

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 Grant Program) for Fiscal Year 2015

Announcement Type: Initial

Funding Opportunity Number: NOAA-NMFS-PRPO-2015-2004151

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 11.439, Marine Mammal Data Program

Dates: Applications must be postmarked, provided to a delivery service, or received by Grants.gov by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time on **October 8, 2014**. Use of a delivery service other than U.S. mail must be documented with a receipt. **PLEASE NOTE:** It may take Grants.gov up to two business days to validate or reject an application. Please keep this in mind when developing your submission timeline.

Funding Opportunity Description: NOAA NMFS' Marine Mammal Health and Stranding Response Program is directed under the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) to facilitate the collection and dissemination of reference data on stranded marine mammals and health trends of marine mammal populations in the wild. The John H. Prescott Marine Mammal Rescue Assistance Grant Program is administered by NOAA to provide Federal assistance to eligible members of the National Marine Mammal Stranding Network to: 1) support basic needs of organizations for response, treatment, and data collection from living and dead stranded marine mammals, 2) 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 3) support facility operations directly related to the recovery, treatment, and data collection from living and dead stranded marine mammals. This document describes how to submit proposals for funding in fiscal year (FY) 2015 and how NMFS will determine which proposals will be funded. This document should be read in its entirety, as some information has changed from the previous year.

FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Program Objective

The John H. Prescott Marine Mammal Rescue Assistance Grant Program (hereafter referred to as the Prescott Grant Program) was established under the Marine Mammal Rescue Assistance Act of 2000 (16 U.S.C. 1421f-1), an amendment to the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA). The Prescott Grant Program is administered through the Marine Mammal Health and Stranding Response Program (MMHSRP) of the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS).

The Prescott Grant Program provides Federal assistance to eligible Stranding Network participants for: (1) basic needs of organizations for response, treatment, and data collection from living and dead stranded marine mammals; (2) 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 (3) facility operations directly related to the recovery, treatment, and data collection from living and dead stranded marine mammals. 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.

The MMHSRP, through close coordination with Regional Stranding Networks, has the following objectives: (1) improve the rescue, care and treatment of stranded marine mammals; (2) reduce the health risk to animals, humans, and the ocean environment during response to, and rehabilitation and release of, stranded marine mammals; (3) collect life history, biological, and biomedical data from live and dead stranded marine mammals; (4) develop baseline reference data on the health of wild marine mammal populations, normal stranding rates, and causes of morbidity and mortality; improve the rapid detection of morbidity and mortality events; (5) collect archival samples for future retrospective studies on causes of mortality or illness, including genetics and genomics, and for placement in the National Marine Mammal Tissue (and Serum) Bank and other properly curated, professionally accredited archival facilities; and (6) refine and/or utilize comprehensive and consistent guidance for the rescue and rehabilitation of stranded marine mammals, collection of specimens, quality assurance, and analysis of tissue samples.

A portion of Prescott funding is available at the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) to provide assistance for emergency marine mammal stranding events throughout FY 2015 on an as-needed basis, until expended. Emergency proposals should not be submitted on Grants.gov. Please submit a proposal online through the NFWF Easygrants system

(<http://www.nfwf.org/easygrants>). Additional guidance on emergency grant requirements and the application process is available on the Prescott Grant Program website (<http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/health/prescott/emergency.htm>).

B. Program Priorities

For this solicitation, all applications must fall within one of the three categories described below. The applicant must select one category to apply under. Since some projects could be designed to meet more than one category, you should determine which category best fits the goals of your proposed project. For each of the proposal categories the MMHSRP has identified multiple national and regional funding priorities. These program priorities pertain only to marine mammal species under the jurisdiction of the Department of Commerce (DOC) (cetaceans and pinnipeds, except walrus).

Category A - Fund marine mammal health, stranding, and rehabilitation scientific research objectives. Data or samples may be collected from stranded animals as well as bycaught, subsistence hunted, or live animals in the wild, which serve as controls or for comparisons in specific study designs. If proposals under Category A are using live animals in the wild, subsistence or by-caught animals, the proposal must link the use of these animals to known or suspected health issues of stranded marine mammals and ultimately to the health of the population or to the development and validation of new tools and techniques to assess such health conditions.

A1. Further the development of scientific research objectives designed to test hypotheses about marine mammal strandings, health, or rehabilitation techniques utilizing data from living and dead stranded marine mammals.

1. National Funding Priorities

a. Improve understanding of health and health trends in populations of cetaceans and pinnipeds, with emphasis on infectious (i.e., zoonotic, epidemic, emerging) agents and diseases utilizing the infectious disease priority list developed by the Working Group for Marine Mammal Unusual Mortality Events by:

- Developing new tools and/or treatments (with the intent to operationalize);
- Validating new or existing tools and/or treatments; or
- Using tools and/or treatments.

The infectious disease priority list is available on the Prescott Grant Program website (http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/pdfs/health/pathogens_prioritization.pdf).

b. Conduct analyses and interpretation of baseline information, trends, and correlations between population demographics, diet, health, environmental parameters (*e.g.*, environmental oscillations, distribution of prey, or harmful algal blooms) or types and

frequency of anthropogenic interactions, as they relate to strandings and overall marine mammal population health.

c. Assess the hearing capabilities of stranded marine mammals, the potential effects of age, natural factors, ototoxic drugs, chemical pollution, infections, and anthropogenic factors on hearing, and/or the potential impacts of anthropogenic sound on marine mammals through in-depth pathology and diagnostic imaging utilizing stranded marine mammals particularly in areas of anthropogenic noise activities by:

- Developing new tools and/or treatments (with the intent to operationalize);
- Validating new or existing tools and/or treatments; or
- Using tools and/or treatments.

2. Regional Funding Priorities - There are no additional regional funding priorities.

A2. Support collaborative, multi-regional scientific services provided to the Stranding Network to enhance data collection and analyses and improve understanding of marine mammal health, strandings, and rehabilitation.

1. National Funding Priorities

- a. Increase Stranding Network diagnostic capabilities (see definitions in Section VIII of this federal funding opportunity (FFO) announcement) by providing diagnostics, disease surveillance, or histopathology services.
- b. Performance and interpretation of additional services to improve understanding of marine mammal health and strandings. Examples of services include: hearing testing, imaging, gas analyses, tooth aging, genetics, stomach content analyses, stable isotopes, sample archiving/preservation, etc.
- c. Provide tags, post-release monitoring and analysis of stranded, out-of-habitat, rehabilitated, and released marine mammals.

2. Regional Funding Priorities - There are no additional regional funding priorities.

Category B- Support basic and enhancement needs of organizations for response to, treatment of, and data collection from living and dead stranded marine mammals. Organizations should apply under Category A if the budget request for scientific research is more than 50% of the total Federal budget. If research objectives are included in Category B proposals, the objectives must be designed with testable hypotheses. **NOTE:** All organizations applying under Category B must be authorized to conduct Stranding Network activities as of October 8, 2014, either through a Stranding Agreement, official designee status from the applicable NMFS Region, or under Section 109(h) of the MMPA (16 U.S.C. § 1379(h)).

B1. Further the development of new organizations (those in existence for less than three years) for response, treatment, and data collection from living and dead stranded marine mammals. Organizations may only apply under Category B1 if they are a new organization (in existence for less than three years) **and** have never had a Prescott application accepted and reviewed during the Prescott technical reviewer process of an annual Prescott competition.

1. National Funding Priorities

- a. Build capacity and infrastructure for basic stranding response and marine mammal rehabilitation activities in areas of low, intermittent or no coverage. This may include: the collection of Level A data and samples for analyses from a majority of stranded animals and outreach/education to raise community awareness for stranded animals.
- b. Train new responders to improve consistency and quality of clinical care and treatment, assessments, necropsies, documentation, and data management for live and/or dead stranded marine mammals. Enhance participation in Regional or National Marine Mammal Stranding Network Conferences.

2. Regional Funding Priorities - In addition to the above national priorities, each region has identified the following priorities of particular interest:

a. Alaska Region

- i. Alaska Region high priority areas include: Western and Northern Alaska, as well as other areas of low and/or intermittent coverage in the state.
- ii. Foster community outreach and education regarding marine mammal stranding response and science.
- iii. Assist with community development, support, and training (*e.g.*, regional and statewide meetings, training, etc.) for the Alaska Regional Stranding Network.

b. Greater Atlantic Region

- i. Provide stranding response coverage for Level A data collection and increase capability to conduct live animal response and post-mortem examinations following established protocols in the following areas: Massachusetts' Northshore (Salem to New Hampshire border), Martha's Vineyard, MA and Nantucket, MA.
- ii. Develop (or enhance) reporting and documentation of live entangled pinnipeds in high sightings area with limited response coverage: Martha's Vineyard, MA and Nantucket, MA.

iii. Increase public outreach and messaging through Public Service Announcements, online tools or printed materials to address and manage public expectations surrounding stranding responses to abundant pinniped species.

c. Pacific Islands Region - No additional priorities.

d. Southeast Region

i. Southeast Region high priority geographic areas are: Florida (Citrus County through Franklin County) and South Carolina.

ii. Establish capabilities to collect Level A data and perform necropsies on dead stranded marine mammals and/or respond quickly and humanely to live stranded marine mammals.

iii. Establish permanent and/or mobile necropsy facilities.

iv. Establish capabilities to perform diagnostics on live or dead stranded marine mammals.

v. Establish capabilities to humanely euthanize live stranded marine mammals.

vi. Increase collaboration with state and local government organizations (e.g. law enforcement, fire departments, life guards, environmental management agencies) to more effectively respond to stranding events.

e. West Coast Region

i. Provide coverage for Level A data collection in limited or low funded areas by building volunteer or collaborative partnerships to support or maintain consistent investigation of marine mammal stranding events. This may include increasing and enhancing communication with local officials and the public regarding marine mammal stranding investigations in the designated response area. An emphasis on education and outreach, addressing and managing public expectations, and developing informational materials (handouts, permanent signage, etc.) for public outreach is extremely important. Mendocino, Humboldt and Sonoma Counties in California are high priority areas.

ii. Provide public education and outreach in limited response areas by developing small volunteer groups to respond to harbor seal pup events in south Puget Sound (primarily Tacoma and Olympia) and the outer coast of Washington State (Willapa Bay, Grays Harbor, and north to Moclips). These volunteer groups would coordinate and form collaborative partnerships with pre-existing Stranding Networks in the area.

B2. Support basic and enhancement needs of organizations (in existence for more than three years) that have previously applied for or received Prescott funding for response to, treatment of, and data collection from living and dead stranded marine mammals.

1. National Funding Priorities

a. Enhance the quality, consistency, quantity, reporting, and sharing of Level A, B, and C data collected from stranded marine mammals, including: complete diagnostic screening and scientific data collection on stranded animals; collection and analyses of samples; equipment necessary to collect samples and perform analyses; and detection and reporting of emerging diseases, new lesions or atypical or uncommon findings.

b. Enhance attendance and participation by professional staff and facility volunteers in training, particularly in: Regional or National Marine Mammal Stranding Network Conferences; the Incident Command System (ICS) relative to oil spill response and natural disasters involving marine mammals; public health in relation to marine mammals; marine mammal disease and treatment issues; and veterinary care. Collaborative proposals are encouraged.

c. Improve capacity for response to mass strandings, hazardous material spills, Unusual Mortality Events, natural disasters, out-of-habitat situations, disease outbreaks, and other events impacting multiple animals, including live animal triage, treatment, short- and long-term care, and necropsy and sample analysis of dead animals. Collaborative proposals are encouraged.

d. Utilize tagging to assess, monitor and analyze post-release success of rehabilitated animals. Continue tagging and marking development. Collaborative proposals are encouraged.

e. Enhance regional and trans-regional logistical support for response to large whale stranding events by:

- Obtaining additional ICS training;
- Acquiring and maintaining supplies and equipment;
- Developing cooperative plans with local, state, or federal agencies to identify carcass landing/necropsy sites; or
- Identifying and securing towing/transport and disposal services by promoting partnerships with local businesses/contractors.

f. Correct non-compliance issues identified during the 2011-2013 NMFS rehabilitation facility inspections. Project costs to correct non-compliance issues must be less than 20% of the Federal budget request (see also Category C).

2. Regional Funding Priorities - In addition to the above national priorities, each region has identified the following priorities of particular interest:

a. Alaska Region

- i. Increase capacity to collect, archive, and analyze data from stranded marine mammals to investigate overall health parameters, prey types, diseases, and immune and reproductive functions.
- ii. Enhance the quality and consistency of data collected and reported from stranded marine mammals (e.g., standardized necropsy examinations and reports, standardized sample analyses, increase supply of gear caches).
- iii. Address underlying causes of pinniped entanglement in Alaska to reduce injury and mortality due to interactions with fishery gear and marine debris.
- iv. Analyze and publish data related to historical Alaska marine mammal strandings and health.
- v. Continue development, support, and training (e.g., regional and statewide meetings, training, etc.) for the Alaska Regional Stranding Network.

b. Greater Atlantic Region

- i. Develop (or enhance) reporting and documentation of live and dead entangled pinnipeds.
- ii. Analyze and publish data related to historical marine mammal strandings and health.
- iii. Increase and enhance public outreach and messaging through Public Service Announcements, online tools or printed materials to address and manage public expectations surrounding stranding responses to abundant pinniped species.
- iv. Enhance local logistical support for response to large whale stranding events by:
 - Obtaining additional ICS training;
 - Acquiring and maintaining supplies and equipment;
 - Developing cooperative plans with local, state, or federal agencies to identify carcass landing/necropsy sites; or
 - Identifying and securing towing/transport and disposal services by promoting partnerships with local businesses/contractors.

c. Pacific Islands Region

- i. Enhance capacity for dead cetacean stranding response in the Main Hawaiian Islands and other U.S. Pacific Islands (e.g., Guam, American Samoa, and Northern Mariana

Islands). This includes increasing: disease and cause of death surveillance (focusing on cetacean morbillivirus, brucellosis and other diseases of concern within the region - http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/pdfs/health/pathogens_prioritization.pdf), veterinary participation, data collection, and necropsies during stranding events.

ii. Support of outreach and training for stranding response and readiness for dead cetaceans and/or Hawaiian monk seals.

iii. Enhance capacity for routine pathogen surveillance of stranded monk seals.

iv. Enhance operational support for rehabilitation or field interventions of monk seals including: medical assessment, transportation, animal husbandry, diagnostic testing, veterinary care, and disease surveillance.

v. Improve access to veterinary care for stranded marine mammals including: facility improvements, on-site (laboratory or field) equipment, instruments for more rapid medical assessments, and instruments for monitoring of treatments.

d. Southeast Region

i. Southeast Region high priority areas are: Florida (Citrus County through Franklin County), areas where there are ongoing Unusual Mortality Events (UME), repeated UMEs, or areas that may need to conduct post-UME surveillance, and areas where stranding/human interaction data are utilized by a Take Reduction Team.

ii. Enhance capabilities to rapidly perform thorough necropsies on dead stranded marine mammals in good condition prior to degradation- particularly during large whale stranding events, human interaction events (e.g. potential gunshot or entangled animals) and UMEs.

iii. Enhance or upgrade permanent and/or mobile necropsy facilities. This includes staging equipment caches for small and large cetaceans throughout the Southeast Region.

iv. Enhance capabilities to perform diagnostic tests on dead stranded marine mammals.

v. Enhance capabilities to triage live stranded marine mammals, including performing thorough diagnostics, such as hematology, histopathology and cytology, and euthanasia.

vi. Enhance capabilities to rapidly and effectively respond to mass strandings. This may include equipment caches, herding capabilities, triage, tagging/post release monitoring, euthanasia, thorough necropsy, carcass disposal, and resources for potential release (immediate release or post-rehabilitation).

vii. Provide support for disentanglement of free-swimming small cetaceans. This may include capture resources and tools and methods for boat-based disentanglement.

viii. Increase collaboration with state and local government organizations (e.g. law enforcement, fire departments, life guards, environmental management agencies) through training and outreach to more effectively respond to stranding events.

e. West Coast Region

i. Provide coverage for Level A data collection in limited or low funded areas by building volunteer or collaborative partnerships to support or maintain consistent investigation of marine mammal stranding events. This may include increasing and enhancing communication with local officials and the public regarding marine mammal stranding investigations in the designated response area. An emphasis on education and outreach, addressing and managing public expectations, and developing informational materials (handouts, permanent signage, etc.) for public outreach is extremely important. Mendocino, Humboldt and Sonoma Counties in California are high priority areas. South Puget Sound, Grays Harbor, and Willapa Bay are high priority areas in Washington State.

ii. Provide public education and outreach in limited response areas by developing small volunteer groups to respond to harbor seal pup events in south Puget Sound and the outer coast of Washington State. These volunteer groups would coordinate and form collaborative partnerships with pre-existing Stranding Networks in the area.

iii. Increase capability to conduct post-mortem examinations using an appropriate protocol for the collection and submission of fluid samples and tissues for analysis by a qualified pathology laboratory and report the results for inclusion in the national MMHSRP database.

iv. Develop a cooperative regional plan (includes California, Oregon, and Washington) to enhance large whale response and necropsies This plan may include:

- Identifying suitable necropsy sites where large whale carcasses can be towed, beached, examined and left to decompose;
- Obtaining prior authorization/permission to use the identified sites on short notice and identify any pre-existing jurisdictional, permitting or other regulatory requirements;
- Researching and securing towing/transport services at minimal cost by promoting partnerships between the Stranding Network and local businesses that addresses leaving carcasses at the site for natural decomposition; or
- Providing funds for carcass disposal costs and network travel for necropsies.

Category C - Support needed modifications and/or upgrades to rehabilitation facilities (existing and new) to meet or exceed the NMFS' Policies and Best Practices- Rehabilitation Facility Standards (<http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/health/publications.htm#policies>). Organizations should apply under Category C if the budget request to modify or upgrade facilities is more than 20% of the total federal budget. **NOTE:** All organizations applying under Category C must be authorized to conduct Stranding Network activities as of October 8, 2014, either through a Stranding Agreement or official designee status from the applicable NMFS Region, or under Section 109(h) of the MMPA (16 U.S.C. § 1379(h)).

1. National Funding Priorities

- a. Enhance, repair, or upgrade existing and new facilities to address non-compliance issues and deficiencies identified during the 2011-2013 NMFS rehabilitation facility inspections for a total cost of more than 20% of the Federal budget request.
- b. Enhance, repair, or upgrade existing and new facilities to meet (or exceed) NMFS' Policies and Best Practices - Standards for Rehabilitation Facilities.

2. Regional Funding Priorities - In addition to the above national priorities, each region has identified the following priorities of particular interest:

a. Alaska Region - No additional priorities.

b. Greater Atlantic Region - No additional priorities.

c. Pacific Islands Region

- i. Enhance facilities, equipment, staff, and volunteer capacity to increase rehabilitation and holding capabilities on Hawaii and Oahu islands for monk seals.

d. Southeast Region - No additional priorities.

e. West Coast Region - No additional priorities.

C. Program Authority

16 U.S.C. 1421 f-1

II. Award Information

A. Funding Availability

NOAA anticipates that up to \$4,000,000 may be available for distribution under the FY 2015 annual competitive Prescott Grant Program. The exact amount of funds that may be awarded will be determined during pre-award negotiations between the applicant and NOAA

representatives. Funds have not yet been appropriated for this program, and there is no guarantee that sufficient funds will be available to make awards for all qualified projects. Publication of this notice does not obligate 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 has no obligation to provide any additional funding in connection with that award in subsequent years beyond the award period. Notwithstanding verbal or written assurance that may have been received, pre-award costs are not allowed under the award unless approved by the Grants Officer in accordance with 15 CFR 14.28.

The maximum Federal award for each grant cannot exceed \$100,000 (16 U.S.C. § 1421f-1). Funds may be set aside from the annual appropriation to provide for emergency assistance awards to eligible stranding network participants. 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 FY2015 competitive grant cycle. However, Stranding Network participants will receive no more than two awards per year as part of the competitive program. The two awards must be for completely independent projects that are clearly separate in their objectives, goals, and budget requests and must be successful in the competitive review process. Eligible researchers applying as Principal Investigators, but not independently authorized under Sections 112(c) or 109(h) of the MMPA (16 U.S.C. §§ 1382(c) and 1379(h), respectively, or the National Contingency Plan for Response to Marine Mammal Unusual Mortality Events, can only receive one award per year as part of the competitive grant cycle.

B. Project/Award Period

Prescott awards may have a maximum project period of three years, but the total Federal award cannot exceed \$100,000 for each award regardless of the length of the project period. Proposals requesting incrementally funded projects exceeding \$100,000 will not be accepted. If an applicant would like to continue work on a project funded through this program beyond the approved award period, the applicant may notify the assigned Grants Officer no less than 30 days prior to the end of the period to determine eligibility for a no-cost extension. If 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 2016) or seek an alternate source of funding.

C. Type of Funding Instrument

Under this solicitation, NOAA will fund Prescott grants or cooperative agreements at a maximum of a \$100,000 award, with a maximum project period of three years.

III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applicants

All eligible applicants must currently be an active, authorized participant or researcher in the National Marine Mammal Stranding Network. Eligible applicants must be: 1) Stranding Agreement (SA) holders or their designee organizations; or 2) holders of researcher authorization letters issued by a NMFS Regional Administrator and/or an MMPA and/or ESA scientific research or enhancement permit (when applicable); or 3) an eligible Federal, state, or local government personnel or tribal personnel (pursuant to Section 109(h) of the MMPA (16 U.S.C. 1379(h)); or 4) diagnostic laboratories performing services for the stranding network. Federal agencies in the DOC or Department of the Interior (DOI) are not eligible to receive Federal assistance under this notice.

1. In Good Standing Criteria. All eligible applicants must meet the following in good standing criteria:

- a. If the applicant is a designated Principal Investigator of an MMPA and/or ESA scientific research or enhancement permit, the applicant must have fulfilled all permit requirements. The applicant must not have any pending or outstanding enforcement actions under the MMPA or ESA.
- b. The applicant must have complied with the terms and responsibilities of the appropriate SA, MMPA Section 109(h) authorization, or researcher authorization letter. This includes, but is not limited to: 1) completion of all reporting requirements; 2) cooperation with state, local, and federal officials; 3) cooperation with state and local officials in the disposition of stranded marine mammals; and 4) cooperation with stranding network participants.
- c. The applicant must have cooperated in a timely manner with NMFS in collecting and submitting Level B and Level C data and samples, when requested.
- d. The applicant must not have any current enforcement investigation for the take of marine mammals contrary to MMPA/ESA regulations.
- e. The applicant must not have any pending NMFS notice of violation(s) regarding the policies governing the goals and operations of the Stranding Network and SA, if applicable (e.g., probation, suspension, or termination).

2. Category Specific Criteria. Organizations and individuals must meet all of the following eligibility criteria specific to their category of participation in order for a proposal to be considered for funding:

- a. SA Holder Participant or SA Designee Participant - SA participants must hold a current, active SA for stranding response and/or rehabilitation from a NMFS Regional Administrator or the Assistant Administrator. SA Designee participants must be holding a current, active letter of designation from a NMFS SA holder. Designees cannot request

authorization for activities beyond the scope of what is authorized by the SA to the agreement holder.

b. **Researcher Participant** - Researcher participants must hold a current, active authorizing letter for the proposed award period from the appropriate NMFS Regional Administrator or the Assistant Administrator to salvage stranded marine mammal specimens, parts and samples for the purpose of utilization in scientific research (50 CFR 216.22). Persons authorized to salvage dead marine mammal specimens under this section must register the salvage with the appropriate NMFS Regional Office within 30 days after the taking occurs. Researchers who are authorized under an MMPA/ESA Scientific Research Permit must still obtain an authorizing letter from the Regional Stranding Coordinator in order to use parts or specimens from stranded animals. Researcher participants that would not require an authorizing letter from the NMFS Regional Administrator (*i.e.*, they will be working with data only and not possessing samples or specimens) must still provide a letter of eligibility from the Regional Stranding Coordinator (see section III.A.3. of this FFO). Researcher participants must also have designated Co-Investigator(s) that are active NMFS authorized Stranding Network participants in good standing, and provide documentation to this effect.

c. **State, Local, Federal Government Employees or Tribal Participants** - State and local government officials or employees participating pursuant to Section 109(h) of the MMPA (16 U.S.C. 1379(h)) for marine mammal species not listed under the ESA must fulfill reporting obligations outlined in 50 CFR § 216.22.

d. **Diagnostic Laboratories** – While diagnostic laboratories performing analyses for Stranding Network members do not need authorization from NMFS to receive and possess samples or specimens from stranded marine mammals (50 CFR § 216.22(c)(8)), diagnostic laboratories must still provide a letter of eligibility from the MMHSRP (see section IV.B.7.a. of this FFO). Laboratories should submit examples of their diagnostic capabilities, diagnostic services proposed and their testing turn-around time to the Marine Mammal Health and Stranding Response Program when requesting a letter of eligibility.

3. Letter of Eligibility. All applicants must submit a letter of eligibility issued by the appropriate NMFS Regional Stranding Coordinator or the Marine Mammal Health and Stranding Response Program (MMHSRP) at NMFS Headquarters. This letter is required in order to be considered for an award in this funding cycle. The letter of eligibility states that you are: 1) an eligible Stranding Network participant, diagnostic laboratory or researcher at the time of the application submission and during the award period; 2) in good standing; 3) have a history of participation in/with the Stranding Network or that your organization is from a local area with no pre-existing stranding response and/or rehabilitation capabilities or your organization provides diagnostic services. A copy of your SA or research authorization will not be considered as proof of eligibility. Any proposal that does not provide a letter

from the NMFS Regional Stranding Coordinator (or NMFS Headquarters) will not be considered eligible and will not be considered for further review. Contact the NMFS Regional Stranding Coordinators (<http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/health/coordinators.htm>) or the Prescott Grant Program at the address in the Agency Contacts, Section VII of this FFO to request this letter.

Federal agencies in the DOC or DOI are not eligible to receive Federal assistance under this notice. In addition, NOAA employees shall not provide assistance in writing any application, writing letters of support for any application, or otherwise confer any unfair advantage on a particular application. However, for activities involving collaboration with current NOAA programs, NOAA employees can write a letter verifying that they are collaborating with the project. MMHSRP staff and other Federal Program Officers can provide guidance on application procedures and proper completion of required forms. Applications encompassing activities conducted under the authority of a MMPA Scientific Research Permit issued to the DOC or DOI should include a copy of the permit and a letter from the Principal Investigator (DOC/DOI employee) verifying that the work is being conducted with their approval. Federal employee travel costs or salaries are not allowable costs under this program.

Unsatisfactory performance under prior or current Federal awards, including delinquency in submitting progress and financial reports, may result in proposals not being considered for funding under the FY 2015 Prescott Grant Program.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement

All proposals submitted must provide a minimum non-Federal cost share of 25% of the total budget (*i.e.*, $0.25 \times \text{total project costs} = \text{total non-Federal share}$). Therefore, the total Federal share will be 75% or less of the total budget. For a proposed total Federal share of \$100,000, the minimum non-Federal share is \$33,334 (total budget of \$133,334; $.25 \times \$133,334 = \$33,334$). Cost share must be an integer, so please round up. The applicant can include a non-Federal cost share for more than 25% of the total budget, but this obligation will be binding. In order to reduce calculation errors when determining the correct cost share amounts, we urge all applicants to use the cost share calculator on the Prescott Program website (<http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/health/prescott/proposals/costshare.htm>). If a proposal does not comply with these cost share requirements, it will not be considered for further review in this annual funding cycle. Pursuant to 48 U.S.C. 1469a, the match requirement does not apply to the U.S. insular areas (Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the U.S. Virgin Islands).

The Federal Program Officer will determine the appropriateness of all non-Federal cost share, including the valuation of in-kind contributions, according to the regulations at 15 CFR §§ 14.23 and 24.24, as applicable. An in-kind contribution is a non-cash contribution, including such

contributions 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. The fair market value is the cost of obtaining such services or property, had they not been donated, or of obtaining such services or property for the period of a loan. The applicant must document any in-kind services or property used to fulfill the non-Federal cost share.

C. Other Criteria that Affect Eligibility

Permits and Approvals

It is the applicant's responsibility to obtain all necessary Federal, state, and local government permits and approvals. The applicant must include in the application 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, or 2) a copy of the cover letter of the final permit or approval. The applicant must be able to provide the entire permit or approval if requested by the Prescott Grant Program.

If the proposed activities fall under the jurisdiction of a facility's Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC), the applicant must have requested or obtained approval from the IACUC prior to applying for funding (as required by the Animal Welfare Act and its relevant implementing regulations at 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 (and ESA, if applicable) scientific research and enhancement permit before the proposal will be considered for funding. Receipt of required MMPA (and ESA, if applicable) scientific research and enhancement permits and verification of IACUC approval is required prior to awarding of funds. 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 Stranding Agreement for Stranding Network participants. These activities do not require an additional permit.

If proposed activities will take place within National Marine Sanctuaries, National Parks, National Seashores, State Parks, and other Federal or state-designated protected areas, it is the applicant's responsibility to request and obtain from the appropriate government agencies any necessary 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)). The awarding of funds will be delayed if other Federal, state, and local permits are not obtained.

For proposals involving construction projects, it is the applicant's responsibility to request or obtain all necessary permits and include documentation of such requests or approvals in the application package. Documentation must, to the extent possible, include environmental information 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 Grant Program in determining the potential for environmentally significant activities and ensure NMFS compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

Applications will be reviewed to determine if the proposed activities were analyzed in the Final Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (FPEIS) for the MMHSRP. For those activities analyzed in the FPEIS, no further environmental documentation will be required. For applications whose activities were not analyzed in the FPEIS, program staff will ensure sufficient environmental documentation has been provided to determine the appropriate level of environmental analysis needed to comply with NEPA. Proposal activities may be categorically excluded or an Environmental Assessment (EA) may be necessary. For those applications needing an EA, affected applicants will be informed after the peer review stage. Applicants will be requested to assist in the preparation of an EA by providing all necessary information to complete the assessment (prior to the award).

IV. Application and Submission Information

A. Address to Request Application Package

Both this FFO and application instructions for this grant program are available via the Grants.gov website at <http://www.grants.gov>. Applicants without internet access can obtain application instructions from Michelle Ordoneo or Jaclyn Taylor, NOAA/NMFS/Office of Protected Resources (F/PR), 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910; Phone: (301) 427-8402; e-mail: Michelle.Ordoneo@noaa.gov or Jaclyn.Taylor@noaa.gov.

B. Content and Form of Application

Proposals must adhere to the following instructions and requirements by the proposal submission deadline. Failure to follow these instructions will be reflected in lower scoring by reviewers. Proposals should be submitted via the Grants.gov website. Applicants are **strongly encouraged** to submit proposals early (at least one week prior to the deadline) in the event that the Federal Program Officers are able to pre-screen applications for any deficiencies, contact applicants, and obtain revised applications by the solicitation deadline. Please note that a pre-screening is not guaranteed even if an application is submitted before the deadline. If you cannot submit your application via Grant.gov, a hard copy of the application will be accepted. One signed original (printed on one side) and one signed paper copy (may be double-sided) of the complete proposal

package must be sent to the address listed in Section IV.F. of this FFO and postmarked by the submission deadline.

The following forms are required as part of each application and are available on [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov):

- Application for Federal Assistance (SF-424)
- Budget Information, Non-Construction Programs (SF-424A)
- Assurances, Non-Construction Programs (SF-424-B)
- Certifications Regarding Lobbying (CD-511), and
- Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (SF-LLL) (if applicable)

Proposals and all attachments must be in 10-point font, double-spaced with one inch margins. For applicants submitting proposals by mail, the SF-424 must be signed in ink (preferably blue ink).

Applicants must choose and identify one category and the specific funding priority or priorities within the identified category to which the proposal is addressing. Applicants may choose national, regional or a combination of both funding priorities. If the proposal addresses more than one priority, clearly identify and list first the priority that most closely reflects the objective of the proposal. Applicants should not assume prior knowledge on the part of the Prescott Grant Program or the reviewers as to the relative merits of the project described in the application.

All applications must include the following information:

1. **Budget Information** (no page limit): Applications must include the SF-424A (Budget Information, Non-Construction Programs) form. All instructions should be read before completing the form. The amounts per category and total amounts indicated on the form must correspond with the amounts indicated on all other proposal documents. The Federal and non-Federal columns must be filled in completely and separately.

Each application must have a detailed budget narrative and corresponding spreadsheet describing the total project costs, including contributions and donations. The narrative must justify 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 in the budget narrative and spreadsheet should be separated into cash and in-kind contributions. If in-kind contributions are included, briefly describe the method for calculating the value of these contributions. A sample budget spreadsheet is available on the Prescott Program website (<http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/health/prescott/faqs.htm>).

Indirect costs can be included if the applicant has a negotiated indirect cost rate agreement with the Federal government. Indirect costs are overhead costs for basic operational

functions that are incurred for common or joint objectives and 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. The Federal share of the indirect costs may not exceed 25% of the total direct costs for the proposal. Applicants with indirect costs above 25% may use the amount over the 25% level as non-federal matching funds. If indirect costs are included, the application must include a copy of the current negotiated indirect cost rate agreement with the Federal government (see Section IV.B.7.g.). This copy will not be included in the page limit requirements. Indirect costs may not be included if the applicant does not have a negotiated indirect cost rate with the Federal government. These costs may be itemized as direct costs.

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. If funds are requested for a staff position that is not currently filled by personnel, a position description must be provided with the Supporting Documentation (see Section IV. B.7.j). Funds are allowed for travel to professional meetings and conferences should be directly related to the project goals and objectives. For equipment purchases over \$5,000, three vendor quotes must be provided with the Supporting Documentation (see Section IV. B.7.i). Fees, fundraising activities, travel for Federal employees, salaries for Federal employees, or profits are not allowable costs.

2. Title Page (one page limit): Provide the project title, project duration (with a start date no earlier than August 1, 2015), 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 list of the Federal, non-Federal, and total costs of the project. A sample title page is available on the Prescott Program website (<http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/health/prescott/faqs.htm>).

3. Proposal Narrative (ten-page limit): Describe the project activities completely and accurately. The Project Description should be a clear statement of all work to be undertaken and must include the information listed below in (a)-(g).

a. Goals and Objectives: Identify one Prescott Grant Program Category and the national and/or regional funding priorities (listed in Section I.B.) relevant to the project. State expected project accomplishments and their significance to the marine mammal health, stranding response, and rehabilitation community. Objectives should be attainable within the specified time period and with the available monetary and human resources. Objectives should be simple, understandable, and as specific and quantitative as possible. Historic stranding data in the region of proposed activities should be used to assess season, species, and likelihood of future strandings. The data are critical in linking the proposed project

objectives with the Prescott Grant Program's goals and priorities. Applicants are encouraged to provide stranding data and statistics by year and geographic area in sufficient detail to provide a regional context to the project.

b. Project Management: Describe how the proposed project will be organized and managed, including financial management of the project. An application may only have one designated Principal Investigator. Other 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 should be referred to as Cooperators. If any portion of the project will be conducted through subcontracts, follow the procurement guidance found in [15 CFR Part 24](#) (State and Local Governments), and [15 CFR Part 14](#) (Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals, Other Non-Profit, and Commercial Organizations). Describe how provisions for competitive subcontracting will be met, if applicable. If the contractor has been identified, please provide a statement of their qualifications or background.

c. Project Description: Describe the scientific or technical plan of activities that will be accomplished to meet the proposed project goals and objectives. Include detailed descriptions of activities, collaborators, milestones, and expected products resulting from the completed project. The description should include:

- i. Project activities and how they relate to the project's goals and objectives.
- ii. A list of the activities that will be conducted by Co-Investigators, Cooperators, sub-contractors, volunteers, etc. Describe the oversight of volunteers and how their staff time will be used to complete project activities. The Principal Investigator is responsible for all technical oversight and implementation of the approved work plan.
- iii. List project milestones and a description of the specific activities and associated timelines necessary to meet them. Describe the timelines in increments (*e.g.*, month one, month two, etc.), rather than by specific dates. Please provide an explanation if dates are necessary (*i.e.*, pupping season). Make sure the timelines are reasonable and reflect your overall project period. Specify the quantitative and/or qualitative evaluation criteria to determine the relative success or failure of the project in achieving the stated project goals, objectives, and milestones.
- iv. Identify the outcomes, results, or products, and how they relate to the Prescott Grant Program goals (those goals under your chosen Category A, B, or C, and National or Regional funding priorities). Describe how the project outcomes, results, or products will be applied and/or made available to any appropriate user groups through outreach and education efforts.

v. If this is a re-submission of a previously unfunded Prescott Grant application, include a brief description of how the new proposal has been revised in response to reviewer comments.

d. **Project Impacts:** Describe the potential impacts of activities on the recovery and treatment of stranded marine mammals or the collection of data from living/dead stranded marine mammals for use in marine mammal health research. Identify any other potential project impacts, including environmental impacts.

e. **Need for Federal Assistance:** Demonstrate the need for government financial assistance. List all other sources of funding that are or have been sought for the project.

f. **Federal, State, and Local Government Programs and Activities:** List any Federal, state, or local government programs or activities that this project would affect and reference any corresponding documentation (*i.e.*, permits, approvals, and environmental assessments).

g. **Participation by persons or groups other than the applicant:** Describe how governmental and non-governmental entities, particularly other members of the marine mammal health and stranding response community will participate in the project and the nature of their participation.

4. **Organizational Summary** (three-page limit): Provide a summary of your facility and the role your organization plays in the Marine Mammal Stranding Network. The summary must include: a map of your response area; response statistics (number of strandings/year); organizational overview (number of paid staff, volunteers, researchers, etc.); size and capacity of your facility; a summary of your relationship with neighboring Stranding Network responders; and a financial overview of your facility, including what funds are available for the proposed work. A sample organizational summary is available on the Prescott Program website (<http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/health/prescott/faqs.htm>).

5. **Data Sharing Plan** (two-page limit): Provide a data sharing plan that includes descriptions of the types of environmental data and information created during the course of the project; the tentative date by which data will be shared; the standards to be used for data/metadata format and content; policies addressing data stewardship and preservation; procedures for providing access, sharing, and security; and prior experience in publishing such data. The plan is required as part of NOAA's data sharing policy described in Section VI.B below, and will be reviewed as part of the Evaluation Criteria under V.A.1.

6. **Appendices** (15 page limit): Additional material may be provided including: tables, charts, graphs, maps, photographs, slide shows, and other pictorial presentations.

7. Supporting Documentation (no page limit): The following supporting documentation is required for all proposals:

a. **Letter of Eligibility:** See requirements in Section III, Eligibility Information.

b. **Results of Previous Prescott Awards:** If any Principal Investigator/Co-Investigator on the project has received support from the Prescott Grant Program the following information is required for each annual competitive and emergency grant received in the past 3 years: 1) NOAA award number, amount, and period of support; 2) title of the project; 3) summary of the results of the completed work including a brief description of available data, samples, physical collections, and other related research projects (1-2 paragraphs); 4) publications resulting from the award (copies are requested for documentation, if available); and 5) if the current application is for renewed or continuing support, a description of the relation of the completed work to the proposed work. If the most recent Prescott grant was awarded more than three years ago, the information listed above is required for the most recent grant. Do not submit copies of progress or final reports.

c. **Curriculum Vitae for Named Investigators** (maximum four pages each): Abbreviated Curriculum Vitae are required from the Principal Investigator, Co-Investigators, and named collaborators.

d. **Letters of Cooperation:** Letters of cooperation between the Principal Investigator and all named participants in the project, describing and agreeing to the specific activities each participant would perform. A letter of cooperation is required from any organization that is supplying marine mammal samples/specimens for the proposed activities.

e. **Letters of Support:** Letters of support include any endorsements or letters of support for the project from other National Marine Mammal Stranding Network participants (*e.g.*, participants in adjacent geographical areas).

f. **Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Documentation:** Applicants applying as a 501(c) (3) non-profit organization must submit include a letter from the IRS verifying non-profit classification under the Internal Revenue Code and tax exempt status under section 501(c)(3) of the Code.

g. **Indirect Cost Rate Agreement:** If indirect costs are included in the budget, the application must include a copy of the current, approved, negotiated indirect cost rate agreement with the Federal government.

h. **Permits, Authorizations, IACUC Approvals, and Complete Environmental Analyses:** Applicants requiring MMPA/ESA scientific research and enhancement permits must include a copy of the cover letter of their permit(s) or their request for such permit.

Projects requiring IACUC review must include a copy of their IACUC approval or request for such approval.

i. **Equipment Quotations:** Applicants requesting funds for equipment purchases over \$5000 must provide three vendor quotes for each piece of equipment.

j. **Position Descriptions:** Applicants requesting funds for new staff positions or staff positions that are vacant at the time of application submission must provide a detailed position description for each vacancy. The position description should include the qualifications, skills and requirements necessary to fill the vacancy.

C. **Submission Dates and Times**

Applications must be received and validated by Grants.gov, postmarked, or provided to a delivery service and time-stamped on or before 11:59 p.m. EDT, **October 8, 2014**. Applications submitted through Grants.gov are automatically stamped with the date and time of submission and will be the basis of determining timeliness. For applications submitted through Grants.gov, there will be three automated email receipts sent to the application submitter with the date and time of submission. The first email confirms receipt of the application. The second email confirms that there are no errors with the application submission and the third email confirms the application has been forwarded to NOAA for further processing. If email confirmation receipts are not provided within two business days of application submission, contact the Grants.gov Help Desk (800-518-4726) and Jaclyn Taylor, at Jaclyn.Taylor@noaa.gov. **PLEASE NOTE:** It may take Grants.gov up to two business days to validate or reject the application. Please consider this when developing your submission timeline. Applicants are responsible for ensuring that all required application elements have been appropriately submitted. Applications received after the deadline will be rejected without further consideration. Use of U.S. mail or another delivery service for hard copy applications must be documented with a receipt. No facsimile or electronic mail applications will be accepted.

Important note on Grants.gov application attachment file names: Attachment file names may only include the following UTF-8 characters: A-Z, a-z, 0-9, underscore (_), hyphen (-), space () and period (.). If applicants use any other characters when naming their attachment files, their applications will be rejected.

D. **Intergovernmental Review**

Applications submitted under this program are subject to the provisions of Executive Order (EO) 12372, "Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs".

E. **Funding Restrictions**

Indirect Cost Rates: The maximum dollar amount of allowable indirect costs for which the DOC will reimburse the recipient shall either be: 1) the lesser of the line item amount for the Federal share of indirect costs contained in the approved budget of the award; or 2) the Federal share of the total allowable 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. The Federal share of the indirect costs may not exceed 25% of the total proposed direct costs for the application. Applicants with indirect costs above 25% may use the amount above the 25% 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.

F. Other Submission Requirements

First-time registration with Grants.gov may take up to three weeks. It is **strongly** recommended that this registration process be completed as soon as possible. To use Grants.gov, applicants must have a DUNS number and registration within the System for Award Management (SAM). Applicants should allow a minimum of five days to complete the SAM registration; registration is required only once, but must be renewed periodically. Grants.gov will not accept submissions if the applicant has not been authorized or if credentials are incorrect. Authorizations and credential corrections can take several days to establish. Please plan your time accordingly to avoid late submissions as such submissions will be rejected.

The Grants.gov validation process for a submitted application can take up to two business days to complete (following submission through Grants.gov). Only validated applications are sent to NOAA for review. To ensure successful submission of an application, it is **strongly recommended** that a final and complete application is submitted at least two business days prior to the submission deadline.

Application Submission: Applications should be submitted electronically through the Grants.gov website at <http://www.grants.gov>. If on-line submission is not possible, hard copy applications may be submitted by postal mail or commercial delivery to NOAA/NMFS/Office of Protected Resources (F/PR), ATTN: Michelle Ordoneo, 1315 East-West Highway, Room 13620, Silver Spring, MD 20910. No facsimile or electronic mail applications will be accepted.

V. Application Review Information

A. Evaluation Criteria

The Category A1, A2, B2 and C proposals will be evaluated by reviewers based on the following criteria (with their relative weights):

- 1. Importance/relevance and applicability of proposed project to the program goals (30%).** This criterion ascertains whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and/or

relevance to NOAA, Federal, regional, state, or local activities. Applications will be evaluated to determine if the project goals and objectives are: clear; relate to project activities; and relate to the Prescott Grant Program goals and funding priorities. Reviewers should consider: the likelihood of meeting project milestones and achieving anticipated results in the stated time period; the Data Sharing Plan; 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 points)

2. Technical/scientific merit (35%). This criterion assesses whether the approach is technically sound and/or innovative, if the methods are appropriate, and whether there are clear project goals and objectives. Proposals will be scored on their clear identification of goals and objectives and appropriate performance evaluation methods. Proposals should have sufficient information to enable Reviewers to provide a technical evaluation of the project. The evaluation will be based upon the strengths and/or weaknesses of the technical design relative to obtaining productive and meaningful results. (Score = 1-100 points)

3. Overall qualifications of applicants (15%). This criterion ascertains whether the applicant possesses the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project. Project management will be evaluated based upon Principal Investigator, Co-Investigator(s), and other personnel documentation of related experience and qualifications. Other personnel include designated contractors, consultants, and Cooperators. The results of previous Prescott awards will be considered when evaluating applicant qualifications. (Score = 1-100 points)

4. Project costs (15%). This criterion evaluates the budget to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time-frame. The proposed costs and overall budget of the project will be evaluated according to the proposed work. Itemized costs and the overall budget must be justified and appropriately allocated. (Score = 1-100 points)

5. Outreach and education (5%). This criterion assesses whether the project provides a focused and effective education and outreach strategy regarding NOAA's mission to protect the Nation's natural resources. Applications will be evaluated on whether project results or products will be shared appropriately given the nature of the proposed work and whether sufficient detail is provided to make this determination. Depending on the nature of the project, outreach and education may include: peer reviewed publications, presentations at professional meetings and Stranding Network conferences, development of brochures, education materials, training manuals or websites, or distribution of project results to the Stranding Network. Proposals should be rated on whether the outreach/education discussed is appropriate for the type and nature of the proposal and whether the outreach/education is expected to be effective. (Score = 1-100 points)

The Category B1 proposals will be evaluated by reviewers based on the following criteria (with their relative weights):

1. Importance/relevance and applicability of proposed project to the program goals (30%). This criterion ascertains whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and/or relevance to NOAA, Federal, regional, state, or local activities. Applications will be evaluated to determine if the project goals and objectives are: clear; relate to project activities; and relate to the Prescott Grant Program goals and funding priorities. Reviewers should consider: the project's likelihood of meeting basic stranding response needs, the amount of communication and collaboration with neighboring stranding network participants, and the Data Sharing Plan. (Score = 1-100 points)

2. Technical/scientific merit (40%). This criterion assesses whether the approach is technically sound, if the methods are appropriate, and whether there are clear project goals and objectives. Recognizing applications are from new organizations (in existence less than three years) and have never applied for Prescott Grant funding, proposals will be scored on their clear identification of goals and objectives and appropriate performance evaluation methods. Proposals should have sufficient information to enable reviewers to provide a technical evaluation of the project. (Score = 1-100 points)

3. Overall qualifications of applicants (10%). This criterion ascertains whether the applicant possesses the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project. Project management will be evaluated based upon Principal Investigator, Co-Investigator(s), collaborators, and other personnel documentation of related experience and qualifications. Other personnel include designated contractors, consultants, and Cooperators. (Score = 1-100 points)

4. Project costs (15%). This criterion evaluates the budget to determine if it is realistic and commensurate basic stranding response operations. Recognizing applications are from new organizations (in existence less than three years), the proposed costs and overall budget of the project will be evaluated according to the proposed work. Itemized costs and the overall budget must be clear and appropriately justified. (Score = 1-100 points)

5. Outreach and education (5%). This criterion assesses whether the project provides a focused and effective education and outreach strategy regarding NOAA's mission to protect the Nation's natural resources. Applications will be evaluated on whether project results or products will be shared appropriately given the nature of the proposed work and whether sufficient detail is provided to make this determination. Outreach and education may include: public lectures, presentations at schools or Stranding Network conferences, and development of brochures, pamphlets or websites. Proposals should be rated on whether the outreach/education discussed is appropriate for the type and nature of the proposal. (Score = 1-100 points)

B. Review and Selection Process

Review and selection of applications will take place in four steps: initial evaluation, technical review, merit review, and final selection by the Selecting Official (the Deputy Director, NMFS Office of Protected Resources).

1. Initial Evaluation of the Applications. Applications received in the NMFS Office of Protected Resources will be screened to ensure that they were received on time; provide for at least a 25% non-Federal cost share; and provide the letter of eligibility. Applications that pass the initial screening will be grouped based on the applicant's chosen category (Category A1, A2, B1, B2 or C).

2. Technical Review. Each accepted application will undergo a technical review by participants in the National Marine Mammal Stranding Network or other qualified persons (scientists, researchers, stranding network participants from foreign countries, etc.). Technical reviewers will be asked to evaluate individual proposals based on the Prescott Grant Program National or Regional funding priorities identified by the applicant and the Evaluation Criteria. Each category of proposals will be reviewed by at least three individual reviewers. Category B and Category C applications will be reviewed and scored by individuals from a different NMFS region than the applicant to avoid any potential conflicts of interest. Technical review will be conducted in panel format with reviewers providing individual, independent reviews for each proposal. There may be panel members present for the discussion that are from the same NMFS Regional Stranding Network. Category A (research) applications may be reviewed by technical experts and scientists from the same NMFS region as the applicant. Each technical reviewer must certify that they do not have a conflict of interest concerning the proposal(s) they are reviewing prior to their review. Each panelist will be required to identify potential conflicts of interest with proposals being reviewed by their panel. Reviewers with conflicts of interest will not be present during those proposal discussions. Scores and comments for proposals will be completed during the technical review meetings. Technical review scores will be used to numerically rank the proposals and provide comments on each proposal.

To determine the appropriateness of each proposal to the Prescott Grant Program's goals and/or National or Regional funding priorities, the technical reviewers will provide independent reviews using the weighted criteria outlined in Section V.A. An average weighted score will be generated from each review using the numeric score per criteria and the weights assigned to each criteria. Proposals with an average weighted score of less than 60 points will not move on to the merit review panel. These proposals will not be reviewed further.

3. Merit Review Panel. A panel of at least three National and Regional MMHSRP staff will conduct a merit review, in consultation with the Marine Mammal Commission. Merit

reviewers will determine recommendations for funding based upon: technical review scores and comments; application materials; and equitable distribution of funds among regions (consistent with the requirements of Section 408 of the MMPA). Merit reviewers will take into consideration the amount of collaboration with other stranding network participants when recommending proposals for funding. Proposals recommended for funding will be ranked. Equitable distribution will be determined 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. Merit reviewers will consider: the actual stranding statistics per region; stranding network effort or coverage per region; the applicant's history with past funding from the Prescott Grant Program, including any delinquencies in report submission and the applicant's history providing diagnostic services and analyses (for Category A2 applicants). Justifications will be given for any recommendations that fall outside the technical review ranking, equitable distribution order, or for any cost adjustments.

4. **Final Selection.** The Selecting Official will make the final decision regarding which proposals will be funded based on recommendations of the merit review panel as well as the selection factors set forth in section V.C (Selection Factors) below.

C. Selection Factors

The merit review panel shall provide a rank order to the Selecting Official for final funding recommendations. 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. Duplicates other projects funded or considered for funding by NOAA or other Federal agencies.
4. Program priorities and policy factors as set out in Section I.
5. Applicant's prior award performance (including report submission).
6. Partnerships and/or participation of targeted groups.
7. Adequacy of information necessary for NOAA to make a NEPA determination and draft necessary documentation before recommendations for funding are made to the Grants Officer.

Therefore, the highest scoring proposals may not necessarily be selected for an award.

D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

Subject to the availability of funds, review of proposals will occur during the four months following the proposal due date given in this announcement. Funding should begin during summer 2015 for most approved projects, subject to the availability of funds. Projects should not be expected to begin prior to August 1, 2015, unless otherwise directed by the Federal Program Officer.

VI. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notices

Successful applicants will receive notification of funding from the NOAA Grants Management Division. Applicants should not initiate any project in expectation of Federal funding until they receive a grant award document signed by an authorized NOAA Grants Officer. A cooperative agreement will be utilized if the proposed work entails substantial involvement between the applicant and NMFS. The final determination of the funding instrument (grant or cooperative agreement) will be made by the NOAA Grants Management Division. After successful applicants have been notified, a Federal Program Officer will notify unsuccessful applicants. Comments and scores from the Technical Review will be provided to unsuccessful applicants. Unsuccessful applications will be kept on file in the Program Office for a period of 12 months and will then be destroyed.

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

Department of Commerce (DOC) Pre-Award Notification Requirements: Administrative and national policy requirements for all DOC awards are contained in the DOC Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements published in the Federal Register on December 17, 2012 (77 FR 74634). You may obtain a copy of this notice by contacting the agency contact(s) under section VII, or by going to the website at <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/fr/index.html>.

Uniform Administrative Requirements: Among other things, the DOC Pre-Award Notification Requirements notify applicants of the uniform administrative requirements and cost principles that apply to all DOC grants and cooperative agreements. Applicants should note that on December 26, 2013, OMB published final guidance titled *Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements* (OMB Uniform Guidance) (<https://www.federalregister.gov/articles/2013/12/26/2013-30465/uniform-administrative-requirements-cost-principles-and-audit-requirements-for-federal-awards>), which streamlines the language from eight existing OMB circulars, including Cost Principles (OMB Circulars A-21, A-87, A-122) and administrative requirements (OMB Circulars A-102 and A-110), into one consolidated set of guidance applicable to federal assistance awards. Once adopted, the OMB Uniform Guidance will supersede DOC's uniform administrative requirements set out at 15

C.F.R. parts 14 and 24. The DOC expects to adopt the OMB Uniform Guidance by December 26, 2014, meaning that the OMB Uniform Guidance will apply to all new awards and to additional funding to existing awards made after December 26, 2014. In addition, the audit requirements of the OMB Uniform Guidance will apply to audits of non-federal entities beginning on or after December 26, 2014. Therefore, applicants should familiarize themselves with the OMB Uniform Guidance. Additional information on the substance of and transition to the OMB Uniform Guidance may be found at <https://cfo.gov/cofar/>.

Limitation of Liability: In no event will NOAA or the DOC 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. Recipients are subject to all Federal laws and agency policies, regulations, and procedures applicable to Federal financial assistance awards.

Universal Identifier: Applicants should be aware that they are required to provide a Dun and Bradstreet Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number during the application process. See the October 30, 2002, Federal Register notice (67 FR 66177) issued by the Office of Management and Budget for additional information. Organizations can receive a DUNS number at no cost by calling the dedicated toll-free DUNS Number request line at 1-866-705-5711 or online at <http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform>.

NEPA: NOAA must analyze the potential environmental impacts, as required by NEPA, for applicant projects or proposals. Detailed information on NOAA compliance with NEPA can be found at the following NOAA NEPA website: <http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/>, including NOAA Administrative Order 216-6 and the Council on Environmental Quality's NEPA implementing regulations.

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. Applicants may be asked to assist NOAA in the drafting of an EA, if NOAA determines one 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 project. Failure to do so shall be grounds for the denial of an application.

NOAA's Data Sharing Policy: Environmental data and information collected and/or created under NOAA grants/ cooperative agreements must be made visible, accessible, and independently understandable to general users, free of charge or at minimal cost, in a timely manner (typically no later than two years after the data are collected or created), except where limited by law, regulation, policy or security requirements. The Data/Information Sharing Plan (and any subsequent revisions or updates) must be made publicly available at the time of award and, thereafter, will be posted with the published data. Failing to share environmental data and

information in accordance with the submitted Data/Information Sharing Plan may lead to disallowed costs and be considered by NOAA when making future award decisions. More information about the Data Sharing Policy is available on NOAA's Environmental Data Management Committee website at: www.nosc.noaa.gov/EDMC/PD.DSP.php.

Unpaid or delinquent tax liability: In accordance with current federal appropriations law, NOAA will provide a successful corporate applicant a form to be completed by its authorized representatives certifying that the corporation has no federally-assessed unpaid or delinquent tax liability or recent felony criminal convictions under any federal law.

C. Reporting

Grant recipients will be required to submit financial and performance (technical) reports. All financial reports (SF-425) shall be submitted electronically via NOAA Grants Online (<https://grantsonline.rdc.noaa.gov/flows/home/Login/LoginController.jspf>) to the NOAA Grants Management Division in accordance with the award conditions. Progress reports should be submitted via NOAA Grants Online to the Prescott Grant Program Officers in accordance with the award conditions. All progress reports will be submitted on a semi-annual schedule and must be submitted no later than 30 days following the end of each six-month period from the start date of the award. The comprehensive final report is due 90 days after the award expiration. Additional reporting on project details may be required at the request of the Program Office. Grant recipients must submit any publications printed with award funds (*e.g.*, manuals, surveys, etc.) to the NMFS Federal Program Officer for dissemination to the public. Publications should be submitted either as three hard copies or in an electronic version.

Based on the location of the projected work, NMFS Regional Stranding Coordinators or MMHSRP staff will serve as Technical Monitors to advise the Program Officer. For projects taking place in more than one region, the Technical Monitor will be MMHSRP Headquarters staff.

The Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006 includes a requirement for awardees of applicable Federal grants to report information about first-tier sub-awards and executive compensation under Federal assistance awards issued in FY 2011 or later. All awardees of applicable grants and cooperative agreements are required to report to the Federal Sub-award Reporting System (FSRS) available at www.FSRS.gov on all sub-awards over \$25,000.

VII. Agency Contacts

The points of contact are: Michelle Ordone and Jaclyn Taylor, Prescott Grant Program, NOAA/NMFS/Office of Protected Resources (F/PR), 1315 East-West Highway, Room 13620,

Silver Spring, MD 20910; Phone: (301) 427-8402; or e-mail at Michelle.Ordoneo@noaa.gov or Jaclyn.Taylor@noaa.gov.

VIII. Other Information

The following definitions apply to Category A funding priorities.

Diagnostic (dead animal) - A “diagnostic specimen” from a marine mammal carcass is a biological substance or other physical evidence, part, or sample (including blood and its components, bone, hair, tissue, and tissue fluids, etc.) that is obtained from a dead animal for the sole purpose of identifying, determining, or attempting to determine, the cause or manner of death, injury, or disease for that individual animal.

Diagnostic (live animal) - A “diagnostic specimen” from a live marine mammal is a biological substance or other physical evidence, part, or sample (including blood and its components, bone, hair, tissue, and tissue fluids, etc.) that is obtained during a medical examination for the sole purpose of identifying, determining, or attempting to determine the presence or absence of an illness, injury, or causative agent affecting the health of that individual animal for the purpose of determining a course of medical treatment or the development of a prognosis for survival of that individual animal.

Research specimen - A marine mammal “research specimen” is a biological substance or other physical evidence, part, or sample (including blood and its components, bone, hair, tissue, and tissue fluids, etc.) that is obtained in a manner consistent with a systematic sampling protocol, by collection, or transfer for comparison with other similar specimens to aid in a scientific research investigation to discover or revise facts or theories that may be related to, but not limited to, epidemiology, genetics, population health, life history, trends in health, etc. Residual diagnostic specimens may be used for research as described above and considered a “research specimen” only by facilities or individuals approved pursuant to 50 CFR 216.22 and/or 50 CFR 216.37.

Freedom of Information Act (FOIA): Department of Commerce regulations implementing FOIA are found at 15 C.F.R. part 4, Public Information. These regulations set forth rules for the Department regarding making requested materials, information, and records publicly available under the FOIA. Applications submitted in response to this FFO may be subject to requests for release under the Act. In the event that an application contains information or data that the applicant deems to be confidential commercial information which is exempt from disclosure under FOIA, that information should be identified, bracketed, and marked as Privileged, Confidential, Commercial or Financial Information. Based on these markings, the confidentiality of the contents of those pages will be protected to the extent permitted by law.