

FY 2016 Implementation of the U.S. Integrated Ocean Observing System (IOOS®) **Frequently Asked Questions**

Q. Is the statement “in the management and operation of the regional coastal ocean observing system” on page 5 in reference to the outreach and education subsystem alone or all five of the subsystems?

A. Applicants should address how they integrate all five of the listed sub-systems “in the management and operation of the regional coastal ocean observing system.”

Q. Can foreign organizations or individuals be included in proposals and receive NOAA funding if the proposal is selected?

A. Yes, foreign entities may be included in proposals and receive NOAA funding, however, they cannot be the primary recipient of the award.

Q. Topic Area 1 – pages 5 through 12 discuss sub-system elements. Pg. 18 under “work Plan” (d)(4) specifically calls out DMAC. Is this intended to emphasize DMAC or specifically require only DMAC in the work plan?

A. NOAA now requires a Data Management plan in all proposals submitted in response to a NOAA funding opportunity; the specific reference to DMAC in this sub-section is intended to highlight NOAA’s requirement. The IOOS Program’s intent is that proposals address all subsystem elements in their work plan. Please note, as stated in the FFO under this sub-section, “successful applicants will be required to submit a regional DMAC implementation plan covering (at minimum) the award period will be required of all successful awardees.”

Q. How should applicants approach shared geographies?

A. The IOOS Program does not identify a specific approach for how applicants propose work in geographies that overlap between two regions. The Federal Funding Opportunity does state that applicants:

- Should demonstrate in their proposals how they would successfully collaborate inter-regionally, intra-regionally and nationally, to include such activities as sharing data and information, coordinating on model development and application, etc;
- Are encouraged to partner with applicants when appropriate;
- Are encouraged to provide details about ongoing and planned inter-, intra-regional and national collaboration on observing activities; and
- Proposals should demonstrate the approach and benefits of integration and implementation at the geographic scale of the IOOS regions.

Q. Topic Area 1 – Are applicants required to use one of the \$1.5M, \$2.5M, or \$4M funding levels mentioned in the FFO as their per year funding request?

A. No, applicants may request funding at any level up to the per year limit of \$4M. The \$1.5M, \$2.5M, or \$4M funding levels are only guides to establish funding priorities within the proposal.

Q: Pg 16 of the FFO states that, “For those proposals that are requesting funding of \$1.5M a year or more, base level is to be set at \$1.5M annually, a subsequent level set at \$2.5M, and an annual cap of \$4M.” Should we request that our sub-awardees provide budget materials (SF424a, sow, budget, justification) at each of the three funding levels as well?

A: No, applicants do not need to submit budget forms or a scope of work at the three different levels. This holds true for both the primary PI and any sub-awards. Applicants need only provide the documents required in the FFO at the overall requested funding amount (capped at \$4M per year). The intent of identifying work activities at the different funding amounts is to have each applicant identify priority tasks at \$1.5M and at \$2.5M.

Q: If we make it clear about the priority tier (\$1.5, 2.5, 4m) for each project, do we have to rank within that tier also? I'm hoping we can just say tier 2 or tier 3 for our priorities projects.

A: No, you do not need to rank priorities within each tier.

Q: Do we have to provide a \$1.5M tier? Or can we start with \$2.5M?

A: The FFO states that applicants requesting over \$1.5M are "required to present their work plan and budget requests in priority order, indicating base capacity plus enhancements at increasing levels . . . Base level is to be set at \$1.5M." The intent of setting these tiers is to help establish general funding priorities at a number of potential funding ranges. These are not binding, nor will funding levels be restricted to them.

Q: We note that applicants to the FY16 IOOS FFO are encouraged to coordinate with Marine Biodiversity Observation Network (MBON) partners. Are the U.S. Marine Biodiversity Observation Network projects seen as part of an observing infrastructure that the IOOS Regional Associations should support and strive to integrate?

A: The language in the FFO encourages applicants to collaborate with partners, both regionally and nationally. It is left to each applicant to determine their priorities and how those priorities influence their proposal.

Collection of biological and biodiversity observations is one of the priorities for IOOS, as this data has always been considered a core component of the System. The MBON projects were established to integrate ocean and coastal condition data (including those collected via satellites) with in situ environmental and biological observations, to build partnerships among existing long-term biodiversity monitoring efforts, to explore innovative uses of new in situ

observations and genomic techniques, and to improve access to integrated biodiversity data. Thus, engagement with and leveraging of the MBON demonstration projects is consistent with this national priority, which has firm support from federal (NOAA, NASA, BOEM) and industry partners.

Q: There is no MBON project in my region – does it make sense to consider partnering with this activity?

A: MBON has a national reach – the projects are tasked with demonstrating how a national MBON could be developed across diverse systems and habitats, and they rely on partnerships that extend across the United States. The three existing pilot projects have created a broad network of federal and state agency, academic, NGO and industry partnerships that includes partners in organizations outside the geographic footprint of the projects.

Q: I want to make sure we complete the SF424-A correctly. The current SF 424-A(Rev. 7-97) in the application package is three pages and only has 4 rows on the first page (and 4 columns on the second), which would allow only 4 years of funding to be on the form, and it automatically generates the total. How do we include the 5th year of requested funding? The problem is that the form to use for the total budget is attached to the application and will now allow us to add additional pages. Should we just include one row and column with the first year of funding details and on the third page include Years 2-5 totals?

A: That would be a suitable approach. With SF424-A (Rev. 7-97)

- In Section B - Budget Categories, in column (1), add the funding amount for each cost category for year 1.
- In Section E - Budget Estimates of Federal Funds Needed for Balance of Project, columns (b) through (e) should show total funding request for years 2-5

Q: We would also appreciate guidance on requirements for the sub-award SF424-A forms as well since they are also five year budgets (but this question doesn't have the attached to the application issue)

For the sub-award SF424-A forms:

- Use two SF424-A forms with Section B columns (1) - (4) in the first form, corresponding to years 1-4. You can give columns 1-3 a heading, but for some reason, whatever you call column (3), will auto name (4).
- With the second SF-424A, in Section B column (1), title it "Years 1-4" and input the total amounts for each cost category from the first SF424A (this should be column 5 of the first form). Then title column (2) "Year 5" and input the Year 5 requests by cost category. Column (5) of Section B should then show the total amounts requested for the entire proposal for all cost categories.

Updated Aug. 27, 2015

Q: We have compiled the appendices for our proposal and since we have 14 sub-awardees our appendices will exceed the 50 page limit. We have over 20 PIs and key personnel which will be 40+ pages in resumes (2 pg limit) alone. Is it ok to exceed the 50 page limit?

A: No, applicants cannot exceed the 50 page limit for the appendices as set in the Funding Announcement.

Q: The scopes of work for each sub-awardee is on average is 2 pages each and we were just going to summarize them within the 15 page project description and not include them as an appendix. The scope of work for sub-awardees was not a requirement in the FFO (that we can see) so we were just going to provide the detailed budgets, budget narrative, support letters, and CVs for each sub-awardee. Is this ok?

A: This approach to the sub-award scopes of work is reasonable. Applicants should make sure that the reviewers know what work is being proposed so they can evaluate and score the proposal.

Q: One of our federal partners is unable to submit an SF424-A form for their part of the proposal due to their agency restrictions. What options are there to include their budget request in our proposal?

A: If a federal partner is unable to submit an SF424-A for their proposed work, that is not a problem. What they should submit to you, in lieu of the SF424-A, is a budget form or table that outlines how their funds will be spent. It is acceptable for you to attach this to your proposal. The main purpose of having sub-recipients submit budgets on the SF424-A form is to enable the proposal reviewers, and NOAA staff, to easily understand how all the funds in the proposal are being spent. This is facilitated by using a single, consistent form - the SF424-A.

Q: The FFO indicates in the Appendices section that "only material submitted as a single package will be reviewed." We have to submit the budget pieces separately through grants.gov [in order for the system to accept it as a complete application package], so do you want the budget again in the appendices of the project narrative so that it is all in a "single package"?

A: Grants.gov will not accept your application unless the mandatory documents and/or required fields, have a file uploaded, so if you want to leave your appendix in tact as a single file, that's fine but , you will still need to upload a document to mandatory budgets. For instance, you can upload a one pager that says, "mandatory budget narrative is in the appendix".