Quick Reference Guide for NCCOS Competitive Research Program Applications

The information provided below is intended to supplement, not replace, the instructions provided in Federal grant application forms and the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO). This information is intended to assist applicants in completing applications submitted to the NCCOS Competitive Research Program. Please read the full NOFO carefully and review the associated websites for complete instructions and helpful information. Contact your institution's sponsored office representative, the NCCOS Program Manager or Grants Administrator listed in the NOFO with additional questions. For more information, see https://coastalscience.noaa.gov/about/funding-opportunities/

Preparing to Apply

Eligible Applicants

For most competitions, eligible applicants for Federal financial assistance are institutions of higher education, other non-profits, state, local, tribal government entities, U.S. Territories, and for-profit organizations. Federal agencies that possess the statutory authority to receive transfers of funds are eligible to submit applications for intra- or inter-agency funds transfers through most competitions.

Letter of Intent (LOI) – *if required*

The purpose of the LOI process is to provide information to potential applicants on the relevance of their proposed project and the likelihood of it being competitive in advance of preparing a full application. Full applications will be encouraged only for LOIs deemed relevant; however, the final decision to submit a full proposal is made by the investigator.

The LOI should provide a concise description of the proposed work and its relevance to program priorities. The LOI should be no more than two pages in length, single spaced in 12-point font with 1-inch margins and must be submitted by e-mail to nccos.grant.awards@noaa.gov.

Program Managers will review each LOI to determine whether the proposed activities address the Program Objectives and Program Priorities described in the NOFO. Letters or emails to encourage or discourage a full application will be sent out approximately two weeks after the LOI due date. Any full proposals submitted without a prior timely LOI submission will not be considered.

Required Registrations

Applicants must complete and maintain three registrations to be eligible to apply for or receive an award. These registrations are SAM.gov, Grants.gov, and eRA Commons. All registrations must be completed prior to the application being submitted. The complete registration process for all three systems can take 4 to 6 weeks, so applicants should begin this activity as soon as possible.

SAM.gov

To enable the use of a universal identifier and to enhance the quality of information available to the public as required by the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act, 31 U.S.C. 6101, any proposal awarded in response to NOFO Announcements will be required to use the System for Award Management (SAM), which may be accessed online at https://www.sam.gov

Applicants and recipients are required to maintain an active SAM registration with current information at all times during which they have an active Federal award or an application or plan under consideration by a Federal awarding agency. The Federal awarding agency may not make a Federal award to an applicant until the applicant has complied with all applicable unique entity identifier (UEI) and SAM requirements; if an applicant has not fully complied with the requirements by the time the Federal awarding agency is ready to make a Federal award, the Federal awarding agency may determine that the applicant is not qualified to receive a Federal award and use that determination as a basis for making a Federal award to another applicant. Allow a minimum of five days to complete the SAM registration.

eRA Commons

Applicants must also register with eRA Commons using the UEI obtained from SAM.gov. The applicant's organization must be registered by someone with signature authority to legally bind the organization in grants administration matters. Only authorized organization officials are qualified to be a signing official (SO) for their organization. If your organization is already registered with eRA Commons because you've applied for a federal grant that currently uses eRA systems, you do not need to register again.

Registering with eRA Commons can take up to four weeks to process. Applicants are encouraged to register with eRA Commons as soon as possible to avoid any delays. Please see the eRA Commons Registration Webinar recording for more information and a registration demonstration. eRA Commons may be accessed online at https://public.era.nih.gov/commonsplus.

Grants.gov

Applicants must register with Grants.gov before any application materials can be submitted. To use Grants.gov, applicants must be registered in SAM.

Elements of the Application

Sample Application Package

A sample application package and other guidance can be found under "Application Forms" located on the NCCOS website at: https://coastalscience.noaa.gov/about/funding-opportunities/application-forms/.

Required Elements

Each application must substantially comply with the following elements to be forwarded for merit review. The Summary Title Page, Abstract, Project Description, References, Biographical Sketch, and Budget Narrative must be single spaced in 12-point font with one- inch margins. The Collaborators List must be an Excel spreadsheet.

1. SF-424
2. Summary Title Page
3. Abstract/Project Summary
4. Project Description
5. References
6. Milestone Chart
7. Biographical Sketch (for each Principal Investigator [PI] and co-PI)
8. Current and Pending Support (for each PI and co-PI)
9. Permits (if none, say so)
10. SF-424A (One for the lead institution and each subaward/subcontract)
11. Budget Narrative (One for the lead institution and each subaward/subcontract).
12. CD-511
13. SF-424B
14. Alphabetized Collaborator List (One Excel spreadsheet for all PIs emailed to nccos.grant.awards@noaa.gov)

Additional Documentation (if applicable)

1. Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (for each institution requesting funding).
2. Signed Approval from subaward/subcontractor institutions.
3. Disclosure of Lobbying Activities Form (SF-LLL).
4. A list of potential reviewers.
5. Letters from unfunded collaborators, verifying their contribution to the project.

Grants.gov Submission

An application should be submitted electronically through Grants.gov (http://www.grants.gov). **After the application is validated by Grants.gov, please send an email to nccos.grant.awards@noaa.gov to notify us of your submission.** If use of Grants.gov is not feasible, contact the NCCOS Grants Administrator at nccos.grant.awards@noaa.gov. If you experience submission problems, send an email to support@grants.gov and call the Grants.gov help desk (800-518-4726).

The NCCOS/CRP Program Manager for each announcement will use programmatic discretion in accepting applications due to documented electronic submission problems. If more than one submission of an application is performed, the last application submitted before the due date and time will be the official version. It may take two days until the applicant is notified as to whether NOAA received the application, so allow sufficient time to ensure applications are submitted before the closing date.

Submission Confirmation

After electronic submission of the proposal through Grants.gov, the person submitting the proposal will receive up to three email messages from Grants.gov updating them on the progress of their proposal. In the first 24 to 48 hours after submission, the first email will confirm receipt of the proposal by the Grants.gov system, and the second will indicate that the proposal has either been successfully validated by the system before transmission to the grantor agency or has been rejected because of errors. Only validated proposals are sent to NOAA for review. After the proposal has been validated, this same person will receive a third email, generally within two days, when the proposal has been received and downloaded by NOAA.

Application Review

Once NOAA has received a full application, an initial administrative review is conducted to determine compliance with requirements and completeness of the application. Ineligible, incomplete, and/or non-responsive applications may be eliminated from further review. Applicants that did not previously submit a timely LOI (if required) will not be considered. NOAA, in its sole discretion, may continue the review process for applications with non-substantive issues that can easily be rectified or cured. All applications that pass this initial review will be evaluated and scored individually by independent peer mail review and/or by independent peer panel review.

Application Checklist

Required Registrations

- ☐ Sam.gov
- ☐ eRA Commons
- ☐ Grants.gov

Letter of Intent *(If required)*

The LOI should be no more than two pages in length, single spaced in 12-point font with 1-inch margins and should include in order the components listed below.

- ☐ Tentative project title.
- ☐ Name, phone number, email address, and institution of all PIs and specification of which individual is the Lead PI.
- ☐ Approximate cost of the project.
- ☐ Statement of the problem and its management relevance.
- ☐ Brief summary of work to be completed, methodology to be used and the plan for transitioning results to management application.

Full Application

Each application must substantially comply with the following elements to be forwarded for merit review.

- ☐ SF-424
- ☐ Summary Title Page
- ☐ Abstract/Project Summary
- ☐ Project Description
  - ○ Proposed Research
  - ○ Application to Management
  - ○ Data Management Plan
- ☐ References
- ☐ Milestone Chart
- ☐ Biographical Sketch (for each PI and co-PI)
- ☐ Current and Pending Support (for each PI and co-PI)
- ☐ Permits (if none, say so)
- ☐ SF-424A (One for the lead institution and each subaward/subcontract)
- ☐ Budget Narrative (One for the lead institution and each subaward/ subcontract).
- ☐ CD-511
- ☐ SF-424B
- ☐ Alphabetized Collaborator List (One Excel spreadsheet for all PIs emailed to nccos.grant.awards@noaa.gov)

Additional Information & Resources

NCCOS Competitive Research Program: https://coastalscience.noaa.gov/crp/
NCCOS Funding Opportunities: https://coastalscience.noaa.gov/about/funding-opportunities/
Application Forms: https://coastalscience.noaa.gov/about/funding-opportunities/application-forms/
Data Management Plan: https://coastalscience.noaa.gov/about/funding-opportunities/data-management-plan
Budget Requirements & Instructions: https://coastalscience.noaa.gov/about/funding-opportunities/requirements/

"Dos" and "Don'ts" for Writing Successful Grant Applications

General Advice

Do:

- Register for SAM.gov, eRA Commons, and Grants.gov.
- Read the funding announcement carefully for: program priorities, application format, budget limits, duration, and due dates.
- Review the associated website for detailed instructions and helpful information.
- Pay attention to evaluation criteria.
- Address comments from the letter of intent *(if required).*
- Include adequate description of personnel qualifications and organizational capacity to do the proposed work.
- Use a budget template or model (See NOAA Grants Management Division Budget Narrative Guidance).
- Contact the Program Manager or Grants Administrator listed in the NOFO if you have questions.

Don't:

- Wait until the due date to submit your application (we recommend starting at least two weeks before the posted deadline).
- Wait to identify key people/institutions and their roles.
- Wait to contact your own institution's sponsored program office.
- Wait to communicate with the Program Manager regarding your project if you have questions after reading the announcement.
- Submit an application written for another funding opportunity without revising to NCCOS NOFO.
- Assume the reviewers already know the PI's qualifications.
- Apply for the exact full amount allowed unless your project needs it (i.e., don't add extraneous equipment, supplies, or activities to "pad" your budget).
- Be afraid to contact the Program Manager or Grants Administrator listed in the NOFO for advice.

The Project Description

Do:

- Organize your application logically.
- Demonstrate the need for your project and why YOUR approach is appropriate.
- Relate your project to NOAA's mission and the program priorities.
- Discuss how the results of the project will be shared (i.e., outreach or dissemination plan).
- Be specific in describing your project activities.
- Design measurable objectives that relate to the funding announcement.
- Have someone not involved in the project proofread your application for clarity and proper grammar.

Don't:

- Ignore significant requirements of the funding announcement.
- Forget to document and leverage your past successes.
- Ignore the application to management section of the NOFO.
- Include web page URLs that don't work.
- Use undefined acronyms.
- Waste space on poor images or try to save space by using bullets.