Note: *These questions and answers from the full proposal webinar have been edited for clarity and conciseness.*

QUESTION: Regarding who makes the management decision, is it fine to list our agency, or a specific division within the agency, rather than individuals, since decisions are typically made by a group/team and then run up the chain for approval?

ANSWER: Yes, you can choose to identify a research management entity and have your resource management letter of support come from that entity. When it comes to your project team, you will need to identify at least one person who is part of the decision process and then make a strong case for them as a resource manager by describing their role in the decision process and how they are the right person to make sure future research findings and products inform the decision.

QUESTION: What professional background will the review panel have? Will they be experts in planning (e.g. social scientists) or natural scientists?

ANSWER: It will be a mix, but given the focus of this funding opportunity on planning, we will look for experts in the planning and application of research rather than experts in specific scientific disciplines.

QUESTION: What if there will be multiple decisions made on a regular basis (e.g., annually), rather than a single management decision?

ANSWER: We recognize that there are some decisions that happen in stages, so describe those stages and the framework or decision making process around those stages and where you think additional research could fit into addressing specific aspects of those decisions.

I think it's important when you are working with multiple decisions that you don't come across at too high of a level where review panelists might not fully appreciate all of the decisions you're working on and think your full proposal is either ambiguous or vague. Our recommendation for projects that are proposing to inform multiple decisions isto pick at least one and walk through it in some detail with some level of specificity, to give the panel a good sense that your project is grounded. Then you could speak to other decisions that your research might eventually inform at a higher level.

If you have a decision that impacts multiple resources you may want to take a similar approach and focus on one particular natural resource as an example and then allude to the others.

QUESTION: Can you include more than one letter of support from a resource manager, if more than one person will be involved?

ANSWER: Yes, but at a minimum you have to provide one letter of support from a resource manager that includes all of the elements that are requested.

QUESTION: Who/what entity is considered the resource manager?
ANSWER: We are using a broad definition of both natural resources and natural resource management (see below). When you identify the natural resource manager(s) on your team, you need to explain what is the resource they manage and how they're involved in the decision making process.

Natural resources are abiotic (e.g., sand, water), biotic (e.g., animals, plants), or energy (e.g., solar and wind) components of the Earth that are useful to humans and not built by humans. Natural resource management is any management decision regarding the human use of or interaction with a natural resource in the Gulf of Mexico.

Natural resource management can take many forms including wildlife and fishery management; local, state, tribal, and federal rulemaking and permitting; conservation practices by public or private landowners; place-based management; and restoration planning.

QUESTION: The guidance for the title page in the funding announcement asks that we include details for the lead principal investigator and natural resource manager (singular for both). If we have multiple co-principal investigators and natural resource managers on the team, should we only list the leads for each 'sector' on the title page? Or should we list the entire team on that page?
ANSWER: Our goal was to make sure that applicants understood the importance of having a natural resource manager on their project team, and so by asking them to list that person on the title page, we were trying to ensure they didn't miss that particularly important requirement. As long as you have a natural resource manager listed, if you want to list other names on the title page, you are welcome to or you can include those other names later in the full proposal.

QUESTION: Should the research and development plan and the application plan be integrated into the proposal?
ANSWER: In your full proposal, you will be describing your approach for developing the research and development plan and the application plan. You should NOT be giving us a research and development plan and application plan as part of your full proposal.

QUESTION: Would you please elaborate on 'ownership of plans' by team members (full proposal element 4(e): Describing how the team intends to use the plans generated by this project in the future and how ownership of those plans would be shared among the project team)?
ANSWER: You need to make a case to the panel reviewers that your project team is going to all have a stake in the development and use of the plans. For example, it is not going to be just the researcher or resource manager who is going to own the plan and execute it on their own. If

there is going to be strict ownership of the plans by only part of the project team, you need to explain why that is not a detriment to the research being conducted and applied in the future.

QUESTION: Can you clarify expectations for the data management plan? The first item is 'descriptions of the types of environmental data and information expected to be created during the course of the project' which does not apply in this competition.
ANSWER: The data management plan requirement is a requirement for every NOAA funding opportunity and you are right that this requirement does not fit this competition, which prohibits the collection of new environmental observations. Since you won't be collecting new environmental information, your data management plans may be short. If you are going to be doing some data synthesis using existing information or you're going to be doing some modeling, it is possible that the outputs of those efforts might need to be archived, and that process would need to be described in your data management plan. Similarly, we do not have any prohibition on the collection of social, behavioral, or economic data, so if you are collecting new information in those areas, you may need to archive them, and your data management plan would describe those steps. The data management plan is not included in our evaluation criteria.

QUESTION: How many people from our project team can join the direct call with someone from the Science Program?
ANSWER: The lead for the project is welcome to invite as many people as they would like to the call. All of the calendar invitations are open for the attendees to modify, so please feel free to add people to those invitations.

QUESTION: Are there specific points that need to be addressed in the letter of support from the resource manager?
ANSWER: The letter needs to come from the manager or natural resource management body responsible for the identified resource management decision, and it should describe their role as an equal partner of the project and how they intend to work as part of the project team.

QUESTION: What should be covered when listing current and pending support (full proposal element 10)? The element states, "please discuss the percentage of time investigators and collaborators have devoted to other federal or non-federal projects, as compared to the time that will be devoted to the proposed work solicited under this notice." Does this mean other grants and not other job responsibilities?
ANSWER: You should list current and pending grant support for each member of your project team. This information will be used by the review panel to assess whether members of your project team have the time and bandwidth to fully participate in the way that you've described their roles in your full proposal.

QUESTION: Regarding new environmental data collection, what if we plan to use a living dataset that will be added to as part of another program independent of this project?
ANSWER: If the environmental data collection is not supported by funding from the Science Program, then it is allowed. For example, if another project is publicly posting remote sensing data, you are welcome to use it.

QUESTION: If we plan to include natural resources that are plants, animals, and energy, do we need to have a manager for each of those categories?
ANSWER: You don't have to have a natural resource manager for every resource that's impacted by the decision around which you are planning research, but you do have to have at least one. Generally, our advice has been to focus on one resource. If your proposal is too general, you will suffer at the full proposal review stage for lack of specificity.

QUESTION: The full proposal is required to have an alphabetized list of collaborators, advisors, and advisees in spreadsheet format. The directions state that "unfunded participants in the proposed study should also be included on the list, but not their collaborators." What does this mean?
ANSWER: This alphabetized list is what we use to make sure the people we select as mail reviewers or panelists do not have a conflict of interest. If someone on your project team or a collaborator is not getting funding, they are an unfunded participant. We would like you to list them along with all the members of your project team on the alphabetized list. However, you do not need to include the people with whom those unfunded participants may have a conflict, such as their collaborators, advisors, or advisees.

QUESTION: Evaluation criteria (b) Technical & Scientific Merit: ...evaluate whether methods are appropriate. Does this mean methods for developing research questions and methods for determining the methods to address those questions?
ANSWER: Yes, under technical and scientific merit, the panel will be looking at whether or not your methods for planning are appropriate.

QUESTION: If the natural resource manager involved in the decision is one of the investigators, I assume the letter of support does not come from them. Rather it would need to come from someone who is not an investigator, but who will be involved in the decision?
ANSWER: No, the letter of support can come from the resource manager who is a member of your project team. It can also come from the management entity responsible for the decision. Rather than have you integrate this information into your project narrative, we thought it was important enough that it needed to stand on its own in a separate letter.

QUESTION: Who should provide biographical sketches?
ANSWER: Anyone who is listed as a member of the project team, including the resource manager, should provide a biographical sketch.

QUESTION: Would a proposal from another federal agency use grants.gov or is there a different way to submit their proposal?
ANSWER: We are urging all applicants to submit their proposals through grants.gov, but we realize that for federal agencies this may be complicated. We would invite folks from other federal agencies who are struggling with grants.gov to reach out to us directly to discuss the situation and possible solutions.

QUESTION: Is the uncertainty we should be addressing related to the natural resource management decision?
ANSWER: Yes, any time you make a decision there are some things that you're certain about and some things that you're less certain about. In your planning, you will focus on designing research that, if performed, would be expected to reduce this uncertainty.

QUESTION: Is there a difference in reducing uncertainty and managing uncertainty for the purpose of this proposal?
ANSWER: Generally speaking science supports decision making by reducing uncertainty, so whether you are planning to reduce or manage uncertainty, the key will be describing how the research you're going to do is going to inform the decision.