

ANNOUNCEMENT OF FEDERAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- **Federal Agency Name(s):** National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Department of Commerce
- **Funding Opportunity Title:** John H. Prescott Marine Mammal Rescue Assistance Grant Program (Prescott or Prescott Grant Program)
- **Announcement Type:** Initial Announcement
- **Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number(s):** 11.439, Marine Mammal Data Program
- **Dates:** Proposals must be postmarked by August 16, 2004.
- **Application Submission:** NOAA/NMFS/Office of Protected Resources, Marine Mammal Health and Stranding Response Program, Attn: Michelle Ordone, 1315 East-West Highway, Room 13620, Silver Spring, MD 20910-3283; phone 301-713-2322 ext 177.
- **Funding Opportunity Description:** The Marine Mammal Health and Stranding Response Program of the National Marine Fisheries Service is charged under the Marine Mammal Protection Act with facilitating the collection and dissemination of reference data on stranded marine mammals and health trends of marine mammal populations in the wild. Through cooperation with NMFS Regional Coordinators, local organizations and state and local government officials respond to and collect valuable data from stranded marine mammals as participants in the national Marine Mammal Stranding Network. The John H. Prescott Marine Mammal Rescue Assistance Grant Program is conducted by NOAA to provide Federal assistance to eligible members of the Stranding Network to: A) Support basic needs of organizations for response, treatment, and data collection from living and dead stranded marine mammals, (B) fund scientific research objectives designed to answer questions about marine mammal strandings, health, or rehabilitation techniques utilizing data from living and dead stranded marine mammals, and (C) support facility operations directly related to the recovery or treatment of stranded marine mammals and collection of data from living or dead stranded marine mammals.

FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Program Objective

The Marine Mammal Rescue Assistance Act of 2000 amended the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) to establish the John H. Prescott Marine Mammal Rescue Assistance Grant Program (16 U.S.C. 1421f-1)(hereafter referred to as the Prescott Grant Program). This document describes how to submit proposals for funding in fiscal year (FY) 2005 under the Prescott Grant Program and how we will determine which proposals will be funded.

The Prescott Grant Program is conducted by the Secretary of Commerce to provide federal assistance to eligible stranding network participants (see section I.E. of this document) for (A) basic needs of organizations for response, treatment, and data collection from living and dead stranded marine mammals¹, (B) scientific research objectives designed to answer questions about marine mammal strandings, health, or rehabilitation techniques utilizing data from living and dead stranded marine mammals, and (C) facility operations directly related to the recovery, treatment, and data collection from living and dead stranded marine mammals and investigation of scientific research objectives designed to answer questions about marine mammal strandings, health, or rehabilitation techniques utilizing data from living and dead stranded marine mammals. The Prescott Grant Program is administered through the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Marine Mammal Health and Stranding Response Program (MMHSRP).

The MMHSRP was formalized in 1992 to fulfill the mandates of the Marine Mammal Health and Stranding Response Act, which amended the MMPA in 1992 (16 U.S.C. 1421). The MMHSRP was established to achieve 3 broad goals:(1) to facilitate the collection and dissemination of reference data on marine mammals and health trends of marine mammal populations in the wild; (2) to correlate the health of marine mammals and marine mammal populations in the wild with available data on physical, chemical, and biological environmental parameters; and (3) to coordinate effective responses to unusual mortality events. To achieve these goals, the MMHSRP (through close coordination with regional stranding networks) has the following objectives: improve the rescue, care and treatment of stranded marine mammals; reduce public health risks during response to and rehabilitation of stranded marine mammals; collect life history and biomedical data from live and dead stranded marine mammals; develop baseline reference data on health of wild populations and “normal” stranding rates and causes; improve the rapid detection of unusual morbidity and mortality events; collect archival samples for future retrospective studies on causes of mortality or illness and for placement in the National Marine Mammal Tissue (and Serum) Bank and other archival facilities including genetics and genomics; and develop comprehensive and consistent guidance for the rescue and rehabilitation

¹ For purposes of this document, a stranded marine mammal is a marine mammal in the wild that is (1) dead and on a beach, shore, or in waters under the jurisdiction of the United States or (2) is live and on a beach or shore of the United States and unable to return to the water, is in apparent need of medical attention, or is in waters under the jurisdiction of the United States but is unable to return to its natural habitat under its own power or without assistance.

of stranded marine mammals, collection of specimens, quality assurance, and analysis of tissue samples.

NMFS has reserved a portion of FY 04 funds to make emergency assistance available for catastrophic stranding events throughout FY 05 funding year on an as-needed basis. This emergency assistance is available to eligible organizations or individuals even though they may already be receiving funds from the Prescott Program's annual competitive award cycle for another project. Responders to such stranding events should contact the NMFS Regional Office that oversees the area of action for further information and approval to forward application materials to the Office of Protected Resources. Until further guidance is published, those seeking emergency assistance funding should prepare for submission to the Regional Office and the Office of Protected Resources all forms and documentation outlined in Section III, Proposal Instructions and Requirements, of this document.

B. Program Priorities

As a result of comments received from those who submitted proposals in 2003 and 2004 and those who took part in the 2003 and 2004 technical and merit reviews of those proposals, a number of changes to the solicitation and review processes are being instituted in this competition. Therefore, we encourage applicants who submitted a proposal in 2003 or 2004 to read this entire document before preparing a proposal for 2005.

For this solicitation, all applications must fall within at least one of the 3 following categories: A) Support basic needs of organizations for response, treatment, and data collection from living and dead stranded marine mammals, (B) fund scientific research objectives designed to answer questions about marine mammal strandings, health, or rehabilitation techniques utilizing data from living and dead stranded marine mammals, and (C) support facility operations directly related to the recovery or treatment of stranded marine mammals and collection of data from living or dead stranded marine mammals and investigation of scientific research objectives designed to answer questions about marine mammal strandings, health, or rehabilitation techniques utilizing data from living and dead stranded marine mammals.

The applicant must select the one category that best fits their proposal. Since we recognize that some projects could be designed to meet more than one category, you should determine which category best fits the goals of your proposed project. In FY 2005, no Prescott Grant Program funds will go towards basic scientific research on non-stranded marine mammals (i.e., wild population studies). In addition, no projects involving construction of new facilities for the rescue and rehabilitation of stranded marine mammals will be considered; however, construction projects in established facilities (i.e., those that involve build-outs, alterations, upgrades and renovations) would be appropriate for Category C projects. Proposals not falling under one of the 3 categories will be returned to the applicant after initial review, and unless revised and resubmitted within two weeks after close of the submission period, will not be considered further in this funding cycle.

For each of the proposal Categories the MMHSRP has identified multiple national-level funding priorities. These Program priorities pertain only to species that the MMPA provides are under the authority of the Department of Commerce (cetaceans and pinnipeds,

except walrus).

In addition to the 3 proposal categories and their related National funding priorities, Regional funding priorities have been identified under each category. Each NMFS Region has separately identified these funding priorities that will improve the capabilities of their regional stranding network in achieving the goals of the Prescott Program in the 2005 competitive cycles. Both the overarching Program goals and regional funding priorities will be re-evaluated by MMHSRP staff and NMFS Regional Stranding Coordinators for the FY 2006 competition.

The priorities are not listed in any particular order and each is of equal importance. Note that the purpose of the priority list is to guide applicants in application development by identifying those applications that will best compete during this grant cycle for these limited funds, and to provide technical reviewers with guidance for their evaluations. Details of the 3 categories and the national and regional funding priorities are as follows:

Category A - Support basic needs of organizations for response, treatment, and data collection from living and dead stranded marine mammals

1. National Funding Priorities

Enhance the response to live animal strandings including transport, treatment, rehabilitation, or euthanasia.

Enhance rehabilitation practices to protect wild animals in rehabilitation from exposure to novel pathogens and prevent introduction of new or altered diseases into the wild.

Enhance the quality and quantity of level B and C data collected from stranded marine mammals, including equipment purchase.

Enhance attendance and participation by professional staff and facility volunteers in training, education and outreach to the general public, particularly in the areas of public health and marine mammal disease and treatment issues.

Enhance the detection of emerging diseases.

2. Regional Funding Priorities

a. Northeast Region

Enhance large whale stranding response (excluding right whales) to include equipment and resources for recovery of floating carcasses, necropsy, sampling, skeletal salvage, and disposal.

Develop training techniques and a manual for data collection to enhance the quality and consistency of assessing marine mammal strandings for human-related injuries and mortalities.

Enhance response to live marine mammal strandings including equipment and resources for field assessments, transport (including vessel and aerial transport), treatment, rehabilitation and release and euthanasia.

Enhance access to veterinarians both in the field and at rehabilitation facilities including assistance in necropsies.

Enhance the quality, quantity and sharing of level B and C data collection by compiling and publishing data on anthropogenic mortalities (especially for large whales).

Enhance the quality of level A data collection and validate historical level A data for

comparison with NMFS records.

b. Northwest Region

Enhance network operations to respond to, rescue, transport, and treat stranded marine mammals that are sick or injured.

Improve capability for handling, stabilization, or treatment of live stranded odontocetes.

Train responders to improve consistency and quality of assessments, documentation and data management for live and dead stranded marine mammals.

Development of protocols for the identification, processing, and disposal of dead marine mammals that carry contaminant burdens exceeding allowable limits for disposal in the environment.

Enhance data collected from stranded killer whales to investigate overall health parameters.

Enhance capabilities to perform thorough necropsies and diagnostics on unusual stranded marine mammal species and to perform thorough necropsies on dead specimens in good condition rapidly prior to degradation.

Develop outreach and educational materials regarding stranded marine mammals for both network members and the general public.

Enhance response capability and rehabilitation capacity for marine mammals impacted by oil or other hazardous material spills.

Enhance response and Level A data collection capability in areas with low or intermittent coverage.

c. Southeast Region

Enhance network preparedness to respond to and/or collect information during live strandings of large whales (excluding right whale) and mass strandings of live cetaceans.

Enhance the capability to respond to live stranded marine mammals that are at risk from oil or other hazardous material spills.

Enhance all aspects of live stranded marine mammal response and transport.

Develop outreach and educational materials regarding live stranded marine mammals for both network members and the general public.

Enhance network preparedness to respond to and/or collect information and samples during the strandings of large whales (excluding right whale) and mass strandings of cetaceans.

Enhance the collection and evaluation of samples and data from stranded marine mammals that can be used in assessing the incidence or prevalence of human-induced injury or mortality.

Enhance the collection of consistent level A data, validate historic data, and improve the quantity and quality of level B and level C data collected from stranded marine mammals.

Enhance the capability to record information from stranded marine mammals impacted by oil or other hazardous material spills.

Enhance the collection of biological samples from stranded marine mammals for analysis in support of marine mammal research projects through cooperative investigations (e.g., serological, histopathological, and chemical analyses).

Enhance the collection of post-Unusual Mortality Event data from stranded marine mammals for comparisons with mortality and morbidity factors observed during die-offs.

Enhance attendance and participation by professional staff and facility volunteers in training and educational/workshop programs, particularly in areas of marine mammal health, disease, human induced morbidity/mortality, diagnostics, forensic investigations and treatment issues.

d. Southwest Region

Enhance response, treatment, and transport of live stranded marine mammals.

Enhance capability to respond to live stranded marine mammals entangled in fishing gear.

Enhance capabilities to respond to live strandings of marine mammals during El Nino years.

Equipment for routine transport of live stranded marine mammals.

Enhance the response to and collection of data from dead-stranded marine mammals.

Collect specimens from live and dead stranded marine mammals for determining biotoxin poisoning.

e. Pacific Islands Region

Operational and staffing needs for increasing quality of care, including veterinary care, data collection, and necropsies during stranding events throughout the U.S. Pacific Islands (e.g., Guam, American Samoa, and Northern Mariana Islands).

Organization of outreach and training in the U.S. Pacific Islands (e.g., Guam, American Samoa, and Northern Mariana Islands) for response readiness and treatment of stranded marine mammals.

Public outreach and education on protocols for communication and response to stranding events.

Conduct thorough necropsies and collect biological samples that will enhance the ability to detect purposeful and incidental human-induced injuries and mortalities (e.g. entanglements and boat strikes).

f. Alaska Region

Enhance response to live strandings of marine mammals throughout the state, particularly in remote and rural areas.

Enhance capability for the care and treatment of live stranded marine mammals.

Respond to live fur seal entanglements on the Pribilof Islands.

Facility operation or equipment needs for stranding response and live stranded marine mammal treatment.

Collect consistent level A data throughout the state, including remote areas.

Collect level B and C data from dead stranded marine mammals.

Conduct necropsies and diagnostics on stranded marine mammals.

Operational needs to improve in-house sample tracking and archiving for participation in the National Marine Mammal Tissue Bank and the Marine Mammal Health and Stranding national database.

Category B - Fund scientific research objectives designed to answer questions about marine mammal strandings, health, or rehabilitation techniques utilizing data from living and dead stranded marine mammals

1. National Funding Priorities

Collect specimens or data from stranded marine mammals to assess health trends in wild populations of cetaceans and pinnipeds, with emphasis on diseases that have potential for epizootics (e.g., morbillivirus), are endemic and may have a significant impact on survival/reproduction (e.g., herpes and other viruses), or have zoonotic potential.

Collect and assess information for baseline information on population demographics, life history, movement and distribution, and health, including disease, contaminants, pathogens, nutrition, biotoxins (including multiple biotoxins) and microbial flora (including antibiotic resistance).

Identify causes of morbidity and mortality in marine mammals, including direct and indirect human impacts and monitoring of species involved in unusual mortality events for up to five years after the event.

Evaluate environmental parameters (physical, biological, chemical) in correlation with records of marine mammal strandings.

Enhance ability of rehabilitation facilities to conduct post-release monitoring (e.g. purchasing telemetry equipment, boat time, airplane time, etc.).

2. Regional Funding Priorities

a. Northeast Region

Enhance ability to conduct post-release monitoring of all live stranded marine mammals (e.g. purchasing tags, downloading analyzing and sharing tag data, boat time, airplane time, etc.)

Collect specimens and data from stranded marine mammals for the development of quality training materials on marine mammal necropsy techniques, anatomy and descriptive pathology.

Enhance assessment of acoustic injuries in stranded marine mammals both in the field and laboratory including development of protocol for detection of these injuries.

b. Northwest Region

Collect data from stranded marine mammals to use in comparative studies of contaminant exposures and burdens in marine mammals.

Collect data from stranded marine mammals to investigate diseases affecting marine mammals.

Collect data from stranded killer whales and harbor porpoise to clarify taxonomic and stock identification in the wild populations of these two species.

Collect specialized data from stranded killer whales to investigate overall health parameters, prey types, diseases, immune and reproductive functions.

Collect data on post-release survival and health status of marine mammals including

releases from rehabilitation and/or beach releases.

Develop capability within the Region to conduct examinations of fresh dead (condition 2) stranded marine mammals using computerized tomography(CT) or magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) and analyze data for evidence of injury from human interaction or to assist in determining the cause of death.

c. Southeast Region

Enhance analyses of stranded marine mammal tissue samples appropriate for life history, contaminants, biotoxin, disease, genetics, anatomic and/or physiologic investigations.

Enhance analysis and assessment of human impact and post-Unusual Mortality Event samples for baseline information on population demographics, health and recovery.

Enhance the collection and analysis of specimens or data from stranded marine mammals in order to assess health trends in wild populations, with emphasis on diseases that have potential for epizootics, are endemic and may have a significant impact on survival/reproduction, or have zoonotic potential.

Enhance the collection and assessment of information for baseline information on population demographics, life history, movement and distribution, and health, including disease, contaminants, biotoxins, pathogens, parasites, nutrition, and microbial flora, including antibiotic resistance.

Enhance ability of rehabilitation facilities to conduct post-release monitoring (e.g. purchasing tags, boat time, airplane time, etc.).

d. Southwest Region

Collect specimens and data from stranded marine mammals to assess health trends in wild populations of cetaceans, with emphasis on diseases that have potential for epizootics (e.g., morbillivirus and others).

Full examination of dead-stranded California sea lions to determine the extent of human-induced mortality in the Southern California Bight.

Collect specimens and data from stranded marine mammals that will support baseline information on population demographics and life history (e.g., genetics, age-to-maturity, reproductive status, etc.).

e. Pacific Islands Region

Collect specimens and data from stranded marine mammals to assess the overall health trends in wild marine mammal populations. Collect appropriate data to investigate the occurrence of epizootics (e.g. morbillivirus) in live stranded odontocetes.

Collect specimens and data from stranded, rehabilitated marine mammals to assess the conditions that affect releasability and identify health risks to wild populations. Share and distribute this information with members of the Marine Mammal Health and Stranding Network.

Collect consistent Level A data throughout the jurisdiction, including remote areas, and collect Level B and C data from strandings of dead marine mammals

f. Alaska Region

Collect and analyze tissue samples appropriate for genetic analysis from stranded harbor seals and Steller sea lions.

Category C - Facility operations directly related to categories A or B above (i.e., physical plant renovations, maintenance, facility modifications/upgrades or construction).

1. National Funding Priority

Enhance physical plant capabilities to increase the quality of care of live stranded marine mammals or enhance the safety and quality of data or sample collection from living or dead stranded marine mammals.

Enhance physical plant capabilities through renovations or other modifications to better ensure human safety

2. Regional Funding Priorities

a. Northeast Region

Facility operation needs to enhance and support existing rehabilitation facilities or to upgrade existing facilities to meet upcoming rehabilitation facility guidelines.

Upgrade facility information management systems and capabilities to improve or allow access to the Marine Mammal Health and Stranding Response National databases.

b. Northwest Region

Enhance or upgrade facilities to handle and treat stranded marine mammals that must be kept in rehabilitation due to injury or disease.

Upgrade facilities for handling, stabilizing or treating stranded odontocetes.

Enhance capability to hold stranded marine mammals, taken for treatment or rehabilitation, for extended periods of time (i.e., > 6 months) when release is anticipated but not imminent.

c. Southeast Region

Upgrade existing rehabilitation facilities, with special attention to active facilities (based on rehabilitation records and historic data) and facilities requiring improvements to meet upcoming NMFS guidelines on rehabilitation.

Enhancements or upgrades of necropsy facilities involved in analysis of samples collected from stranded marine mammals.

d. Southwest Region

Facility operation needs or upgrades and renovations associated with veterinary care of stranded marine mammals.

Expansion and renovation of existing stranding and rehabilitation facilities.

Facility upgrades associated with treatment and feeding of stranded marine mammals.

e. Pacific Islands Region

Renovations, upgrades, expansions, or equipment to stranding and rehabilitation facilities.

Facility operation needs to improve access to veterinary care of stranded marine mammals, including facility improvements, on-site (lab or field) equipment, instruments for more rapid assessment of medical condition, and instruments for monitoring of treatment response

Equipment needs to improve live stranded cetacean response and transport safety.

f. Alaska Region

Facility upgrades and renovations for stranding response and live stranded marine mammal treatment.

Facility operation needs to improve in-house sample tracking and archiving for participation in the National Marine Mammal Tissue Bank and the Marine Mammal Health and Stranding national database.

C. Program Authority 16 USC 1421 f-1

II. Award Information

A. Funding Availability

This solicitation announces that a maximum of \$3.7 M may be available for distribution under the FY 2005 annual competitive Prescott Program. Applicants are hereby given notice that these funds have not yet been appropriated for this program, and therefore exact dollar amounts cannot be given. There is no guarantee that sufficient funds will be available to make awards for all qualified projects. The maximum Federal award for each grant cannot exceed \$100,000, as stated in the legislative language (16 U.S.C. 1421f-1).

In addition to the annual competitive process, \$1.2 M has been deposited with NFWF to provide for emergency assistance awards to eligible stranding network participants before the 2006 competitive grant cycle. These emergency funds will be available until expended.

There is no limit on the number of proposals that can be submitted by the same stranding network participant during the 2005 competitive grant cycle. However, there are insufficient funds to award financial assistance to every member of the network. Multiple proposals submitted must clearly identify different projects and must be successful in the competitive review process. In an attempt to ensure that the greatest number of network participants receive assistance during the FY 2005 funding cycle, eligible stranding network participants and their organizations can receive no more than two awards per year as part of the competitive cycle. The two awards must be for projects that are clearly separate in their objectives, goals, and budget requests. In addition, eligible researchers applying as Principal Investigators, but not independently authorized under the MMPA Section 112(c), the MMPA Section 109(h) (50 CFR 216.22), or the National Contingency Plan for Response to Marine Mammal Unusual Mortality Events, can receive no more than one award per year as part of the competitive cycle.

Authorized stranding network participants and researchers may be identified as Co-

Investigators or collaborators on as many proposals as needed as long as no more than 100 percent of their time is funded through the Prescott Program. In addition, Department of Commerce and Department of Interior employees may act as collaborators if they are responsible for performing analyses on data or samples collected under a Prescott award. See section I.F. for Eligibility requirements.

There is no guarantee that sufficient funds will be available to make awards for all qualified projects. Publication of this notice does not oblige NOAA to award any specific project or to obligate any available funds. If an application for a financial assistance award is selected for funding, NOAA/NMFS has no obligation to provide any additional funding in connection with that award in subsequent years beyond the award period.

If one incurs any costs prior to receiving an award agreement signed by an authorized NOAA official, one would do so solely at one's own risk of these costs not being included under the award. Notwithstanding any verbal or written assurance that applicants have received, pre-award costs are not allowed under the award unless the Grants Officer approves them in accordance with 15 CFR 14.28.

B. Project/Award Period

This solicitation announces that a maximum of \$3.7M may be available for distribution under the FY 2005 competitive program. Fiscal year 2005 awards under the Prescott Program will have a maximum project period of 3 years. However, the total Federal award cannot exceed \$100,000 regardless of the length of the project period. We will not accept proposals requesting incrementally funded projects exceeding \$100,000.

If an applicant wishes to continue work on a project funded through this program beyond the approved award period and obligated award funds have not been expended by the end of this period, the applicant can notify the assigned Federal Program Officer 30 days prior to the end of the period to determine eligibility for a no-cost extension. If, however, the money is expended and funds are needed to continue the project, the applicant should submit another proposal during the next competitive award cycle (FY 2006) or seek an alternate source of funding.

If a proposal is selected for funding, we have no obligation to provide any additional future funding in connection with that award. Renewal of an award to increase funding up to the maximum of \$100,000 in the Federal share, or extend the period of performance, is totally at our discretion.

C. Type of funding instrument

Under this solicitation, NOAA will fund Prescott grants as a maximum of a \$100,000 award, with a maximum project period of 3 years.

D. 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/enhancement permit, etc.) or approvals (e.g., Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) review, etc.), or 2) a copy of the final permit or approval.

For proposed work beyond the normal scope of stranding network activities (e.g., live capture programs, data collection on non-stranded and wild marine mammals, invasive and new technologies for post-release monitoring of marine mammals, holding marine mammals in captivity after they are deemed releaseable, collection or propagation of cell lines, etc.) the applicant is responsible for requesting and obtaining scientific research permits under the MMPA or Endangered Species Act (ESA).

For proposed Category B (i.e., data collection) projects on live stranded or rehabilitated, free-ranging marine mammals, if the stranding network participant or researcher works for a facility (University, Aquarium, live animal research 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 data collection involves intrusive research (50 CFR 216.27(c)(6)) or if animals must be held after rehabilitation has been completed (prevented from release), the applicant must also obtain a MMPA/ESA scientific research and enhancement permit before the proposal will be considered for funding. Intrusive research is defined under 50 CFR 216.3 as a procedure that involves: a break in or cutting of the skin or equivalent, insertion of an instrument or material into an orifice, introduction of a substance or object into the animals' immediate environment that is likely either to be ingested or to contact and directly affect animal tissues (i.e., chemical substances), or a stimulus directed at animals that poses a risk to the health or welfare of the animal or has the potential to impact normal function or behavior (e.g., audio broadcasts directed at animals that potentially affects behavior, brainstem auditory evoked responses, etc.).

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 these activities do not require an additional permit.

For proposals under Category C involving construction projects (i.e., facility upgrades), it is the applicant's responsibility to request or obtain all building, water quality, air quality, wetland or other necessary permits and include documentation of such requests or approvals in the proposal package. Documentation should, to the extent possible, must include environmental documentation that has been or will be submitted to the appropriate Federal, state, and local government offices (see Section IV, Application and Submission Information, for required information for each proposal category). These documents will help the Prescott Program in determining the potential for environmentally significant activities and ensure NMFS compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act.

All applications will be reviewed using the Grants NEPA Checklist 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 in conformance with requirements of the National Environmental Policy

Act. For those applications needing an Environmental Assessment, affected applicants will be informed after the peer review stage and will be requested to assist in the preparation of a draft of the assessment (prior to award).

If proposed activities will take place within National Marine Sanctuaries, National Parks, National Seashores, and other federally or state-designated protected areas, it is the applicant's responsibility to request and obtain from the appropriate government agencies any necessary federal, state or local permits or letters of agreement for conducting the proposed activities.

For further information on permit requirements and applications procedures for federal natural resource permits, contact the NMFS Office of Protected Resources (see Section VII, Agency Contact(s)) or see the following website:

http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/prot_res/PR1/Permits/pr1permits_types.html.

Receipt of required MMPA/ESA scientific research and enhancement permits will be required prior to award of funds if the proposal is selected for funding and the applicant has not yet obtained the permit. Failure to obtain other Federal, state, and local permits, approvals, letters of agreement, or failure to provide environmental analyses where necessary (i.e., NEPA environmental assessments or documentation) will also delay the award of funds if a project is otherwise selected for funding.

III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applicants

There are 5 categories of eligible stranding network participants that may apply for funds under this Program: 1) Letter of Agreement (LOA) holders; 2) LOA designee organizations; 3) holders of researcher authorizations; 4) official Northwest Region participants; and, 5) state, local, eligible federal government or tribal employees or personnel. In order for these organizations and individuals to apply for award funds under the Prescott Grant Program, they must meet the following eligibility criteria specific to their category of participation:

1. LOA Holder Participant

- a. Active as an authorized participant for the past 3 years or more in network activities².
- b. Participating in good standing³.

²Applications from new network members, such as individuals or groups that have been granted authorization recently, will likely not qualify for eligibility during the first few funding cycles unless those applicants have experience as active Network participants (e.g., as designee or under 109(h)) for the past 3 years. The Act makes clear its intent to provide financial assistance to the active stranding network: "Provide grants to eligible stranding network participants ...", and preference should be given to: "... those facilities that have established records for rescuing or rehabilitating sick and stranded marine mammals." The 3 year period is important to establishing whether or not participants are in good standing by their completion of reporting requirements and level of cooperation.

³To be "in good standing", you must meet all of the following criteria:

1. If a the applicant is a designated Principal Investigator of a Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) or Endangered Species Act (ESA) scientific research or enhancement permit holder, the applicant must have fulfilled all permit requirements, including but not limited to submission of all reports, and must have no pending or outstanding enforcement actions under the MMPA or ESA.
2. Have complied with the terms and responsibilities of the appropriate LOA, MMPA section 109(h) authorization, or National Contingency Plan (whichever applies). This includes the following reporting requirements: a) timely reporting of strandings to NMFS, and b) timely submission of complete reports on basic or Level A data to the Regional Coordinator (includes investigator's name, species, stranding location, number of animals, date

- c. Holding a current (active) LOA for stranding response (either live or dead animal response) or rehabilitation from a NMFS Regional Administrator or the Assistant Administrator.
- d. Not a current full-time or part-time employee or contractor of the Department of Commerce (DOC) or the Department of Interior (DOI).

2. LOA Designee Participant; NOTE: Designees cannot request authorization for activities beyond the scope of the letterholder.

- a. Active as an authorized participant for the past 3 years or more in network activities².
- b. Participating in good standing³.
- c. Holding a current (active) letter of designation from a NMFS LOA holder.
- d. Not a current full-time or part-time employee or contractor of DOC or DOI.

3. Researcher Participant

- a. Active as an authorized participant for the past 3 years or more in network activities².
- b. Holding a current (active) authorizing letter for the time of the application and for the proposed award period from the NMFS Regional Administrator or the Assistant Administrator to salvage stranded marine mammal specimens and parts or samples therefrom for the purpose of utilization in scientific research (50 CFR 216.22). Persons authorized to salvage dead marine mammal specimens under this section must have registered the salvage with the appropriate NMFS Regional Office within 30 days after the taking occurs.
- c. Have designated co-Investigator(s) that are active NMFS-authorized stranding network participants in good standing³.
- d. Not a current full-time or part-time employee or contractor of DOC or DOI.

4. Northwest Region Participants

- a. Active as an authorized participant for the past 3 years or more in network activities².
- b. Participating in good standing³.
- c. Named in the National Contingency Plan for Response to Marine Mammal Unusual Mortality Events (Wilkinson, 1996).
- d. Not a current full-time or part-time employee or contractor of DOC or DOI.

5. State, Local, Federal Government Employees or Tribal Participants

- a. Actively involved as an authorized participant in stranding response and/or rehabilitation during the past 3 years in an area of geographic need (i.e., municipality or larger region with no

and time of stranding and recovery, length and condition, and sex; marine mammal parts retention or transfer; annual reports), and (3) collecting information or samples as necessary and as requested. This also includes the following coordination/cooperation requirements: a) cooperation with state, local, and Federal officials, b) cooperation with state and local officials in the disposition of stranded marine mammals, and c) cooperation with other stranding network participants.

3. Have cooperated in a timely manner with NMFS in collecting and submitting Level B (supplementary information regarding sample collection related to life history and to the stranding event) and Level C (necropsy results) data and samples, when requested.

4. Have no current enforcement investigation for the take of marine mammals contrary to the MMPA/ESA regulations.

5. Have no record of pending NMFS notice of violation(s) regarding the policies governing the goals and operations of the Stranding Network.

existing responder)².

b. Participating in good standing³.

c. State and local government officials or employees participating pursuant to MMPA section 109(h)(16 U.S.C. 1379(h)) for marine mammal species not listed under the Endangered Species Act fulfilling reporting obligations outlined in 50 CFR 216.22 (i.e., submission of written report to NMFS every six months containing description of animal(s) involved, circumstances of taking, method of taking, name and position of official or employee involved, and disposition of animal(s)).

d. Not a current full-time or part-time employee or contractor of DOC or DOI.

Applicants must submit the required documentation in their proposal (see Section IV, Application and Submission Information) as evidence that they are an LOA holder participant, designee participant, researcher participant, Northwest Region participant, or a state, local, Federal government employee, or tribal participant at the time of the submission and during the award period. All eligibility criteria specified for the participant's category must be met in order for a proposal to be considered for funding. Applicants that do not meet these eligibility criteria will be notified no later than two weeks after the submission deadline that their proposal is not eligible for funding in the annual competitive cycle.

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 defined by 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 strongly committed to broadening the participation of Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs), which include Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Hispanic Serving Institutions, Tribal Colleges and Universities, and institutions that work in undeserved areas 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, Prescott Grant Program encourages 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, except for providing information on data or sample analyses as an identified collaborator/Co-Investigator in the proposal. 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, Regional funding priorities for the 2003/2004 Prescott Program, and, along with other Federal Program Officers, can provide guidance on application

procedures and proper completion of required 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. However, for activities that involve collaboration with current NOAA programs that include, but are not limited to, the National Marine Mammal Tissue Bank (NMMTB) or laboratories conducting analysis of tissues for contaminants, employees of NOAA or the National Institute of Standards and Technology can write a letter verifying that they are collaborating with the project, or that the organization or individual applying is trained to participate in the NMMTB or is currently participating in the National Marine Analytical Quality Assurance Program. Federal employee travel costs or salaries are not allowable costs under this program.

Unsatisfactory performance under prior or current Federal awards can result in proposals not being considered for funding under the 2005 Prescott Grant Program.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement

All proposals submitted must provide a minimum non-Federal cost share of 25 percent of the total budget (i.e., $.25 \times \text{total project costs} = \text{total non-Federal share}$). Therefore, the total Federal share will be 75 percent or less of the total budget. For example, if the proposed total budget was \$133,334, the minimum total non-Federal share would be \$33,334 ($.25 \times \$133,334 = \$33,334$) and the maximum total Federal share would be \$100,000 ($.75 \times \$133,334 = \$100,000$). The applicant can include a non-Federal cost share for more than 25 percent of the total budget, but this obligation will be binding. In order to reduce calculation error in determining the correct cost share amounts, we urge all applicants to use the cost share calculator on the Prescott Program web page (see Section IV.A. Address to Request Application Package).

Legislation under which the Prescott Program operates requires this cost sharing, or non-Federal match, in order to leverage the limited funds available for this program and to encourage partnerships among government, private organizations, non-profit organizations, the stranding network, and academia to address the needs of marine mammal health and stranding response. If a proposal does not comply with these cost share requirements, it will be returned to the applicant after initial review by NMFS and, unless the proposal is revised and returned, it will not be considered in this annual funding cycle.

The Federal Program Officer will determine the appropriateness of all non-Federal cost sharing proposals, including the valuation of in-kind contributions, according to the regulations codified at 15 CFR 14.23 and 24.24. An in-kind contribution is a non-cash contribution, donated or loaned, by a third party to the applicant. In general, the value of in-kind services or property used to fulfill a non-Federal cost share will be the fair market value of the services or property. Thus, the value is determined by the cost of obtaining such services or property if they had not been donated, or of obtaining such services or property for the period of the loan. The applicant must document the in-kind services or property used to fulfill the non-Federal cost share. If we decide to fund a proposal, we will require strict accounting of the in-kind contributions within the total non-Federal cost share included in the award document. The Grants Officer (i.e., the Department of Commerce official responsible for all business management and administrative aspects of a grant and with delegated authority to award, amend, administer, close out, suspend,

and/or terminate awards) is the final approving authority for the award, including the budget and any cost-sharing proposals.

IV. Application and Submission Information

A. Address to Request Application Package

This solicitation, complete proposal packages (including required federal forms) with instructions, a cost share calculator and address for application submission are available on the NMFS Prescott Program web page at:

http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/prot_res/PR2/Health_and_Stranding_Response_Program/Prescott.html.

Non-construction proposals and construction proposals (i.e., those that involve build-outs, alterations, upgrades, and renovations to existing facilities) require different federal forms depending on the percentage of federal funds being requested. For example, proposals with 50 percent or more of their requested federal amount going to construction activities require the federal forms for construction (i.e., SF-424D and SF-424C) and do not require the federal forms for non-construction (i.e., SF-424B and SF-424A).

The required forms are as follows:

Forms required of all proposals:

Application for Federal Assistance: SF-424

Certifications Regarding Debarment, Suspension, and other Responsibility Matters: Drug

Free Workplace Environment: CD-511

For projects not involving construction (Category A and B):

Budget Information - Non-Construction Programs - SF-424A

Assurances - Non-Construction Programs: SF-424B

For projects with 50 percent or more of their requested federal amount going to construction activities such as build-outs, alterations, upgrades, and renovations to existing facilities (Category C):

Budget Information - Construction Programs: SF-424C

Assurances - Construction Programs: SF-424D

Depending on the applicant, the following forms may also be required:

Disclosure of Lobbying Activities: SF-LLL (if applicable)

Name Check: CD-346 (Required for the following individuals- Sole Proprietorship, Partnerships, Corporations, Joint Venture, Non-profit Organizations)

If forms cannot be downloaded from the website contact Angela Payne or Karen Salvini, NOAA/NMFS/Office of Protected Resources, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring MD 20912, 301 713-2322, or by email: PrescottGrantFR.comments@noaa.gov.

B. Content and Form of Application Submission

Proposals must adhere to the following provisions and requirements by the deadline of August 16, 2004, for proposal submission. Failure to follow these requirements will result in proposals being returned without review. The instructions in this document are designed to help applicants in preparing and submitting a application for Federal funding under the Prescott Grant Program. All required federal forms, the narrative description of the budget and proposed project, and applicable supporting documentation must be complete and must follow the format described here. Assistance in filling out required forms and avoiding common problems can be found on the NOAA Grants web site at: <http://www.rdc.noaa.gov/~grants/index.html>. The Prescott Grant Program web site:

http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/prot_res/PR2/Health_and_Stranding_Response_Program/Prescott.html has complete proposal package examples (one non-construction and one construction), supplemental instructions for completing all federal forms and the budget narrative, and questions and answers related to applying for funds under the Prescott Grant Program.

One signed original and two signed copies of the complete proposal package must be submitted. The original proposal and copies should not be bound in any manner and must be printed on one side only. Proposals must be in 10-point font and double-spaced with 1 inch margins. In addition, we are requesting that applicants submit an electronic copy, on diskette or CD (in Microsoft Word 2000 or earlier or WordPerfect v. 9 or lower), of the narrative project description. The required unbound original and two copies, and the optional electronic copy must be sent to the address listed in section IV.E. of this document and postmarked by the submission deadline in order to be considered in the 2005 competition. If a package does not contain all of the required proposal elements described in this section it will be returned to the applicant, and unless re-submitted, it will not be considered further in this funding cycle. We are not required to screen proposals before the submission deadline, nor do we have to give applicants an opportunity to correct any deficiencies leading to rejection. However, we strongly recommend early submission of proposals in the event that we have the resources to pre-screen. Note that there will be no extensions of the deadline for proposal revisions and that any revised proposals must be re-submitted by the original solicitation deadline.

Applicants must identify the specific research priority or priorities to which they are responding. If the proposal addresses more than one priority, it should list first on the application the priority that most closely reflects the objective of the proposals. For applications containing more than one project, each project component must be identified individually using the format specified in this section. If an application is not in response to a priority, it should so state. Applicants should not assume prior knowledge on the part of the Prescott Grant Program as to the relative merits of the project described in the application.

Returned applications must be revised and resubmitted by the postmark deadline for this competition. Brevity will assist reviewers and program staff in dealing effectively with proposals. Therefore, Project Description may not exceed 10 pages for each proposal. Appendices may be included but must not exceed a total of 15-pages in length. Tables and visual materials, including charts, graphs, maps, photographs, and other pictorial presentations are not

included in the 15-page limitation. Additional informational material will be disregarded. Proposals must include the following information:

1. Cover Sheet: Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Standard Forms 424 and 424B (4-92) or 424D must be the cover sheets for each proposal. To complete item 10 of Standard Form 424, the “Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance” number is 11.439, and the title is “Marine Mammal Data Program.” For item 13 of Standard Form 424, a start date no earlier than 1 January 2005 should be selected.

2. Total project costs and budget narrative: Total project costs are the amount of funds required to accomplish what is proposed in the Project Description and include contributions and donations. Each proposal must include clear and concise budget information on the required federal forms, in summary, and in narrative detail.

Proposals requesting a federal amount that does not include construction activities or in which construction activities are less than 50 percent of the total federal amount must use OMB standard form 424A, “Budget Information - Non Construction Programs” and associated form instructions. Proposals that include a requested federal amount for construction activities that is equal to or greater than 50 percent of the total federal amount requested must use OMB standard form 424C “Budget Information - Construction Programs” and associated form instructions.

All instructions should be read before completing the appropriate form. Both Federal and non-Federal columns on these forms must be filled in completely and separately and the amounts per category and total amounts must correspond with the budget narrative and justification.

On a separate sheet, describe and justify in narrative detail or on a spreadsheet the itemized costs per category between Federal and non-Federal shares and the corresponding direct and indirect cost totals. For the non-Federal share, the itemized costs should be separated into cash and in-kind contributions. If in-kind contributions are included, describe briefly the basis for estimating the value of these contributions.

If the applicant currently has a negotiated indirect cost rate with the Federal government, an amount for indirect costs can be included in the budget. Indirect costs are overhead costs for basic operational functions (e.g., lights, rent, water, insurance) that are incurred for common or joint objectives and therefore cannot be identified specifically within a particular project. Indirect costs can be included in both the Federal and non-Federal cost shares as long as the method of calculation is clear and certain rules are followed. If indirect costs are included, the package should include a copy of the current, approved, negotiated indirect cost agreement with the Federal government (see Section IV.D.2).

Funds for salaries and fringe benefits may be requested only for those personnel who are directly involved in implementing the proposed project and whose salaries and fringe benefits are directly related to specific products or outcomes of the proposed project. NOAA strongly encourages applicants to request reasonable amounts of funding for salaries and fringe benefits to ensure that your proposal is competitive.

We will not consider fees, fund-raising activities, travel for federal employees, salaries for federal employees, or profits as allowable costs in the proposed budget. The total costs of a project consist of all allowable costs you incur, including the value of in-kind contributions, in accomplishing project activities during the project period. A project begins on the effective date of an award agreement between you and the Grants Officer and ends on the date specified in the

award. Accordingly, we cannot reimburse applicants for time expended or costs incurred in developing a project or preparing the application, or in any discussions or negotiations with us prior to the award. We will not accept such expenditures as part of your cost share.

3. Title Page: A Title Page must be included for each project. The Title Page must list the project title, project duration (with a start date no earlier than 1 January 2005), applicant name, name of Principal Investigator or Contact, address and phone number of the Principal Investigator or Contact, the Prescott Grant Program Category under which the project fits (see Section I.B. of this document), the project's objective(s), and a statement regarding the Federal, non-Federal and total costs of the project.

4. Project summary (1-page limit): In 6 sentences or less, briefly summarize: project goals and objectives as they relate to the Prescott Grant Program Categories (i.e., Category A, Category B, or Category C), Program goals and/or Regional funding priorities; proposed activities; geographic area where activities would occur; and expected outcomes and benefits from the activities (e.g., increased number of responses to live stranded cetaceans, greater and higher quality data collected from pinniped strandings, renovation and upgrade of a marine mammal rehabilitation facility, etc.) of the project. This summary will be posted on our website if the project is funded.

5. Project description (10-page limit): The narrative description of the proposed project must not exceed 10 pages (not including curriculum vitae and supplemental documentation) and must be typed in 10-point font, double-spaced, with 1 inch margins. Each project or component must be completely and accurately described. The narrative should be a clear statement of the work to be undertaken and should: include specific objectives and performance measures for the period of the proposed work and the expected significance, demonstrate the applicant's knowledge of the need for the project, and show how the proposed project builds upon any past and current work in the subject area, as well as relevant work in related fields. Applicants should not assume that reviewers already know the relative merits of the project. The narrative project description must include each of the following elements in the order listed here:

a. Project goals and objectives (maximum 2 pages). Identify the Prescott Grant Program Category and/or regional funding priorities, listed in Section I.B. of this document, to which the project's goals and objective(s) correspond. Identify the problem/opportunity the project intends to address and describe its significance to the marine mammal health and stranding response and rehabilitation community. State expected project accomplishments.

Objectives should be simple and understandable and as specific and quantitative as possible. Although actual stranding events cannot be predicted, historic stranding data in the region of proposed activities should be used to assess season, species, and likelihood of future strandings. This data is critical in linking proposed project objectives with the Prescott Program's goals, regional funding priorities, and in assuring an equitable distribution of funds among regions. Therefore, we encourage applicants to provide stranding data and statistics by year and geographic area in sufficient detail to provide a regional context to the project. Objectives should be attainable within the time, money and human resources available.

b. Project management (maximum 3 pages, excluding resumes and curriculum vitae). Describe how the proposed project will be organized and managed (e.g., financial accounting systems to be used and point of contact responsible for managing those systems, etc.). Identify

whether the applicant is applying as an LOA holder, designee, researcher, Northwest Region contingency plan organization/individual, state, local, tribal or Federal employee under 109(h) of the MMPA or some other recognized authority.

The lead organization/individual and person listed as the technical contact should be identified as the Principal Investigator. The Principal Investigator may or may not be the applicant. However, if the applicant is not the Principal Investigator, there must be an explanation of the relationship between the applicant and Principal Investigator (e.g., applicant will be responsible for managing the grant funds and the Principal Investigator will be responsible for completing the project milestones on time and within budget, etc.). One Principal Investigator must be designated on each project. If a Principal Investigator is not identified, the proposal will be returned. Project participants or organizations that will have a significant role in conducting the project should be listed as Co-investigators. Organizations or individuals that support the project, for example, network members contributing data or materials, should be referred to as Cooperators. In addition, identify the planned use of volunteer staff to complete any aspect of project activities. Copies of the Principal Investigator's and all Co-investigator's current resumes or curricula vitae must be included in the package's Supporting Documentation section. In addition, the proof of eligibility documents (see II.C.6. Supporting Documentation) provided and listed in the Supporting Documents section of the proposal must name the Principal Investigator and/or Co-investigator. List any prior or current Federal awards the Principal Investigator and Co-investigators have received and describe resultant products of such awards. Provide a statement of no more than one page on the qualifications and experience (e.g., resume or curriculum vitae) of consultants and/or subcontractors that are not named as Co-investigators and any Cooperators.

Include copies of agreements between the Principal Investigator and other participants in the project, describing the specific activities each participant would perform. Include copies of any endorsements received from other marine mammal health and stranding response participants related to this project.

If any portion of the project will be conducted through consultants and/or subcontracts, procurement guidance found in 15 CFR part 24, "Grants and Cooperative Agreements to State and Local Governments," and 15 CFR part 14, "Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Agreements with Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals, Other Non-Profit, and Commercial Organizations" must be followed. Describe how provisions for competitive subcontracting will be met if applicable.

c. Project description. This is the scientific or technical action plan of activities that are to be accomplished to ensure that the proposed project's goals and objectives are met within the proposed award period. The statement of work should include detailed descriptions of activities, collaborators, milestones, and expected products resulting from a successfully completed project. The narrative should respond to the following questions:

(1) What specific activities does the project include and how do these activities relate to the project's goals and objectives?

(2) Who will be responsible for carrying out each activity? For Category A and Category B projects, highlight activities that will be conducted by Co-investigators or Cooperators. For Category C projects, highlight activities that will be conducted by sub-contractors, volunteers,

and others designated as Co-investigators or Cooperators. For all projects, highlight activities that will be subcontracted. Use of volunteer staff time to complete project activities and oversight of those volunteers should be discussed. The Principal Investigator is responsible for all technical oversight and implementation of the approved work plan as delineated in this Statement of Work.

(3) What are the project milestones? List milestones, describing specific activities and associated time lines necessary to meet them. Describe the time lines in increments (e.g., month 1, month 2, etc.), rather than by specific dates.

(4) What are the major outcomes, results, or products expected? Describe expected outcomes, results, or products that will directly relate to the Prescott Program goals (i.e., under Categories A, B and C) and Regional funding priorities.

(5) How will outcomes, results, or products be disseminated or shared? Describe how project outcomes, results or products will be disseminated to or shared with stranding network participants and other potential users. In addition, describe how activities and results of the project will be shared outside the stranding network for education and outreach purposes. In both cases, indicate the method of information or product transfer (e.g., print media, video, training manual, facility sharing, educational displays, etc.)

d. Project impacts (maximum 1 page). Describe the potential impacts of this proposed project on both the recovery and treatment of stranded marine mammals and the collection of data from living or dead stranded marine mammals for use in scientific research on marine mammal health. Identify any other potential project impacts.

e. Project performance evaluation (maximum 1 page). Specify the quantitative and/or qualitative criteria to be used in evaluating the relative success or failure of the project in achieving the stated project goals and objectives.

f. Need for federal assistance (maximum 1 page). Explain the need for government financial assistance in successfully carrying out project activities. List all sources of funding received from the Federal government, either past or current, for this or a closely related project(s). List other sources of Federal funding being sought for this same project.

g. Federal, state, and local government programs and activities (maximum 1 page). List any existing Federal, state, or local government programs or activities that this project would affect and reference any corresponding documentation (i.e., permits, approvals, environmental assessments) included in the proposal package.

h. Participation by persons or groups other than the applicant (maximum 1 page). Describe how government and non-government entities, particularly other members of the marine mammal health and stranding response community, will participate in the project and the nature of their participation. How much will other members of the marine mammal health and stranding response community participate in the project?

6. Appendices (15 page limit): Additional material may be provided, but must not exceed 15 pages in length. Tables and visual materials, including charts, graphs, maps, photographs, and other pictorial presentations are not included in the 15-page limitation.

7. Supporting Documentation (no page limit): In order to be considered for an award in this funding cycle, the applicant must provide proof of eligibility documents. These include one or more of the following: LOA(s), letter of designation, letter of research authorization under 50

CFR 216.22, if in the Northwest Region (Washington and Oregon) documentation that the applicant is named and active in the National Contingency Plan for Response to Marine Mammal Unusual Mortality Events or the 2002 National Contingency Plan for Response to Marine Mammal Unusual Mortality Events, or authorization under MMPA Section 109(h) to participate as a state or local official. Principal Investigators that are researchers and do not hold LOAs, are not LOA designees, are not on the Northwest Region's National Contingency Plan list, and are not MMPA Section 109(h) participants must include copies of letters from a NMFS Region or the MMHSRP authorizing them under 50 CFR 216.22, any MMPA/ESA scientific research or enhancement permits, and a Co-investigator's LOA or letter of designation. See section I.F., Eligibility, to determine what specific type of documentation is required.

Applicants requiring ESA/MMPA scientific research and enhancement permits must include a copy of their permit(s) in this section.

Applicants should also include a description of their need for government financial assistance (maximum 1 page). Explain the need for government financial assistance in successfully carrying out project activities. List all sources of funding received from the Federal government, either past or current, for this or a closely related project(s). List other sources of Federal funding being sought for this same project. If any PI or CI identified on the project has received support from the NOAA Prescott Grant Program in the past 3 years, information on the prior award(s) is required. The following information should be provided: 1) the NOAA award number, amount and period of support; 2) the title of the project; 3) a summary of the results of the completed work; 4) publications resulting from the award, if any (reprints may be submitted and are requested for documentation if available); 5) a brief description of available data, samples, physical collections and other related research projects not described elsewhere; and 6) if the current application is for renewed or continuing support, a description of the relation of the completed work to the proposed work.

Applicants proposing activities that may require an environmental assessment under NEPA must include sufficient environmental analyses to allow program staff to determine whether or not the proposal can be categorically excluded from further NEPA analysis.

Curriculum vitae or resumes of the Principals and Co-Investigators and all other required federal forms (i.e., CD-511, SF-LLL, CD-346) must be included here.

Applicants applying as non-profit organizations must include a letter from the Internal Revenue Service verifying non-profit classification under Internal Revenue Code and tax exempt status under section 501(c)(3) of the Code.

Any other relevant documents and additional information (e.g., maps, additional stranding statistics for your geographic area or region, organizational history and information, schematics and architectural renderings of facility upgrades, photographs, etc.) that will help us to understand the proposed project and the problem/opportunity the project seeks to address should be included in this section.

Supporting documents will not count as a part of the 10 page limit for the project description or the 15 page limit for appendices.

C. Submission Dates and Times

Proposals must be postmarked by August 16, 2004. Proposals postmarked after that date will not be considered for funding.

D. Funding Restrictions

1. Indirect Cost Rates: Regardless of any approved indirect cost rate applicable to the award, the maximum dollar amount of allocable indirect costs for which the Department of Commerce will reimburse the recipient shall be the lesser of the line item amount for the Federal share of indirect costs contained in the approved budget of the award, or the Federal share of the total allocable indirect costs of the award based on the indirect cost rate approved by an oversight or cognizant Federal agency and current at the time the cost was incurred, provided the rate is approved on or before the award end date. However, the Federal share of the indirect costs may not exceed 25 percent of the total proposed direct costs for this Program. Applicants with indirect costs above 25 percent may use the amount above the 25 percent level as cost sharing. If the applicant does not have a current negotiated rate and plans to seek reimbursement for indirect costs, documentation necessary to establish a rate must be submitted within 90 days of receiving an award.

2. Allowable Costs: Funds awarded cannot necessarily pay for all the costs that the recipient might incur in the course of carrying out the project. Allowable costs are determined by reference to the Office of Management and Budget Circulars A-122, "Cost Principles for Nonprofit Organizations"; A-21, "Cost Principles for Education Institutions"; and A-87, "Cost Principles for State, Local and Indian Tribal Governments." Generally, costs that are allowable include salaries, equipment, supplies, and training, as long as these are "necessary and reasonable."

E. Other Submission Requirements

All proposal packages should be sent to NOAA/NMFS/Office of Protected Resources, Marine Mammal Health and Stranding Response Program, Attn: Michelle Ordonez, 1315 East-West Highway, Room 13620, Silver Spring, MD 20910-3283, phone 301-713-2322 ext 177. We cannot accept completed applications via the Internet or facsimile at this time.

V. Application Review Information

A. Evaluation Criteria

1. Importance and/or relevance and applicability of proposed project to the program goals: This ascertains whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and/or relevance to NOAA, federal, regional, state, or local activities. For this competition, this encompasses the following: Proposals will be evaluated on clear identification of project goals and objectives and the ability to link those goals and objectives to project activities and the applicability of the project's goals and objectives to the Prescott Program goals and regional funding priorities. Reviewers should consider: the likelihood of meeting milestones and achieving anticipated results in the time line specified in the statement of work; the contribution of potential outcomes,

results, or products to the marine mammal stranding and rehabilitation communities; and, the amount of collaboration with other stranding network participants. (Score = 1-100; Weight = 50 percent)

2. Technical/scientific merit: This assesses whether the approach is technically sound and/or innovative, if the methods are appropriate, and whether there are clear project goals and objectives. For this competition, this encompasses the following: Proposals will be scored based on their clear identification of goals and objectives, performance evaluation methods, and the suitability of those methods for evaluating the success or failure of the project in terms of meeting its original goals and objectives. Proposals will also be evaluated on the sufficiency of information to evaluate the project technically, and, if such information is sufficient, the strengths and/or weaknesses of the technical design relative to securing productive and meaningful results. (Score = 1-100; Weight = 10 percent)

3. Overall qualifications of applicants: This ascertains whether the applicant possesses the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project. For this competition, this encompasses the following: The management of the project will be evaluated based on documentation of previous related experience and qualifications of the project's Principal Investigator, Co-investigator(s) and other personnel, including designated contractors, consultants, and Cooperators. Consideration will be made to previous awards received by the Principal Investigator and outcomes, results, or products resulting from such awards. (Score = 1-100; Weight = 25 percent)

4. Project costs: The Budget is evaluated to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time-frame. For this competition, this encompasses the following: The proposed costs and overall budget of the project will be evaluated in terms of the work proposed. The itemized costs and the overall budget must be justified, clear to the reviewer, and allocated appropriately. (Score = 1-100; Weight = 15 percent)

5. Outreach and education: NOAA assesses whether this project provides a focused and effective education and outreach strategy regarding NOAA's mission to protect the Nation's natural resources. (Score = 0, Weight = 0)

B. Review and Selection Process

Screening, review, and selection procedures will take place in 4 steps, described in detail in this section: initial screening, peer review, merit review, and final selection by the Selecting Official (i.e., the Assistant Administrator for Fisheries). The peer review step will involve at least 3 individual reviewers per proposal. The Selecting Official will make the final decision regarding which proposals will be funded based on recommendations of the merit review team as well as policy considerations such as costs, geographical distribution, financial need, duplication with other federally funded projects, and equitable distribution of funds among the stranding regions.

1. Initial Technical Evaluation of the Applicants

The initial screening will ensure that proposal packages have all required forms and proposal elements (listed in Section IV, Application and Submission Information), clearly relate to the 2005 Prescott Program goals or regional funding priorities, and meet all of the eligibility criteria.

Proposal packages received in the Office of Protected Resources will be screened to ensure that they: were postmarked by the due date (see IV.C, Submission Dates and Times); include one original and 2 signed copies of the entire proposal package; an electronic copy of the project proposal in Word or WordPerfect format, submitted either by electronic mail or on a compact disk; include the correct OMB forms (424, 424A or 424D, and 424B or 424C) signed and dated (see Sections IV.A and IV.B); provide for at least a 25-percent non-Federal cost share (see Section III.B.); identify a Principal Investigator and provide current resumes or curricula vitae for both the Principal and Co-Investigators (see Sections IV.B.5.b and IV.B.6); provide proof of eligibility (see Section III.F. and Section IV.B.6); identify and address one of the 3 project categories for species under NMFS's jurisdiction(see section I.B); include proposal package elements (see Section IV.B); include MMPA or ESA permit application cover letters, if applicable; and provide proof of non-profit status, if applicable. Proposals that pass this initial screening will be pooled based on the proposal category (i.e., Category A, B, or C) identified by the applicant and by the coast where activities are proposed.

2. Peer Review

Each accepted proposal will undergo a peer review by participants in the U.S. marine mammal stranding network or other qualified persons (scientists, researchers, biologists, stranding network participants of foreign countries, engineers, etc.) based on the subject matter of the proposals received. Peer reviewers will be asked to evaluate individual proposals based on the Prescott Program goal or regional funding priorities identified by the applicant, review criteria, and technical reviewer comments. Proposals will be grouped according to Category and coast; 6 groups will be created and each group will be reviewed by an appropriate peer-review panel. Each panel will review proposals from the opposite coast to avoid any potential conflicts of interest. Ranking and commenting on proposals will be completed during these meetings. The peer review results will be used to numerically rank the proposals and provide programmatic and regional stakeholder comments on each proposal. Each peer reviewer will be required to certify that they do not have a conflict of interest concerning the proposal(s) they are reviewing prior to their review.

To determine the appropriateness of each proposal to the Prescott Program's goals and/or regional funding priorities, the peer reviewers will provide independent reviews using the weighted criteria outlined above. Each proposal will be reviewed by at least 3 peer reviewers. On a scale of 0-100, the reviewers will score the proposal in each criteria outlined in Section A above. An average, weighted score will be generated from each review using the numeric score per criteria and the weights assigned to each criteria. Only those proposals with an average weighted score will be passed on to the merit review panel; all proposals with an average weighted score less than 60 points will be returned to the applicant and not reviewed further.

3. Merit Review

After proposals have undergone peer review, the MMHSRP staff, NMFS Regional Administrators (RAs) and Office Directors (ODs) will conduct a merit review in consultation with the Marine Mammal Commission and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, to consider the technical and peer review results and develop recommendations for funding. Merit reviewers will use the peer review comments, application materials, stranding statistics by region (i.e., geographic need for proposed projects), and number of applications received in making recommendations regarding equitable distribution of funds among regions, in ranking all proposals recommended for funding, and in justifying any discrepancies between the technical and peer reviewers' comments and the merit reviewers' recommendations. Equitable distribution will be determined by review of technically sound proposals (those that score above 60 points in the peer review) pooled by stranding region. The merit review will consider proposals by region using the best available data on episodic, anomalous or unusual stranding events, average annual strandings and mortalities, and sizes of marine mammal populations within each region. They will also consider the actual stranding statistics per region for the previous 5 non-El Nino years and for the last El Nino year. After proposals are prioritized within the regions using the best available data, preference will be given to facilities within each region that have established records for responding to stranded marine mammals. The merit review team will prepare a written justification for any recommendations for funding that fall outside the peer review ranking or equitable distribution order, or for any cost adjustments.

4. Final Selection: After applications have undergone peer and merit reviews and been ranked, the merit review team will then prepare recommendations for funding to the Selecting Official (the Assistant Administrator (AA) for Fisheries).

C. Selection Factors

Selection Factors for Projects

The merit review ratings shall provide a rank order to the Selecting Official for final funding recommendations. A program officer may first make recommendations to the Selecting Official applying the selection factors below. The Selecting Official shall award in the rank order unless the proposal is justified to be selected out of rank order based upon one or more of the following factors:

1. Availability of funding.
2. Balance/distribution of funds:
 - a. Geographically
 - b. By type of institutions
 - c. By type of partners
 - d. By research areas
 - e. By project types
3. Whether this project duplicates other projects funded or considered for funding by NOAA or other federal agencies.
4. Program priorities and policy factors as set out in sections I.A. and B. above.
5. Applicant's prior award performance.
6. Partnerships and/or Participation of targeted groups.

As a result, awards are not necessarily made to the highest technically ranked projects.

D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

Subject to the availability of funds, review of proposals will occur during the two months following the date given in this announcement that the full proposals are due to the Prescott Grant Program. Funding should begin during spring 2005 for most approved projects. Projects should not be expected to begin prior to January 1, 2005, unless otherwise directed by the Program Officer.

VI. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notices

The final, exact amount of funds, the scope of work, and terms and conditions of a successful award will be determined in pre-award negotiations between the applicant and NOAA/NMFS representatives. The funding instrument (grant or cooperative agreement) will be determined by NOAA Grants Management Division. If the proposed work entails substantial involvement between the applicant and NMFS, a cooperative agreement will be utilized.

As soon as the Selecting Official has signed the list of proposals recommended for funding, the list will be posted on our website for applicants to review. This notification is not an authorization to begin performance of the project. Applicants should not initiate any project in expectation of Federal funding until they receive a grant award document signed by an authorized NOAA official. Notifications will be issued through electronic mail to the Authorizing Official and the Principal Investigator of the project. Unsuccessful applicants will be notified that their proposal was not selected for recommendation, and be provided the comments from the review panel(s). Unsuccessful applications will be kept on file in the Program Office for a period of at least 12 months, then destroyed.

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

The Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements

The Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements contained in the Federal Register notice of October 1, 2001 (66 FR 49917), as amended by the Federal Register notice published on October 30, 2002 (67 FR 66109), are applicable to this solicitation.

Limitation of Liability

In no event will NOAA or the Department of Commerce be responsible for proposal preparation costs if these programs fail to receive funding or are cancelled because of other

agency priorities. Publication of this announcement does not oblige NOAA to award any specific project or to obligate any available funds.

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

OAA must analyze the potential environmental impacts, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), for applicant projects or proposals which are seeking NOAA federal funding opportunities. Detailed information on NOAA compliance with NEPA can be found at the following NOAA NEPA website: <http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/>, including our NOAA Administrative Order 216-6 for NEPA (http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/NAO216_6_TOC.pdf), and the Council on Environmental Quality implementation regulations (http://ceq.eh.doe.gov/nepa/regs/ceq/toc_ceq.htm). Consequently, as part of an applicant's package, and under their description of their program activities, applicants are required to provide detailed information on the activities to be conducted, locations, sites, species and habitat to be affected, possible construction activities, and any environmental concerns that may exist (e.g., the use and disposal of hazardous or toxic chemicals, introduction of non-indigenous species, impacts to endangered and threatened species, aquaculture projects, and impacts to coral reef systems).

In addition to providing specific information that will serve as the basis for any required impact analyses, applicants may also be requested to assist NOAA in drafting of an environmental assessment, if NOAA determines an assessment is required. Applicants will also be required to cooperate with NOAA in identifying and implementing feasible measures to reduce or avoid any identified adverse environmental impacts of their proposal. The failure to do so shall be grounds for the denial of an application.

Copies of the Pre-Award Notification Requirements can be obtained from the Government Printing Office Website: http://www.access.gpo.gov/su_docs/aces/aces140.html or the Prescott Stranding Grants Program Website: http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/prot_res/PR2/Health_and_Stranding_Response_Program/Prescott.html

C. Obligations of Recipients

Applicants awarded a grant or cooperative agreement for a project must:

1. Manage the day-to-day operations of the project, be responsible for the performance of all activities for which funds are granted, and be responsible for the satisfaction of all administrative and managerial conditions imposed by the award.
2. Keep records sufficient to document any costs incurred under the award, and allow access to these records for audit and examination by the Secretary of Commerce, the Comptroller General

of the United States, or their authorized representatives; and, submit financial status reports (SF 269) to NOAA's Grants Management Division in accordance with the award conditions.

3. Submit financial and performance (technical) reports. All financial reports shall be submitted in triplicate (one original and two copies) to the NOAA Grants Officer. Performance reports should be submitted to the individual identified as the NMFS Program Officer in the funding agreement. We are committed to using available technology to achieve the timely and wide distribution of final reports to those who would benefit from this information. Therefore, we request submission of final reports in electronic format, in accordance with the award terms and conditions, for publication on the NMFS Protected Resources Home Page. Awardees can charge the costs associated with preparing and transmitting your final reports in electronic format to the grant award. We will consider requests for exemption from electronic submission of final reports on a case-by-case basis. The comprehensive final report is due 90 days after the award expiration. The final report must describe the project and include an evaluation of the work performed and the results and benefits in sufficient detail to enable us to assess the success of the completed project.

In addition to the final report, we request that awardees submit any publications printed with award funds (such as manuals, surveys, etc.) to the NMFS Program Officer for dissemination to the public. Publications should be submitted either as three hard copies or in an electronic version.

VII. Agency Contact(s)

Please visit the Prescott Grant Program website at:

http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/prot_res/PR2/Health_and_Stranding_Response_Program/Prescott.html or contact Michelle Ordonez at the NOAA/NMFS/Office of Protected Resources, Marine Mammal Health and Stranding Response Program, 1315 East-West Highway, Room 13620, Silver Spring, MD 20910-3283, by phone at (301) 713-2322, or by fax at (301) 713-3535, or by e-mail at PrescottGrantFR.comments@noaa.gov.