

work, relationship to ongoing projects and how the project fits into the jurisdiction's strategy for addressing the issue;

(iii) How the project coordinates with relevant local governmental and non-governmental agencies and, if applicable, NOAA or DOI regional activities;

(iv) Task timetable with interim benchmarks and clearly-defined work products;

(v) Project priority as compared to all other proposed projects; and,

(vi) A Summary Budget that includes a detailed breakdown of costs by category and information regarding the amount of matching funds available to the applicant, as described in Section VIII(3) of this Guidance. Intended sources of matching funds must be identified in the application, and applicants whose proposals are selected for funding will be required to submit with the final application, letter(s) of commitment to fund from the organization(s) providing matching funds.

c. Each application must also include, on the last page, a summary budget table of all projects, which lists the name of each project proposed and the corresponding total cost and matching funds information.

F. Application Evaluation and Selection Criteria

1. Evaluation Criteria

Applications will be peer-reviewed by individuals with coral reef and fisheries management experience on the following equally weighted evaluation criteria, as evidenced by information in the application:

a. Documented need for the proposed coral reef management activity to fill gaps in the jurisdiction's management capacity;

b. Demonstrated coordination with applicable ongoing local, state, territorial, and Federal coral reef management activities;

c. Technical merit of the proposed management activity; and,

d. Ability of the work to be completed for the funding and timing proposed.

Subsequently, a Federal agency team of representatives from NMFS, OCRM, and OIA will review the applications, pursuant to equally weighted criteria described in Section X(3) of the Guidelines and comments received from peer reviewers. Based on this review, the team will make a preliminary funding recommendation for each jurisdiction.

2. Selection Criteria

OCRM and DOI will then provide the preliminary funding recommendation

and application comments to each selected jurisdiction. These comments will include input from peer reviewers and the Federal agency team and are intended for use in the applicant's development of the final application.

Upon receipt of the final application, complete with the requisite Federal financial assistance forms, the Federal agency team will review the complete package and make final funding recommendations based on the response to comments that were returned to the applicant. The team will submit these funding recommendations to the NOAA review panel for final review, pursuant to Section X(4) of the Guidelines.

If all available funds are not awarded, NOAA and DOI will consult with the eligible applicants on the use of any residual funds. NOAA and DOI will work with each jurisdiction to ensure the greatest degree of success in meeting local, state, territorial, and national coral reef management needs.

G. Program Authority

Specific authority for the NOAA program is found in 16 U.S.C. 6403. NOAA proposals will be reviewed and awarded by OCRM under title, *Coastal Zone Management Program*, CFDA Number: 11.419.

III. State and Territory Coral Reef Ecosystem Monitoring

A. Program Description

This description provides requirements for applying for funding appropriated by Congress to the NOAA in FY 2003 to support state and territorial coral reef ecosystem monitoring. This program will be administered by the NOS National Centers for Coastal and Ocean Science (NCCOS).

NOAA and its partners are implementing a nationally coordinated, comprehensive, long-term monitoring program to assess the condition of U.S. coral reef ecosystems and evaluate the effectiveness of coral reef ecosystem management decisions. This program was requested by the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force, which, along with the nation's coral reef program managers and the public, endorsed and called for implementation of "A National Program to Assess, Inventory, and Monitor U.S. Coral Reef Ecosystems."

NOAA began implementing the Program in 2000 and continues to administer it with Congressional appropriations for coral reef conservation. The Program includes the collection, analysis, and reporting of long-term coral reef ecosystem monitoring data pursuant to

scientifically valid methodologies and protocols and is a key priority of the *National Coral Reef Action Strategy*.

The implementation plan calls for integration of now-disparate monitoring sites into a coordinated national network, sharing of monitoring information among U.S. coral reef resource managers and scientists, and filling gaps in monitoring coverage nationwide. Through this Program, U.S. Federal, state, commonwealth, and territory, and Freely Associated State agencies support a variety of local and regional assessments, inventories, and monitoring of U.S. and U.S. affiliated coral reef resources. Additionally, there are several regional volunteer and community monitoring programs regularly assessing reef resources. A nationally coordinated coral monitoring infrastructure will enable the preparation of a biennial science-based report on the condition or "health" of U.S. coral reef ecosystems and support local coral reef management efforts.

The nation's coral reef resource managers have recommended key biotic and abiotic parameters that should be monitored at all local sites in the National monitoring network:

1. Benthic habitat characterization (e.g., depth, habitat delineation, and/or percent live/dead cover of corals, submerged aquatic vegetation, macroalgae, sponges, rugosity, diversity, etc.);

2. Associated biological community structure including fish condition (e.g., abundance, density, size, diversity, disease, harvest trends) and large motile and sessile invertebrates condition (abundance, density, size, diversity, disease, harvest trends); and,

3. Water/substrate quality (e.g., temperature, nutrient enrichment, toxic chemicals, turbidity).

Proposed work should include multi-organizational partnerships (local, regional, Federal, and possibly international) that build local capacity for maintaining long-term monitoring sites as part of a National Coral Reef Monitoring Network. NOAA will be an active partner in the development and implementation of the award; thus, proposals should be structured as cooperative agreements between NOAA and the principal investigators. For these proposals, it is appropriate to include the equipment necessary to build capacity to archive biotic transects (e.g., one or more digital videography cameras with underwater housing, museum maintenance of reference specimen collections, etc.).