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LARGE PELAGICS RESEARCH CENTER
University of New Hampshire

EXTERNAL GRANT REVIEW PROCESS

Stage 1 – Pre-Proposal Review

1. The Large Pelagics Research Center will send out an annual request for proposals (RFP) and proposal guidance document that lists the priority research areas and the evaluation criteria.
2. Pre-proposals will be screened against the evaluation criteria by the Center Director and Program Manager. Pre-proposals that address priority research areas set forth in the RFP will be forwarded to the Advisory Board, along with a list of pre-proposals that did not meet program goals.
3. Pre-proposals will be reviewed by the Advisory Board, with discussion of each pre-proposal led by two of the Advisory Board members.
4. Once the reviews have been completed, the Advisory Board will convene to discuss its recommendations with the Center Director and Program Manager. The Program Manager will use these recommendations to seek full proposals.
5. The Center will invite applicants with eligible projects to submit full proposals. Guidance for full proposal submission will be included with the notification. Applicants with ineligible projects will be informed of the outcome of the review and reasons for rejection.

Pre-proposals will be judged by the Advisory Board on the following criteria

- **Relevance** - Does the proposed work address one of the priority research areas outlined in the RFP? Does the proposed work address an important scientific or management issue with respect to large pelagics? Will the potential results lead to better scientific knowledge and contribute information that could improve management strategies?
- **Budget** – Is the proposed budget realistic, reasonable and cost-effective for accomplishing the proposed tasks?

Stage 2 – External Mail Review

Full proposals from applicants will be mailed to individuals knowledgeable in the subject area of the proposed project for their review. Potential reviewers will first be contacted to make sure they are willing to review proposals. A minimum of three mail reviews will be used when ever possible for each proposal. Additional mail reviews for any proposal may be requested at the discretion of the Program Manager.

Full proposals will be judged based on the following weighting criteria:

A. Technical Merit (75%)

- **Scientific and Management Relevance (40%)**. Does the proposed work address one of the priority research areas outlined in the RFP? Does the proposed work address an important scientific or management issue with respect to large pelagics? Will the potential results lead to better scientific knowledge and contribute information that could improve management strategies?

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- **Technical Approach and Innovativeness (25%).** 1) technical feasibility of the proposed effort; 2) innovativeness of the method or application; 3) reasonableness of the hypotheses; 4) appropriateness and validity of the proposed methods; 5) degree to which the proposed timeline is realistic; 6) degree to which the proposal demonstrates an understanding of the current state of knowledge, and the total project requirements.

- **Transferability (10%).** 1) how well the principal investigators describe and identify how project results will be used to improve understanding and application by the large pelagics science and management communities.

B. Qualifications of Principal Investigator and Key Personnel (10%).

Experience and past performance of the principal investigator and key personnel, and their publication record.

C. Institutional Support and Capabilities (5%).

Extent of the applicant institution's support for and commitment to the proposed research and what facilities, equipment, and other resources are available to the principal investigator and key personnel from his/her institution for use in accomplishing the proposed work.

D. Budget and Cost-Effectiveness (10%).

Is the proposed budget realistic, reasonable and cost-effective for accomplishing the proposed tasks?

Reviewers will be asked to assign an overall rating to the proposal. The definitions for the rating categories are:

Excellent- Scientifically and professionally important and well justified; presents an opportunity for a major contribution to the advancement of knowledge and to the resolution of a problem of practical import: Support strongly recommended

Very good- Scientifically and professionally important and well justified; will make an important contribution to the advancement of knowledge and to the resolution of a problem of practical import: Support recommended

Good- Scientifically and professionally competent and justified; will make a contribution to the advancement of knowledge and to the resolution of a problem of practical value, however, proposal has deficiencies or is somewhat routine: Support if funds are available.

Fair- Scientifically and professionally satisfactory in part and only marginally justified; possibility for a contribution to the advancement of knowledge and to the resolution of a practical problem appears limited; routine in character; Reject support in present form

Poor-Scientifically and professionally unsatisfactory; poorly organized and justified; or sub-professional in character; not deserving of support: Reject support.

Stage 3 – Technical Panel Review

1. The Program Manager will arrange a technical panel review of the full proposals and their corresponding external reviews.
2. The panel review will include a discussion of all aspects of the proposals, including but not limited to technical, operational, logistical, budget, outreach, and scientific aspects. All discussions are to be in a closed meeting and absolutely confidential. The Program Manager will be present at the panel review meeting but will not express an opinion regarding the value of any application.

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3. The Program Manager will act as facilitator for the group, and will be present throughout to act as a resource to the panel. The Program Manager will answer questions posed by the participants, and will take notes on the discussion of each proposal for the purpose of producing a summary report.

4. At the review session, each proposal will receive a 10-15 minute evaluation. Technical panelists will be asked to lead the discussion on proposals for which they are the lead reviewer and to provide comments on proposals for which they are the second reviewer. Lead reviewers will be asked to submit a brief written summary and evaluation for each of their proposals. The written evaluation may be prepared prior to the panel; however, panelists may edit summaries and recommendations if needed. The technical panel will score proposals using the same categorical criteria used by mail reviewers. They will then be asked to make one of three recommendations: 1) highly recommended for funding; 2) fund if dollars are available*; or 3) not recommended for funding [*Recommendation #2 can also be further categorized as high, medium or low priority].

Stage 4 – Post-Review Procedures

1. The recommendations of the technical panel and external reviews will provide the Center Director and Program Manager with the information they need to make a final decision on which proposals to fund.
2. The final list of proposals to fund will be given to the Advisory Board for their review.
3. The Program Manager will notify applicants of the outcome of the review process.
4. The Program Manager will work with the Office of Sponsored Research at UNH to award subcontracts to principal investigators.
5. Mail reviewers will be asked not to discuss the proposals with anyone and board members will be asked to discuss proposals only during the board review meeting. All reviewers (mail and panel) will be asked to sign a no conflict of interest form and must return or destroy all proposals and reviews after the review process is complete.

Funding and Reporting Requirements

Upon award of a proposal, the Program Manager will oversee the distribution of funds from UNH to the award recipient's institution through the UNH Office of Sponsored Research. Award recipients will be required to submit a brief semi-annual progress report and more comprehensive final reports (or annual updates for multi-year awards) for inclusion in UNH reports provided to NOAA and for posting to the Center Web Site.

CONFIDENTIALITY OF PROPOSALS AND PEER REVIEWS

Large Pelagic Research Center proposals are considered "CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION" and Large Pelagic Research Center treats these proposals accordingly. In addition, the identities of reviewers are kept confidential. In accordance with this, reviewers hereby agree not to copy, quote, or otherwise use confidential material from any Large Pelagic Research Center proposal. Reviewers are also required to include a statement, if applicable, when they have a conflict of interest related to a proposal. Lastly, by participating in the review process, reviewers agree to destroy both electronic and hard copies of all Large Pelagic Research Center proposals after the process is complete.