

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 2014

Announcement Type: Initial

Funding Opportunity Number: NOAA-OAR-SG-2014-2003987

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

Dates: Pre-proposals must be received by electronic mail to the National Sea Grant Office by 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time on February 21, 2014.

Full proposals are due from applicants to the state Sea Grant Program by 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time on May 5, 2014.

State Sea Grant Programs must forward all full proposal applications to Grants.gov by 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time on May 30, 2014.

Applications received after the closing dates and times will not be accepted.

Funding Opportunity Description: Depending on the availability of funds, NOAA Sea Grant expects to have up to \$3,000,000 available for a national competition to fund new FY 2014 marine aquaculture research projects. This is part of the overall plan to support the development of environmentally and economically sustainable ocean, coastal, or Great Lakes aquaculture. Topical priorities for this FY 2014 competition are, briefly: 1) Research to inform pending, regulatory decisions on the local, state, or federal level leading to an information product-- such as a tool, technology, template, or model-- needed to make final decisions on a specific question regarding impacts of aquaculture; 2) Public-private research partnerships that address specific, current problems with production technology, especially those that limit a steady supply of marine or Great Lakes fingerlings; and 3) Social and/or economic research targeted to understand aquaculture issues in a larger context. Applicants must describe how their proposed work will rapidly and significantly advance U.S. marine aquaculture development in the short-term (1-2 years after project completion).

This Federal Funding Opportunity includes information on application and criteria for aquaculture research proposals requesting a maximum of \$500,000 in total federal funding for up to a two-year period. Matching funds are required. Awards are anticipated to start no later than September 1, 2014. Additional proposals from this competition may be selected for funding in the next fiscal year, subject to the availability of funds.

FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Program Objective

This aquaculture research competition is designed 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 eligible for this competition. 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 national level through the Interagency Working Group on Aquaculture.

Proposed projects must:

- 1) Support one or both of Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture Focus Area goals in Sea Grant's National Strategic Plan: 2014-2017 (available at <http://seagrants.noaa.gov/WhoWeAre/StrategicPlan.aspx>):
 - a. A safe, secure, and sustainable supply of seafood to meet public demand;
 - b. Informed consumers who understand the health benefits of seafood consumption and how to evaluate the safety and sustainability of the seafood they buy.
- 2) Directly or indirectly increase one or both of the national performance measure targets for the Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture Focus Area in the short-term (1-2 years after project completion). "Direct increase" means the proposal includes one or both of the above performance measures, with targets, in its work plan. "Indirect increase" 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. When describing this line of reasoning on how the proposed work will contribute to performance

measure targets, applicants are strongly advised to develop specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-bound criteria, for which progress can be independently verified:

a. Number of fishermen, seafood processors and aquaculture industry personnel who modify their practices using knowledge gained in fisheries sustainability and seafood safety as a result of Sea Grant activities;

b. Number of seafood consumers who modify their purchases using knowledge gained in fisheries sustainability, seafood safety and the health benefits of seafood as a result of Sea Grant activities.

3) Be consistent with the NOAA and Department of Commerce Aquaculture Policies (available at <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/aquaculture/index.htm>).

4) Support aquaculture of ocean, coastal, or Great Lakes species (including state- and federally-managed species). It is not a programmatic priority to fund projects focused solely on freshwater catfish or freshwater tilapia production in this competition.

5) 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.

B. Program Priorities

This aquaculture research competition is designed to support the development of environmentally and economically sustainable ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes aquaculture.

The following are program priorities for this competition. The most successful proposals will address all of the following priorities. A proposal does not need to address all three of the research topical areas (listed in B.2.a-c) to be competitive:

1. High probability of significantly advancing sustainable domestic marine aquaculture development in the short-term (1-2 years after project completion). To be considered responsive to this priority, applicants must clearly demonstrate how their specific research project will advance marine aquaculture in the short-term.

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

a) Research to inform pending, regulatory decisions on the local, state, or federal level leading to an information product-- such as a tool, technology, template, or model-- needed to make final decisions on a specific question regarding impacts of aquaculture. This must be specific enough to answer a particular regulatory question, but must be able to serve as a model to be applied to other similar issues. To be considered responsive to this priority, applicants must: a) clearly state how their work will address a current and specific regulator

impasse; b) clearly state how their work will facilitate a prompt decision on the pending regulatory question and provide the time-frame for that to occur, as well as state the general application of the decision; and c) provide specific contacts/letters of support from the agency (or agencies) involved that requires this information.

b) Public-private research partnerships that address specific, current problems with production technology, especially those that limit a steady supply of marine or Great Lakes fingerlings: Hatchery ‘bottlenecks’ between the egg and fingerling stages. This research topic is intended to cover all species, not just finfish, and includes all production technology issues, not only those that limit the production of marine fingerlings. This includes, but is not limited to new production technologies that reduce mortality risk for aquaculture species and improve their nutritional value while reducing pressure on wild stocks. To be considered responsive to this priority, applicants must clearly state how the results from their proposed work to increase fingerling supply will be ready for technology transfer, outreach, or extension efforts to advance sustainable domestic marine aquaculture in the short-term (1-2 years after project completion).

c) Social and/or economic research targeted to understand aquaculture issues in a larger context: Research on the social and/or economic issues associated with current and new marine or Great Lakes aquaculture. This includes interactions between aquaculture and harvest fisheries, valuation of ecosystem services for aquaculture operations, and consumer and stakeholder perception of aquaculture. To be considered responsive to this priority, applicants must clearly state how these research findings will be ready for outreach or extension efforts to advance sustainable domestic marine aquaculture in the short-term (1-2 years after project completion).

3. Involve partnerships and demonstrate resource leveraging, such that research impacts will be applicable to a broader geographic area. Example partnerships include: extension or other outreach personnel, industry, academia, state and federal agencies, and coastal communities. Given that the results are intended to advance U.S. aquaculture in the short-term, careful consideration of partnerships is warranted.

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 \$3,000,000 for new FY 2014 aquaculture research projects from this competition. Budget requests will keep the following in mind: no more than \$250,000 in federal funds will be awarded per year, totaling no more than \$500,000 in federal funds for the entire project. Given historical project budgets, anticipated funding available, and the number and quality of proposals submitted, it is expected that at about 10 projects will be awarded in FY 2014. Additional proposals from this competition may be

selected for funding in the next fiscal year (FY 2015) subject to the availability of funds.

B. Project/Award Period

Projects can be for a maximum duration of two years (24 months), but shorter-term project proposals are welcome. Proposals must provide a project description and budget that can easily be divided into annual increments of significant work that result in solid accomplishments. Awards are anticipated to start no later than September 1, 2014.

C. Type of Funding Instrument

Applications selected for funding will be funded through grants or cooperative agreements. Whenever appropriate, these grants or cooperative agreements will be made to the state Sea Grant Program that the applicant applied through. 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 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. The applicant may include additional matching funds in excess of this amount if they wish. Additional matching funds might allow the project to achieve a greater impact for the federal investment, and can show evidence of partner involvement.

C. Other Criteria that Affect Eligibility

none.

IV. Application and Submission Information

A. Address to Request Application Package

No application package is required to submit a pre-proposal.

Applicants from Sea Grant States should contact their state Sea Grant Program prior to submission of a full proposal to request application materials and instructions. The contact information for state Sea Grant Programs may be found at:

<http://seagrant.noaa.gov/WhoWeAre/Leadership/SeaGrantDirectors.aspx> or may also be obtained by contacting the Agency Contact listed in section VII.

Applicants *NOT* from Sea Grant States can submit their full proposals to a nearby state Sea Grant Program or directly to grants.gov. If they choose to submit to a state Sea Grant Program, they must contact that Program for application materials and instructions. If they choose to submit directly to grants.gov, they must obtain application materials from <http://grants.gov> (search for opportunity number NOAA-OAR-SG-2014-2003987). Application materials may also be obtained by contacting the Agency Contact listed in section VII.

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

B. Content and Form of Application

Format Requirements for both pre-proposals 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.

Pre-proposal Content Requirements:

The pre-proposal process is intended to provide an indication to potential applicants of the technical merit and the relevancy of the proposed project to the state Sea Grant Program before preparing a full proposal. The intent is to reduce the burden of preparing full proposals that do not have a high probability for funding. Late or incomplete pre-proposals, 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 pre-proposal should not exceed three pages using the format described above and should provide:

- a) Title of the research project;
- b) Name and address of all investigators and partners;
- c) Background section that sets the stage for the work and identifies which one of the three topical priorities listed in section I.B (2) that the pre-proposal addresses directly;
- d) Rationale of why the work should be conducted and how it is relevant to the state Sea Grant Program;
- e) Clear statement of research objectives and general methodology to be used;
- g) 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) Estimated budget amount (federal and match for each year).

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

- i) One-page biography for each investigator;
- j) 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 total budget requested (federal and match), duration of the project (one or two years), and the date of submission; and
- k) A statement identifying which state Sea Grant Program the applicant will be submitting a full proposal to, and a description of the degree of interaction that has occurred with that state Sea Grant Program before pre-proposal submission. If an applicant from a non-Sea Grant state intends to submit a full proposal via grants.gov rather than to a state Sea Grant Program, he or she must state that here.

Full Proposal Content Requirements:

All those who submit complete and timely pre-proposals and meet all requirements are eligible to submit a full proposal. Brevity will assist reviewers and program staff in dealing effectively with proposals; thus, the Project Description may not exceed 15 pages. Tables and visual materials, including charts, graphs, maps, photographs and other pictorial presentations are included in the 15-page limit. The following do not count towards the 15-page limit: signed title page; project summary; references; budgets and justification; previous, current and pending support sections; letters of support; vitae; standard application forms; list of permits, NEPA questionnaire; and data sharing plan. The application may not include materials other than the items described below.

For each full proposal the following information must be included:

a. Signed title page (two-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, "Larval feed automated system - PI Smith". The title page must include: the name, affiliation, and address of the investigators with e-mail and telephone numbers; the federal funding 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://seagrant.noaa.gov/FundingFellowships/SeaGrantFormsandTemplates.aspx>.

b. Project Summary Form 90-2 (three-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 Aquaculture Competition Form 90-2 for this purpose, found at

<http://seagrant.noaa.gov/FundingFellowships/SeaGrantFormsandTemplates.aspx>. The project summary must 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) Federal funding request and proposed matching funds; (d) Project Period: start date should be no later than September 1, 2014; (e) 300-word maximum Project Abstract, written into the Objectives section of the 90-2 form. This abstract should briefly summarize the rationale for the project, the scientific or technical objectives and/or hypotheses to be tested, a brief summary of work and accomplishments to be completed to be used for public dissemination; and (f) a brief summary (one or two sentences) of the Data Sharing Plan required below, written into the Methodology section of the 90-2 form. If the project does not generate any environmental data, it is sufficient to include a sentence saying that. If the proposal's Data Sharing Plan is short enough, you may repeat it in its entirety here. If not, you may just write that a full data sharing plan is attached to the proposal, and provide a point of contact for questions about the data.

c. Project description (15-page maximum):

(1) Introduction/background/justification: Subjects that the applicant must include in this section are: (i) which one of the three topical priorities listed in section I.B (2) that the proposal addresses; (ii) current state of knowledge of problem or issue and justification for proposed work; and (iii) contributions that the study will make to the particular industry, subject area, or issue.

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

(3) Outcome and Milestone Chart: This section must describe how the research, outreach, or other parts of the overall project will be integrated to effectively lead to the specific outcomes or benefits that will contribute to enhancing sustainable domestic aquaculture. One suggestion is a logic model or some depiction of the logical relationships between resources, activities, outputs, and outcomes of the proposed work. An outcome should describe the desired end state to be achieved (e.g., a desired change adopted by the aquaculture industry), not just a description of the activities to be performed. Applicants are strongly advised to develop specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-bound criteria, for which outcomes and success of the project (i.e., performance measures, objectives, milestones) can be independently verified.

This section must include increases to one or both of the national performance measures listed in section I.A, with targets and dates by which those targets are planned to be met. Alternatively, other intermediate, outcome-based performance measures with targets and dates by which those targets are planned to be met can be provided, if applicants provide an explanation of how achieving these intermediate performance measure targets will lead to increased targets for one or more of the national performance measures in section I.A.

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. Describe how these will be measured and reported.

(4) Outreach Plan: Describe specific outreach goals, activities, and deliverables. Ideally, this will describe a clear connection between the proposed research and management and/or policy decisions and how the results will be translated or transferred to end-users beyond direct scientific peers (i.e., beyond merely peer-review journals and scientific conferences). Describe how the results of the project will benefit specific stakeholders outside of academia (e.g., local coastal communities, public and private sectors), if appropriate. Provide a specific, measurable, time-bound work plan for these activities. Investigators are encouraged to meet with extension and outreach personnel during the early stages of proposal development.

(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://seagrant.noaa.gov/FundingFellowships/SeaGrantFormsandTemplates.aspx>).

Subcontracts must have a separate budget page. The appropriateness of all matching funds (including in-kind contributions) will be determined, 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 (see section IV.E. below for funding restrictions). This section does not count towards the 15-page project description maximum.

f. Previous, current and pending support: Applicants must provide information on all current and pending federal and state (including state Sea Grant) support for aquaculture projects and proposals that relate to the proposed work, 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. 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.

j. 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 must indicate "no permits are required." 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://seagrant.noaa.gov/FundingFellowships/SeaGrantFormsandTemplates.aspx>. All applicants need to fill in sections A, D, E and F. If you are proposing activities Related to Fisheries Sampling and Research, fill out section H. Failure to complete all of the indicated

questions will result in the application being considered incomplete. This section does not count towards the 15-page maximum.

1. Data Sharing Plan: Environmental data and information collected and/or created under NOAA grants/ 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 (2) years after the data are collected or created), except where limited by law, regulation, policy or security requirements.

(1). Unless otherwise noted in the federal funding announcement, a Data/Information Sharing Plan of no more than two pages shall be required. A typical plan should include descriptions of the types of environmental data and information created during the course of the project; the tentative date by which data will be shared; the standards to be used for data/metadata format and content; policies addressing data stewardship and preservation; procedures for providing access, sharing, and security; and prior experience in publishing such data. The Data/Information Sharing Plan will be reviewed as part of the NOAA Standard Evaluation Criteria, Item 1 -- Importance and/or Relevance and Applicability of Proposed Project to the Mission Goals.

(2). The Data/Information Sharing Plan (and any subsequent revisions or updates) must be made publicly available at time of award and, thereafter, will be posted with the published data.

(3). Failing 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.

(4) If your proposed activities do not generate any environmental data, your application is still required to have a data sharing plan. Such a data sharing plan could include the statement that “this project will not generate any environmental data”.

(5) The data sharing plan does not count towards the 15-page maximum.

C. Submission Dates and Times

Pre-proposals must be received via e-mail (to oar.hq.sg.aquaculture@noaa.gov) to the National Sea Grant Office at 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time on February 21, 2014. By March 13, 2014, applicants should receive a summary statement that includes whether their pre-proposal is encouraged or discouraged to submit a full proposal. All those who submit complete and timely pre-proposals and meet all requirements are eligible to submit a full proposal.

Full proposals are due from applicants at 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time on May 5, 2014, regardless of where they are submitted. State Sea Grant Programs must forward all full

proposal applications to Grants.gov by 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time on May 30, 2014. These full proposal applications must be forwarded unchanged, unless those changes are approved by NOAA.

Applications received after any of the published deadlines will not be reviewed. 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 state Sea Grant Programs will be certified by the receiving Sea Grant Program.

It is up to the individual applicant to contact the state Sea Grant Program. It is highly recommended that applicants contact their state Sea Grant Program prior to submission of a pre-proposal to discuss the relevancy of the proposed idea and the process for submitting a full proposal, including the required forms and content. Applicants from non-Sea Grant states who intend to submit their full application via a state Sea Grant Program are similarly encouraged to contact that state Sea Grant Program prior to submitting a pre-proposal. 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 proposal processing 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

G. Address for Submission of Proposals:

All pre-proposals must be submitted via electronic mail to the National Sea Grant Office 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 pre-proposal, or if the size of your pre-proposal is larger than can be accommodated by our e-mail system (> about 10 megabytes) or by your e-mail system, please contact the person listed in Agency Contacts by February 18, 2014 to request a secure file transfer. Include your name and valid e-mail address in the request.

You will receive an acknowledgement of your pre-proposal submission via email within about 3 days. If you do not receive such an acknowledgement, please contact the person listed in Agency Contacts.

Address for Submission of Full Proposals:

Applicants from Sea Grant states must submit full proposals to the address provided by their state Sea Grant Program, following specific instructions on how proposals must be submitted which will be provided by their state Sea Grant Program on request. Those state Sea Grant Programs must submit full proposals received to Grants.gov (address opportunity number NOAA-OAR-SG-2014-2003987).

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-2014-2003987.

The contact information for state Sea Grant Programs may be found at: <http://seagrant.noaa.gov/WhoWeAre/Leadership/SeaGrantDirectors.aspx> or may also be obtained by contacting the Agency Contact listed in section VII. If an applicant or state 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 - 35): 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 sustainable domestic marine aquaculture development in the short-term (1-2 years after project completion) and if applicants have clearly demonstrated how their specific research project will advance marine aquaculture in the short-term; and

b) How well the proposed project directly addresses major constraints that currently limit development and progress of domestic aquaculture, and specifically focuses on one or more of the three following topical areas:

i) Research to inform pending, regulatory decisions on the local, state, or federal level leading to an information product-- such as a tool, technology, template, or model-- needed to make final decisions on a specific question regarding impacts of aquaculture. This must be specific enough to answer a particular regulatory question, but must be able to serve as a model to be applied to other similar issues. Has the applicant: a) clearly stated how their work will address a current and specific regulatory impasse; b) clearly stated how their work will facilitate a prompt decision on the pending regulatory question and provided the time- frame for that to occur, as well as stated the general application of the decision; and c) provided specific contacts/letters of support from the agency (or agencies) involved that requires this information?

ii) Public-private research partnerships that address specific, current problems with production technology, especially those that limit a steady supply of marine or Great Lakes fingerlings: Hatchery 'bottlenecks' between the egg and fingerling stages. This research topic is intended to cover all species, not just finfish, and includes all production technology issues, not only those that limit the production of marine fingerlings. This includes, but is not limited to new production technologies that reduce mortality risk for aquaculture species and improve their nutritional value while reducing pressure on wild stocks. Have the applicants clearly stated how the results from their proposed work to increase fingerling supply will be ready for technology transfer, outreach or extension efforts to advance sustainable domestic marine aquaculture in the short-term (1-2 years after project completion)?

iii) Social and/or economic research targeted to understand aquaculture issues in a larger context: Research on the social and/or economic issues associated with current and new marine or Great Lakes aquaculture. This includes interactions between aquaculture and harvest fisheries, valuation of ecosystem services for aquaculture operations, and

consumer and stakeholder perception of aquaculture. Has the applicant stated how these research findings will be ready for outreach or extension efforts to advance sustainable domestic marine aquaculture in the short-term (1-2 years after project completion)?

c) The appropriateness of the Data Sharing Plan.

2. Technical/scientific merit (maximum - 25 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 and others on the team possess the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and resources to accomplish the project. This includes applicant's record of achievement with previous funding, as well as the qualifications of project partners. If the proposal includes the use of outside consultants not yet identified, this criterion includes how clearly the selection factors for the outside consultants are set out, and the expected qualifications of the consultants based on those selection factors.

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. For this competition, this includes: the extent of matching funds in excess of the required amount and the level of contribution by project partners.

5. Outreach and education (maximum - 20 points): This 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: a) if the proposal includes a clear and objective work plan for outreach strategy and specific activities to maximize dissemination of results to stakeholders; b) the level of active participation by partners on the project; c) and the ability of the project to serve as a model for other states or regions.

B. Review and Selection Process

This will be a two-stage competition with pre-proposals and full proposals. At both stages, an administrative review is conducted by NOAA to determine compliance with requirements, completeness of the application, and responsiveness to this FFO and programmatic priorities.

Encouragement of pre-proposals is based on technical merit and relevance. Technical merit will be determined by a technical panel similar to that used at the full proposal stage, providing scores using the same evaluation criteria and weights (above in section V.A) as at the full proposal stage. Input from Sea Grant directors will be considered and given high weight towards determining relevance of pre-proposals. Sea Grant directors will review all pre-proposal submitted from their state to provide (to the competition manager) comments on the relevance of pre-proposals to the state Sea Grant Program and highlight one pre- proposal that they determine as most relevant to each Program.

A summary statement will be provided to each applicant of a pre-proposal, stating whether their pre-proposal was complete and timely and whether a full proposal is 'encouraged' or 'not encouraged' for the full proposal stage. Regardless of encouragement or discouragement based on the pre-proposal, all those who submit complete and timely pre-proposals and meet all requirements are eligible to submit a full proposal.

All complete full proposals will be subjected to evaluation, to be organized by NOAA, based on the criteria listed above. This evaluation will be by a technical review panel of government, academic, NGO or private sector scientists and managers. Sea Grant Directors will comment on the relevance of proposals submitted through their state; that information will be provided to panelists. 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 Competition Manager 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 state which factor(s) is/are used and how it applies to the applications identified.

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

Subject to the availability of funds, awards are expected to be made by September 1, 2014. 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 December 17, 2012 (77 FR 74634). 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. Publication of this announcement does not oblige NOAA to award any specific project or to obligate any available funds.

3. UNPAID OR DELINQUENT TAX LIABILITY - In accordance with current Federal appropriations law, NOAA will provide a successful corporate applicant a form to be completed by its authorized representatives certifying that the corporation has no Federally-assessed unpaid or delinquent tax liability or recent felony criminal convictions under any Federal law.

4. 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 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.

State Sea Grant Programs also are required to use the National Sea Grant Planning Implementation Evaluation Reporting (PIER) System to communicate with the National Sea Grant Office on activities relating to this award. This includes tracking progress and impacts, in addition to performance metrics. Successful applicants will be asked to provide performance progress information in a form compatible with this system. If a proposal is selected and funded, information about the project and investigator(s) will be recorded in the PIER system, and can be made public.

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 2014, inquiries should be directed to Competition Manager, 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://seagrant.noaa.gov/FundingFellowships/NationalStrategicInvestments\(NSIs\)/AquacultureCompetition.aspx](http://seagrant.noaa.gov/FundingFellowships/NationalStrategicInvestments(NSIs)/AquacultureCompetition.aspx)