

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 2016

Announcement Type: Initial

Funding Opportunity Number: NOAA-OAR-SG-2016-2004807

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 March 10, 2016.

Full proposals are due from applicants to the state Sea Grant Program by 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time on May 12, 2016.

State Sea Grant Programs must forward all full proposal applications to Grants.gov by 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time on June 2, 2016.

Applications received from applicants 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 2016 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 2016 competition are, briefly: a) Research to inform pending, regulatory decisions regarding aquaculture 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; b) Research that supports the introduction, and/or increase in production of new and emerging species of aquaculture interest; c) Research that supports continued seafood safety and product quality; and d) 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. 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 \$300,000 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, 2016. Additional proposals from this competition may be selected for funding in the next fiscal year, subject to the availability of FY17 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://seagrant.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 address major constraints that currently limit development and progress of domestic aquaculture, and specifically focus on one or more of the four following topical areas:

a) Research to inform pending, regulatory decisions, regarding aquaculture 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. 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 within 1-2 years after project completion. To be considered responsive to this priority, applicants must: a) clearly state how their work will address a current and specific regulatory impasse; b) clearly state how their work will facilitate a prompt decision on the pending regulatory question and provide the timeframe 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) Research that supports the introduction, and/or increase in production of new and emerging species of aquaculture interest (e.g. algae, bivalves, and finfish). To be considered responsive to this priority, applicants must clearly state how their work will increase production of a currently farmed aquaculture species, or advance efforts to introduce new aquaculture species within 1-2 years after project completion.

c) Research that supports continued seafood safety and product quality. This includes research on the interactions between aquaculture species and existing or emerging contaminants, biotoxins, bacteria, and viruses. To be considered responsive to this priority, applicants must clearly state how their work will address human health and product safety issues for aquaculture products in the short term (1-2 years after project completion).

d) 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 aquaculture in the short term (1-2 years after project completion).

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.

1. It is a programmatic priority to support, where possible, projects that are relevant to the state Sea Grant Program's goals in the areas of Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture. More information about your state Sea Grant Program's goals can be obtained from your state Sea Grant Program. Contact information is described in Section IV.A.

2. It is a programmatic priority to support projects that score well in all criteria, not just those with a high total score.

3. It is not a programmatic priority to fund projects focused solely on freshwater catfish or freshwater 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 \$3,000,000 for new FY 2016 aquaculture research projects from this competition. Budget requests will keep the following in mind: no more than \$150,000 in federal funds will be awarded per year, totaling no more than \$300,000 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 about 10 projects will be awarded in FY 2016. Additional proposals from this competition may be selected for funding in the next fiscal year (FY 2017) 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 welcome. Awards are anticipated to start no later than September 1, 2016.

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 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. For administrative purposes, state Sea Grant Directors will be considered to be the Principal Investigator for all awards made to their state programs. For awards to other organizations, an employee or officer of the organization will be considered to be the Principal Investigator for administrative purposes.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement

Nonfederal matching funds equal to at least 50 percent of the federal funding request must be provided.

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 must 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://seagrants.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, if they choose to submit to a state Sea Grant Program, 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-2016-2004807). 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, and Sea Grant 90-4 form (OMB Control No. 0648-0362) are available at: <http://go.usa.gov/c98xj>, 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 11inch paper, with 1 inch margins.

1.) Pre-proposal Content Requirements:

The pre-proposal process is intended to provide an indication to potential applicants of the relevance of the proposed project 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 two pages using the format described above and should provide:

- a) Title of the research project;
- b) Rationale of why the work should be conducted;
- c) Which one, or more of the four topical objectives listed in section I.A2. that the pre-proposal addresses directly and why;

and in addition, and not counted towards the two page limit, the applicant must provide:

- d) Cover page that includes the title of the research project, the name, affiliation, and address of the investigators with email and phone contact information, and

e) 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.

2.) 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 Principal Investigator". For example, "Larval feed automated system - PI Smith". The title page must include: the name, affiliation, and address of the investigators with email 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://go.usa.gov/c98xj>

b. Aquaculture Competition Project Summary Form 90-2: 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://go.usa.gov/c98xj>. 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, 2016; (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, and 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.

The Aquaculture Competition Project Summary Form 90-2 also contains a series of questions drawn from "The Environmental Compliance Questionnaire for NOAA Federal Financial Assistance Applicants" (OMB Control No. 0648-0538). These must be answered.

c. Project description (15 page maximum):

(1) Introduction/background/justification: Subjects that the applicant must include in this section are: (i) which one, or more of the four topical objectives listed in section I.A2 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.A), 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 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://go.usa.gov/c98xj>). 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., SF424, SF424A, SF424B, CD511) 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. 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.

To show how this will be accomplished, a Data/Information Sharing Plan of no more than two pages is 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. If your proposed activities do not generate any environmental data, your application is still required to have a data sharing plan, but it may consist of the single sentence, “This project will not generate any environmental data”.

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

C. Unique entity identifier and System for Award Management (SAM)

Each applicant (unless the applicant is an individual or Federal awarding agency that is excepted from those requirements under 2 CFR §25.110(b) or (c), or has an exception approved by the Federal awarding agency under 2 CFR §25.110(d)) is required to: (i) Be registered in SAM before submitting its application; (ii) provide a valid unique entity identifier in its application; and (iii) continue to maintain an active SAM registration with current information at all times during which it has an active Federal award or an application or plan under consideration by a Federal awarding agency. The Federal awarding agency may not make a Federal award to an applicant until the applicant has complied with all applicable unique entity identifier and SAM requirements and, if an applicant has not fully complied with the requirements by the time the Federal awarding agency is ready to make a Federal award, the Federal awarding agency may determine that the applicant is not qualified to receive a Federal award and use that determination as a basis for making a Federal award to another applicant.

D. Submission Dates and Times

Pre-proposals must be received via email (to oar.hq.sg.aquaculture@noaa.gov) to the National Sea Grant Office by 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time on March 1, 2016. By March 29, 2016, 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 12, 2016, 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 June 2, 2016. These full proposal applications must be forwarded unchanged, unless those changes are approved by NOAA.

Applications received from applicants 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. The timeliness of applications received through state Sea Grant Programs will be certified by the receiving Sea Grant Program.

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.

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

All pre-proposals must be submitted via electronic mail to the National Sea Grant Office to: oar.hq.sg.aquaculture@noaa.gov.

Note: email 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 email system (more than about 10 megabytes) or by your email system, please contact the person listed in Agency Contacts by February 25, 2016 to request a secure file transfer. Include your name and valid email 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-2016-2004807).

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-2016-2004807.

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.

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 45): 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) 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 four following topical areas given in section I.A.2. Products from the proposed research should be available within 1-2 years after project completion.

b) The appropriateness of the Data Sharing Plan.

c) Partnerships and leveraging of services and knowledge.

d) If the proposal includes a concrete, unambiguous specific desired outcome, and has a good chance of achieving that outcome and if the proposal includes a way to objectively determine its success at achieving its outcomes.

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.

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 timeframe.

5. Outreach and education (maximum 10 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 relevance to one or more of the topical priorities. Relevance will be determined by a panel similar to that used at the full proposal stage.

A summary statement discussing whether the pre-proposal is relevant to one or more

priorities will be provided to each applicant. This summary statement will include whether a full proposal is 'encouraged' or 'not encouraged'. Regardless of encouraged or not encouraged pre-proposal summary statements, 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. Scores will be provided by each member of the panel based on the evaluation criteria. 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, 2016. 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 (2013), http://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?SID=1ccffb4c1d4de03add6a041113460f9&mc=true&node=se2.1.200_1300&rgn=div8

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 30, 2014 (79 FR 78390) are applicable to this solicitation and may be accessed online at <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2014-12-30/pdf/2014-30297.pdf>.

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. If a form is provided, an award may not be issued until it is returned and accepted by NOAA.

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.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 nonindigenous 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.

5. REVIEW OF RISK - After applications are proposed for funding by the selecting official, the Grants office performs administration reviews. These may include financial stability of an applicant, quality of the applicant's management systems, history of performance, and the applicant's ability to effectively implement statutory, regulatory, or other requirements imposed on non-Federal entities. Also, review of these factors, if

appropriate, special conditions that correspond to the degree of risk may be applied.

6. 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 by security requirements.

a. Unless otherwise noted in this federal funding announcement, a Data/Information Sharing Plan of no more than two pages shall be required as part of the Project Narrative. A typical plan may include the types of environmental data and information to be 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, data, 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.

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

c. 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.

7. INDIRECT COST RATE - If an applicant has not previously established an indirect cost rate with a Federal agency they may choose to negotiate a rate with the Department of Commerce or use the de minimis indirect cost rate of 10% of MTDC (as allowable under 2 C.F.R. §200.414). The negotiation and approval of a rate is subject to the procedures required by NOAA and the Department of Commerce Standard Terms and Conditions Section B.06.

The NOAA contact for indirect or facilities and administrative costs is:

Lamar Revis, Grants Officer
NOAA Grants Management Division
1325 East West Highway, 9th Floor
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910
lamar.revis@noaa.gov

8. FOIA - In the event that an application contains information or data that you do not want disclosed prior to award for purposes other than the evaluation of the application, mark each page containing such information or data with the words "Privileged, Confidential, Commercial, or Financial Information - Limited Use" at the top of the page to assist NOAA in making disclosure determinations. DOC regulations implementing the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) are found at 5 U.S.C 552, which sets forth rules for DOC to make requested materials, information, and records publicly available under FOIA. The contents of funded applications may be subject to requests for release under the FOIA. Based on the information provided by you, the confidentiality of the content of funded applications will be maintained to the maximum extent permitted by law.

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 2016, inquiries should be directed to Competition Manager, Dr. April Croxton, 301-734-1073; via email 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

None