NWX-DOC CONFERENCING

Moderator: Julia Royster
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3:00 pm CT

(Courtney):   Welcome and thank you for standing by. At this time, all participants are in a

listen-only mode until the question-and-answer session of today's conference.

At that time, you may press Star 1 on your phone to ask a question. I would

like to inform all parties that today's conference is being recorded. If you

have any objections, you may disconnect at this time. I would now like to

turn the conference over to (Liz Ferry). Thank you - you may begin.

(Liz Ferry):   Good afternoon everybody - welcome to the Applicant Webinar for the

NOAA Ruth Gates Coral Restoration Innovation Grant. We'd like to thank

you for your interest in this federal funding opportunity.

As mentioned, I'm (Liz Ferry). I'm with the Office of Habitat Conservation

and the Coral Reef Conservation Program. My colleague -- Julia Royster --

who is with the Office of Habitat Conservation will be leading today's

presentation.

The purpose of this information session is to help the potential applicants.

You all understand the components of the funding opportunity and allow

(these) all applicants to ask general questions about the competition.

If you're tuning to the recording of the webinar following today's presentation, you'll have - and if you have highly specific questions about your project -- please feel free to reach out to me. My contact information is in the funding opportunity and will be at the end of this presentation on the last slide. Okay (Julia), you can take it away.

Julia Royster: Thanks (Liz) - all right so - all right we're having technical difficulties. Let's see here - okay sorry, we had to go from one computer to another computer, so my apologies. For this presentation, we will be highlighting pertinent information from the sections included in the funding opportunity but can be downloaded from the related documents tab under the Grant.gov posting.

These numbers listed here on the slide correspond to the actual selection headers in the funding opportunity so that you can cross reference them when you are reading through the document. We will not be highlighting section 7 and 8 during the webinar, so please refer to the document itself for questions regarding agency level contacts and other information.

For this funding opportunity, we anticipate up to half a million dollars will be available for fiscal year 20 and another one-and-a-half million in additional funds for fiscal year 21 and 22 for a total of $2 million for this competition. We want to emphasize the proposals must be received by March 20 at 11:59 Eastern Standard time and benefit coral - shallow water coral reef restoration.

The program objectives in Section 1 of the Funding Opportunity or I'm just going to go over them here. But the principal objective of this competition is to support innovative research and in-water pilot projects to advance techniques that will promote the persistence of resilient, genetically diverse, and reproductively viable shallow water coral populations as well as the

development of methods to improve coral outplanting efficiency and build resilient coral reef (unintelligible).

Additionally to encourage collaboration between research scientists and management entities to ensure innovative techniques align with predictive needs of the United States and territories in the face of environmental changes.

The intent of the funding opportunity is to support the development of novel coral reef research and restoration technologies to enhance coral survival and/or the efficiencies in restoration (outplanting).

Applications should focus on novel research and restoration technologies to increase polar resilience, building on innovative laboratory research efforts to move coral (unintelligible) extension science towards field pilot testing and/or explore new approaches to increase the efficiency of in-water coral restoration.

There are two program priorities. The first program priority is research and develop innovative coral intervention methods to improve coral - sorry I have this thing that is - there we go - sorry. To remote long-term persistence of reproductively viable corals.

So under this priority of - (Courtney), there's people that can't hear it. I don't know…

(Courtney):   Are they dialed into the audio line?

(Liz):   I'm not sure. Let me see if there's a way to - you guys want me to type them and ask them?

(Courtney):   Sure, that would be awesome (Liz).

(Liz):   To everyone?

Julia Royster: Yes, so if anyone can't hear us? (Gretchen) sent out the information.

(Liz):   Yes, I saw that. You might have to - all right well we'll just wait a minute for people to try the number that (Craig) provided and hopefully that will work for people.

(Courtney):   You have people joining now.

(Julia):   Okay - so can people hear now that are joining? All right so for those that couldn't hear before if you called in, can you hear now? If you want to just put it in the Chatbox.

                   Okay - all right that I think as long as you use the number that (Craig Reed) provided, it sounds like - I'm sorry that there was confusion about the number. I'm sorry about that.

                   Okay so for those who were not able to join earlier, I will - just go back one thing. The main that we're doing here and I think you guys - some of you had been on the webinar so you saw the slides. But basically I'm just going to walk through some sections of the funding opportunity to make sure that it's clear what we were intending to get as far as proposals and what our priorities are.

So again, the objective and I also have the section headers and page numbers on each slide so that people can reference them outside of this particular call if that's helpful for you.

So starting at the top - the program objectives are to support necessary research and apply innovation and restoration and intervention techniques in order to promote the (recursiveness) of resilient genetically diverse and reproductively viable shallow water coral populations to support the development of creative methods to improve shallow water coral outplanting efficiency and build resilient shallow water coral reef ecosystems.

And to encourage collaboration between research scientists and management entices to ensure innovative techniques aligned with predictive needs of US states and territories in the face of environmental changes.

The program priorities are novel research and restoration technologies to increase coral resilience and to build on innovative laboratory research efforts to move coral intervention science towards field pilot testing and/or to explore new approaches to increase the efficiencies of in-water coral restoration.

The program priority one - there's two program priorities is to research and develop innovative coral intervention methods to improve coral resilience to threat to promote long-term persistent of reproductively viable coral populations.

The highest priorities within this program priority are to get an increase diversity of coral population through assisted (gene) flow, improved techniques to support future interventions. Some examples are identify stress tolerant coral colonies and/or genes and capture and seeding of coral gametes

and larvae and to increase thermal tolerance of coral such as stress hardening techniques or ways to manipulate (unintelligible).

(Courtney), are people muted? It seems like there's a problem with some people not being able to hear because others are making noise.

(Courtney):   Everyone's on listen only in the conference.

Julia Royster: Okay - and for this particular item -- the coral resilience intervention -- these are just some of the priorities that were also talked about in the National Academy of Scientist Research Review of Intervention to increase the persistence and resilience of coral reefs.

Program Priority 2 is to research and develop innovative coral restoration methods to significantly improve the success of outplanting corals at various life stages including asexual and sexual propagation strategies.

Under this program priority, high priority coral restoration issues for this funding opportunities are to increase the ability to scale up (institute) asexual coral restoration efforts by improving techniques for transporting live corals and/or developing methods to significantly improve efficiency and cost effectiveness of coral outplant deployment, development and test methods to improve post settlement survival for sexual propagation techniques or determine ways to improve coral survival through multi-species restoration such as co-planting seed grass beds and coral as a way to reduce the effects of ocean acidification.

A couple of things that are not priorities underneath this funding opportunity are projects where the activities are solely focused on coral restoration and do not address one of the priorities in Section 1.

Additionally expenditures that are not a priority for this funding opportunity are purchases of real property, large equipment, capital expenditures or infrastructure.

For the funding available, in Section 2 of the document deals with funding availability. No one will consider applications for words covering a one-year period that would be supported with fiscal year 20 funds only as well as applications for multi-year awards for up to three funding years through fiscal year 22.

As we stated previously, NOAA anticipates up to half a million dollars will be available in FY20 with an additional one-and-a-half million over fiscal year's 21 and 22 to support selected awards for a total of $2 million under this competition.

NOAA will not accept proposals with the funding requests of less than $100,000 or more than $1 million over a three-year project period.

In Section 3 of the funding opportunity, it deals with eligibility. Applicants must be US based. They can partner with international organizations and entities that is acceptable but the proposal itself has to be from a US based applicant.

Eligible applicant types include US institutions of higher education, non-profit and for-profit organizations, US state territories, state local and Native American Tribal governments and all proposed in-water work must occur within US Coral Jurisdiction.

And two other things - sorry. They have to be in by the due date, or they will not be considered this. Under this federal opportunity, there also is a requirement for a one-to-one match. It's a statutory requirement.

Ineligible project types - any project that is legally required as mitigation compensatory restoration under a consent decree or court order and then also ineligible applicants are federal employees or federal agencies.

Submission information - admission information can be found in Section 4 of the funding opportunity. For application packages, federal forms, and instruction, please find the funding opportunity on the Grants.gov Web site and contact Grants.gov customer service to resolve submission challenges. Their contact information is listed in this section.

The proposal package must be signed - include signed copies of the standard forms associated with this funding opportunity. It can be digitally signed if you submitted electronically. Otherwise, they need to be signed in ink if you decide to submit a paper application through the mail.

They're identified page limits for each section of the proposal. Guidance for the components of a complete application package start on Page 11. It is important to note that the only listed number of pages for each section will be reviewed during a technical review process. So anything above these page limits is not going to be reviewed.

Applicants should be registered in SAM - the assistant for award management - and also provide a valid DUNS number on the application. (DUNS) is the Data Universal Number System.

Now would be a good time to initiate the registration processes for grants.gov and SAM if you have not already done so, or to check whether your status is active, if you have registered previously.

Please consult Section 4 for guidance on registration. We highly recommend submitting your proposal through grants.gov but please see the funding opportunity for additional guidance on mailing in paper applications.

On Page 20 in federal funding opportunity, you can find the beginning of the evaluation criteria for the application. There are too many sub-criteria to recite here on the webinar, so please read this section carefully to check how well your project fits within the criteria.

Briefly, the main five criteria are importance and relevance and applicability of proposal to the program goals, technical and scientific merit, applicant qualifications, and project costs, as well as outreach and education.

Proposals will be evaluated based on their potential as innovative projects and their inability to increase resilience or improve the efficiency of coral restorations and the level of collaboration with national resource managers or restoration practitioners.

The program objectives on Slide 4 and Page 4 in the funding opportunity should be demonstrated in the proposal by showing the level of support or need identified for the proposed work for state and local resource management agencies. Restoration practitioners or other resource managers as documented through direct, established partnerships or letters of collaboration or support.

The extent to which the work is filling a known gap in coral resilience research or taking a significant step in creating efficiencies in sexual or asexual outplanting or enhancing the effectiveness of coral restoration.

Detailed project narratives are the key to demonstrating how the project is innovative and meets the funding opportunity objectives. Narratives should include clear project objectives and success criteria, reasonable and detailed time lines with clear project milestones, detailed technical plans and methods to demonstrate feasibility of implementing the project task, as well as descriptions and demonstration of collaboration efforts with research scientists, managers and restoration practitioners. This could be done through a letter of support.

Next step - and you also want to show next steps to ensure that the projects will continue to move forward or move restoration science forward into the future.

Eligible application submissions will undergo technical review, ranking and selections based on program priories and the evaluation criteria. Applicants recommended to the NOAA grant management division for funding will be notified by June 30th, 2020. The earliest anticipated start date for awards will be October 1st, 2020.

A few reminders and tips - you should start registration now if you have not yet registered for any of these systems that we talked about - grants.gov, DUNS (number), SAMs. Don't wait until the last minute to submit through grants.gov. It can take up to two business days to validate or reject applications.

If for some reason you have not gotten confirmation from grants.gov and it is the last day, it never hurts to put something in the mail. Because if there is a glitch and we do not get it, it does not count and we cannot accept it. So you can always put a paper version, make sure that the forms are signed in ink in the mail.

Read the entire announcement and verify all requirements are complete and refer to the website listed in the announcement for additional information.

(Courtney), at this time are there any questions?

(Courtney): As a reminder, please press Star 1 on your phone if you have a question.

Our first question comes from (Rich Hogan), your line is now open.

(Rich Hogan): All right thank you, I was wondering if you wouldn't mind reviewing the secondary priorities again on this (DUNs) slide.

Julia Royster: Sure - all right guys we have to go all the way back because I'm afraid I'm going to mess up the computer if I…

All right so Program Priority Number 2 was coral restoration issues. Research and develop innovative coral restoration methods to significantly improve the success of outplanting corals at various life stages including asexual and sexual propagations. And then which - within that priority -- the higher priority item underneath that -- were to increase the ability to scale up into asexual coral restoration efforts by improving techniques for transporting live corals and/or developing the methods to significantly improve efficiency and cost effectiveness of coral outplant deployment, developing test methods to improve post settlement survival for asexual propagation techniques, or to

determine ways to improve coral survival through multi-species restoration such as co-planting seed grass beds and corals as a way to reduce the effects of ocean acidifications.

And these are literally taken straight out of the funding opportunity. We recognize that there's a lot in there, so whether it's on this webinar or a follow-up with (Liz), definitely reach out and answer - you can answer your questions, but ask your question so that we can help you better understand the funding opportunity.

(Rich Hogan):   Can you guys still hear me?

Julia Royster: Yes.

(Rich Hogan):   Okay, just as a secondary point, when we're building our sort of budgets to submit for this application, how detailed do you want us to be with regards to each line item and if there's some sort of discrepancy towards what our application is and then what's sort of suspense on the final days. Is that an issue?

Julia Royster: Well, so there's multiple phases to this. I guess the budget should be detailed and we're expecting that it's your proposal so things might not necessarily work out according to your proposal. But you do also want to make sure that it's, you know, that you are…

((Crosstalk))

Julia Royster: …you're providing the detail that you need to be able to demonstrate that you can do the project work that you're proposing. And then also -- so the ones that move forward from the technical review -- they will likely go through

some sort of a negotiation based on how much money we have and things that may or may not make sense for NOAA to fund but could be in a proposal.

And so at that point -- I'm just going to call the negotiation phase -- there's an opportunity for refining the budget before it actually goes to the Grant's Management division for their final approval.

(Rich Hogan): Okay.

Julia Royster: So and it says (Object Class) cost. I'm sorry (Liz), I'll let you jump in.

(Liz): I was going to say so when you're planning your budgets and you're writing your budgets in your application, you really need to break your budget out by the object class that's in the (SF424A), Section B. And then you'll need to break it up as much as possible. I believe in the funding announcement, there's a link that goes to the grants office required kind of budget narrative format or the format they like to see. If you can't find that, I can help you get it.

(Rich Hogan): Okay.

(Liz): And - but…

(Rich Hogan): What's your name? I can just contact you offline?

(Liz): Right, just be as detailed as you can. And if you're traveling - if you know when you're traveling - could all the information related to that like your flight, hotel, everything you're asking for.

(Rich Hogan): Okay.

Julia Royster: Yes, so (Liz Ferry) is who was just talking, and this is Julia Royster and we can send out our contact information for budget things especially as far as how to prepare budgets. It's definitely worth - well (Unintelligible) call to make sure you're getting the right level of details.

(Rich Hogan):   Okay perfect - thanks.

(Liz Ferry):   And then I think the end of your question was if it didn't - if you were awarded an award and your budget changed.

(Rich Hogan):   Yes, I'm just concerned about going over in a certain line item or, you know, something unanticipated arose.

(Liz):   There's some flexibility in being able to move around some money without if you were to get an award without notifying NOAA but over a certain amount, you may have to put in a Budget Change of Budget Request.

(Rich Hogan):   Okay.

(Liz):   And it's not anything that's terribly difficult so.

(Julia Royster):   And yes - the only addition to that is that for multi-year awards, the way that those work if that you have - well in this case it would be fiscal year 2020 - so your first year of funding budget you would have that outline and then you would also have your needs for yours too, and your three if you were asking for money for all three years.

And so together they come together to have an awards ceiling, which is the amount of money that NOAA can give you. We can only give you up to

whatever that amount of money is. And so if you were going to spend more than that, that's a problem but otherwise we can usually work it out. You do have to have NOAA approval if you're going to reorganize fund just to make sure that you're reorganizing them to something that makes sense for (unintelligible) for the project that you proposed.

(Rich Hogan): Okay perfect - thank you very much.

Julie Royster: All right - any other questions (Courtney)?

(Courtney): I'm showing no other questions at this time.

Julia Royster: All right then I'm going to just go to some frequently asked questions that I've gotten over the last decade as a Federal Program Officer and hopefully they're helpful to you. One question was how will the innovative aspect of a project be assessed?

So the answer is based on a brief summary of relevant background information that justifies the need for the proposed task and clearly states the gap the project will help fill, (reviewers) will determine if the project is truly developing new techniques or methods as well as how likely the work is to increase coral resilience, improve efficiency of coral restoration or advance existing methodologies to the level of in-water field testing.

Another one just to reinforce that one-to-one match is required, there is a waiver that you can request as well and that - more information about that is on Pages 8 and 9 in the funding announcement.

So for those that are not familiar with (Match), a couple of different sources and activities that count as non-federal (Match), any shared cost or matching

funds and all contributions including cash, third-party inclined contributions of property and services will be accepted as part of an applicant's cost sharing or matching when the contributions meet the criteria listed in 2CFR 200.

Contributions can come from a variety of public and private forces and can be combined to meet the one-to-one match requirement. Examples include third party (inclined) goods and services, you know, boats, lab space, lab equipment.

One main thing to remember about Match is that you are on the hook for it, so once things go to Grant's Management Division and if everything gets approved, if you say that you're going to match a million dollars with a million dollars, then you are responsible for coming up with a million dollars' worth of Match or you have to give the money back.

A couple of notes on the waiver -- how to apply for a match waiver -- you need to provide a justification explaining the need for a waiver to the program manager - (Jan Coff) - the Coral Program Manager. Justification should describe attempts to attain match funding sources, how the benefit of the project outweighs the public interest in providing match, and any other extenuating circumstances preventing the availability of Match.

The waivers will not be officially approved until after the technical review is complete, and projects have been recommended for funding meaning that NOAA has identified the projects as ones that rank well.

Another question is, is there a limit on the number of proposals from any one applicant, geography, area or region? There is not a limit on the number of proposals that can be submitted.

If you have two great ideas, I would definitely encourage you to contemplate if it makes sense to try to put them together or - even though it's more work - to try to make separate proposals because they might review stronger as two separate proposals.

Will NOAA ensure geographic distribution of selected awards? The NOAA selecting official will select proposals in rank order unless a proposal is justified to be selected out of rank order based upon standard selection factors outlined in the funding opportunity including the availability of funding and the balance distribution of funds according to geography, type of partners, focus areas, and project types.

Another important question is how can I verify the contents of my submitted package from grants.gov? After submitting the application package through their workspace, applicants should download a copy of the submitted application for offline recordkeeping and to verify the contents of the submissions of the zip file.

This is really important. Sometimes people think they've made attachments or various things and they haven't. And we can only review what has been submitted. So you want to make sure to submit it on time, but then also with enough time to just download and make sure that all the technology has worked according to plan.

So those are all of the prepared questions that we have - that we thought might be useful. Are there any other questions at this time?

(Courtney): We have a question from (Hanna Cook). Your line is now open.

(Hanna Cook): Hi, can you hear me?

Julia Royster: Yes.

(Hanna Cook):   Hi, regarding funding restrictions and pre-award costs, the notice packet states that federal and Match pre-award costs incurred up to 90 days prior to the Awards (unintelligible) can be requested. Could you explain how and when those requests are processed during this whole process - application process?

Julia Royster: (Liz), do you want to answer that or do you want me to answer that?

(Liz Ferry):   Well from my experiences, did you write it into your application and as part of your budget and what you've done and if it gets approved as your application is being processed, then it's considered okay.

                   But then the flip side if you are - if you're moving forward in the application process and you need to purchase stuff to start on time, they will allow some of those pre-award costs.

(Hanna Cook):   Okay.

Julia Royster: There is a trick about even if they approve the award, like a - we don't know for sure when award packages are finally approved by the Grants Management Division until sometimes it's October or early September, and all of the packages we have to submit to them by June 30th. So there's a couple of months there where we don't really know what's going to happen and it doesn't happen very often, but there are times where applications do not pass all the checks that the Grants Management Division ends up doing. And so then you wouldn't be receiving any NOAA money. So it's mostly about that it shouldn't be a problem to approve pre-award costs. You would know

with enough time to start studying them, but if for something, you know, falls apart and NOAA doesn't get money whatever, then you might just have to. You know, basically the federal government isn't responsible for paying you back if something falls apart.

(Hanna Cook)   Yes, I understand that - okay thank you for the explanation.

Julia Royster: Yes.

(Courtney):   I'm showing no further questions at this time.

Julia Royster: Okay - all right well thank you for joining everybody on the webinar today and definitely reach out to (Liz Ferry) with questions. It's also a lot easier to start asking questions sooner than later. I know that it seems like we have a long time until proposals are due -- a little bit over a month which is great - but try to think about whatever questions you have and reach out the next two or three weeks just to make sure we can get back to you and provide as much guidance as possible.

(Liz Ferry):   Thanks Julia for (doing this).

Julia Royster: No worries - all right thank you (Courtney).

(Courtney):   That concludes today's conference. Thank you for participating. You may disconnect at this time.

END