

local, or Federal government participant. All eligibility criteria specified for the participant's category must be met in order for a proposal to be considered for funding. Proposals that are not eligible for funding according to the above criteria will be returned to the applicant with explanation.

We support cultural and gender diversity in our programs and encourage eligible women and minority individuals and groups to submit proposals. Furthermore, we recognize the interest of the Secretaries of Commerce and Interior in defining appropriate marine management policies and programs that meet the needs of the U. S. insular areas, so we also encourage proposals from eligible individuals, government entities, universities, colleges, and businesses in U. S. insular areas as described in the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) (section 3(14), 16 U. S. C. 1362). This includes the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the U. S. Virgin Islands, American Samoa, Guam, and the Northern Mariana Islands.

We are also strongly committed to broadening the participation of Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs), which include Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Hispanic Serving Institutions, and Tribal Colleges and Universities, in our programs. The DOC/NOAA/NMFS vision, mission, and goals are to achieve full participation by MSIs, to advance the development of human potential, strengthen the Nation's capacity to provide high-quality education, and increase opportunities for MSIs to participate in and benefit from Federal financial assistance programs. Therefore, we encourage all eligible applicants to include meaningful participation of MSIs whenever practicable.

Applicants are not eligible to submit a proposal under this program if they are an employee of the DOC or DOI. NOAA/NMFS employees (whether full-time, part-time, or intermittent) are not allowed to help in the preparation of proposals. MMHSRP staff (at the regional and national level) are available to provide information regarding statistics on strandings, MMHSRP programmatic goals and objectives, ongoing marine mammal programs, funding priorities for the 2003/2004 Prescott Grant Program cycle, and, along with other Federal Program Officers, can provide guidance on application procedures and proper completion of required Federal forms. Since this is a competitive program, NMFS and NOAA employees cannot provide assistance in conceptualizing, developing, or

structuring proposals, or write letters of support for any proposal. NMFS or NOAA employees may provide information to applicants on appropriate analytical techniques including costs and time lines for such analyses. For activities that involve collaboration with current NOAA programs including, but not limited to, the National Marine Mammal Tissue Bank (NMMTB) and laboratories conducting analysis of tissues for contaminants, employees of NOAA or the DOC/National Institute of Standards and Technology can write a letter verifying that they are collaborating with the proposed project, that the applicant is trained to participate in the NMMTB, or that the applicant is currently participating in the National Marine Analytical Quality Assurance Program. Funds from the Prescott Grant Program cannot be used for NOAA or NMFS employee travel or salaries. Proposals selected for funding from a non-NOAA Federal agency will be funded through an inter-agency transfer.

Unsatisfactory performance under prior or current Federal awards can result in proposals not being considered for funding under the 2003/2004 Prescott Grant Program cycle.

G. Other Permits and Approvals

It is the applicant's responsibility to obtain all necessary Federal, state, and local government permits and approvals. In order to determine whether such permits and approvals have been obtained or requested, the applicant must include in the proposal package either: 1) an application cover letter from the Prescott applicant to the appropriate authorizing entity requesting permits (e.g., MMPA scientific research permit) or approvals (e.g., Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) review), or 2) a copy of the final permit or approval.

For projects on live stranded or rehabilitated and/or released marine mammals, if the stranding network participant or researcher works for a research facility (e.g., University, Aquarium, animal care facility) with an IACUC, that applicant must have requested or obtained approval from the IACUC prior to applying for funding under this program (as required by the regulations under the Animal Welfare Act, 9 CFR 2.30–2.31). If the proposed project involves intrusive research (50 CFR 216.27(c)(6)) or if animals must be held after rehabilitation has been completed, the applicant must have applied for or obtained a MMPA and/or ESA scientific research and/or enhancement permit before the proposal will be considered for funding. Intrusive

research is defined under 50 CFR 216.3. For proposed intrusive research at a research facility, the facility must have applied for registration or already be registered by the U. S. Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) as a research facility. For more information on obtaining research facility registration please refer to the APHIS, Animal Care Program home page at <http://www.aphis.usda.gov/ac/>.

Activities directly related to the individual animal's health assessment, standard diagnostics, treatment, approved post-release monitoring, or release are separately authorized by NMFS under the authorizations for stranding network participants and therefore do not require an additional permit.

It is the applicant's responsibility to request and obtain all water quality, air quality, or other waste disposal permits as well as wetland and building permits, when required. If applicable, documentation of the requests or approvals of all such environmental permits must be included in the proposal package. Such documentation must include any environmental impact analyses that is required to be submitted to the appropriate Federal, state, or local permitting authority as well as a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) checklist (form available on the Prescott Grant Program web site http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/prot_res/PR2/Health_and_Stranding_Response_Program/Prescott.html). These documents will help the Prescott Grant Program staff determine if the application requires the preparation of an environmental assessment. At initial screening, all applications will be reviewed to ensure that they have sufficient environmental documentation to allow program staff to determine whether the proposal is categorically excluded from further NEPA analysis or whether an environmental assessment is necessary.

For those applications needing an environmental assessment, affected applicants will be so informed after the initial screening stage and will be requested to prepare a draft of the assessment by the merit review panel meeting in Summer 2003. Applicants are expected to design their proposals so that they minimize their potential adverse impacts on the environment. Applicants who believe that the work or funding for the work under their applications may require an environmental assessment, for example those proposing construction activities under Category C, should not wait until the initial screening to plan for