

governmental and non-governmental entities involved in coral reef activities in developing the application. Local government agencies that must be consulted include coastal zone management, water quality, and wildlife and/or marine resource agencies.

Applicants may submit applications covering a 12-to 18-month period, and must meet all applicable DOC grant requirements. One copy of the initial application, submitted electronically or by surface mail, must be received by NOAA by the date established in the DATES section above.

One original and two signed copies of the final application, complete with all required Federal financial assistance forms (SF-424, SF-424A, SF-424B, CD-511, CD-512, and, if applicable, CD-346 and/or SF-LLL) must be received by NOAA by the date established in the DATES section above. In addition, applicants may choose to submit an electronic copy (in Word Perfect, Microsoft Word, or PDF) with the required original and hard copies of the final application.

2. Application Format

In developing the application, the applicant must categorize proposed tasks into the following 7 categories, which are based on a subset of those found in the *National Action Plan*:

a. *Monitoring and assessment of coral reefs or reef resources*; e.g., community or non-governmental organization monitoring or assessment programs that complement State or Territorial coral reef monitoring programs funded out of the NCCOS Coral Reef Monitoring Award,

b. *Socio-economic and resource valuation*, e.g., community assessments, economic valuations, alternative income generation workshops, etc.,

c. *Marine Protected Areas and associated management activities*, especially assessment of the gaps in protection of existing marine protected area systems, and outreach and education efforts,

d. *Coral reef fisheries management*, e.g., resource assessments, collection of fishery information, outreach to fishers, co-management of coral reef fisheries by fishing communities, etc.,

e. *Reducing pollution*, e.g., marine debris prevention and removal, reducing impacts from land-based/watershed pollution sources, etc.,

f. *Coral reef restoration*, e.g., restoration of coral reef habitats resulting from physical and biological disturbances such as orphan vessel groundings, storm events, coral disease and coral predator outbreaks, and anthropogenic disturbances, particularly

projects utilizing innovative coral restoration technologies and/or comprehensive evaluation of restoration sites, and

g. *Public education and outreach activities*, e.g., brochures and other informational materials, public meetings and workshops, etc., particularly those which address the needs of local user groups.

Please Note: Coral reef research activities are not eligible for funding under this General Coral Reef Conservation program. Applicants interested in submitting coral reef research proposals should consult section IV. Coral Reef Ecosystem Research of this Guidance.

In addition, the following projects will not be eligible for funding:

(1) Activities that constitute legally required mitigation for the adverse effects of an activity regulated or otherwise governed by state or Federal law;

(2) Activities that constitute mitigation for natural resource damages under Federal or state law; and,

(3) Activities that are required by a separate consent decree, court order, statute or regulation.

Applications for the coral reef conservation activities beyond the scope of those legally required by mitigation or restoration activities as described above, are eligible under this program. For each project proposed, the applicant should not exceed 20 pages, including descriptions of qualification, letters of support and no more than five pages of other attachments, and should use 12-point font on letter size paper. Each application must include the following:

1. The cover page described in the **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION** section at the beginning of this Guidance.

2. An introduction, not to exceed one page, that describes:

a. The status and magnitude of the issues in the jurisdiction where the project will take place;

b. Recent actions undertaken to address the issues, with a focus on federally funded tasks; and

c. How the project fits into the jurisdiction's strategy to addressing critical coral reef conservation needs the next 2-to 3-years.;

3. A description of each proposed task that includes:

a. Clear identification of the work to be completed and who will perform the work;

b. How the project coordinates with relevant state, territorial, or local governmental and non-governmental agencies, and if applicable, NOAA regional activities;

c. A narrative Budget Summary that includes a detailed breakdown of costs

by category and information regarding the amount of matching funds available to the applicant, pursuant to Section VIII(3) of this Guidance. Intended sources of matching funds must be identified in the application. 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; and

d. Task timetable with interim benchmarks and clearly defined work products.

G. Application Evaluation and Selection Criteria

1. Evaluation Criteria

Applications will be peer-reviewed on the following equally weighted evaluation criteria by individuals with coral reef conservation experience:

a. Documented need for the proposed coral reef activity in the jurisdiction;

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

c. Technical merit of the proposed activity;

d. Ability of the work to be completed for the funding and timing proposed (projects that can be completed within 18- months of the start date will receive a higher score for this criterion); and,

e. Evidence presented of the capacity of the applicant to conduct the proposed work, including past performance on similar projects or programs involving coral reef ecosystems. NOAA will request and consider written comments on proposed projects from each agency with jurisdiction over coral reef ecosystems in the area where the project is to be conducted, pursuant to Section X(1) of the Guidelines.

NMFS will then review the applications, consistent with the equally weighted criteria listed in Section X(3) of the Guidelines and comments received from peer reviewers and jurisdictions.

2. Selection Criteria

In addition to these peer review criteria and comments from jurisdictions, NMFS will strive for a balanced selection of projects among jurisdictions and subject areas. Based on these cumulative reviews, NMFS will make preliminary funding recommendations which may not be the highest scoring proposals. NMFS will provide a summary of review comments to each selected applicant. These summary comments will include input from peer reviewers, the solicited