# U.S. IOOS® Guidance on Regional Progress and Milestone Reporting (revised August 2012)

The U.S. IOOS Program Office (hereafter "Program Office") is required periodically to review and evaluate all of its funded activities in accordance with law, Department of Commerce policy, and NOAA policy. This document is intended to help clarify the content, process, and timelines for required reporting by U.S. IOOS grant and/or co-operative agreement award recipients.

Five types of routine reports are included here along with a calendar: progress reports, quarterly regional milestone reports, performance metrics, semi-annual supplemental information, and annual project reviews. These reports, as described here, are very valuable in helping us document the progress of our investments in the regional observing systems and other regional partners. This guidance will be revisited periodically, as appropriate, if reporting needs or other factors change over time.

## I. Program Performance Reports

Program Performance Reports ("progress reports") are a Department of Commerce requirement for federal financial assistance as codified in 15 CFR Part 14 §§ 14.51–14.53. These progress reports are an important source of information for U.S. IOOS and allow the Program Office to:

- track progress against milestones and deliverables in our cooperative agreements
- stay informed about successes and problems
- anticipate upcoming administrative actions
- report on system-wide capacity.

As required by 15 CFR 14.51, progress reports shall document:

- a comparison of actual accomplishments with the goals and objectives (milestones and deliverables) established *for the reporting period* and/or the findings of the investigator
- expenditures commensurate with the actual accomplishment of goals and objectives defined for the reporting period
- reasons why established goals were not met, if appropriate.

Award recipients are responsible for monitoring each project, program, sub-award[1], function or activity supported by the award. NOAA's Grants Management Division has prescribed that the frequency of progress reports is semi-annual; however, the Program Office can require recipients to report as frequently as quarterly.

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[1] Information on sub-award reporting is available online at: http://www.usaspending.gov/news or http://www.usaspending.gov/sites/all/themes/usaspendingv2/pdf/General_Questions_and_Answers_Subaward_and_Executive_Compensation_Reporting_Requirements_Small_Business.pdf

NOAA Administrative Standard Award Conditions, section C, identifies the federal program officer as the authority on the acceptable form and content of progress reports. The Program Office requires that progress reports:

- are limited to 10 pages (the office reserves the right to return to the award recipient progress reports that exceed the page limit)
- clearly identify the NOAA award number
- clearly identify the reporting period
- be submitted through the Grants Online system
- are submitted no later than 30 days following the end of the reporting period to avoid suspension of the recipient's ASAP account
- address the items outlined below
- report only on progress and accomplishments of the funded activity for the 6-month reporting period.[2]

Progress reports shall include the following sections:

**1) Project Summary**
Provide a brief summary of the overall goals of the funded activity to provide context for subsequent sections.

**2) Progress and Accomplishments**
Describe progress and accomplishments for the current reporting period. Include progress toward project milestones and deliverables, and provide quantitative data when available.

**3) Scope of Work**
Describe current or anticipated changes to 1) the scope of work or 2) the ability to achieve milestones and deliverables (due to problems encountered, improved approach, etc.). Note that a change or addition of work elements not contained in the original application may require a request to NOAA to approve the change or addition. Describe any issues that hamper progress as proposed.

**4) Personnel and Organizational Structure**
Include any changes in key scientific or management personnel, especially those that affect the proposed scope of work. Note that a change in the Principal Investigator requires NOAA approval. Also include information about organizational structure, such as:

- changes in status of the partner organization
- changes in staff or points of contact.

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[2] Annual supplemental information, beyond the activities of the funded award, can be submitted in June and December – guidance for annual supplemental information is included in section IV of this document.

**5) Budget Analysis**

Include commentary on actual budget expenditures in relation to anticipated budget expenditures. Explain any discrepancy between ASAP draw downs and actual expenditures. (The purpose of this is to help the Program Office anticipate if budget modifications will be needed for the award.) Ensure that financial reports are up to date and report that information in this section.

As required by 15 CFR 14.51, progress reports shall document other pertinent information including, when appropriate, analysis and explanation of cost overruns or high unit costs. Progress reports shall also describe any property or equipment charged directly to the award having a useful life of more than one year and an acquisition cost of $5,000 or more per unit.

## II.    Quarterly Regional Milestone Reporting

The Program Office will request reporting on regional-level milestones to synchronize with its requirement to meet National Ocean Service (NOS) quarterly reporting requirements. The Program Office will send reminders along with a reporting template to award recipients three weeks prior to the reporting deadline.

Reports will be submitted on the template and will include the following elements:
- milestone **status** (i.e., met, delayed, canceled)
- **summary** (2-3 sentences) explanation of the milestone with positive or negative impact depending upon status (i.e., provide explanation if delayed)
- **issues** for Program Office attention, if necessary.

We ask that you complete the reporting template's column D using the pull down menu, and columns E and F by writing a short summary of no more than 500 characters regarding the milestone impact and any issues, if applicable.

## III.    Performance Metrics

Reporting on performance metrics will be required in synchronization with a requirement that the Program Office meet NOAA reporting deadlines. Metrics reporting will involve quantitative reporting, but should not require narrative reports.

It may not be necessary for all regions to report on all metrics. For example, the data necessary for reporting on the surface currents/USCG SAROPS metric could be provided through the national HF Radar network.

The Program Office will combine requests for performance metrics with the regional-level milestone reporting request sent three weeks prior to the April and October reporting deadline.

# IV.    Semi-Annual Supplemental Information

The semi-annual supplemental information requirement applies to all Regional Associations (RAs) who are grant and/or co-operative agreement award recipients.   The semi-annual supplemental information enables the Program Office to improve collection and organization of information that is often requested.

The semi-annual supplemental information should be submitted as a separate addendum to the semi-annual progress report.   The supplemental section is limited to a maximum of five pages of text (in addition to the ten-page maximum for the progress report).   Semi-annual supplemental information should be included with the June or December progress report as outlined below.

In the June progress report, please include:
- Regional Ocean Governance Organization (e.g., Gulf of Mexico Alliance, West Coast Governor's Alliance on Ocean Health) activities
- Efforts to leverage IOOS funding
- Updates to RA Governance board membership are made utilizing the template located at: http://www.ioos.gov/regions/ra_membrshp_govern_template.xlsx.
- Governance activities and accomplishments.
- Education and Outreach Activities
  - To satisfy reporting requirements for Training and Education activities and for Marketing Outreach and Engagement activities, RAs should ensure and indicate in the June report that the information contained in the Education and Outreach Inventory tool is current and accurate for their region.   This tool was developed with the NFRA Education and Outreach Committee.   Updating the inventory tool will result in reporting of activities in a manner that is supportive of the U.S. IOOS Blueprint document.
  - The Education and Outreach Inventory tool is located at: https://docs.google.com/spreadsheet/ccc?key=0AlZ_N4z24o_ZdFR5UnpaMklzc2FrdUY3UnR5NjZCWkE&authkey=CJ-JmJYO&authkey=CJ-JmJYO#gid=0.
  - To support this update, the following definitions of Education and Outreach are provided:
    - Outreach:   Engagement with individuals and organizations with the primary purpose of serving as a resource (e.g., extending services) to those individuals and/or organizations.
    - Education:   Providing products or sustained services including formal classroom learning, curriculum development, professional development of teachers, and informal learning resources.

In the December progress report, please include:
- Products and Services - number and brief description of contributions to new or improved
  - regional products or services
  - national products or services

- Data Management
  - Progress towards a standards-based foundation for DMAC capabilities
  - Demonstrated progress towards:
    - open data sharing
    - provision of data to WMO GTS
    - implementation of a service-oriented architecture
    - use of common vocabularies and identifiers
    - improved use of metadata conventions
    - data storage and archiving
  - On-going program-level participation in:
    - data management planning and coordination
- Observing Assets
  - A list of "platforms of opportunity" that are being used to support monitoring of ocean acidification
  - Current inventory of all regional observing assets, which may include[3]:
    - description (instrument type)
    - status
    - location
    - data type collected
    - program (owner)
    - anticipated changes (e.g., additions, deletions, upgrades, etc.).

## V.   Annual Project Reviews

U.S. IOOS RAs, NFRA, and other grant and/or co-operative agreement award recipients shall meet annually, as a group, with Program Office staff in Silver Spring to discuss technical progress and award management.   We anticipate these meetings will be held in the spring of each year.   Topics for discussion during these sessions might include:

Updates on Regional Organization and Management
- new members of the Board or technical teams
- new key stakeholders or funding partners
- changes to formal organizational structure

Current Regional Activities
- activities in the region that are related to or support IOOS, including activities not funded by the Program Office
- engagement with regional stakeholders
- benefits of U.S. IOOS to the region, including quantifiable, tangible expressions of support from stakeholders

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[3] Recipient will be asked to provide this kind of information, based on guidance that is forthcoming.

- description of problems encountered to date and the resolutions; this includes whether funded activities are on track for completion – if not, what activities will be delayed or incomplete and for what reason?

Finances
- anticipated changes to the operating budget
- concerns about expenditure of funds or other grant and/or cooperative agreement requirements
- opportunities for leveraging

Cross-Regional Coordination

- discussion of joint efforts and opportunities for coordination across U.S. IOOS RAs and other funded partners

Other Topics and Requests for follow-up

## VI.  National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Special Award Conditions

Federal funds cannot be expended on any new vessel operations, glider or buoy deployments, HF radar, sensor or mooring installations or other activities without an evaluation of consequences to the human environment.   In addition, activities conducted with NOAA/IOOS funding shall give consideration to and be compliant with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Marine Managed Areas (MMA), Endangered Species Act (ESA), Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA), and National Marine Sanctuaries Act (NMSA).

Award recipients should refer to the Special Award Conditions in their cooperative agreements for details about NEPA reporting requirements.   Copies of all impact statements, assessments, licenses or permits obtained shall be submitted to Program Office for input into the recipient's official file in Grants Online. Recipients shall complete the template provided by the Program Office via email before any new assets are deployed, installed or launched.

## VII.  Questions?

Please contact the Program Office with questions or comments:

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# Calendar of Routine Reporting Requirements

| Date | Description |
|---|---|
| | |
| Spring | • Annual project reviews (group meeting in Silver Spring) |
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| March 31 (approx.) | • Completion of descope negotiation and submission of award documents to IOOS for submission to NOAA's Grants Management Division |
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| April 7 | • Quarter 2 Regional-level milestones for NOS reporting<br>• Performance Metrics report |
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| June 30 | • Grant Progress Reports Due<br>  o Semi-Annual Supplemental: Education and Outreach<br>  o Semi-Annual Supplemental: Regional Ocean Governance Organization activities<br>  o Semi-Annual Supplemental: RA Governance Board membership<br>• Quarter 3 Regional-level milestones for NOS reporting |
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| October 7 | • Quarter 4 Regional-level milestones for NOS reporting<br>• Performance Metrics report |
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| December 31 | • Grant Progress Reports Due<br>  o Semi-Annual Supplemental: Products and Services<br>  o Semi-Annual Supplemental: Data Management<br>  o Semi-Annual Supplemental: Observing Assets<br>• Quarter 1 Regional-level Milestones for NOS reporting |