

**Frequently Asked Questions**  
**FY2023 National Competitive HAB Programs: PCMHAB & MERHAB**  
**Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)**  
**NOAA-NOS-NCCOS-2023-2007530**

*The following questions were received by emails to the Program Managers and via chat during the October 12, 2022 webinar on the NCCOS National Competitive Harmful Algal Bloom (HAB) Programs FY 2023 Funding Opportunity for Prevention Control and Mitigation of Harmful Algal Bloom (PCMHAB) and Monitoring and Event Response for Harmful Algal Blooms (MERHAB) programs. Some questions have been edited for clarity.*

*If you have questions that are not answered here, please contact Marc Suddleson ([marc.suddleson@noaa.gov](mailto:marc.suddleson@noaa.gov)), Maggie Broadwater ([maggie.broadwater@noaa.gov](mailto:maggie.broadwater@noaa.gov)) or Felix Martinez ([felix.martinez@noaa.gov](mailto:felix.martinez@noaa.gov))*

Q: Where can I access information about this funding opportunity?

A: The Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) is posted at [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov), and can be directly accessed here: <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/view-opportunity.html?oppld=343841>. Also, see links under “New Funding Opportunities” on the [NCCOS Funding Opportunities page](#) to access the webinar recording, slides and this FAQ document.

Q.: Do your research programs support freshwater systems or just marine/coastal/estuary systems? Our research focus is exclusively freshwater in agriculturally influenced watersheds.

A: Our national HAB programs, including MERHAB, will not fund research on inland or freshwater HABs except in the Great Lakes and coastal waters, which, as defined in the Coastal Zone Management Act (16 U.S.C. 1453 (3)), contain a measurable quantity or percentage of seawater. Research on freshwater toxins that are transported into the coastal zone is, however, permitted. This information can be found in the FFO under "3. Examples of non-applicable research topics."

Q: How will a tabled proposal from the last MERHAB 2019 call be handled? Is ours still in the running, or should we formally resubmit if we want full consideration?

A: Please resubmit to the new NOFO. Our agency has determined that once a new national competition is announced we are not able to consider any previous tabled MERHAB proposals, even if they are still viable.

Q. My institution or my potential collaborator's institution is not fully functioning after Hurricane Ian? Can I have an extension on my letter of intent?

A. Do the best that you can to submit a letter of intent (LOI), even if you are not sure about your collaborators. If you do not submit a LOI by the deadline, you cannot submit a proposal. The LOIs are only evaluated for whether they fit the program priorities described in the NOFO, and some changes can be made after the LOIs are submitted. Submitting a LOI does not require an investigator to submit a full proposal.

Q. Do LOIs need to explicitly state whether they are responding to the PCMHAB or MERHAB program?

A. Yes. If you are unsure which program is appropriate, talk to the Program Managers.

Q. Would a proposal focusing on remote sensing-based water quality monitoring and HAB detection be eligible for MERHAB?

A. It would depend on the purpose of the proposed project. MERHAB is not primarily a method development program. Remote sensing could be included as part of a regional MERHAB project. These large scale, multi-disciplinary, multi-investigator research efforts should aim to identify and pilot enhanced monitoring that will be amenable for sustained funding. Contact Marc Suddleson to discuss the applicability of specific remote sensing or HAB detection efforts under this MERHAB competition.

Q. Will the responses to the LOI include any comments about how the proposals may be improved (e.g., any additional elements that the PI could include in the full proposal)?

A. Generally, yes. Some guidance may be provided. The purpose of the LOI is to ensure the proposed research is responsive to the program priorities described in the NOFO.

Q. Are regions predetermined? What constitutes a regional survey?

A. This is a national competition. We are no longer doing a "regional rotation" of the HAB programs. US coastal and Great Lakes "regions" are not defined, but a MERHAB regional proposal should have the characteristics described on p. 15-16 of the NOFO.

Q. Can multiple “accepted” LOIs be aggregated into one full proposal?

A. Yes, but the program managers cannot share information about LOIs with other potential applicants.

Q. Is there a suite of monitoring technologies expected for MERHAB proposals?

A. No. Under MERHAB, we are looking for technologies proven for the detection of HABs and toxins.

Q. Is the development of HAB toxin detection methods appropriate for both MERHAB and PCMHAB?

A. Yes. MERHAB will fund method development when it is needed to improve or test an existing method for use in monitoring HAB cells or toxins or environmental conditions that foster HABs. PCMHAB will fund novel method development and efforts to make existing technologies more widely available. Note that the FY23 PCMHAB competition is specific to methods to detect HAB toxins in seafood (molluscan shellfish, fish, and fishery products as referenced in the PCMHAB program priorities (NOFO, p. 11-12). Topics appropriate for proposals submitted to the National Competitive HAB Programs (ECOHAB, MERHAB and PCMHAB) are described in a Federal Register Notice issued April 5, 2009.

Q. What are examples of non-applicable research topics? What should not be submitted as part of a LOI or proposal?

A. Examples of non-applicable research topics are provided on p. 17-18 of the NOFO.

Q. Can MERHAB projects include some lab experiments to inform or improve monitoring efforts?

A. Yes.

Q. Regarding laboratory toxin bioassays for PCMHAB, should proposals focus on developing or advancing “rapid” methods only?

A. No. The PCMHAB program priorities include (1) laboratory assays and analytical methods (e.g., LC-MS/MS) appropriate for seafood regulatory applications and (2) technologies that advance the detection of HAB toxins in seafood in remote or field settings. Please contact Maggie Broadwater to discuss whether a specific application is appropriate for this competition.

Q. Using LC-MS/MS as an example. If you are improving a method for regulatory use, would that be more appropriate for PCMHAB or MERHAB?

A. MERHAB will fund method development when it is needed to improve or test an existing method for use in monitoring HAB cells or toxins or environmental conditions that foster HABs. PCMHAB will fund novel method development and efforts to make existing technologies more widely available. Note that the FY23 PCMHAB competition is specific to methods to detect HAB toxins in seafood (molluscan shellfish, fish, and fishery products as referenced in the PCMHAB program priorities; NOFO, p. 11-12). Topics appropriate for proposals submitted to the National Competitive HAB Programs (ECOHAB, MERHAB and PCMHAB) are described in a Federal Register Notice issued April 5, 2009.

Q. Is there a minimum proposal size? Would \$50,000 per year qualify?

A. While there is not a set minimum proposal budget, specific guidelines for approximate budget requests include \$125,000 to \$250,000 per year per proposal. PCMHAB may reject any proposals submitted with an annual budget that is greater than \$250,000 for any year.

Q. Would developing regional capacity for monitoring, with the view of making it a sustained monitoring network, fall under the non-applicable set of topics?

A. No. We do not aim to support existing regional monitoring, but we do want to build regional monitoring capacity. Within a regional MERHAB project, there should be an effort to identify and secure sustainable funding beyond the lifetime of the project.