

2015 Sea Grant - NMFS “On Assignment” Exchange Program

1. Background

The Sea Grant - National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) “On Assignment” Exchange Program (Exchange Program) is intended to expand the partnership between NMFS and Sea Grant and improve the services each provides to stakeholders. The Exchange Program will support personnel exchanges between Sea Grant programs and a NMFS Science Center. The duration of each assignment can range from one to twelve months. Duties and locations should be proposed by the Applicant and approved by the Directors of the partnering Sea Grant program and partnering NMFS Science Center.

Up to \$100,000 will be available in 2015 to support NMFS staff selected to participate in the Exchange Program. Funding may be requested for travel support and project-related costs, not for salary and fringe benefits. Similar funding will be available for Sea Grant employees selected to participate in the Exchange Program through a separate selection process.

2. Program Goals

NMFS employees have an in-depth understanding of the science and policy behind living marine resources management decisions and can provide Sea Grant outreach professionals and stakeholders with additional insight into NMFS science, technological developments, products and policies. Sea Grant outreach professionals are embedded in and engaged with coastal communities and they understand the fishing communities’ needs and they can provide a robust stakeholder perspective to researchers at a NMFS Science Center.

NMFS participants are expected to work closely with experienced Sea Grant outreach professionals to promote and launch NMFS products and services to potential stakeholders. NMFS Applicants must identify at least one NMFS product or activity they have worked on that supports [Sea Grant’s goal](#) of “A safe, secure and sustainable supply of seafood to meet public demand.” Program participants should be expected to undertake activities that do one or more of the following:

- a. Increase the understanding of the dynamics of wild fish populations and the communities that depend on them among fishery management and fishermen;
- b. Increase the knowledge within the seafood industry about innovative technologies, approaches, and policies;
- c. Increase the knowledge among commercial and recreational fishermen about efficient and responsible fishing techniques;

- d. Share innovative marketing strategies within the commercial fishing industry;
- e. Share economically viable techniques and processes with the seafood processing industry to ensure the production and delivery of safe and healthy seafood.

3. Award Information

A. Funding Availability

The number of applicants selected will be a function of proposals submitted by selected applicants. The maximum amount that can be submitted by each applicant is \$25K.

B. Project/Award Period

The project start date must be between September 1, 2015 and May 1, 2016. The Award will provide travel and project-related support for between one and twelve months.

4. Application and Submission Information

A. Content and Form of Proposal

Applications must adhere to the provisions under "Required Elements" below. Failure to follow these requirements will result in applications being rejected without review.

B. Proposal Required Elements

The proposal itself should not exceed five (5) pages. References and figures do not count towards the five page limit. Format requirements for the project proposal are: 1) standard 8.5" x 11" page size; 2) 12-point, Times New Roman font for main text (10-point font may be used for references, footnotes, figure captions and text within figures); 3) 1" margins on all sides; 4) single spaced or greater line spacing.

Proposal must include the following elements:

1. Signed title page: The title page must identify the prospective Exchange Program Applicants, be signed by the NMFS Science Center Director and the Sea Grant Program Director, and provide complete contact information. The proposal title should include "Sea Grant - NMFS Exchange Program (full name of Applicant)" as a prefix. The total amount of funds being requested must be listed.
2. Project summary: The project summary should concisely describe the activity

being proposed and the impact that would result from its successful completion. A specific product or service should be highlighted.

a. Title: Use the exact title as it appears in the rest of the application.

b. Investigators: List name and affiliation of the prospective Exchange Program Applicant, the Sea Grant Program Director and the NMFS Science Center Director.

c. Funding request and budget justification for the Exchange.

d. Project period: The project start date must be between September 1, 2015 and May 1, 2016 and extend between one and twelve months.

3. Project proposal: The project proposal should describe the proposed Exchange Program Project and the general intended area of study. It must be written by the prospective Applicant and include the following elements:

a) A work plan that includes a brief summary of the work to be completed, a product or service expected as a result, outreach plans to transition the product or service to end users, and a timeline for the work;

b) Rationale for the proposed activity;

c) Who is the Applicant's collaborator(s) at Sea Grant;

d) What does the Applicant hopes to gain from the experience;

e) How will the NMFS Science Center benefit from the Applicant's participation?

f) Anticipated long-term benefit of participation in the Exchange Program.

4. Curriculum vitae of the Exchange Program Applicant(s) (2 page maximum).

5. A letter from the Sea Grant Program Director indicating relevance of the proposal and that office/lab space will be offered without charge.

6. Budget and budget justification: The Sea Grant Budget Form 90-4 (found at the following [link](#)) should be used to list the funding being requested. A separate Word file should be used to provide the justification.

C. Submission Dates and Times

Proposal for the Exchange Program should be sent to Jim.Berkson@noaa.gov no later than 5:00 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time (EDT) on May 27, 2015.

5. Application Review Information

A. Evaluation Criteria

All evaluation criteria have equal weights.

1. IMPORTANCE AND/OR RELEVANCE AND APPLICABILITY OF THE PROPOSED PROJECT TO THE MISSION GOALS (25%): This criterion is designed to assess whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and/or relevance to NOAA, federal, regional, state, or local activities (i.e., how does the proposed activity enhance NMFS and Sea Grant strategic focus areas and mission goals). For this competition, this includes how well the proposed activity addresses geographic, programmatic, or other restrictions placed on available funds.

2. TECHNICAL/SCIENTIFIC MERIT (20%): This is designed to assess whether the approach is technically sound, if the methods are appropriate, and whether there are clear project goals and objectives.

3. OVERALL QUALIFICATIONS OF APPLICANTS (20%): This is designed to assess whether the applicant possesses the necessary education, experience, training, and facilities to accomplish the project.

4. PROJECT COSTS (10%): The budget is evaluated to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time-frame.

5. OUTREACH (25%): This criterion is designed to assess whether the project provides a focused and effective outreach strategy regarding NMFS' mission to protect the Nation's natural resources, and Sea Grant's strategic focus areas.

B. Review and Selection Process

An initial administrative review is conducted to determine compliance with requirements and completeness of the application. Applications will be individually ranked in accordance with the above criteria and assigned weights by an independent review panel. Panel members will provide individual evaluations of each application. The selecting official shall award in the rank order unless the application is justified to be selected out of rank order based upon any of the selection factors provided below. The selecting official shall make final recommendations to the NMFS-Sea Grant Liaison who is authorized to obligate the funds and execute the cooperative agreement.

C. Selection Factors

The Selecting Official shall award in the rank order unless the proposal is justified to be selected out of rank order based on any 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. Whether this project duplicates other projects funded or considered for funding by NOAA or other Federal agencies.
 4. Program priorities and policy factors
 5. Applicant's prior award performance
 6. Partnerships and/or Participation of targeted groups
- D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

It is anticipated that successful applicants will be notified by July 17, 2015 and awards are expected to be made by September 30, 2015.

6. Reporting

Exchange Program participants will be expected to present a review of the project to appropriate NMFS and Sea Grant staff and leadership via webinar. At the conclusion of the exchange, all Participants in the Exchange Program will be required to do the following:

1. Participate in a meeting (can be via teleconference) in which all Participants provide feedback and lessons-learned from their experiences to guide future Applicants;
2. Provide a seminar that allows the Participant to share an overview of his/her experience and project outcomes with the broader NMFS and Sea Grant community.

7. Contacts

Contact Jim Berkson (Jim.Berkson@noaa.gov)