

ANNOUNCEMENT OF FEDERAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Federal Agency Name(s): Oceanic and Atmospheric Research (OAR), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Department of Commerce

Funding Opportunity Title: NOAA Sea Grant Aquaculture Research Program 2012

Announcement Type: Initial

Funding Opportunity Number: NOAA-OAR-SG-2012-2003249

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 11.417, Sea Grant Support

Dates: The deadline for receipt of preproposals via electronic mail at the National Sea Grant Office is 4:00 p.m. Eastern Time on February 7, 2012. By March 9, 2012, applicants should receive a summary statement that includes whether their preproposal is likely to fare well ("encouraged") or poorly ("discouraged") as a submitted full proposal. Only those who submit preproposals that meet the deadline, are responsive to this Federal Funding Opportunity, and meet all other requirements of this notice are eligible to submit full proposals. Full proposals are due by 4:00 p.m. Eastern Time on April 17, 2012. State Sea Grant Programs must forward applications unchanged to Grants.gov by 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time on May 9, 2012. Applications received after the closing dates and times will not be accepted.

Funding Opportunity Description: Depending on the availability of funds, NOAA expects to have approximately \$3,200,000 available for a national competition to fund marine aquaculture research projects for FY 2012. This is part of the overall plan to support the development of environmentally and economically sustainable ocean, coastal, or Great Lakes aquaculture. Aquaculture that occurs in the Great Lakes or its coastal zone is considered marine aquaculture for this competition. Priorities for this FY 2012 competition include: Research to inform specific regulatory decisions; Research that supports multi-use spatial planning; and Socio-economic research targeted to understand aquaculture in a larger context. Proposals must be able to express how the proposed work will have a high probability of significantly advancing U.S. marine aquaculture development in the short-term (1-2 years) or medium-term (3-5 years).

This Federal Funding Opportunity includes information on application and criteria for aquaculture research projects requesting a total of \$50,000 to \$500,000 in federal funding for up to a two-year period. Matching funds are required. Given the anticipated amount of funding and the anticipated number and quality of proposals submitted, it is anticipated that at least seven projects will be awarded in FY 2012. Additional proposals from this competition may be selected for funding in the next fiscal year, subject to the availability of funds. Ideally, awards are anticipated to start no later than September 1, 2012.

FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Program Objective

The NOAA National Sea Grant College Program was established by Congress to promote responsible use and conservation of the nation's ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes resources. Sea Grant carries out NOAA's mission of stewardship of our country's oceanic and atmospheric resources through a broadly based network of universities. Sea Grant aquaculture-related activities are integrated with the rest of NOAA via the NOAA Aquaculture Office, which includes activities across multiple NOAA Line Offices: Oceanic and Atmospheric Research (Sea Grant), the National Marine Fisheries Service (Office of Aquaculture, Fisheries Science Centers and Regional Offices), and the National Ocean Service (Beaufort Laboratory and Hollings Marine Laboratory). NOAA recognizes the role of other Departments, such as the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Department of Interior, and state and regional management partners in aquaculture and coordinates with other Department representatives at the regional level and at the national level through the Joint Subcommittee on Aquaculture.

This aquaculture research competition is designed to support the development of environmentally and economically sustainable ocean, coastal, or Great Lakes aquaculture. Therefore, proposed projects must support one or more of the goals stated in Sea Grant's National Strategic Plan (2009-2013) Focus Area of Safe and Sustainable Seafood Supply: 1) a sustainable supply of safe seafood to meet public demand; 2) a healthy domestic seafood industry that produces, processes, and markets seafood responsibly and efficiently; or 3) informed consumers who understand the importance of ecosystem health and sustainable harvesting practices to the future of our domestic fisheries, who appreciate the health benefits of seafood consumption, and who understand how to evaluate the safety of the seafood products they buy. Sea Grant's National Strategic Plan is available at http://www.seagrants.noaa.gov/other/admininfo/documents/0209_stratplan.pdf. These goals are consistent with those of the NOAA Aquaculture Policy and the Department of Commerce Aquaculture Policy, which are available at http://aquaculture.noaa.gov/us/aq_policies.html.

Projects supported under this funding opportunity must contribute to a measurable increase of one or both of the following national performance measures, which have been set by NOAA or component NOAA programs, including Sea Grant:

1. Number of fishers, resource managers, consumers, and seafood businesses (harvesters, aquaculturists, processors, and recreational fishers) who modify their practices using knowledge gained in fisheries sustainability, seafood safety, and the health benefits of seafood.

2. Economic (market and non-market) and societal benefits (jobs created and retained) derived from project activities (e.g., the discovery and/or application of new

aquaculture production and management models or techniques that lead to increased sustainability and productivity).

B. Program Priorities

The following are program priorities for this competition. The most successful proposals will address all of the following priorities:

1. Projects that have a high probability of significantly advancing U.S. marine aquaculture development in the short-term (1-2 years) or medium-term (3-5 years). Applicants must clearly demonstrate how their specific research project will advance marine aquaculture in the short-term and medium-term via a series of conditional ("if, then") statements.

2. Projects that directly address major constraints that currently limit development and progress of domestic aquaculture, and clearly focus on one or more of the three following topical areas:

a) Research to inform specific regulatory decisions: Targeted research that identifies environmental, biological, or technological impacts of aquaculture necessary for decision making on specific policy and permit issues. Applicants must be able to clearly articulate how their work will address a current and specific regulatory "standstill" and provide the contacts for the local, state, or federal agency involved.

b) Research that supports multi-use spatial planning, such as the development of planning tools or approaches for coastal managers to aid in site selection for new or expanded aquaculture facilities in the context of comprehensive ocean and coastal management and planning: Examples include tools or data to increase efficiency in permitting, case studies of development of model permit processes, and new approaches and mechanisms to improve coordination among federal and state agencies to facilitate timely permitting of commercial and restoration aquaculture projects, while ensuring effective protection of NOAA trust resources.

c) Socio-economic research targeted to understand aquaculture in a larger context: Research on the social and economic issues associated with current and new marine aquaculture. This includes, but is not limited to, valuation of ecosystem services, case studies of successful aquaculture development, public perception of aquaculture, interactions between aquaculture and other fishing industries including employment crossover between industries, economic effects of aquaculture on seafood supply and demand, and stakeholder involvement and conflict resolution.

3. Involve multiple partners (e.g., industry, academia, community collaboration, Sea Grant Programs, state and federal agencies), include extension and other outreach personnel, and demonstrate resource leveraging. Given that the results are intended to advance U.S. aquaculture in the short- and medium-term, careful consideration of partnerships is warranted.

4. Align with state Sea Grant Strategic Plans, the National Sea Grant Strategic Plan, a Sea Grant Regional Research and Information Plan, the NOAA Aquaculture Policy, or the Department of Commerce Aquaculture Policy.

5. Have impacts that can be applied to the regional scale, rather than those that only address local issues.

6. Directly or indirectly support the achievement of one or both of the national performance measures listed in section I.A., above. "Direct support" means the proposal includes one or both of the above performance measures, with targets, in its work plan. "Indirect support" means the proposal includes well-formed performance measures that the applicant credibly shows will lead to increased targets for one or both of the above national performance measures.

7. It is a programmatic priority to support aquaculture of ocean, coastal, or Great Lakes species (including state- and federally managed species).

8. It is a programmatic priority to support aquaculture occurring in the coastal zone (as defined by the Coastal Zone Management Act), including state waters and the terrestrial coastal zone, and federal waters. This includes the coastal zone of the Great Lakes Region.

9. It is not a programmatic priority to fund projects focused on catfish or tilapia production in this competition.

C. Program Authority

33 U.S.C. 1121 et seq.

II. Award Information

A. Funding Availability

Depending on the availability of funds and the quality of proposals, NOAA Sea Grant expects to have available up to \$3,200,000 for aquaculture research projects for FY 2012, with individual research projects funded at a total of \$50,000 to \$500,000 in federal funding (or \$75,000 to \$750,000 total funding, including required non-federal matching funds) for up to a two-year period. Additional match may be proposed, if appropriate. Given the anticipated amount of funding and the anticipated number and quality of proposals submitted, it is expected that at least seven projects will be awarded in FY 2012. Additional proposals from this competition may be selected for funding in the next fiscal year, subject to the availability of funds.

B. Project/Award Period

Projects can be for a maximum duration of two years, but shorter-term project proposals are also welcome. Ideally, awards are anticipated to start no later than September 1, 2012. Proposals must provide a project description and budget that can easily be divided into annual increments of significant work that result in solid

accomplishments.

C. Type of Funding Instrument

Applications selected for funding will be funded through grants or cooperative agreements. We will use cooperative agreements if the proposed project includes substantial NOAA involvement as described in the award. Examples of substantial NOAA involvement may include non-compensated collaboration in research or approval of key stages in the project before subsequent steps are undertaken.

III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applicants

Institutions of higher education, nonprofit organizations, commercial organizations, State, local and Indian tribal governments and individuals are eligible. Federal agencies and their personnel are not permitted to receive federal funding under this competition; however, federal scientists can serve as uncompensated partners or co-Principal Investigators on research proposals. Directors of the state Sea Grant Programs are not eligible to compete for funds under this announcement, although for administrative purposes, they will be considered to be the Principal Investigator for all awards made to their state programs.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement

Non-federal matching funds equal to at least 50 percent of the Federal funding request must be provided. In-kind contributions can count towards this matching requirement.

C. Other Criteria that Affect Eligibility

none

IV. Application and Submission Information

A. Address to Request Application Package

Applicants from Sea Grant States should contact the Sea Grant Program or project in their state prior to submission of a proposal to request application materials and instructions, or contact the Agency Contact listed in section VII to request application materials and instructions. The contact information for participating state Sea Grant Programs and Projects may be found at: http://www.seagrant.noaa.gov/nsi/2012/eligible_2012.htm or may also be obtained by contacting the Agency Contact listed in section VII.

Applicants *NOT* from Sea Grant States can submit applications to a nearby Sea Grant Program or directly to grants.gov. If they choose to submit to a Sea Grant Program, they should contact that program for application materials and instructions. If they choose to submit directly to grants.gov, they should obtain application

materials from <http://grants.gov> (search for opportunity number NOAA-OAR-SG-2012-2003249). Application materials may also be obtained by contacting the Agency Contact listed in section VII.

A Title Page template, Sea Grant 90-2 form, Sea Grant 90-4 form (OMB Control No. 0648-0362) and NEPA questionnaire (OMB Control No. 0648-0538) are available at <http://www.seagrant.noaa.gov/funding/forms.html> or may be requested from the Agency Contact listed in section VII.

B. Content and Form of Application

Applications must adhere to the provisions under Format Requirements and Content Requirements below. Applications received that deviate from content and format requirements will not be reviewed by NOAA.

Format Requirements for both preproposals and full proposals: All application materials should be composed in Portable Document Format (PDF) or a common word processing format, and when printed out should meet all format requirements. All pages must be single- or double-spaced, printed or typed in at least 12-point font, and printable on metric A4 (210 mm x 297 mm) or 8.5-inch x 11-inch paper, with 1-inch margins.

Preproposal Content Requirements:

The preproposal process is intended to provide an indication to potential applicants of the relevance of their proposed project and the likelihood of it being funded before preparing a full proposal. Thus, this process is intended to reduce the burden of preparing full proposals that do not have a high probability for funding. The criteria for encouragement of preproposals is how well a full proposal might fare using the evaluation criteria and weights and selection factors. Only those who submit preproposals that meet the deadline, are responsive to this Federal Funding Opportunity, and meet all other requirements of this notice are eligible to submit full proposals. Late or incomplete preproposals, as well as those that deviate from content or format requirements, will not be reviewed by NOAA, and any associated full proposal applications cannot be submitted.

Each preproposal should not exceed three typewritten pages (i.e., each side of the paper is one page) using the format described above and should provide:

- a) the title of the research project;
- b) the name and address of all investigators and partners;
- c) a background section that sets the stage for the work and identifies how the research would fit into one or more of the three topical priorities listed in section I.B (2), above;
- d) a rationale of why the work should be conducted;

- e) a clear statement of research objectives;
- f) the general methodology that will be used;
- g) a logical description of how the work supports (either directly or indirectly) one or both of the national performance measures listed in section I.A.; and
- h) an estimated budget amount.

In addition, and not counted towards the three-page limit, the applicant must provide:

- i) a one-page biography for each investigator;
- j) a cover page that includes the title of the research project, the name, affiliation, and address of the investigators with e-mail and phone contact information, the budgets requested, duration of the project (one or two years), and the date of submission; and
- k) Given that full proposals will be submitted through a state Sea Grant Program the applicant must identify the state Sea Grant program that is intended as the Program to submit the full proposal and describe the degree of interaction that has occurred before preproposal submission.

Full Proposal Content Requirements:

The following provisions for full proposals are mandatory. Only those who submit preproposals that meet the deadline, are responsive to this Federal Funding Opportunity, and meet all other requirements of this notice are eligible to submit full proposals. Brevity will assist reviewers and program staff in dealing effectively with proposals. Therefore, the Project Description may not exceed 15 pages (i.e., each side of the paper is one page). Tables and visual materials, including charts, graphs, maps, photographs and other pictorial presentations are included in the 15-page limit. The signed title page, project summary, references, budgets and budget notes, current and pending support sections, letters of support, and vitae do not count towards the 15-page limit. All information needed for review of the proposal must be included in the main text; no appendices are permitted. Applications received that deviate from this format will not be reviewed by NOAA.

For each full proposal the following information must be included:

- a. Signed title page (one-page maximum): The title page should clearly identify the program area being addressed by starting the project title with: a brief descriptive title of the proposal, followed by a hyphen and letters "PI" and the last name of the

Principle Investigator". For example, "A new site planning tool for aquaculture permitting - PI Smith". The title page must include the name, affiliation, and address of the investigators with e-mail and telephone numbers, the budgets requested and match offered for year one and, if applicable, for year two and a total budget figure, and the date of submission. An optional Title Page template is available at <http://www.seagrant.noaa.gov/funding/forms.html>.

b. Project Summary (two-page maximum for this section): It is critical that the project summary accurately describe the project being proposed and convey all essential elements of the project. Applicants must use the Sea Grant Form 90-2 for this purpose, found at <http://www.seagrant.noaa.gov/funding/forms.html>. The project summary must not exceed two pages and include: (a) Title: Use the exact title as it appears in the rest of the application; (b) Investigators: List the names and affiliations of each investigator who will significantly contribute to the project, starting with the Principal Investigator; (c) Funding request for each year of the project, including matching funds; (d) Project Period: Start and completion dates. Ideally, proposals should request a start date no later than September 1, 2012; and (e) a one-page Project Abstract: This abstract is intended for public distribution and must include the rationale for the project, the scientific or technical objectives and/or hypotheses to be tested, and a brief summary of work and accomplishments to be completed.

c. Project description (15-page maximum):

(1) Introduction/background/justification: Subjects that the applicant must include in this section are: (i) current state of knowledge of problem or issue and justification for proposed work; (ii) contributions that the study will make to the particular industry, subject area, or issue; and (iii) contributions the study will make toward addressing the problems identified in the appropriate state Sea Grant Strategic Plan Regional Research and Information Plan or National Sea Grant Strategic Plan.

(2) Research Work Plans and Milestone Chart: Include objectives to be achieved, hypotheses to be tested, how the objectives relate to each of the program priorities (listed in Section I.B), experimental design and statistical analyses, and role of all project personnel.

This section should also describe how the research, outreach, or other parts of the overall project will be integrated to effectively lead to the desired result. It should also discuss how the success of the project (i.e., objectives, timelines, milestones) will be measured and reported.

This section must either include one or both of the national performance measures listed in section I.A, with targets, or include other performance measures with targets, and provide an explanation of how achievement of these performance measure targets will lead to increased targets for one or more of the national performance measures in section I.A. The performance measures should be outcome-based rather than activity based.

This section must also include at least one milestone (a significant activity to be

performed or objective to be achieved) per year. Provide timeline(s) of major tasks covering the duration of the proposal project in a milestone chart.

(3) Outcome: Describe the project outcomes or benefits that will contribute to improving and further developing marine aquaculture in the U.S. Identify the planned outcomes in objective, quantifiable terms. The outcome should be a description of the desired end state to be achieved (for example, the desired changes adopted by the aquaculture industry), not just a description of the activities to be performed. Describe how the project outcomes will enhance sustainable domestic aquaculture. If appropriate, describe how the outcomes will affect an identified regional, state, or national aquaculture priority. Describe how the outcomes of the project will be measured and reported.

(4) Outreach Plan: Describe specific outreach goals, activities, and deliverables including publications, presentations, and public education. Provide a specific, measureable, time-bound work plan for these activities. Describe how the results of the project will benefit stakeholders (e.g., local coastal communities, public and private sectors).

(5) Coordination with other program elements: Describe any coordination with other agency programs or ongoing research efforts. Describe any other proposals or outside activities that are essential to the success of this proposal.

d. References and literature citations: Must be included as appropriate. This section does not count towards the 15-page project description maximum.

e. Budget and matching funds justification: Applications must reflect the total budget necessary to accomplish the project. There must be a separate budget for each year of the project as well as a cumulative budget for the entire project. Applicants must use the Sea Grant Budget Form 90-4 (<http://www.seagrants.noaa.gov/funding/forms.html>). Subcontracts must have a separate budget page. The appropriateness of all matching funds (including in-kind contributions) will be determined on the basis of guidance provided in applicable federal cost principles, and applicants will be bound by the percentage of matching funds in the grant award. Applicants must provide justification for all budget items in sufficient detail to enable review of the appropriateness of the funding requested. Pay special attention to any travel or supply budgets and provide details and see section IV.E. below for funding restrictions. This section does not count towards the 15-page project description maximum.

f. Current and pending support: Applicants must provide information on all current and pending federal and state (including state Sea Grant) support for ongoing projects and proposals, including subsequent funding in the case of continuing grants. The proposed project and all other projects or activities requiring a portion of time of the principal investigator and other senior personnel must be included. The relationship between the proposed project and these other projects must be described, and the number of person-months per year to be devoted to the projects must be stated. This section does not count towards the 15-page project description

maximum.

g. Letter(s) of support: Applicants may provide letters of support from stakeholders. Letters of support do not count towards the 15-page project description maximum.

h. Vitae (2 pages maximum per investigator). This section does not count towards the 15-page project description maximum.

i. List of all applicable permits that will be required to perform the proposed work. All proposals must respond to this required element whether or not permits are required. If no permits are requested, this section should indicate "no permits are required." This section does not count towards the 15-page project description maximum.

j. Standard application forms: Standard application forms (i.e., SF-424, SF-424A, SF-424B, CD-511) are available through Grants.gov. They are mandatory for a proposal application. This section does not count towards the 15-page project description maximum.

k. NOAA NEPA Questionnaire: As part of this application process, questions from "The Environmental Compliance Questionnaire for NOAA Federal Financial Assistance Applicants" (OMB Control No. 0648-0538) must be answered. This NEPA Questionnaire form is available at <http://www.seagrant.noaa.gov/funding/forms.html>. All applicants need to fill in sections A, D, E and F. If you are proposing activities Related to Damage Assessment and Restoration, also fill out section G. If you are proposing activities Related to Fisheries Sampling and Research, also fill out section H. Failure to complete all of the indicated questions will result in the application being considered incomplete.

Applications received after the deadline or applications that deviate from the format described will not be reviewed.

C. Submission Dates and Times

Preproposals must be received by electronic mail by the National Sea Grant Office at 4:00 p.m. Eastern Time on February 7, 2012. By March 9, 2012, applicants should receive a summary statement that includes whether their preproposal is likely to fare well ("encouraged") or poorly ("discouraged") as a submitted full proposal. Full proposals are due at 4:00 p.m. Eastern Time on April 17, 2012, regardless of where they are submitted. State Sea Grant Programs must forward all full proposal applications unchanged to Grants.gov by 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time on May 9, 2012. Applications received after any of the published deadlines will not be reviewed by NOAA.

The timeliness of applications received through Grant.gov will be determined by the date and time indicator included when applications are submitted. Note: Grants.gov requires applicants to register with the system prior to submitting an

application. This registration process can take several weeks, involving multiple steps. The timeliness of applications received through Sea Grant Programs will be certified by the receiving Sea Grant Program.

Although contact with state Sea Grant Programs is not required for preproposals or full proposals for this funding opportunity, it is highly recommended that interested applicants contact the Sea Grant Program in their state prior to submission of a preproposal or full proposal to discuss the process for submitting and the required form and content of the application. There is no deadline by which these preliminary discussions must take place, but failure to submit a correct and complete full proposal by the proposal deadline of submission to the State Sea Grant Program, because the above issues were not fully discussed and resolved in time, will result in rejection of the application by NOAA.

D. Intergovernmental Review

Applications under this Program are not subject to Executive Order 12372, "Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs."

E. Funding Restrictions

Federal funding received under this Federal Funding Opportunity is prohibited by 33 USC 1124(d)(2) from being used for the purchase or rental of any land or the purchase, rental, construction, preservation, or repair of any building, dock, or vessel, except for: (1) the short-term rental of buildings or facilities for meetings in direct support of this project; (2) purchase, rental, construction, preservation, or repair of non-self-propelled habitats, buoys, platforms, and other similar devices or structures approved by NOAA, and (3) rental of any research vessel which is used in direct support of this project and approved by NOAA.

F. Other Submission Requirements

none

Address for Submission of Preproposals:

Preproposals must be submitted via electronic mail to oar.hq.sg.aquaculture@noaa.gov.

Note: e-mail is not secure and may be read by others than the intended recipient. If you are concerned with the security of your preproposal, or if the size of your preproposal is larger than can be accommodated by our e-mail system (approximately 10 megabytes) or by your e-mail system, please contact the person listed in Agency Contacts prior to the submission due date to request a secure file transfer. Include your name and valid e-mail address in the request.

Address for Submission of Full Proposals:

Applicants from Sea Grant states must submit full proposals to the address provided by their participating Sea Grant Program or Project, following specific instructions on how proposals must be submitted provided by their Sea Grant Program or Project. Those Sea Grant Programs or Projects must submit full proposals received to Grants.gov (address opportunity number NOAA-OAR-SG-2012-2003249).

Applicants *NOT* From Sea Grants States submit their full proposals to a nearby State Sea Grant Program to the address provided by that Program, or directly to Grants.gov. If submitted electronically, via Grants.gov, address opportunity number NOAA-OAR-SG-2012-2003249.

The contact information for participating state Sea Grant Programs and Projects may be found at: http://www.seagrant.noaa.gov/nsi/2012/eligible_2012.htm or may also be obtained by contacting the Agency Contact listed in section VII. If an applicant or Sea Grant Program does not have proven internet access, contact the Agency Contact listed in section VII for submission instructions for hard copies. The hard copy must be received by the deadline, so it is recommended that you use a carrier that will guarantee timely delivery and provide tracking documentation.

V. Application Review Information

A. Evaluation Criteria

1. Importance and/or relevance and applicability of proposed project to the National Sea Grant program goals (maximum - 30): This ascertains whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and/or relevance to NOAA, Federal, regional, State, or local activities. For this competition, this ascertains:

a) If the proposed project has a high probability of significantly advancing U.S. marine aquaculture development in the short-term (1-2 years) or medium-term (3-5 years). Applicants must clearly demonstrate how their specific research project will advance marine aquaculture in the short-term and medium-term via a series of conditional ("if, then") statements; and

b) how the proposed project will directly address major constraints that currently limit development and progress of domestic aquaculture, and will clearly focus on one or more of the three following topical areas :

i. Research to inform specific regulatory decisions: Targeted research that identifies environmental, biological, or technological impacts of aquaculture necessary for decision making on specific policy and permit issues. Applicants must be able to clearly articulate how their work will address a current and specific regulatory "standstill" and provide the contacts for the local, state, or federal agency involved.

ii. Research that supports multi-use spatial planning, such as the development

of planning tools or approaches for coastal managers to aid in site selection for new or expanded aquaculture facilities in the context of comprehensive ocean and coastal management and planning.

iii. Socio-economic research targeted to understand aquaculture in a larger context: Research on the social and economic issues associated with current and new marine aquaculture.

2. Technical/scientific merit (maximum - 30 points): This assesses whether the approach is technically sound and/or innovative, if the methods are appropriate, and whether there are clear project goals and objectives. For this competition, this ascertains:

(a) the quality of the work plan, and if it includes (if appropriate) plans for identifying and conducting future research or other future actions;

(b) if the proposal includes all components (research, outreach, extension, etc) necessary to achieve the desired outcome and an effective plan to integrate all components;

(c) if the proposal contributes to one or both of the performance measures identified in section I.A, with targets; and

(d) if the proposal includes a concrete, unambiguous specific desired outcome, and has a good chance of achieving that outcome (including meeting stated national performance measure targets) and if the proposal includes a way to objectively determine its success at achieving its outcomes.

3. Overall qualifications of applicants (maximum - 10 points): This ascertains whether the applicant possesses the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project. This includes their record of achievement with previous funding.

4. Project costs (maximum - 10 points): The budget is evaluated to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time-frame.

5. Outreach and education (maximum - 20 points): Assesses whether this project provides a focused and effective education and outreach strategy regarding NOAA's mission to protect the Nation's natural resources. For this competition, this ascertains if the proposal includes a clear and objective work plan for outreach strategy and specific activities to maximize dissemination of results to stakeholders.

B. Review and Selection Process

This will be a two-stage competition with preproposals used in an initial evaluation process, and full proposals will be evaluated and scored, and recommended for funding. At both the preproposal and full proposal stage, an initial administrative review is conducted by NOAA to determine compliance with requirements, completeness of the application, and whether it is responsive to this

FFO and the programmatic priorities.

All preproposals will be evaluated by a preproposal review panel, to be organized by NOAA, based on the evaluation criteria listed above. The preproposal panel will consist of approximately 10 government, academic, NGO or private sector scientists and managers. The panel will assess how well a full proposal might fare using the evaluation criteria and weights (above in section V.A) and selection factors (below section V.C). A summary statement of the review by the panel will be provided to each applicant of a preproposal, including a statement of whether a full proposal is likely to fare well ("encouraged") or poorly ("discouraged"). Regardless of encouragement or discouragement by the preproposal panel, all applicants who submit preproposals that meet the deadline, are responsive to this Federal Funding Opportunity, and meet all other requirements of this notice are eligible to submit full proposals.

All full proposals will be subjected to technical review panel, to be organized by NOAA, based on the evaluation criteria listed above. Evaluation will be by a review panel of government, academic, NGO or private sector scientists and managers. Scores will be provided by each member of the panel based on the evaluation criteria contained in this request for proposals. A summary statement of the review by the panel will be provided to each applicant of a complete proposal. Reviewers will not make a consensus decision, but will provide individual scores. The Program Coordinator will review the ranking of the proposals and the review panel comments and make recommendations to the Selecting Official. Awards will be made in rank order unless a proposal is justified to be selected out of rank based upon one or more of the selection factors described in the next section. If selection is out of rank order based on the selection factors below, a justification memorandum will be provided by the Selecting Official to clarify the selection process.

C. Selection Factors

The Selecting Official shall award in rank order unless a proposal is justified to be selected out of rank based upon one or more of the following factors:

1. Availability of funding
2. Balance and distribution of funds
 - a. Geographically
 - b. By type of institutions
 - c. By type of partners
 - d. By research areas
 - e. By project types
3. Duplication of other projects funded or considered for funding by NOAA or other Federal agencies

4. Program priorities and policy factors as given in section I.B
5. Applicant's prior award performance
6. Partnerships and/or Participation of targeted groups
7. Adequacy of information necessary for NOAA staff to make a National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) determination and draft necessary documentation before recommendations for funding are made to the Grants Officer.

Consequently, awards may not necessarily be made to the highest-scored proposals. Applicants may be asked to modify objectives, work plans, or budgets prior to approval of the award. Subsequent administrative processing will be in accordance with current NOAA grants procedures.

D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

Applicants should receive preproposal review results by March 9, 2012. Subject to the availability of funds, awards are expected to be made by September 1, 2012. Given the anticipated amount of funding and the anticipated number and quality of proposals submitted, it is anticipated that at least seven projects will be awarded in FY 2012. Additional proposals from this competition may be selected for funding in the next fiscal year, subject to the availability of funds. This may result in applicants being asked to modify their start dates.

VI. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notices

Successful applicants will receive notification that the application has been recommended for funding to the NOAA Grants Management Division. This notification is not an authorization to begin performance of the project. Official notification of funding, signed by the NOAA Grants Officer, is the authorizing document that allows the project to begin. Notification will be issued to the Authorizing Official and the Principle Investigator of the project electronically via Grants Online or in hard copy. Unsuccessful applicants will be notified that their proposal was not selected for recommendation.

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 proposal awarded in response to this announcement will be required to use the Central Contractor Registration and Dun and Bradstreet Universal Numbering System and be subject to reporting requirements, as identified in OMB guidance published at 2 CFR Parts 25, 170 (2010), http://ecfr.gpoaccess.gov/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=ecfr&tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title02/2cfr25_main_02.tpl, <http://ecfr.gpoaccess.gov/cgi/t/text/text-idx?>

c=ecfr&tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title02/2cfr170_main_02.tpl.

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

1. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE PRE-AWARD NOTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS FOR GRANTS AND COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS - Administrative and national policy requirements for all Department of Commerce awards are contained in the Department of Commerce Pre- Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements contained in the Federal Register notice of February 11, 2008 (73 FR 7696). A copy of the notice may be obtained at . <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/>.

2. LIMITATION OF LIABILITY - In no event will NOAA or the Department of Commerce be responsible for proposal preparation costs if these programs fail to receive funding or are canceled because of other agency priorities. Publication of this announcement does not oblige NOAA to award any specific project or to obligate any available funds.

3. NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT (NEPA) - NOAA must analyze the potential environmental impacts, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), for applicant projects or proposals which are seeking NOAA federal funding opportunities. Detailed information on NOAA compliance with NEPA can be found at the following NOAA NEPA website: <http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/>, including our NOAA Administrative Order 216-6 for NEPA, <http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/NAO216--6--TOC.pdf> , and the Council on Environmental Quality implementation regulations, http://ceq.eh.doe.gov/nepa/regs/ceq/toc_ceq.htm Consequently, as part of an applicant's package, and under their description of their program activities, applicants are required to provide detailed information on the activities to be conducted, locations, sites, species and habitat to be affected, possible construction activities, and any environmental concerns that may exist (e.g., the use and disposal of hazardous or toxic chemicals, introduction of non-indigenous species, impacts to endangered and threatened species, aquaculture projects, and impacts to coral reef systems).

In addition to providing specific information that will serve as the basis for any required impact analyses, applicants may also be requested to assist NOAA in drafting of an environmental assessment, if NOAA determines an assessment is required. Applicants will also be required to cooperate with NOAA in identifying feasible measures to reduce or avoid any identified adverse environmental impacts of their proposal. The failure to do so shall be grounds for not selecting an application. In some cases if additional information is required after an application is selected, funds can be withheld by the 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.

C. Reporting

Award recipients will be required to submit financial and performance (technical) reports to the State Sea Grant Program for reporting requirements. These reports are to be submitted electronically, unless the recipient does not have proven Internet access, in which case hard copy submissions may be accepted; however, no facsimiles will be accepted. After consultation between the Applicant(s) and the State Sea Grant Program staff, reports are to be submitted electronically by State Sea Grant Program staff via Grants Online.

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 on all subawards over \$25,000.

VII. Agency Contacts

For information regarding the NOAA Sea Grant Aquaculture Research Program 2012, inquiries should be directed to Dr. Gene Kim, 301-734-1281; via e-mail at oar.hq.sg.aquaculture@noaa.gov; Mailing Address: NOAA Sea Grant; 1315 East-West Highway, SSMC3, R/SG; Silver Spring, MD 20910.

VIII. Other Information

Questions about this funding opportunity may be sent to oar.hq.sg.aquaculture@noaa.gov. Questions of general interest will be responded to, time permitting, on a question-and-answer website about this competition: http://www.seagrant.noaa.gov/nsi/2012/aquaculture_research_q_and_a.html