applicant submitting an application for funding is required to complete item 19 on SF-424 regarding clearance by the State Single Point of Contact established as a result of EO 12372. The following states and territories have elected to require review of applications by a Single Point of Contact: American Samoa, CNMI, the District of Columbia, Florida, Guam, Puerto Rico, Texas, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. This list is not meant to be exhaustive and only includes the locations where most coral reef projects occur; applicants proposing work in alternate locations are advised to establish whether their application is subject to the EO 12372 prior to submission by reviewing the list of contacts provided at: [http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants\\_spoc](http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants_spoc).

## 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 proposed work. Allowable costs are determined by reference to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Circulars. By January, 2015 current OMB Circulars A-21, A-87, and A-122 will have been replaced by OMB Circulars 2 CFR, Part 220, "Cost Principles for Educational Institutions"; 2 CFR, Part 225, "Cost Principles for State, Local and Indian Tribal Governments"; and 2 CFR, Part 230 "Cost Principles for Nonprofit Organizations", respectively. Recipients will be subject to these new OMB Circulars and as well as any Department of Commerce implementing regulation that may be in effect. Generally, costs that are allowable include salaries, fringe benefits, travel, equipment, supplies, and training, as long as the costs are determined to be necessary, reasonable, and allocable to the award.

### 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 managed 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. For applicants who intend to conduct research or monitoring activities on any coral species that are listed as endangered under the Endangered Species Act, you will likely need a ESA Section 10(a)(1)(A) permit, for more information see:

<http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/permits/corals.htm>. Even though the agency's determination on whether to list additional coral species under ESA had not been made prior to the publication of this announcement, it is beneficial for applicants to prepare to start the permit application process as soon as possible after finalization of any new listing since the permitting process may take up to a year to complete.

Applicants are expected to design their proposals so that they minimize 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 proposed activities 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](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. Equipment purchases proposed as part of an application to this program will be reviewed on a case by case basis.

#### F. Other Submission Requirements

None.

Please address applications to Jenny Waddell at the NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program, 1305 East West Highway, SSMC4, 10th floor, Silver Spring, MD 20910.

## V. Application Review Information

### A. Evaluation Criteria

An initial administrative review is conducted on each application to determine compliance with application requirements and completeness of the application materials. Applications that meet the minimum requirements will be peer-reviewed by a minimum of 3 individuals with coral reef and fisheries management experience. Their evaluation will be based solely on the information included in the application, and their ratings will be used to produce a rank order of the proposals. Each reviewer will individually evaluate and rank proposals using the following weighted evaluation criteria:

1) Importance and/or relevance and applicability of proposed project to the CRCP goals (25%): This ascertains whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and relevance to the goals and priorities of NOAA's Coral Reef Conservation Program, and/or Federal, regional, state, or local goals and priorities, and whether the proposed work will result in direct benefit to coral reef resources and ecosystems. Proposals 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 proposal must demonstrate that the proposed coral reef management activities are part of a comprehensive and integrated approach to address established coral reef conservation goals of the jurisdiction and/or national program.

2) Technical/scientific merit and adequacy of implementation plan (30%): 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 each task or activity. Project proposals must: (a) Incorporate an assessment of project success in terms of meeting the proposed objectives; (b) Demonstrate that the conservation activity will be sustainable and long-lasting; and (c) Provide assurance that implementation of the project will meet state and local environmental laws and Federal consistency requirements by obtaining all necessary permits and consultations.

3) Overall qualifications of applicants (25%): This criterion ascertains whether, based on the information contained in the application, the applicant possesses the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project and administer the award. For this competition, the proposal must also demonstrate coordination with applicable ongoing coral reef management activities.

4) Project costs (15%): The Budget is evaluated to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time-frame. The budget must reflect the applicant's

ability to complete the work within the constraints of the funding and time period proposed in the application. 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. Proposals will also be evaluated on their ability to demonstrate that significant benefit will be generated for the most reasonable cost.

5) Outreach and education (5%): NOAA assesses whether this project provides an effective education and outreach component that supports NOAA's mission to protect the Nation's natural resources. Because awards made under this competition are intended to benefit the state and territorial government agencies with primary responsibility for managing U.S. coral reef ecosystems, applicants must describe how proposed activities and project results will be disseminated to the local coral reef management community and how data and information will be transmitted in accordance with the application's Data and Information Sharing Plan, which is described in Section IV(B)12.

#### B. Review and Selection Process

An initial administrative review is conducted on each application to determine compliance with application requirements and completeness of application materials. Applications that meet the minimum requirements will be reviewed by at least three independent peer reviewers with coral reef and/or fisheries management experience during a merit-based review and ranking process. Appropriate mechanisms will be implemented to avoid potential conflicts of interest during the proposal review process. Each reviewer will be asked to individually evaluate and rank proposals using the weighted evaluation criteria above. Proposal evaluations will be based exclusively on information included in the application. Merit reviewer ratings will be used to produce a rank order of the proposals.

Once the peer review process has been completed, a committee of CRCP representatives will meet to discuss the pre-applications, pursuant to the criteria described above and in Section X of the Coral Reef Conservation Grant Program Implementation Guidelines (<http://coralreef.noaa.gov/aboutcrp/workwithus/funding/grants/welcome.html>). The committee will consider the proposal rankings and the comments of the merit reviewers, as well as other available information about the applicant's past performance, quality of work, and success under previous awards. Based on this review and the merit review evaluations, the committee will assign a preliminary funding recommendation for each application and forward the top ranked proposal(s) to the Selecting Official for final recommendation. The Selecting Official or their designee may negotiate the funding level or other major aspects of the proposal, and the Selecting Official will make the final recommendation for award to the Grants Officer, who is authorized to obligate Federal funding.

#### C. Selection Factors

The review and selection process shall provide a rank order of proposals that will be presented to the Selecting Official for final funding recommendations. The CRCP competition manager may make recommendations to the Selecting Official applying the selection factors below. The Selecting Official shall award in rank order unless there is justification for selecting a proposal 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 as stated in Sections I A and B of this funding opportunity;
5. Applicant's prior award performance;
6. Partnerships and/or participation of targeted groups; and
7. Adequacy of information necessary for NOAA to make a NEPA determination and draft necessary documentation before recommendations for funding are made to the NOAA Grants Officer.

#### D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

The anticipated start date for awards made under this competition is either September 1, 2015 or October 1, 2015.

## VI. Award Administration Information

### A. Award Notices

The NOAA Grants Management Division (GMD) will contact the selected applicant by sending an email to the applicant organization's authorized representative to confirm that their application has been preliminarily selected for funding. Applicants may be requested to



modify activities, budgets or other components of the project, and possibly incorporate reduced funding levels as recommended through the review process, and submit a revised application before final funding decisions are made. The exact amount of funds to be awarded, the final scope of activities, the project duration, and other relevant application details will be determined in pre-award negotiations among the applicant, NOAA GMD, and CRCP staff. The earliest start date for projects will be September 1, 2015, dependent upon availability of Federal funding as provided by Congress, acceptable completion of all NOAA/applicant negotiations including NEPA analysis and permit requirements, and the provision of other supporting documentation as requested.

Projects may 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 competition 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 and will be applied on a case-by-case basis. Applicants are strongly encouraged to review award documents carefully before accepting a Federal award to ensure 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, application materials may be considered public documents and may be released to individuals 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.

Unsuccessful applicants will be notified by e-mail that their application was not recommended for funding after the final section package has been approved by NOAA GMD. Unsuccessful applications submitted to this competition will be retained for a period of up to 12 months and then destroyed.

If no proposal is funded in the current fiscal period, a proposal may be considered for funding in another fiscal period without NOAA repeating the competitive process outlined in this announcement.

## B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

### 1. Indirect Costs:

Please see Section III(C) for more information on indirect costs and the process for establishing a new indirect cost rate with the Department of Commerce.

2. System for Award Management. To enable the use of a universal identifier and to enhance the quality of information available to the public as required by the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006, to the extent applicable, any applicant awarded in response to this announcement will be required to use the System for Award Management (SAM) at: <https://www.sam.gov/portal/public/SAM/>.

3. Dun and Bradstreet Universal Numbering System. Applicants are required to use the Dun and Bradstreet Universal Numbering System and are subject to reporting requirements identified in OMB guidance published at 2 CFR Part 25 ([http://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?c=ecfr&tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title02/2cfr25\\_main\\_02.tpl](http://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?c=ecfr&tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title02/2cfr25_main_02.tpl)).

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

5. Limitation of Liability. In no event will NOAA or the Department of Commerce be responsible for application preparation costs. Publication of this announcement does not oblige NOAA to award any specific project.

6. Award Standard Terms and Conditions. Successful applicants that accept an award under this solicitation will be bound by Department of Commerce, Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions, which may be found at: [http://www.osec.doc.gov/oam/grants\\_management/policy/documents/DOC\\_Standard\\_Terms\\_and\\_Conditions\\_01\\_10\\_2013.pdf](http://www.osec.doc.gov/oam/grants_management/policy/documents/DOC_Standard_Terms_and_Conditions_01_10_2013.pdf).

7. National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Please review the NEPA information and respond to the specific questions contained in Section IV(B)13 of this announcement.

8. Unpaid or delinquent tax liability. In accordance with current Federal appropriations law, NOAA requires than an authorized representative of the applicant organization certify that the organization has no Federally-assessed unpaid or delinquent tax liability or felony criminal convictions under any Federal law.

### 9. Paperwork Reduction Act Statement

Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average three hours per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other suggestions for reducing this burden to Steve Kokkinakis, NOAA Office of Program Planning and Integration, SSMC 3, Room 15723, 1315 East West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910. The information collection does not request any proprietary or confidential information. No confidentiality is provided.

Notwithstanding any other provisions of the law, no person is required to respond to, nor shall any person be subjected to a penalty for failure to comply with, a collection of information subject to the requirements of the Paperwork Reduction Act, unless that collection of information displays a currently valid OMB Control Number. NOAA's OMB Approval No.:0648-0538.

#### 10. 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 Federally-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 described in Section IV(B)12.

#### 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 14: Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Other Agreements with Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals and Other Non-Profit Organizations or 15 CFR Part 24: Grants and Cooperative Agreements with State and Local Governments. 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. 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. Instructions for submitting financial and progress reports will be provided by NOAA upon request.

A comprehensive final report is due 90 days after the award expiration date along with copies of all products developed under the award. Copies of all materials (including but not limited to brochures, posters, videos, DVDs, publications, reports, management plans, public

service announcements, 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 must be of publishable quality, and include a citation and 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." If the applicant has requested publication costs, resulting journal publications must be made available to the public free of charge.

Successful applicants will be requested to ensure that all interim progress reports indicate whether financial reports have been submitted to NOAA's Grants Management Division and are up-to-date. In their final progress report, applicants will be asked to a) clearly state the resulting impact of their project with respect to coral reef conservation; and b) certify that "Final financial reports have been submitted to NOAA's Grants Management Division and a final funding draw-down has been made through the Automated Standard Application for Payments (ASAP)."

The Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006 includes a requirement for awardees of applicable Federal grants to report information about first-tier subawards and executive compensation under Federal assistance awards issued in FY 2011 or later. All awardees of applicable grants and cooperative agreements are required to report to the Federal Subaward Reporting System (FSRS) available at [www.FSRS.gov](http://www.FSRS.gov) on all subawards over \$25,000.

If equipment or tangible property is purchased with grant funds, applicants shall submit an inventory in accordance with 15 CFR 14.34(f)(3), 15 CFR 24.32(b), or 15 CFR 24.32(d)(2) by submitting the applicable SF-428 forms annually and in the final progress report. SF-428 forms may be attached as an appendix to progress reports. The program office recommends that if the equipment is no longer needed, recipients are encouraged to request disposition instructions for equipment approximately 150 days before the project period ends to allow sufficient time to have equipment disposition requests addressed before a project ends. Equipment disposition instructions typically require that recipients complete an "other" award action request in Grants Online. NOAA will provide instructions for disposition in accordance with 15 CFR 14.34(g and h) and 15 CFR 24.32(g)(2) upon request.

## VII. Agency Contacts

The Federal Program Officer and technical point of contact for the FY15 Coral Reef NGO Partnership Competition is Jenny Waddell. She can be reached by phone at 301-713-3155, extension 150 or by email at [Jenny.Waddell@noaa.gov](mailto: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

Potential funding applicants must register with Grants.gov before application materials can be submitted. An organization's one time registration process may take up to three weeks to complete so please allow sufficient time to ensure applications are submitted before the closing date. To use Grants.gov, applicants must have a Dun and Bradstreet Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number and be registered in the System for Award Management (SAM), which may be found at: <https://www.sam.gov/portal/public/SAM/>. Please allow a minimum of five days to complete the SAM registration. (Note: Your organization's Employer Identification Number (EIN) will be needed on the application.)

The Grants.gov site contains directions for submitting an application and the application package (forms); it is also where the completed application is submitted. Applicants using Grants.gov must locate the downloadable application package for this solicitation by the Funding Opportunity Number (NOAA-NOS-OCRM-2015-2004211) or the CFDA number (11.482). Applicants will be able to download a copy of the application package, complete it off line, and then upload and submit the application via the Grants.gov site.

Within 24 to 48 hours after electronic submission of the application, the person submitting the application will receive two e-mail messages from Grants.gov updating them on the progress of their application. The first e-mail will confirm receipt of the application by the Grants.gov system, and the second will indicate that the application has either been successfully validated by the system prior to transmission to the grantor agency or has been rejected due to errors. After the application has been validated, this same person will receive another e-mail to indicate that the application has been downloaded by the Federal agency.

There is no guarantee that funds will be available to make awards for this Federal funding opportunity or that any proposal will be selected for funding. If an applicant incurs any costs prior to receiving an award agreement signed by an authorized NOAA official, they do so at their own risk of these costs not being included in a subsequent award. In no event will NOAA or the Department of Commerce be responsible for any proposal preparation costs. In addition, NOAA and DOC will not be responsible for proposal or project costs if this program fails to receive funding. Recipients and sub-recipients are subject to all federal laws and agency policies, regulations, and procedures applicable to

federal financial assistance awards. Applicants must be in good standing with all existing NOAA grants and/or cooperative funding agreements in order to receive funds under this announcement.

The NOAA program office reserves the right to immediately halt activity under the award if the recipient fails to fulfill the requirements of the project as described in the final negotiated application submitted to the agency. Non-compliance may result in termination of the award.

NOAA will not release the names of applicants submitting proposals unless ordered by a court or requested to do so by an appropriate NOAA official and administrative protocol. Applicants may use a public search feature to access information about NOAA awards: <https://grantsonline.rdc.noaa.gov/flows/publicSearch/begin.do> or go through the Freedom of Information Act process. More information about the NOAA FOI process is available online at: <http://www.rdc.noaa.gov/~foia/>.