

sources of matching funds must be identified in the application. Applicants whose proposals are selected for funding will be required to submit letter(s) of commitment to fund from the organization(s) providing matching funds with the final application.

Multiple-year proposals must specify the budget and activities for each year;

d. *Curriculum Vitae* for principal investigators;

e. *Summary Project Abstract*; and,

f. *All required NOAA Federal financial assistance awards* - forms (see below). One original and two copies of the jurisdiction's application must be submitted to NOAA by the date established in the DATES section at the beginning of this Guidance.

Final applications must include all elements of the initial application, any responses to comments and edits, all required NOAA Federal financial assistance forms (element f above), and must be received by NOAA on or before the date established in the DATES section above. One original and two signed hard copies of the final applications are required.

The NOAA Grants Management Division program web site, <http://www.rdc.noaa.gov/~grants/index.html>, provides detailed application instructions and electronic versions of Federal financial assistance forms. The two most relevant sections at this web site are, "C. Instructions and Guidelines," and, "D. Application Forms for Initial Proposal Submission." Applicants should review their application package prior to submission and be sure that all blocks on forms SF-424, SF-424A, SF-424B, CD-511, CD-512, and if applicable, CD-346 and/or SF-LLL have been filled in completely. Monitoring program Applicants should reference http://biogeo.nos.noaa.gov/~jchristensen/mon_web/ for instructions on filling out forms SF-424 and SF-424A.

F. Application Evaluation and Selection Criteria

1. Evaluation Criteria

Applications will be peer-reviewed by a small panel of representatives from relevant U.S. State, Territory, and Federal, and Freely Associated State agencies, as well as the jurisdictional coral reef Points of Contact (POCs). Each POC will be asked to review one or more proposals from other jurisdictions, but never their own. Proposals will be peer-reviewed on the following criteria:

a. The jurisdiction's need for such work to fill gaps in monitoring coverage and build local capacity for long-term monitoring of coral reef ecosystems;

b. The quality of the proposed science and potential for the resulting data to be incorporated into a National Monitoring Network;

c. The ability of the principal investigators to conduct such work; and,

d. Support for the All Islands Coral Reef Initiative, in applicable jurisdictions.

Reviewer results will be shared with applicants, and applicants will be given the opportunity to revise their application and/or respond to reviewer comments.

Taking into consideration comments received from peer reviewers, NCCOS will evaluate each proposal and develop funding recommendations based on the criteria in Section X(3) of the Guidelines. In evaluating the technical merit and adequacy of the implementation plan, NCCOS will apply the following 3 equally weighted criteria:

a. *Relevance to establishing a national monitoring network.* The principal objective of the proposals should be to fill priority gaps or needs in coral reef monitoring and assessment programs, such that they contribute to the creation of a comprehensive and coordinated network of monitoring sites for U.S. coral reef ecosystems. In subsequent years, the project should be monitoring the "minimum suite of key biotic and abiotic parameters," (as listed in the program description) at least once a year, at one or more sites;

b. *Quality assurance and error estimates for parameter measurements.* Flexibility of methodologies for acquiring measurements is allowable, as long as they are done *in situ* and are quantitatively reliable within a jurisdiction and across a region. Where possible, NOAA favors a stratified random sampling design for site selection (i.e., ideally based on reliable habitat maps), multi-methodological monitoring of the ecosystem (i.e., line transects for cryptic species, point-count surveys for large pelagic species), and sample archiving (i.e., species reference collections, transect/survey videographic records); and

c. *Potential to meet data reporting requirements and the ability of transferring the data to the local or regional management community.* Data from proposals must be useful in preparing the biennial report on the *Health of U.S. Coral Reef Ecosystems*. Grant recipients will provide raw or synthesized data to NCCOS no later than 3 months after data collection. The data generated in the National Coral Reef Ecosystem Monitoring Program will be used by NOAA and its partners to develop regional and national state of

the reef reports and disseminated to the public via NOAA's Coral Reef Information (CoRIS) Web site development (<http://www.coris.noaa.gov>). Biotic data integrity is critical for sharing of information and detection of national/regional trends and hotspots. Each jurisdiction will need to have basic data management quality controls and quality assurances for its data. Funding eligibility for future funding years will be contingent on meeting data submission deadlines including all performance and financial reporting requirements and data transfers.

2. Proposal Selection

Based on these reviews, NCCOS will provide a preliminary funding recommendation and proposal comments to each selected applicant. 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 forms, the Federal agency team will review the complete package and make final funding recommendations based on the incorporation and/or response to comments that were returned to the applicant. NCCOS will submit these funding recommendations to the NOAA review panel for final review, pursuant to Section X(4) of the Guidelines.

G. Program Authority

Specific authority for this program is found in 16 U.S.C. 6403. Proposals will be reviewed and awarded by NCCOS under title, *Financial Assistance for National Centers of Coastal Ocean Science*, CFDA 11.426.

IV. Coral Reef Ecosystem Research

A. Program Description

In FY 2003, the Program is providing \$600,000 to NOAA's Undersea Research Program (NURP) to cooperatively administer NURP coral reef grant programs for the Caribbean, Florida, Hawaii, and the Western Pacific. Three separate requests for proposals will be announced. The Hawaii Undersea Research Laboratory will administer and announce the program for Hawaii and the Western Pacific; the Caribbean Marine Research Center will address research needs in the U.S. Caribbean; and the Southeastern U.S. and Gulf of Mexico Center will announce a joint program in partnership with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Sanctuary Friends of the Florida Keys, which will support research in the