

National Estuarine Research Reserve System Science Collaborative

2020 Collaborative Research Full Proposal Guidelines

~ Collaborative Research Grants: Generating New Science to Inform Decisions ~

Proposals Due: 11:59pm EDT on April 6, 2020 (original deadline)

Proposals Due: April 20, 2020 (extended)

Note (3/20/20):

The proposal submission deadline has been extended by two weeks (from April 6 to April 20) due to the many disruptions resulting from the novel coronavirus (COVID-19).

Changes in this RFP are limited to the following:

- **2-week proposal deadline extension**
- **Subsequent extension of deadline for manager proposal assessments**
- **The proposal review and selection process (page 18) has been updated. There will no longer be a panel consultation call and teams and their end user representative will not be invited to participate in a Q&A session during the panel meeting.**
- **Elimination of the project team Q&A session with the review panel increases the importance of letters of support from primary end users. Reviewers will be looking to these letters to not only confirm end users' interest and commitment to the project but to understand, as specifically as possible, how they will use the outputs and how the project makes a difference in their decision making/management context.**

About the NERRS Science Collaborative

The National Estuarine Research Reserve System (NERRS) Science Collaborative's primary goal is to support the co-development and application of relevant and usable knowledge to address critical coastal management issues identified by the NERRS, in order to improve the long-term stewardship of the nation's estuaries. The Science Collaborative works to achieve this goal through regular funding opportunities, project support and management, and an adaptive approach to program implementation that fosters ongoing learning and improvement.

Consistent with the NERRS strategic plan, NOAA has identified the following focus areas for Science Collaborative funding opportunities in 2019 - 2023:

- Research and monitoring related to biophysical, social, economic and behavioral impacts of habitat change resulting from **climate change** and/or **coastal development**.
- Understanding how an **ecosystem service approach** can be utilized to support the protection and restoration of estuarine systems.
- Understanding the impacts of **land use change, eutrophication, and contamination** in estuarine ecosystems and the options for management and mitigation.
- Investigating options for improving estuarine **habitat resilience**; processes for identifying, prioritizing, and restoring sites; and monitoring and evaluating success.
- **Syntheses of long-term monitoring data** and information, originating from programs such as the NERRS System-wide Monitoring Program and associated monitoring efforts, to develop regional and national data products that address coastal management priorities for the NERRS and NOAA.

The Science Collaborative is managed through a cooperative agreement between the University of Michigan and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

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Overview

The National Estuarine Research Reserve System (NERRS) Science Collaborative is soliciting full proposals from invited applicants for up to three-year collaborative research grants. Collaborative research projects develop new applied science using an end user¹ driven, collaborative process that results in research, data, tools, or other products that will inform decision making related to a [reserve management need](#).² Applicants may draw on both the social sciences and physical/natural sciences to meet the goals of this request for proposals (RFP).

Funding Amount

Proposals may request up to \$200,000 per year, for up to three years. The total budget may not exceed \$600,000 for a three-year project.

Eligibility for Funding

To be eligible for this funding opportunity, applicants must have submitted a pre-proposal and been invited by the Science Collaborative to submit a full proposal.

Proposals must address one or more reserve management need(s), as identified by the reserve(s) with which they wish to work, and have the full support of the relevant reserve manager(s), as demonstrated by a written assessment from the reserve manager(s).

This funding opportunity is open to applicants from United States (U.S.) academic, non-government organizations, and non-federal public sectors working in partnership with NERRS staff.

Each proposal must designate a fiduciary institution and a fiscal lead³ that will receive and manage the award, if granted. Researchers from institutions outside the U.S. cannot serve as the fiscal lead, but can be included in the project and may be funded by sub-awards through an eligible U.S. entity. Federal employees and agencies are not eligible to receive funding from the Science Collaborative, but may participate as unfunded project team members.

¹ End user is defined as a person or group in a position to apply the information or tools being produced, evaluated, or transferred through a Science Collaborative project in a way that is of direct consequence to the ecological, social, or economic integrity of a reserve(s) and/or surrounding watershed(s). Examples of end users include, but are not limited to, reserve staff, and public, private, or non-governmental decision/policy makers, including landowners, resource managers, land use planners, and educators at all levels.

² This document is a compilation of the current management needs within NOAA's reserve system. Management needs are submitted by reserve managers to NOAA and are updated on an annual basis.

³ In most cases, the project lead is also the fiscal lead. In rare cases where the project lead is not employed by the institution that will receive and manage the grant, a project team member from the fiduciary institution may serve as fiscal lead and will have ultimate responsibility for ensuring that the proposed scope of work is completed.

Proposal Submission Process

Invited applicants should review the application process as outlined in these full proposal guidelines and follow directions to submit a proposal using the timeline outlined below. Proposals include a 15-page maximum narrative that describes the problem being addressed, end user needs, outputs and outcomes, approach and team members; as well as detailed budget and justification and appendices. All applicants will receive feedback on their proposals along with the notification as to whether they are invited to a final proposal review panel meeting.

Key Dates

Date	Activity
March 9, 2020 at 4pm EDT	Webinar: Proposal guidance Q&A
April 20, 2020 by 11:59pm EDT	Proposals due (extended deadline)
April 29, 2020	Manager proposal assessments due
June 23 & 24, 2020	Review panel meeting (no project team Q&A sessions with panel)
June/July 2020	Funding notifications
October 1, 2020	Anticipated project start date

Supporting Documents

All RFP supporting documents can be found at <http://nerrsciencecollaborative.org/research>

About Collaborative Research Projects

Collaborative research projects conduct new applied science through an end user driven, collaborative process that results in research, data, tools, or other products that will inform decision making related to a [reserve management need](#). Collaborative research projects can use social and/or natural science research approaches and must have a well-defined research question that the project is designed to answer.

Outputs

Project outputs are specific products that are developed during or upon project completion. Outputs must address end user and reserve management needs. Examples of project outputs include, but are not limited to the following:

- Specific, scientifically produced datasets and analyses;
- A synthesis of findings;
- Specific product(s) that translate and/or apply the research findings in a way that addresses the identified end user's needs, e.g., decision support tools, implementation guides, management recommendations, training curricula, and technical or non-technical reports; and/or
- Evaluation of existing decision making information needs.

At least one output must include an activity that shares the project approach and results with the broader NERRS community, such as a poster or session at a conference, such as the NERRS/NERRA Annual Meeting, a system-wide webinar, or a NERRS sector meeting.

Outcomes

Project outcomes are the expected impacts of the project process and outputs. Examples of project outcomes include, but are not limited to the following:

- New or refined decision making and/or management processes and a plan for future iterative evaluations of these processes;
- Stronger collaborative relationship among reserve staff, partners, and end users; and/or
- Better understanding among researchers and end users of how their respective fields can inform each other's efforts.

Required Elements

In order for proposals to achieve the purpose of this RFP, they must include three elements, all of which are critical to collaborative science with the NERR System. All proposals must:

- 1) Clearly identify, engage, and be responsive to the interests and needs of end users;
- 2) Directly involve at least one reserve, address one or more [reserve management need\(s\)](#) for the reserves with which the team wishes to work, and have the full support of the relevant reserve manager(s); and

- 3) Include a [Data Sharing Plan](#) and account for the costs and time associated with implementing the plan in the proposal budget and timeline.

1) Collaboration and End User Integration

Proposals must clearly identify, engage, and be responsive to the interests and needs of end users—the intended users of the project outputs. A collaborative process that engages end users in project development and implementation is necessary for producing usable outputs. The goals and type of work proposed should dictate the approach to engagement as well as the breadth and depth of engagement planned during the project.

To this end, all proposals must:

- Identify the primary end user(s) and their needs;
- Describe how the end user’s input helped to shape the project;
- Describe a clear process that will accommodate iterative engagement with the end user(s), including mechanisms for being adaptive and responsive to their input;
- Provide evidence of the end user’s interest in the project and intent to be involved in it, e.g., letter of support (all proposals must include at least one letter of support);
- Identify an individual who will be responsible for leading the collaborative process—the collaborative lead⁴—and describe their relevant experience and skills; and
- Demonstrate that sufficient time and resources are dedicated to support a collaborative, end user engagement process throughout the project, e.g., budget, personnel, and timeline.

The Science Collaborative has [resources online](#) that can help you design your end user engagement process, including key considerations for engaging end users effectively and efficiently.

2) Reserve Engagement

All proposals must address one or more [reserve management need\(s\)](#), demonstrate a plan for productive collaboration with relevant reserve staff⁵, and have the full support of the relevant reserve manager(s). ***It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that the***

⁴ The collaborative lead is responsible for the full engagement of end users by helping to develop and manage a process that ensures meaningful user input, including mechanisms for being adaptive and responsive to their input. This person should have the appropriate experience and skills to design and implement a collaborative process that provides the team with the end user input necessary to produce outputs that are responsive to their needs.

⁵ Reserve staff have played a variety of roles in Science Collaborative projects, including serving as project, technical, or collaborative lead, providing critical contributions to the technical work, and participating as an end user representative and project advisor. Roles should match the expertise and interests of the individuals involved and the scope of a particular project and be clearly explained in the proposal.

reserve manager and other appropriate staff are engaged sufficiently in project development.

Relevant reserve managers and staff must be consulted and engaged in the development of the proposal. Relevant managers are those whose reserves will be directly engaged in project implementation.

The proposal title page must identify a lead reserve as well as any additional reserves that will be participating in the proposed work. For each proposal that engages their reserve, managers will submit a written assessment of how well the proposal meets the following criteria:

- 1) The proposal addresses a reserve management need for your reserve.
- 2) The proposing team engaged reserve staff sufficiently during the proposal development process.
- 3) You agree with the proposed allocation of resources to the reserve, and/or proposed allocation of reserve staff time or other resources if not covered in the budget.

Reserve managers submit the assessments directly to the Science Collaborative, independent of all proposals. If a reserve is not directly engaged in the proposed work, that reserve should not be listed as a partner on the project title page and the manager will not be expected to submit a proposal assessment. ***Applicants must provide a copy of their final proposal to the manager of every reserve named on the project.***

3) Data Management

NOAA requires that environmental and social science data collected and/or created under NOAA grants and cooperative agreements be made visible, accessible, and independently understandable to general users. It should be available free of charge or at minimal cost, and made available in a timely manner (typically no later than two (2) years after the data are collected or created), except where limited by law, regulation, policy, or security requirements.

Applicants that propose the collection of new data are required to develop and include a Data Sharing Plan as a part of their full proposal package. This plan must address elements such as methods and protocols for data collection, data quality control/quality assurance procedures, metadata format, and a process for data access and data archival. Applicants must account for the costs associated with implementing a Data Sharing Plan in their budget and project narrative.

A valid Data Sharing Plan may include only the statement that no detailed plan is needed, as long as the statement is accompanied by a clear justification, e.g., no new data are being collected.

The NERRS Centralized Data Management Office (CDMO) is the coordinating entity for Science Collaborative data management activities. CDMO personnel will provide data management guidance during proposal development and technical support for projects. In addition, CDMO can help teams archive and make accessible their project datasets using CDMO's access and archival services and standard protocols. If teams would like to use CDMO for data access and data archival, the standard process is as follows:

- The Science Collaborative will create an entry about a project's datasets in the Science Collaborative online resource library, as well as in national data catalogs ([InPort](#)), outlining the scope of the datasets and making them discoverable.
- Potential users of the data will have an option to complete a data request form. The form will generate an email response with a data download link connecting the user to the package of data and metadata files that have been archived with the CDMO.

If this archival/access process meets a project's needs, applicants may include it as part of their proposal's data sharing plan. More complicated data sharing ideas, such as development of an interactive user interface for a database, are not part of CDMO's typical support for Science Collaborative projects.

Additional guidance for developing a Data Sharing Plan can be found in the template and examples provided on the [grant opportunity webpage](#) and the proposal requirements section [below](#). Clarifying information and opportunities for questions and answers about Data Sharing Plan requirements will be provided during the Q&A webinar described [below](#).

Proposal Requirements

Proposals must be submitted by 11:59pm EDT on **Monday, April 20, 2020**.

Proposals must be provided as a single pdf file using 12-point Times New Roman font, no less than single spaced, with one-inch margins, and be organized using the headers below. Proposals must include a title page, 15-page maximum narrative, and appendices as outlined below. **Proposals not meeting these requirements, including budget and header requirements, will be removed from the competition without further review.**

Title Page (up to 2 pages):

Organize your title page using the following headers:

- 1) Project Title
- 2) Project Lead / Fiscal Lead⁶ (primary contact for the project) –
 - a) Title / Position
 - b) Institution
 - c) Telephone Number
 - d) Postal Mailing Address
 - e) E-mail Address
- 3) Additional Team Members (anyone receiving project resources or contributing significant resources to the project) – Name, institution, telephone, e-mail, and role, e.g., project lead, collaboration lead, technical lead, end user, team member, etc. **Note: Project, collaborative, and technical leads are required.** One person can serve multiple roles. See [team section](#) for definitions of these roles.
- 4) Fiduciary Information – Indicate the institution that would receive and manage the grant contract. Please provide a point of contact, including email address, to receive fiscal questions. The fiduciary institution is responsible for managing any project subcontracts, tracking grant-related spending, and submitting invoices to the University of Michigan for reimbursement on behalf of the grant.
- 5) Name of Reserve(s) – Identify which is the lead reserve for the project as identified at the pre-proposal stage. If relevant, identify any additional reserves that are directly engaged in the project. Multiple reserves may collaborate on a proposal but a *single, lead* reserve must be identified here. Managers of each listed reserve will submit an assessment of the proposal. See the [reserve engagement section](#) for additional guidance.

⁶ In most cases, the project lead is also the fiscal lead. In rare cases where the project lead is not employed by the institution that will receive and manage the grant, a project team member from the fiduciary institution may serve as fiscal lead and will have ultimate responsibility for ensuring that the proposed scope of work is completed.

- a) Lead reserve:
- b) Any additional reserves:
- 6) Budget Request – Requested dollar amount. Proposals may request up to \$200,000 per year, for up to three years. The total budget may not exceed \$600,000 for a three-year project. Note: This budget request may not exceed the pre-proposal budget estimate.
- 7) Project Duration – Projects should start October 1, 2020 and end no later than September 30, 2023.
- 8) Project Summary – Provide a 200-word summary of the proposed project that is suitable for a non-technical audience. Please include the project’s objectives, responsiveness to end user needs, planned outputs, and anticipated outcomes.

Project Narrative (15-page maximum):

Organize your narrative using the following headers:

- 1) Problem Statement and Response to End User Needs –
 - a) Describe the issue(s) the project will address, discussing the importance and context, with particular emphasis on how the project will address one or more [reserve management need\(s\)](#).
 - b) Clearly identify the project’s primary end user(s) ⁷ and their needs. Describe how the end user’s input helped to shape the project, how the research is designed to meet their needs, and how you anticipate the end user(s) will use the project outputs. This should be corroborated by letters of support from end users, included in Appendix E.
- 2) Outputs and Outcomes – Clearly distinguishing between the two, provide a list of the planned outputs and anticipated outcomes. Describe these briefly, clearly stating how the outputs meet the end user and reserve management needs discussed in the “problem statement” and how the outputs will help lead to the anticipated outcomes. Explain how the usability of the outputs will be sustained beyond the project period, e.g., who will be responsible for disseminating products and how information products will be maintained or updated.
 - a) *Output* – A specific product that is developed during or upon project completion; there may be several outputs associated with a project. See [example outputs](#) provided above. Outputs must address end user and reserve management needs and include an activity that shares the project approach and results with the broader NERRS community.

⁷ Primary end users are those most instrumental in developing the project, most directly engaged in the project, and who stand to benefit the most from the outputs.

- b) *Outcome* – An expected impact of the project process and outputs; there may be several outcomes associated with a project. See [example outcomes](#) provided above.
- 3) **Project Approach** – Clearly identify the core research question(s). Detail both the technical methodology and the collaborative process that will be followed to ensure iterative engagement with end users. Include specific mechanisms for being adaptive and responsive to end user input and an explanation for *why* the chosen approach — e.g., tightly linking to an existing working group, creating a new advisory group, or integrating individuals into a project team — is appropriate for the end users who are engaged. The technical and collaborative aspects of the project should occur in an integrated manner where each informs and builds on the other.

As you detail the technical aspects of your approach, be sure to identify specific methods and tools, e.g., models, special analytical approaches, to be used. Make it clear why the proposed methods are appropriate for addressing the research question(s) and how they will lead to the planned outputs.

- 4) **Team** – Identify each team member and explain how the team and its expertise are well qualified to implement the project, including the collaborative approach. Describe the role of each team member (e.g., project lead, collaboration lead, technical lead, end user, team member) and explain each team member's contribution to the project. Two-page resumes for all team members must be included in Appendix F.

Note: Project lead, fiscal lead, collaborative lead, and technical lead must be specified. One person can serve multiple roles. Team member roles are defined as follows:

- The project lead is the primary contact for the project, coordinates the project team, and ensures all elements of the project are implemented. In most situations, the project lead is also the fiscal lead.
- The fiscal lead manages the grant award and will have ultimate responsibility for ensuring that the proposed scope of work is completed. The fiscal lead must be employed at the fiduciary institution that will receive the grant contract. In rare cases where the project lead is not employed by the fiduciary institution, a project team member from the fiduciary institution may serve as fiscal lead.
- The technical lead serves as a content area expert within the team, coordinates technical aspects of the project, and ensures the quality of the science.
- The collaborative lead is responsible for the full engagement of end users by helping to develop and manage a process that ensures iteration with them, including mechanisms for being adaptive and responsive to their input.

- 5) Data Accessibility – For projects using existing datasets, identify who owns them and how the project team will access them. If a critical dataset is not publicly available, demonstrate permission for accessing the data by including letters of support in Appendix E.

Appendices:

Appendices A-I are required; appendices J and K are optional.

- A. Timeline – Using the required [timeline template](#) found on the grant opportunity webpage, provide the following:
- i. Project start and end dates. Projects should start October 1, 2020 and end no later than September 30, 2023.
 - ii. A schedule with key tasks and deliverables. This schedule must:
 - a) Identify significant tasks, including planned end user engagement opportunities;
 - b) Specifically cite and link directly to the outputs identified in the project narrative;
 - c) Plan on the project lead and either the collaboration or technical lead attending a NERRS Science Collaborative project workshop once a year, typically in the fall/early winter every fall (the Science Collaborative will provide travel support, outside of the project budget); and
 - d) Indicate completion of all final project outputs.
- B. References – Up to 2 pages of references may be included.
- C. Budget & Budget Narrative – Use the [budget template](#) found on the grant opportunity webpage to provide an itemized estimate of all project costs. Proposals may request up to \$200,000 per year, for up to three years. The total budget may not exceed \$600,000 for a three-year project. The total budget may not exceed that requested in the pre-proposal. **Proposals with budgets that do not fall within these parameters will be disqualified from the competition.**

Multi-reserve projects are complex and require an efficient subcontracting process to ensure project teams are able to begin their work quickly. Applicants are encouraged to work closely with their fiscal point of contact to ensure they have mechanisms in place to facilitate the sub-award process effectively.

The overall budget must include a separate budget for each subcontract (using the [budget template](#)). The Science Collaborative will reimburse overhead costs up to the subcontractor's federally negotiated indirect cost rate agreement⁸. Unless otherwise

⁸ If a subcontractor does not have a federally negotiated indirect rate, they are able to use the de minimus rate of 10%.

noted in the indirect cost rate agreement, indirect costs may only be applied to the first \$25,000 of each subcontract.

Budget Narrative – Provide a budget narrative to justify expenses in all budget categories. Please note the following:

- i. Personnel costs must be broken out by team member including number of months and percentage of time requested.
- ii. Any unnamed personnel, e.g., reserve staff, graduate students, post-doctoral researchers, or technicians, must be identified by their job title, and their personnel costs explained as described above.
- iii. The contribution of any personnel to the project goals shall be explained even if not receiving support under this grant. In particular, all reserve staff time anticipated for the project must be accounted for, even if funds are not being requested to support that time.
- iv. Equipment costs must describe the equipment to be purchased and its contribution to the achievement of project goals. If a piece of equipment costs more than \$5,000, a cost analysis will be required. If a lease vs. purchase analysis cannot be completed at the time of proposal development, a statement is needed that the analysis will be completed before the equipment is purchased. This analysis will compare the cost of purchasing a piece of equipment against the cost of leasing the same piece of equipment. The benefits of leasing or purchasing should be addressed in this analysis as well.
- v. Travel costs must be broken out by number of people traveling, destination, and purpose of travel, and projected costs per person. Domestic and foreign travel should be itemized separately. Foreign travel must comply with the Fly America Act which limits the use of foreign flag carriers. For more information, go to <http://www.gsa.gov/portal/content/103191>.
- vi. If collecting new data, proposals must include appropriate budgets to support required data management activities. It is anticipated that for projects proposing significant new data collection efforts, appropriate personnel time should be committed for data QA/QC and metadata development. For budget allocation guidance, it is anticipated that 10% to 15% of the overall budget should go to support data management activities.
- vii. Overhead may be charged up to the fiscal institution's federally negotiated indirect cost rate.
- viii. A separate budget narrative is required for each subcontract, including the same detail as is required for the overall budget. As noted above, unless otherwise noted in the indirect cost rate agreement, overhead may only be applied to the first \$25,000 of each subcontract.

If a proposal includes an estimate for a subcontract, for example, for work that will be competitively bid after the project is awarded, the budget narrative should include a summary of and justification for the subcontract services. If the project is selected for funding, exact costs must be provided before funding is awarded. In all cases, contractual expenses will be capped at the amount listed in the budget.

- D. Fiscal Letters of Commitment – The fiduciary institution must provide a letter of commitment approving the proposal submission, including approval of any subcontracts included in the proposal. A letter of commitment is also required from each subcontracting institution. There is no standard form for this letter.
- E. Letters of Support – Provide letters from individuals and/or partners confirming contributions to and support for the project. Include letters from the following:
- i. Primary end users who will be engaged throughout the project and will use the outputs. In their letters of support, end users should describe in their own words: (i) how they have been engaged with the development of the proposal; (ii) how they see themselves continuing to inform the project if funded; and (iii) how they anticipate using project outputs. Reviewers will be looking for personalized, signed letters on an organization’s letterhead to confirm end user engagement and understand how the work will meet their needs. **All proposals must include at least one letter of support from an end user.**
 - ii. Team members or partners included in the project approach but not funded in the budget.
 - iii. Individuals, groups, and/or institutions that have agreed to provide data/access to data or other resources necessary for the project not otherwise accounted for in the budget.
- F. Resumes – Two-page resumes for each team member are required. Resumes will be used by reviewers to determine whether the team has the requisite technical and collaborative skills and experience to undertake the project successfully.
- G. Data Sharing Plan – All Science Collaborative proposals must address data management requirements in one of two ways:
- i. For projects that propose the collection of new data: A Data Sharing Plan of two to five pages is required for all proposals that collect new data. Use the [Data Sharing Plan Requirements and Outline](#) available on the grant opportunity webpage to develop a Data Sharing Plan.
 - ii. For projects that do not propose the collection of new data: A statement that “no detailed Data Sharing Plan is needed,” accompanied by a clear justification as to why, e.g., no new data are being collected.

See the [data management section](#) above for additional guidance.

- H. Related Work - Use the [related work template](#) found on the grant opportunity webpage to list all current and pending projects relevant to this proposal. A single table may be used to list all relevant projects across the team.
- I. Reviewers – Identify 3-4 qualified technical reviewers who could review your proposal. You may also list up to four persons you would prefer not review your project and indicate why. Whether or not these suggestions will be used is at the discretion of the Science Collaborative.
- J. Other Supporting Documents (optional; 5 pages maximum)
- K. Field Site Information (optional; see [Environmental Compliance Review](#) for guidance on this appendix)

How to Submit Your Proposal

Proposals must be submitted by 11:59pm EDT on [Monday, April 20, 2020](#) at the unique application URL emailed to applicants when invited to full proposal.

Your unique URL will prompt you to log in and then direct you to your application form. Please note that in order to submit, your login credentials must be the same as those used to submit your pre-proposal.

Submitting your full proposal will consist of uploading a single PDF of your full proposal to your original online application form. Once logged in, you will need to scroll down towards the end of the page to the full proposal upload field, upload your proposal, and then click on the "save" button. Please also review and update the other fields in the online application form, including reserves and team members involved in the proposal.

You will receive a confirmation email the first time you successfully upload and save your proposal. The email will include a link you may use to return to your proposal submission and make edits until the deadline. Your saved application will be automatically submitted at 11:59pm EDT on [April 20, 2020](#). You will not receive a second confirmation email

If you do not receive a confirmation email, your proposal was not saved properly and you should resave or contact us directly at nerrs-info@umich.edu.

Proposal Evaluation Criteria

Proposals must comply with all submission instructions and guidelines to be considered for funding. Proposals not meeting these requirements will be removed from the competition without further review.

Each compliant proposal will be evaluated based on the equally weighted criteria listed below. Proposal review will also be informed by reserve manager assessments to determine the extent to which projects were developed collaboratively with reserves and address reserve management needs.

1) Collaboration and End User Integration

- Does the proposal demonstrate engagement of primary end users in the development of the research and project approach? E.g., is it clear how the end user(s) helped to shape the project?
- Will the outputs meet the identified end user's needs? Is this corroborated in letters of support from the end user(s)?
- Is there evidence of end user's commitment to continued involvement, as appropriate, in the project?

2) Project Approach

- Is the approach appropriate to address the research question?
- Are there clear opportunities for end users to provide meaningful input throughout the project and influence project outputs?
- Are the methods sufficiently detailed and technically sound?
- Are the collaborative and technical methods sufficiently integrated to produce the intended outputs?

3) Feasibility

- Does the team have adequate expertise and experience for the proposed technical methods and end user engagement?
- Is the timeline realistic for the proposed work and does it include sufficient time for integrating end user input and completing proposed project outputs?
- Is the budget appropriate for the proposed work and does it include sufficient resources for integrating end user input and completing proposed project outputs?
- Does the proposal demonstrate access to and/or availability of necessary resources, including data? Where relevant, is this corroborated in letters of support?

4) Potential Impact

- Does the project address at least one [reserve management need](#)?
- Does the proposal reflect a comprehensive understanding of the issue and end user's needs and/or decision making context?
- Are the proposed process and outputs likely to lead to the desired outcomes, including increased capacity to address the issue?

Review and Selection Process

Review Process

The review process for collaborative research proposals is as follows. A more detailed summary of the review process, including decision points, inputs to each decision, and a summary of the process participants can be found [here](#).

- 1) **Minimum requirements assessment** – Science Collaborative staff will review all submitted proposals to ensure that they meet the requirements as described in these full proposal requirements, including all proposal elements, the budget request, and adherence to header requirements. Proposals not meeting these requirements will be removed from the competition without further review.
- 2) **Full proposal written technical review** – Collaboration and subject matter experts will conduct written technical reviews of full proposals. The technical review will consist of written evaluation by experts from the specific content area of the proposed work and collaboration practitioners with experience working on natural resource issues. Reviewers will be asked to rate each proposal according to the full proposal evaluation criteria listed [above](#).
- 3) **Applicant response to reviews (optional)** – Applicants will receive their written technical reviews and be given the option to provide a response (one page maximum).
- 4) **Full proposal panel meeting** – The panel will convene for a final discussion of full proposals. The panel will consist of pre-proposal panelists plus non-conflicted NERRS representative(s). For each proposal, panelists will discuss strengths and weaknesses and any discrepancies among the written reviews. Panelists will identify projects that are supportable in rank order as input to the final selection process as outlined in the following section. Applicants will receive a summary of the panel's discussion of their proposal.

Selection Process

Final funding recommendations will be based on the panel recommendations of supportable projects in rank order. In consultation with the NOAA Program Manager, the NERRS Science Collaborative shall award projects in rank order unless a 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 geographically by NERRS regions; and
- 3) No reserve will serve as the lead reserve on more than one collaborative research project funded through this RFP.

Funding notifications are expected in June/July 2020.

Environmental Compliance Review

Applicants should be aware of the following environmental compliance requirements:

NOAA requires that, prior to award, every Science Collaborative project recommended for funding undergo review for potential impacts to the environment and/or cultural resources. **This initial review process by NOAA takes a minimum of 30 days.**

Projects that are identified by NOAA as potentially impacting the environment and/or cultural resources, e.g., involve field work, and/or are conducted in areas where historic or archeological artifacts might be present, will require further review by the agency. NOAA will be reviewing for compliance with the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), the Endangered Species Act (ESA), the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA), and the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act related to essential fish habitat (EFH). If the proposed project is placing fixed structures in the environment, consultation with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers may also be required. NHPA, ESA, MMPA, and EFH reviews take a minimum of 30 days to complete, but can often take 60 to 90 days.

Guidance to Applicants

All applicants should plan for a minimum 30-day initial review process by NOAA; this process will be initiated immediately after funding notifications. To conduct the environmental compliance review, NOAA will need a detailed description of field sampling methods along with a map showing the location of each field site, including each field site's latitude and longitude. If you have it, detailed site maps and latitude/longitude information only should be included in Appendix K. **Please note that information for NOAA to conduct the environmental compliance review is NOT a required element of your proposal at this stage.** If you do provide the information, include it in Appendix K. If you do not provide this information in your proposal and it is recommended for funding, NOAA will contact you to obtain the information required for the environmental compliance reviews.

Questions regarding this requirement should be directed to Dwight Trueblood (603-862-3580, Dwight.Trueblood@noaa.gov).

Proprietary Information & Intellectual Property

Applicants should be aware that the disclosure of patentable ideas, trade secrets, and privileged, confidential, commercial, or financial information can hinder an applicant's chances to secure patents, trademarks, or copyrights.

Proprietary information of this kind should only be included in proposals when it is necessary to convey an understanding of the proposed project. Applicants must mark proprietary information clearly in the proposal with appropriate labels, such as, "The following is (proprietary or confidential) information that (proposing entity) requests not be released to persons outside the NERRS Science Collaborative, except for purposes of review and evaluation."

Please protect your intellectual property rights at the proposal preparation stage as appropriate. This will allow you to speak freely about ideas and avoid the inadvertent loss of intellectual property rights. You should contact your institution's technology transfer or intellectual property office to determine the best way to protect your intellectual property.

Questions Regarding this Request for Proposals

Question and Answer Record: Responses to all questions, without reference to project specifics, will be posted on a rolling basis for all interested applicants to view online at <http://nerrsciencecollaborative.org/research>.

Q&A Webinar: The Science Collaborative will host a question and answer webinar on **March 9 at 4pm EDT**.

To register, go to <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/8964780501143286283>.

After the webinar, questions and responses will be incorporated into the online Q&A Record and webinar slides and the recording will be posted online at <http://nerrsciencecollaborative.org/research>.

Email: The Science Collaborative will accept and reply to written questions regarding this request for proposals through **April 19, 2020**. Questions should be submitted to nerrs-info@umich.edu.

Phone: The Science Collaborative will also accept questions via phone regarding this request for proposals. Questions should be directed to Maeghan Brass (734-763-0727) or Lynn Vaccaro (734-763-0056).

Website: More information about the NERRS Science Collaborative can be found at <http://nerrsciencecollaborative.org/>.