

FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Program Objective

Worldwide fisheries production will be inadequate to meet the needs of the world's population without supplementation through aquaculture and marine fish enhancement. The development of a robust aquaculture industry can help meet the seafood needs of the domestic market, reduce imports of fishery products and benefit the nation's balance of trade. In the United States, marine aquaculture has been slow to develop for a variety of reasons including the lack of technologies, multi-use conflicts in the coastal zone, and difficult and expensive permit and licensing processes, to name a few. However, none of these problems are insurmountable. NOAA created the NOAA Aquaculture Program in 2004 to address these challenges and opportunities. The NOAA Aquaculture Program includes activities at the Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research (OAR), NOAA Fisheries (NMFS), National Ocean Service (NOS), and the National Environmental Satellite Data Information Service (NESDIS).

NOAA recognizes the role of other Departments such as United States Department of Agriculture and Department of Interior and state and regional management partners in aquaculture and coordinates with other Department representatives at the regional level and at the national level through the Joint Subcommittee on Aquaculture.

B. Program Priorities

NOAA encourages proposals that address the following: demonstration projects, research, and industry development priorities. Applicants should check with the list of projects funded during the last 5 years by the National Marine Aquaculture Initiative to determine what has already been funded and how a proposed project might contribute to the NOAA Aquaculture Program (See www.aquaculture.noaa.gov).

Areas of priority include:

(1) site specific commercial/pilot scale demonstration projects to establish technical and economic feasibility with special emphasis on hatchery development, land based nearshore and offshore production systems; (2) studies to assess environmental impacts of current marine aquaculture production systems and species including fish and shellfish ; (3) nutrition research involving alternative protein based diets and influence of diet on product quality; (4) development of environmental models and GIS tools to aid site selection for new facilities; (5) disease diagnostics and control; (6) development of technical, hands-on training programs in marine hatchery operations and management; and (7) development of synthesis research papers (i.e.,

executive summary and journal publication) for the following topics: a) environmental impacts of marine production systems; b) alternative protein feeds and potential impacts; and c) disease transmission from aquaculture to wild stocks and vice versa, and status of ecologically acceptable treatments and preventives; and d) genetic technologies and environmental risk analysis.

C. Program Authority

33 U.S.C. 1121 et seq.

D. Cost Principles

Not Applicable

II. Award Information

A. Funding Availability

Up to \$8 million for FY 2008 and FY 2009 is anticipated. It is anticipated that we will make approximately twenty awards, three or four pilot scale demonstration projects at the \$1,000,000 level for the two year period and the remainder at or about the \$200,000 level. In addition, funding for the synthesis research summaries (priority #7 in Program Priorities section) is anticipated to be up to \$50,000 with four awards being made. Some funds in FY 2008 may be used to finish out projects started in FY 2007. We intend to fund projects for the full two year project period (08 and 09) using FY 2008 funds. In addition we will use some of FY 2009 funds to start other two year projects identified through this FY-2008 competition. A competition is not anticipated to be held in 2009. We reserve the option to use some FY 2010 funds to finish projects started in FY 2009.

B. Project/Award Period

Projects can be for a maximum of two years' duration. Proposed start dates should be no earlier than June 1, 2008.

C. Type of Funding Instrument

Awards will be made as grants.

III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applicants

Institutions of higher education, nonprofit organizations, commercial organizations, Federal, State, local and Indian tribal governments and individuals are eligible. Only those who submit preliminary proposals by the preliminary proposal deadline are eligible to submit full proposals.

Please note: Before non-NOAA Federal applicants may be funded, they must demonstrate that they have legal authority to receive funds from another Federal agency in excess of their appropriation. Because this announcement is not proposing to procure goods or services from applicants, the Economy Act (31 USC 1535) is not an appropriate legal basis.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement

This solicitation allows funding of proposals from institutions of higher education, other non-profits, commercial organizations, state, local and Indian tribal governments and Federal agencies. Matching funds are not required but proposals that combine resources from institutions such as private industry, universities, Federal and State agencies, and foundations to address national or regional issues will be considered in relation to Criteria One (Impacts) in this solicitation and factor 6 (Partnerships) of the selection factors listed in the Omnibus Federal Register notice for this competition.

IV. Application and Submission Information

A. Address to Request Application Package

Full proposals should be submitted through grants.gov. Preliminary proposals from all applicants, and full proposals from those that do not have access to internet

should be sent in hardcopy to: Dr. Andy Lazur, NOAA R/SG; 1315 East-West Highway, Bldg SSMC 3, Room 11805, Silver Spring, Maryland 20910-3283, Tel. 301-734-1082.

B. Content and Form of Application

PRELIMINARY PROPOSALS.

Each preliminary proposal should not exceed two typewritten pages using 10 point font or larger, and provide the title of the research project; the title, name and address of investigators and partners; a background section that sets the stage for the work and identifies how the research would fit into any ongoing research in this area; a rationale of why the work should be conducted; a clear statement of objectives; the general methodology that will be used; and an estimated budget amount. In addition, and not counted in the two page limit, the applicant should provide: 1) a one page biography for each investigator and 2) a cover page that includes the title of the research project, the name and address of the investigators with e-mail and phone contact information, the budgets requested, duration of the project (one or two years), and the date of submission. The criteria for recommendation of preliminary proposals are the degree to which they fit the priority areas and evaluation criteria listed in this notice.

FULL PROPOSALS.

Each full proposal should include the items listed here. All pages should be single- or double-spaced, typewritten in at least a 10-point font, and printed on metric A4 (210 mm x 297 mm) or 8 1/2" x 11" paper. Brevity will assist reviewers and program staff in dealing effectively with proposals. Therefore, the Project Description may not exceed 15 pages. Tables and visual materials, including charts, graphs, maps, photographs and other pictorial presentations are included in the 15 page limitation. The signature page, summary page, references/literature cited, budgets and budget notes, current and pending support sections, letters of support, and vitae do not count in the 15 page limit. There must be a cover page for the proposal that includes the title of the research project, the name and address of the investigators with e-mail and phone contact information, the budgets requested for year one and, if applicable, for year two and a total budget figure, and the date of submission. In addition, a one page project abstract including title, lead investigator and their affiliation, project award and dates, rationale, objective and anticipated benefits is required and will be used for public dissemination if funding is awarded. Conformance to the 15 page limitation will be strictly enforced. All information needed for review of the proposal should be included in the main text; no appendices are permitted.

Federal agencies submitting proposals need to follow all of the instructions for submissions up to but not including Standard Application Forms for proposals.

(1) Signed title page: The title page should be signed by the Principal Investigator and the institutional representative and should clearly identify the program area being

addressed by starting the project title with: NOAA Marine Aquaculture Program. The Principal Investigator and institutional representative should be identified by full name, title, organization, telephone number and address. The total amounts of requested Federal funds and matching funds should be listed for each budget period.

(2) Project Summary: This information is very important. It is critical that the project summary accurately describe the research being proposed and convey all essential elements of the research. The project summary should not exceed two pages and include: (a) Title: Use the exact title as it appears in the rest of the application. (b) Investigators: List the names and affiliations of each investigator who will significantly contribute to the project. Start with the Principal Investigator. (c) Funding request for each year of the project, including matching funds. (d) Project Period: Start and completion dates. Proposals should request a start date of June 1, 2008 or later. (e) Project Summary: This should include the rationale for the project, the scientific or technical objectives and/or hypotheses to be tested, and a brief summary of work to be completed.

(3) Project description (15-page limit)

Introduction/background/justification: Subjects that the investigator(s) should include in this section are: (a) current state of knowledge of problem or issue and justification for proposed work; (b) contributions that the study will make to the particular discipline or subject area or issue; and (c) contributions the study will make toward addressing the problems identified in the NOAA Marine Aquaculture Program.

Research or technical plan: (a) Objectives to be achieved, hypotheses to be tested; (b) Plan of work B discuss how stated project objectives will be achieved; and (c) Role of project personnel.

Output: Describe the project outputs or benefits that will contribute to improving and further developing marine aquaculture in the U.S.

Outreach Plan: Describe specific outreach goals, activities, and deliverables including publications, presentations, and public education.

Coordination with other program elements: Describe any coordination with other agency programs or ongoing research efforts. Describe any other proposals that are essential to the success of this proposal.

(4) References and literature citations: Should be included as appropriate.

(5) Budget and matching funds justification: Applications must reflect the total budget necessary to accomplish the project. There should be a separate budget for each year of the project as well as a cumulative budget for the entire project.

Applicants are encouraged to use the Sea Grant Budget Form 90-4 (<http://www.seagrant.noaa.gov/funding/forms.html>), but may use their own form as long as it provides the same information as the Sea Grant form. Subcontracts should have a separate budget page. Cost sharing is not required but encouraged as part of the selection criteria listed here. The appropriateness of all cost sharing will be determined on the basis of guidance provided in applicable Federal cost principles. The applicants will be bound by the percentage of cost sharing reflected in the grant award. Applicants should provide justification for all budget items in sufficient detail to enable the reviewers to evaluate the appropriateness of the funding requested. Pay special attention to any travel or supply budgets and provide details.

The Sea Grant Budget Form 90-4 is available through the World Wide Web or from the grants coordinator (See electronic addresses).

(6) Current and pending support: Applicants must provide information on all current and pending Federal support for ongoing projects and proposals, including subsequent funding in the case of continuing grants. The proposed project and all other projects or activities requiring a portion of time of the principal investigator and other senior personnel should be included. The relationship between the proposed project and these other projects should be described, and the number of person-months per year to be devoted to the projects must be stated.

(7) Vitae (2 pages maximum per investigator). This is not counted in the 15 page maximum.

(8) Standard application forms:

Standard application forms are available through grants.gov. However, these standard grant forms are not necessary for pre-proposals. They will only be necessary for full proposal application.

Applicants may obtain all required application forms through grants.gov or from the project coordinator.

Applications received after the deadline and applications that deviate from the format described will be returned to the sender without review.

As part of the full application process, the Environmental Compliance Questionnaire from NOAA Federal Financial Assistance Applicants, OMB Approval Number 0648-0538, must be answered. This form can be found at: www.nepa.noaa.gov

Failure to complete the form will result in the application being considered incomplete.

HOW TO SUBMIT:

Full proposals are to be submitted through Grants.gov as described above.

Preproposals from all applicants, and full proposals from those not having internet access should make hard copy submittals. Investigators are required to submit 3 copies of the proposal. Investigators are encouraged to submit sufficient proposal copies for the full review process if they wish all reviewers to receive color graphics, glossy photographs, nonstandard-sized pages(not 8.5 x 11"), or otherwise unusual materials submitted as part of the proposal. Only three copies of the federally required forms are needed.

C. Submission Dates and Times

Preproposals must be received at NOAA by 4:00 p.m. EDT, on October 18, 2007 and full proposals by 4 p.m. EST on January 24, 2008. For applications submitted through Grants.gov, a date and time receipt indication will be the basis of determining timeliness. For those not having access to the internet, hard copy applications must be received by NOAA 4:00 PM at the following address: Dr. Andy Lazur, NOAA R/SG; 1315 East-West Highway, Bldg SSMC 3, Room 11805, Silver Spring, Maryland 20910-3283. Proposals will be date and time stamped when

they are received.

D. Intergovernmental Review

Applications under this Program are not subject to Executive Order 12372, "Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs."

E. Funding Restrictions

No special restrictions apply. There is no matching requirement for these proposals but those projects that show leveraging of funds to accomplish more activities will be given preference through scoring of the criteria below. This scoring will be considered under the criteria for impact.

F. Other Submission Requirements

Full proposals should be submitted through Grants.gov. All preproposals and full proposals from those not having access to internet can submit applications in hardcopy to: Dr. Andy Lazur, NOAA R/SG: 1315 East-West Highway, Bldg. SSMC 3, Room 11805, Silver Spring, MD 20910-3383, Tel. 301-734-1082.

V. Application Review Information

A. Evaluation Criteria

PRELIMINARY PROPOSALS

The evaluation criteria for preliminary proposals submitted for support under the NOAA Marine Aquaculture Program are as follows:

Importance and/or relevance and applicability of the proposed project to the program priority topics (maximum 50 points) - This ascertains whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and/or relevance to NOAA, Federal, regional, State, or local activities. The degree to which the work fits and achieves the objectives within the five listed program priorities and extent that work will increase domestic marine aquaculture production, contribute to environmental sustainability, and advance the state of the industry, science, or state-of-the-art methods for marine aquaculture. In addition, the degree of collaborations or partnerships with pertinent stakeholders.

Technical/scientific Merit (maximum 30 points) - 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. The clarity of objectives and the level of scientific endeavor or professional merit exhibited in the proposal. The presence of a clear work plan, and probability of success. The innovativeness of the approach to the problem or the unique combination of technologies and disciplines to overcome a significant problem.

Overall Qualifications and Past Record of Investigators (maximum 5 points) - This ascertains whether the applicant possesses the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project. Additionally, record of achievement with previous funding.

Project costs and budget (maximum 5 points) - The Budget is evaluated to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time-frame.

Outreach and Education (maximum 10 points) - 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. Presence of strategy and specific activities to maximize dissemination of results to stakeholders.

FULL PROPOSALS

Evaluation criteria for full proposals submitted for support under the NOAA Marine Aquaculture Program are as follows:

Significance and impact of the proposal (maximum 50 points) - This ascertains whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and/or relevance to NOAA, Federal, regional, State, or local activities. The degree of impact of the proposed work to increase domestic marine aquaculture production, contribute to environmental sustainability, and advance the state of the industry, science, or state-of-the-art methods for marine aquaculture. The degree of collaborations or partnerships with pertinent stakeholders and extent of specific resource leveraging (grants, and private investment).

Technical/scientific Merit (maximum 30 points) - 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. The clarity of objectives and the level of scientific endeavor or professional merit exhibited in the proposal. The presence of a clear work plan, and probability of success. The innovativeness of the approach to the problem or the unique combination of technologies and disciplines to overcome a significant problem.

Overall Qualifications and Past Record of Investigators (maximum 5 points) - This ascertains whether the applicant possesses the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project. Additionally, the record of achievement with previous funding.

Project costs and budget (maximum 5 points) - The Budget is evaluated to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time-frame.

Outreach and Education (maximum 10 points) - 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. Presence of clear outreach strategy and specific activities to maximize dissemination of results.

B. Review and Selection Process

This will be a two stage competition with two-page pre-proposals used in an initial selection process and full proposals requested from those encouraged in the pre-proposal process. The pre-proposal process is to reduce the burden of preparing full proposals that do not have a high probability for funding. Those not submitting pre-proposals are not eligible to submit full proposals, but those submitting pre-proposals, and not recommended to submit full proposals, have the option to submit full proposals.

A pre-proposal review panel, to be organized by NOAA, will be convened at the NOAA Offices in Silver Spring, MD and will review all preliminary proposals. The pre-proposal review panel will consist of government, academic, industry and non-government organization (NGO) representatives. This panel will assign points on an individual basis to each pre-proposal based on the evaluation criteria and priorities contained in this request for proposals. A summary statement of the review by the selection panel will be provided to each applicant of a pre-proposal. Projects for development into full proposals will be selected in rank order from pre-proposals submitted.

Full proposals will be evaluated by a peer review panel comprised of government, academic, industry and NGO experts organized by the NOAA Aquaculture Program. Proposals will be reviewed by three members of the panel using the evaluation criteria listed in this announcement. One reviewer will be designated as the lead reviewer for each proposal. Reviewer evaluations will be discussed by the full review panel and individual project scores will be provided by each member of the panel. The lead reviewer will prepare a written summary of the review panel discussion. Panel evaluations will be considered by the NOAA Aquaculture Program for final project recommendation.

C. Selection Factors

Proposal reviewers will not make a consensus decision but will develop merit

review ratings and shall provide a rank order to the Selecting Official for final funding recommendations. The Selecting Official shall award in rank order unless a proposal is justified to be selected out of rank based upon one or more of the following factors:

1. Availability of funding
2. Balance and distribution of funds
 - a. Geographically
 - b. By type of institutions
 - c. By type of partners
 - d. By research areas
 - e. By project types
3. Duplication of other projects funded or considered for funding by NOAA or other Federal agencies
4. Program priorities and policy factors
5. Applicants prior award performance
6. Partnerships and/or Participation of targeted groups
7. Adequacy of information necessary for NOAA staff to make a National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) determination and draft necessary documentation before recommendations for funding are made to the Grants Officer. Consequently, awards may not necessarily be made to the highest-scored proposals. Investigators may be asked to modify objectives, work plans, or budgets prior to approval of the award. Subsequent administrative processing will be in accordance with current NOAA grants procedures. A summary statement of the scientific review by the peer panel will be provided to each applicant of a full proposal.

D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

Response to preliminary proposals is anticipated to occur by November 1, 2007, and full proposal selection is anticipated to occur by March 1, 2008. Anticipated grant start dates will be June 1, 2008.

VI. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notices

Successful applicants will receive notification that the application has been recommended for funding to the NOAA Grants Management Division. This notification is not an authorization to begin performance of the project. Official notification of funding, signed by the NOAA Grants Officer, is the authorizing document that allows the project to begin. Notification will be issued to the Authorizing Official and the Principle Investigator of the project either electronically or in hard copy. Unsuccessful applicants will be notified that their proposal was not selected for recommendation.

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

1. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE PRE-AWARD NOTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS FOR GRANTS AND COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS - Administrative and national policy requirements for all Department of Commerce awards are contained in the Department of Commerce Pre- Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements contained in the Federal Register notice of December 30, 2004 (69 FR 78389). A copy of the notice may be obtained at <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/fr/search.html>.

2. 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.

3. NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT (NEPA) - NOAA 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 feasible measures to reduce or avoid any identified adverse environmental impacts of their proposal. The failure to do so shall be grounds for not selecting an application. In some cases if additional information is required after an application is selected, funds can be withheld by the Grants Officer under a special award condition requiring the recipient to submit additional environmental compliance information sufficient to enable NOAA to make an assessment on any impacts that a project may have on the environment.

Administrative and national policy requirements for all Department of Commerce awards are contained in the Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements published in the Federal Register on October 1, 2001 (66 FR 49917), as amended by the Federal Register notice published on October 30, 2002 (67 FR 66109). You may obtain a copy of these notices by contacting the agency contact(s) under Section VII, or by going to the website at: http://www.access.gpo.gov/su_docs/aces140.html.

C. Reporting

Award recipients will be required to submit financial and performance (technical) reports. These reports are to be submitted electronically unless the recipient does not have Internet access, in which case hard copy submissions will be accepted. All financial reports shall be submitted in triplicate (one original and two copies) to the NOAA Grants Officer.

VII. Agency Contacts

Dr. Andy Lazur, 301-734-1082; via internet at Andy.Lazur@noaa.gov, facsimile 301-713-0799.

For information on past projects contact: NOAA Aquaculture Information Center, Eileen McVey at: Eileen.mcvey@noaa.gov.

VIII. Other Information