

enhancing the use of Gulf of Mexico and/or South Atlantic fishery resources, and cost estimates as they relate to specific aspects of the project. Budgets must include a detailed breakdown, by category of expenditures, with appropriate justification for both the Federal and non-Federal shares.

Applications should exhibit familiarity with related work that is completed or ongoing. Where appropriate, proposals should be multi-disciplinary. In addition to referencing specific area(s) of special interest, proposals should state whether the research applies to the Gulf of Mexico only, the South Atlantic only, or to both areas. Successful applicants may be required to collect and manage data in accordance with standardized procedures and formats approved by NMFS and to participate with NMFS in specific cooperative activities that are determined by consultations between NMFS and successful applicants before project grants are awarded. All applications must include funding for the principal investigator to participate in an annual MARFIN Conference in the southeast regional area at the completion of the project.

Applications must be one-sided and unbound. Incomplete applications will be returned to the applicant. Ten copies (one original and nine copies) of each application are required and should be submitted to the NMFS Southeast Regional Office, State/Federal Liaison Office (see **ADDRESSES**). The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) has approved 10 copies, under OMB Control No. 0648-0175.

3. Submission Dates and Times - We must receive your application by close of business (5 p.m. eastern daylight time on June 27, 2003. Applications received after that time will not be considered for funding. The earliest start date of awards is about 200 days after the date of publication of this notice. Applicants should consider this processing time in developing requested start dates for their applications.

When we receive applications we will screen them to ensure that they were received by the deadline date (see **DATES**); include SF 424 signed and dated by an authorized representative; were submitted by an eligible applicant; address one of the funding priorities for federally managed species; and include a budget, statement of work, and milestones, and identify the principal investigator. We do not have to screen applications before the submission deadline in order to identify deficiencies that would cause your application to be rejected so that you would have an opportunity to correct

them. However, should we do so and provide you information about deficiencies, or should you independently decide it is desirable to do so, you may correct any deficiencies in your application before the deadline. After the deadline, the application must remain as submitted; no changes can be made to it. If your application does not conform to these requirements and the deadline for submission has passed, the application will be returned without further consideration.

4. Intergovernmental Review - Applications under this program are subject to the provisions of Executive Order 12372, "Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs." Applicants must contact their State's Single Point of Contact (SPOC) to find out about and comply with the State's process under EO 12372. The names and addresses of the SPOCs are listed in the Office of Management and Budget's home page at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants/spoc.html>.

5. Funding Restrictions - Construction is not an allowable activity under this program. Therefore, applications will not be accepted for construction projects.

Indirect Costs - If you have a negotiated rate with a Federal agency, the total dollar amount of the indirect costs awarded under this program will not exceed the indirect cost rate negotiated and approved by a cognizant Federal agency prior to the proposed effective date of the award or 25 percent of the Federal share of the total proposed direct costs dollar amount in the application, whichever is less. A copy of the current negotiated Indirect Cost Agreement with the Federal Government must be included with the application. If the applicant does not have a negotiated cost rate, then they may direct cost all charges, or submit a request to establish a rate.

6. Other Submission Requirements - You must meet all application requirements and provide all information necessary for the evaluation of the proposal, including one signed original and nine signed copies of the application to the NMFS Southeast Regional Office, State/Federal Liaison Office (see **ADDRESSES**). You must also be available to respond to questions during the review and evaluation of the proposal(s).

V. Application Review Information

1. Criteria - Applications responsive to this solicitation will be evaluated by three or more appropriate private and/or public sector experts to determine their technical merit. These reviewers

will provide individual evaluations of the proposals. No consensus advice will be given. These reviewers provide comments and assign scores to the applications based on the following criteria, with the weights shown in parentheses:

a. Does the proposal have a clearly stated goal(s) with associated objectives that meet the needs outlined in the project narrative? (30 points maximum)

b. Does the proposal clearly identify and describe, in the project outline and statement of work, scientific methodologies and analytical procedures that will adequately address project goals and objectives? (30 points maximum)

c. Do the principal investigators provide a realistic timetable to enable full accomplishment of all aspects of the research? (20 points maximum)

d. How effective are the proposed methods in enabling the principal investigators to maintain stewardship of the project performance, finances, cooperative relationships, and reporting requirements? (10 points maximum)

e. Does the budget appropriately allocate and justify costs? (10 points maximum)

2. Review and Selection Process - Following the technical review, we will determine the weighted score for each individual review and average the individual technical review scores to determine the final technical score for each application. Then, we will rank applications in descending order by their final technical scores. A "cutoff" score of 70% will be used and those applications that scored below the cutoff will be eliminated from further consideration.

MARFIN Panel. Those applications at or above the cutoff technical evaluation score will be presented to a panel of non-NOAA fishery experts known as the MARFIN Panel. Each member of the MARFIN Panel individually considers if needs of the Agency are addressed in each proposal, if the project assists industry, and if the project addresses issues that are important to regional fisheries management. The individuals on the MARFIN Panel provide comments and rate each of these proposals as either "Recommended for Funding" or "Not Recommended for Funding." No consensus advice will be given by the panel. The Program Manager ranks the proposals in the order of preferred funding, based on the number of MARFIN Panel members recommending the proposal for funding.

Regional Administrator. The ranked proposals are provided to the Regional Administrator, who is the selecting official, in the order of preferred