

SUPPORTING STATEMENT
U.S. Department of Commerce
National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration
NOAA Competitive Research Program Grants Proposal Application Package
OMB Control No. 0648-0384

SUPPORTING STATEMENT PART A

Abstract

This request is for a revision and extension of a currently approved information collection. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Coastal Ocean Program (COP) now known as the Competitive Research Program (CRP) under the National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science provides direct financial assistance through grants and cooperative agreements for research supporting the management of coastal ecosystems and the NOAA Restore Science Program. The statutory authority for COP is P.L. 102-567 Section 201 (Coastal Ocean Program). NOAA was authorized to establish and administer the Restore Science Program, in consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, by the Resources and Ecosystems Sustainability, Tourist Opportunities, and Revived Economies (RESTORE) of the Gulf States Act of 2012 (Public Law 112-141, Section 1604). Identified in the RESTORE Act as the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Science, Observation, Monitoring, and Technology Program, the Program is commonly known as the NOAA RESTORE Science Program (RSP). In addition to standard government application requirements, applicants for financial assistance are required to submit a project summary form, current and pending support form and a data management form for both programs. The data management form is an addition to the application package. Data Management is a required element of the application package and the use of this form will reduce the public burden by providing a specific format instead of requiring each applicant to create their own format. CRP recipients are required to file annual progress reports and a project final report using CRP formats. The RSP recipients are required to file semiannual progress reports, a final report and a Gantt chart showing project milestones using RSP formats. All of these requirements are needed for better evaluation of proposals and monitoring of awards.

Justification

1. Explain the circumstances that make the collection of information necessary. Identify any legal or administrative requirements that necessitate the collection. Attach a copy of the appropriate section of each statute and regulation mandating or authorizing the collection of information.

Beginning in late FY1998, the National Ocean and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA's) National Ocean Service (NOS), Coastal Ocean Program (COP) now known as the Competitive Research Program (CRP) under the National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science was able to provide direct financial assistance in the form of discretionary research grants and cooperative agreements under its own program for the management of coastal ecosystems. COP financial assistance had been previously provided to non-profit organizations and educational institutions through joint participation in the Sea Grant omnibus vehicle.

The CRP is part of a unique federal-academic partnership designed to provide predictive capability for managing coastal ecosystems. Under the authority of [33 U.S.C. Section 1442](#) (<https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/USCODE-2023-title33/pdf/USCODE-2023-title33-chap27->

[subchapII-sec1442.pdf](#)), “Research program respecting possible long-range effects of pollution, overfishing, and man-induced changes of ocean ecosystems”, CRP supports research on critical issues associated with the Nation’s estuaries, coastal waters and the Great Lakes, and translates its finding into accessible information for coastal managers, planners, lawmakers and the public. CRP’s projects are multi-disciplinary, large in scale and long in duration (usually three to five years). Grants monies are available for related activities. Multi-year funding will be funded incrementally.

Included in the request is the NOAA Restore Science Program (RSP). This program is housed in NOAA/NOS/NCCOS and provides direct financial assistance through grants and cooperative agreements for research, observation, and monitoring to support, to the maximum extent practicable, the long-term sustainability of the ecosystem, fish stocks, fish habitat, and the recreational, commercial, and charter-fishing industry in the Gulf of Mexico. NOAA was authorized to establish and administer the Program, in consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, by the [Resources and Ecosystems Sustainability, Tourist Opportunities, and Revived Economies \(RESTORE\) of the Gulf States Act of 2012](#) (Pub. L. 112–141, section 1604). Identified in the RESTORE Act as the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Science, Observation, Monitoring, and Technology Program, the Program is commonly known as the NOAA Restore Science Program.

All potential NOAA CRP and RSP grant recipients are required to submit the Standard Forms used by NOAA for Federal grants as follows: SF-424; the SF-424A, Budget Information for Non-Construction Programs; the SF-424B, Assurances for Non-Construction Programs; the CD-511 and 512 Certifications and the SF-LLL (lobbying form) if applicable.

At the time of application, CRP and RSP grant applicants will be asked to include a CRP Project Summary (Abstract) Form, a Data Management Form and a Current and Pending Support Form in addition to the standard application requirements for Federal grants. Copies of these proposed forms are included in this request. The main purpose of this information collection is to enable CRP and RSP to provide summaries of each proposed project and their current and pending Federal funding. The information gathered will enable CRP and RSP to properly and quickly evaluate proposals in a collaborative environment with its partner agencies.

CRP grant recipients will also be required to file CRP Annual Progress Reports and a CRP Project Final Report. RSP grant recipients will be required to file RSP Semi-Annual Progress Reports, a Gantt Chart and an RSP Project Final Report. The proposed formats are included in this request. The CRP Annual Progress Report and the CRP Project Final Report provide a consistent, detailed format to grantees.

Revisions:

The Data Management form template is an addition to the application package. Data Management is a required element of the application package and the use of this form will reduce the public burden by providing a specific format instead of requiring each applicant to create their own format.

Project Summary (Abstract) Form:

The Project Summary (Abstract) Form provided at time of application includes a statement of objectives, methods to be employed and the significance of the proposed activity to the advancement of knowledge or education. This information collection shall not be more than one page in length and must be written in the third person. The summary is used to help compare proposals quickly and allows the respondents to summarize these key points in their own words.

Current and Pending Federal Funding Form:

The Current and Pending Federal Funding Form provided at the time of application describes all current and pending federal financial/funding support for all principal and co-investigators, including unfunded collaborators making a substantial contribution to the research. Continuing grants are also included. This information allows merit reviewers and Federal Program Managers to determine the capability of the investigator and collaborators to complete the proposed work in light of present commitments to other projects.

Data Management Form:

Data Management is a required element of the application package and the use of this form will reduce the public burden by providing a specific format instead of requiring each applicant to create their own format. This information is used to compare the proposed data management plans between proposals.

Reporting Requirements:

Consistency in reporting requirements for competitive research grant programs is desirable and this is behind the CRP and RSP efforts in proposing a standardized format/form. In accordance with current OMB guidance, recipients are responsible for managing and monitoring each project, program, sub-award, function or activity supported by an award. The Federal awarding agency prescribes the frequency with which the performance reports shall be submitted, which typically shall not be required more frequently than quarterly or less frequently than annually. A final report will be required upon expiration or termination of grant support.

Format – Annual Performance Report:

The format chosen provides the minimum information required by this program to evaluate the project's progress with respect to its goals and objectives, schedule for accomplishments, and application to resource management. It has been determined that with respect to research, semi-annual reports are an unnecessary reporting burden for established long term programs, especially for large multi-investigator projects typical of the CRP. The request for annual performance reports has been accepted and approved by the NOAA Grants Management Division for CRP-sponsored grants and cooperative agreements.

Format- RSP Semi-Annual Report:

The format chosen provides the minimum information required by this program to evaluate the project's progress with respect to its goals and objectives, schedule for accomplishments, and application to resource management. It has been determined that semi-annual progress reporting is necessary for newer established programs.

Format – RSP Gantt Chart:

The format chosen provides the recipients with a consistent way to show the milestones across projects. This format allows the recipients to easily follow and update their progress.

Format – CRP Final Report:

The use of the Project Final Report format provides the level of detail required to evaluate the effort invested by investigators and staff on project management; any actual accomplishments and research findings; and what goals and objectives were attained

2. Indicate how, by whom, and for what purpose the information is to be used. Except for a new collection, indicate the actual use the agency has made of the information received from the current collection.

Project Summary (Abstract) Form:

The summary is used to help compare proposals quickly by the reviewing officials in the competitive process. It is submitted at time of application by the applicant.

Current and Pending Federal Funding Form:

The current and pending form is used by Federal Program Managers and merit reviewers to evaluate and determine the capability of the investigator and collaborators to complete the proposed work in light of present commitments to other projects. It is submitted at time of application by the applicant.

Data Management Format:

Use of the format will reduce the public burden by providing a specific format instead of requiring each applicant to create their own format. The form is used by the Federal Program Manager and the merit reviewers to determine if the data plan meets the DOC requirements for grants. This form is submitted at the time of application by the applicant.

Semi-Annual Report:

Use of the format will provide RSP Federal Program Managers with the necessary information required to evaluate performance of the newly established program. A copy of the semi-annual progress report is maintained in the RSP Program Information File. It is electronically transmitted to the Grants Management Division (GMD) through the NOAA eRA Commons system by the award recipient.

Gantt Chart:

The Gantt chart is submitted by the applicant in the initial application submission and updated during the semi-annual progress reporting periods. The chart is used by the Program Manager to ensure the project is progressing as expected.

Annual Report:

For the proposed progress report format, the first section is taken from the CRP-implementation plan and has some advantages in that previously-funded investigators will be familiar with the format. Use of this format will provide CRP with the necessary information required to evaluate performance of the project. Since CRP's grants are typically three to five years in duration, one annual report will be requested at the end of each year funded. A copy of the annual progress report is maintained in the CRP Program Information File and it is electronically transmitted to the Grants Management Division (GMD) through the NOAA eRA Commons system.

Final Reports:

Final reports are reviewed to determine if any information products were delivered by the grantee. In addition, the final report is used as a management tool by program managers to determine recipient compliance and performance with the terms and conditions of the grant.

3. Describe whether, and to what extent, the collection of information involves the use of automated, electronic, mechanical, or other technological collection techniques or other forms of information technology, e.g. permitting electronic submission of responses, and the basis for the decision for adopting this means of collection. Also, describe any consideration of using information technology to reduce burden.

There is internet availability of the grant application kit on the NCCOS's home page at: <https://coastalscience.noaa.gov/about/funding-opportunities/>. The website offers the public the ability to print all CRP and RSP required forms with accompanying instructions from the internet. Applicants are able to electronically submit grant applications at: www.grants.gov and the progress reports can be submitted electronically by those recipients having electronic access via [eRA Commons](#).

4. Describe efforts to identify duplication. Show specifically why any similar information already available cannot be used or modified for use for the purposes described in Question 2

No duplication has been identified for the Abstract, Current and Pending, Milestone chart and the Data Management form. These forms do not have a government-wide standard format. The semiannual, annual and final progress report templates are much more targeted than the government-wide standard progress reporting format and allow the grant recipients and program managers to focus on the most important aspects of each funded project. These forms are necessary due to the need to measure agency progress against the Government Performance and Results Act.

5. If the collection of information impacts small businesses or other small entities, describe any methods used to minimize burden.

Although some of the respondents may be categorized as small businesses, the collection of information is not expected to have a significant economic impact or burden on small businesses in terms of time and resources. Therefore, no special modifications of the requirements were considered necessary.

6. Describe the consequence to Federal program or policy activities if the collection is not conducted or is conducted less frequently, as well as any technical or legal obstacles to reducing burden.

Summaries are submitted only at the time of application and efficient review of the proposals is not possible without these documents. If annual and final reports are not submitted, monitoring of grant performance would be much more difficult to measure agency progress against the Government Performance and Results Act and there would be less benefit to other professionals from the projects.

7. Explain any special circumstances that would cause an information collection to be conducted in a manner inconsistent with OMB guidelines.

This collection will be conducted in a manner consistent with OMB guidelines.

8. If applicable, provide a copy and identify the date and page number of publications in the Federal Register of the agency's notice, required by 5 CFR 1320.8 (d), soliciting comments on the information collection prior to submission to OMB. Summarize public comments received in response to that notice and describe actions taken by the agency in response to these comments. Specifically address comments received on cost and hour burden.

A Federal Register Notice published on August, 16, 2024 (2024-18438 (89 FR 66688)). Comments closed on 10/15/24 and none were received.

NOAA consulted with five recent grant recipients to obtain their views on the availability of data, frequency of collection, the clarity of instructions and recordkeeping, disclosure, reporting format and on the data elements to be reported. One comment was received which agreed with the estimates provided. No other comments were received before this submission.

9. Explain any decision to provide any payment or gift to respondents, other than remuneration of contractors or grantees.

No payments or gifts are provided (other than grant monies).

10. Describe any assurance of confidentiality provided to respondents and the basis for the assurance in statute, regulation, or agency policy. If the collection requires a systems of records notice (SORN) or privacy impact assessment (PIA), those should be cited and described here.

As stated on the forms, grant files are subject to the [Freedom of Information Act](#) (FOIA). However, the forms also state, unpublished research results shall not be published without prior permission from the recipient.

11. Provide additional justification for any questions of a sensitive nature, such as sexual behavior or attitudes, religious beliefs, and other matters that are commonly considered private. This justification should include the reasons why the agency considers the questions necessary, the specific uses to be made of the information, the explanation to be given to persons from whom the information is requested, and any steps to be taken to obtain their consent.

There are no sensitive questions.

12. Provide estimates of the hour burden of the collection of information.

In the research grant environment, applicants have staff dedicated to the submission of proposals, including clerical support. Both time and dollar costs are charged to grantors under the general and administrative overhead line item on the proposal budget. This includes hours spent for preparation of the other reports.

Information Collection	Type of Respondent (e.g., Occupational Title)	# of Respondents/ year (a)	Annual # of Responses / Respondent (b)	Total # of Annual Responses (c) = (a) x (b)	Burden Hrs / Response (d)	Total Annual Burden Hrs (e) = (c) x (d)	Hourly Wage Rate (for Type of Respondent) (f)	Total Annual Wage Burden Costs (g) = (e) x (f)
Summary (Abstract)	Secretaries and Administrative Assistants	300	1	300	.5	150	\$21.87	\$3,280.50
Current and Pending	Secretaries and Administrative Assistants	300	1	300	.5	150	\$21.87	\$3,280.50
Data Management	Secretaries and Administrative Assistants	300	1	300	.5	150	\$21.87	\$3,280.50
Annual Report	Secretaries and Administrative Assistants	50	1	50	5.0	250	\$21.87	\$5,467.50
Semiannual Report	Secretaries and Administrative Assistants	50	2	100	5.5	550	\$21.87	\$12,028.50
Final Report (CRP)	Secretaries and Administrative Assistants	25	1	25	10	250	\$21.87	\$5,467.50
Final Report (RSP)	Secretaries and Administrative Assistants	25	1	25	10.5	262.5	\$21.87	\$5,740.88
Gantt Chart	Secretaries and Administrative Assistants	300	1	300	.5	150	\$21.87	\$3,280.50
Totals				1400		1912.50		\$41,826.38

Occupation Code 43-6014, Secretaries and Administrative Assistants, Except Legal, Medical, and Executive, was used to determine the hourly wage rate for the respondents. (https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes_nat.htm#43-0000)

13. Provide an estimate for the total annual cost burden to respondents or record keepers resulting from the collection of information. (Do not include the cost of any hour burden already reflected on the burden worksheet).

There are no capital/start-up or ongoing operation/maintenance costs associated with this information collection.

14. Provide estimates of annualized cost to the Federal government. Also, provide a description of the method used to estimate cost, which should include quantification of hours, operational expenses (such as equipment, overhead, printing, and support staff), and any other expense that would not have been incurred without this collection of information.

The Commerce Alternative Personnel System (CAPS) pay tables (https://www.commerce.gov/sites/default/files/2024-01/CAPS_rpStandard_2024.pdf) were used to determine the base salary. The Rest of U.S. locality rate was used as NOAA employees are geographically dispersed. The average salary for a ZA-IV interval 1-3 was used to arrive at a base salary of \$131,134.50. A 1.5 multiplier was used to calculate the loaded salary of \$196,701.75, for an hourly rate of \$94.57 (\$196,701.75 / 2,080 hrs = \$94.57/hr).

Information Collection	Review Time (Minutes) (a)	Total # of Annual Responses (b)	Loaded Salary / Hr (c)	Total Annual Federal Labor Costs (d) = a/60 x b x c
Summary (Abstract)	5	300	\$94.57	\$2,364.25
Current and Pending	5	300	\$94.57	\$2,364.25
Data Management	5	300	\$94.57	\$2,364.25
Annual Report	23	50	\$94.57	\$1,812.59
Semiannual Report	23	100	\$94.57	\$3,625.18
Final Report (CRP)	23	25	\$94.57	\$906.30
Final Report (RSP)	23	25	\$94.57	\$906.30
Gantt Chart	20	300	\$94.57	\$9,457.00
Totals		1400		\$23,800.12

15. Explain the reasons for any program changes or adjustments reported in ROCIS.

Information Collection	Respondents		Responses		Burden Hours		Reason for change or adjustment
	Current Renewal / Revision	Previous Renewal / Revision	Current Renewal / Revision	Previous Renewal / Revision	Current Renewal / Revision	Previous Renewal / Revision	
Summary (Abstract)	300	300	300	300	150	150	
Current and Pending	300	900	300	900	150	450	
Data Management	300	0	300	0	150	0	New Requirement
Annual Report	50	50	50	50	250	400	
Semiannual Report	50	50	100	100	550	600	
Final Report (CRP)	25	25	25	25	250	300	
Final Report (RSP)	25	25	25	25	263	263	
Gantt Chart	300	150	300	150	150	150	
Total for Collection	1350	1500	1400	1550	1913	2313	
Difference	-150		-150		-400		

16. For collections of information whose results will be published, outline plans for tabulation and publication. Address any complex analytical techniques that will be used. Provide the time schedule for the entire project, including beginning and ending dates of the collection of information, completion of report, publication dates, and other actions.

Grants products may be published, but not applications or reports.

NOAA National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science will retain control over the information and safeguard it from improper access, modification, and destruction, consistent with NOAA standards for confidentiality, privacy, and electronic information. See response to Question 10 of this Supporting Statement for more information on confidentiality and privacy. The information collection is designed to yield data that meet all applicable information quality guidelines. Although the information collected is not expected to be disseminated directly to the public, results may be used in scientific, management, technical or general informational publications. Should NOAA National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science decide to disseminate the information, it will be subject to the quality control measures and pre-dissemination review pursuant to Section 515 of Public Law 106-554.

17. If seeking approval to not display the expiration date for OMB approval of the information collection, explain the reasons that display would be inappropriate.

The agency plans to display the expiration date for OMB approval of the information collection on all instruments.

18. Explain each exception to the certification statement identified in "Certification for Paperwork Reduction Act Submissions."

The agency certifies compliance with [5 CFR 1320.9](#) and the related provisions of [5 CFR 1320.8\(b\)\(3\)](#)