National Estuarine Research Reserve System Science Collaborative

2018 Collaborative Science Catalyst Grants
Request for Proposals

October 31, 2017

About the NERRS Science Collaborative

The University of Michigan Water Center and partners are working with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to coordinate the National Estuarine Research Reserve System (NERRS) Science Collaborative. The Science Collaborative's primary goal is to support the co-development and application of relevant and usable knowledge to address critical coastal management issues identified by the NERRS in order to improve the long-term stewardship of the nation's estuaries.

The Science Collaborative works to achieve this goal through regular funding opportunities, project support and management, and an adaptive approach to program implementation that fosters ongoing learning and improvement. Consistent with the NERRS strategic plan, NOAA has identified the following focus areas for the Science Collaborative: climate change, water quality, habitat restoration, shoreline stabilization, ecosystem service valuation, and the application of data from the NERRS System-wide Monitoring Program (SWMP) and Sentinel Sites.

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Overview

The National Estuarine Research Reserve System (NERRS) Science Collaborative is soliciting proposals for one-year collaborative science catalyst grants. Catalyst grants support activities that advance collaborative science by facilitating the development of *new* collaborative science ideas; amplifying or enhancing *existing* collaborative research; or synthesizing NERRS System Wide Monitoring Program (SWMP) data for a regional or national application. All proposals must adopt an end user[1] driven approach and meet a reserve management need.[2] Applicants may draw on both the social sciences and physical/natural sciences to meet the goals of this request for proposals (RFP).

Background and Purpose

This call for proposals replaces the NERRS Science Collaborative Research/Integrated Assessment RFP which has been issued annually for the past three years (2015-2017). This change is due to the structure of the University of Michigan's five-year cooperative agreement with NOAA that only permits one-year projects at this stage of the parent grant.

This year's RFP is distinct from prior RFPs in that it solicits a broader range of proposals for projects that maximize the return on investment for collaborative science within a one-year timeline. While collaborative research and integrated assessment approaches are eligible, this RFP allows for other kinds of projects as well, including SWMP syntheses. As with prior RFPs, successful proposals must include end user and reserve engagement.

Funding Amount

The Science Collaborative is interested in funding a variety of catalyst projects with awards ranging between $75,000 and $250,000. Budgets of $250,000 are expected to be most appropriate for multi-reserve projects.

Eligibility for Funding

Proposals must address one or more reserve management need(s) that are consistent with Science Collaborative focus areas and have the full support of the relevant reserve manager(s), as demonstrated by a written assessment from the reserve manager(s).

This funding opportunity is open to applicants from United States (U.S.) academic, non-government organizations, and non-federal public sectors working in partnership with NERRS staff.

[1] End user is defined as a person or group in a position to apply the information or tools being produced, evaluated, or transferred through a Science Collaborative project in a way that is of direct consequence to the ecological, social, or economic integrity of a reserve(s) and/or surrounding watershed(s). Examples of end users include, but are not limited to, reserve staff, and public, private, or non-governmental decision/policy makers, including landowners, resource managers, land use planners, and educators at all levels.
[2] This document is a compilation of the current management needs within NOAA's reserve system. Management needs are submitted by reserve managers to NOAA and are updated on an annual basis.

Each proposal must designate a single fiscal agent. The person in this role must be a project team member from the reserve, agency, institution, or non-profit group who will receive the award, if granted. Researchers from institutions outside the U.S. cannot serve as the fiscal agent, but can be included in the project and may be funded by sub-awards through an eligible U.S. entity. Federal employees and agencies are not eligible to receive funding from the Science Collaborative, but may participate as unfunded project team members.

Proposal Submission Process

Interested parties should review the application materials and follow directions to submit both a letter of intent (LOI) and proposal on the timeline outlined below. The LOI is **mandatory** and will be used to inform reviewer recruitment, not the review process. LOIs are one page in length and outline the project lead, planned team members, reserves expected to participate in the project, a draft project title, and a one-paragraph description of the project. Proposals submitted without an LOI will not be considered. Applicants should not expect a response or comments to the LOI other than confirmation of receipt.

Key Dates

Date	Activity
November 29, 2017 at 12pm EST	Webinar: RFP Question & Answer
December 8, 2017 by 11:59pm EST	Mandatory letter of intent due
January 18, 2018 at 1pm EST	Webinar: RFP Question & Answer
February 21, 2018 by 11:59pm EST	Proposals due
February 28, 2018	Manager proposal assessments due
May 2018	Funding notifications
September 1, 2018	Anticipated project start date

Supporting Documents

All RFP supporting documents can be found at
http://graham.umich.edu/water/nerrs/funding/catalyst

About Collaborative Science Catalyst Grants

RFP Objectives

Collaborative science catalyst proposals must address at least one reserve management need and provide an actionable plan to achieve ***at least one of*** the following objectives:

- Objective 1: Facilitate the development of *new* collaborative science ideas;
- Objective 2: Amplify or enhance *existing* collaborative research efforts; or
- Objective 3: Conduct NERRS System Wide Monitoring Program (SWMP) syntheses for a regional and/or national application.

Proposals ***must*** include at least ***one, or a combination of***, the following core activities:

- Collecting and analyzing new data (including social science data);
- Compiling and analyzing existing data; and/or
- Developing new or refining existing tools or products to maximize utility.

To achieve objective 1, facilitating *new* collaborative science ideas, proposals must engage end users to develop a clear and actionable plan for pursuing future funding opportunities, via the Science Collaborative or other opportunities. Example activities include, but are not limited to the following:

- Collection of preliminary data and analysis to refine and focus a research question;
- A combination of data collection, and partnership building and engagement activities to understand end user needs and identify a collective set of research priorities; and
- Synthesis of existing data to identify gaps or trends that can be filled or elucidated by a targeted future funding opportunity.

To achieve objective 2, amplifying or enhancing *existing* collaborative research efforts, proposals must advance prior research accomplishments to the next level in terms of meeting end user needs. This new work must be distinct from prior or existing collaborative research projects. Funds cannot be used to support ongoing work already funded by the Science Collaborative or another funding source. Example activities include, but are not limited to the following:

- Additional data collection and analysis to answer a critical follow up question from an end user;
- Assessment of policy or management options based on a synthesis of existing science (integrated assessment);
- Development of a new decision support tool to make existing products accessible to a broader and highly relevant end user group; and

- Evaluation of the effectiveness of an existing product and refinement to maximize use by current and/or additional end users.

To achieve objective 3, conducting SWMP syntheses for a regional and/or national application, proposals must utilize existing SWMP long-term monitoring data, and potentially other relevant coastal observing data, to address priority coastal management issues. SWMP syntheses may be conducted at the local, regional, or national scales. However, local and regional syntheses must be transferrable to other regional or national applications. Example activities include, but are not limited to the following:

- Cross-reserve data comparisons to make SWMP relevant to regional or national coastal management questions;
- Identification of ecologically relevant patterns, extreme events, or trends in the data and potential impacts of these trends on a coastal management issue; and
- Development of new analytical tools that can facilitate the use of SWMP data in the future.

If electing to develop an integrated assessment, please see the [Integrated Assessment Primer] for more information about this type of project. Please note that the Integrated Assessment approach may need to be modified to fit into a one-year time frame.

Outputs

Project outputs are specific products that are developed during or upon project completion. Outputs must address end user and reserve management needs. Examples of outputs include, but are not limited to the following:

- A detailed and actionable strategy for pursuing future funding opportunities, including those offered by the Science Collaborative or another source;
- A refined collaborative research question informed by preliminary data and analysis and end user engagement;
- A new dataset or synthesis of existing data to meet an end user need;
- An analysis of policy options to address an issue, such as those generated through an [Integrated Assessment]; and
- Specific product(s) or tools that translate and/or apply information in a way that addresses the identified end user's needs, e.g., decision support tools, implementation guides, management recommendations, training curricula, and technical or non-technical reports.

Outcomes

Project outcomes are the expected impacts of the project process and outputs. Examples of project outcomes include, but are not limited to the following:

- Stronger collaborative relationship among reserve staff, partners, and end users;
- A team that is well-positioned to pursue future collaborative research funding opportunities;
- New or refined decision-making and/or management processes; and
- SWMP data integrated into products used to address regional or national management needs.

Required Elements

In order for proposals to achieve the purpose of this RFP, they must include three elements, all of which are critical to collaborative science with the NERR System. All proposals must:

1) Clearly identify, engage, and be responsive to the interests and needs of end users[3];
2) Directly involve at least one reserve, address one or more reserve management need(s), and have the full support of the relevant reserve manager(s); and
3) Include a data sharing plan and account for the costs and time associated with implementing the plan in the proposal budget and timeline.

1) Collaboration and End User Integration

Proposals must clearly identify, engage, and be responsive to the interests and needs of end users—the intended users of the project outputs. A collaborative process that engages end users in project development and implementation is important to producing usable outputs. The one-year time frame of catalyst grants will require an efficient, targeted process for engaging end users. For example, close collaboration with a single, highly relevant end user group may be sufficient to develop a strong proposal and, in some cases, to complete a successful catalyst grant project. The goals and type of work proposed should dictate the breadth and depth of engagement planned during the project.

To this end, all proposals must:

- Identify the primary end user(s) and their needs;
- Describe how the end user's input helped to shape the project;

[3] End user is defined as a person or group in a position to apply the information or tools being produced, evaluated, or transferred through a Science Collaborative project in a way that is of direct consequence to the ecological, social, or economic integrity of a reserve(s) and/or surrounding watershed(s). Examples of end users include, but are not limited to, reserve staff, and public, private, or non-governmental decision/policy makers, including landowners, resource managers, land use planners, and educators at all levels.

- Describe a clear process that will accommodate iterative engagement with the end user(s), including mechanisms for being adaptive and responsive to their input;
- Provide evidence of the end user's interest in the project and intent to be involved in it, e.g., a letter of support. (All proposals must include at least one letter of support from an end user. End users should describe how they have been engaged with the development of the proposal and how they anticipate using project outputs. Reviewers will be looking for this information to confirm end user engagement.);
- Identify an individual who will be responsible for leading the collaborative process—the collaborative lead[4]—and describe her/his relevant experience and skills; and
- Demonstrate that sufficient time and resources are dedicated to support a collaborative, end user engagement process throughout the project, e.g., budget and timeline.

The Science Collaborative has resources online that can help you design your end user engagement process, including key considerations for engaging end users effectively and efficiently, which is particularly important for one-year projects.[5]

2) Reserve Engagement

All proposals must address one or more reserve management needs and have the full support of the relevant reserve manager(s).

Relevant reserve managers and staff must be consulted and engaged in the development of the proposal. ***It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that the reserve manager and other appropriate staff are engaged sufficiently in project development.***

For each proposal that engages their reserve, managers will submit a written assessment of how well the proposal meets the following criteria:

1) The proposal addresses a reserve management need for your reserve.
2) The proposing team engaged reserve staff sufficiently during the proposal development process.

[4] The collaborative lead is someone who is responsible for the full engagement of end users by helping to develop and manage a process that ensures iteration with them, including mechanisms for being adaptive and responsive to their input. This person should have the appropriate experience and skills to design and implement a collaborative process that provides the team with the end user input necessary to produce outputs that are responsive to their needs.

[5] These resources are available at http://graham.umich.edu/water/nerrs/funding/catalyst. This includes tools for characterizing end users and key considerations for end user engagement throughout the course of a project, as well as a summary of a webinar on end user engagement.

3) You agree with the proposed allocation of resources to the reserve, and/or proposed allocation of reserve staff time or other resources if not covered in the budget.

These assessments will be submitted by reserve managers directly to the Science Collaborative, separate from the proposal. ***Applicants must provide a copy of their final proposal to the manager of every reserve named on the project***. Relevant managers are those whose reserves will be directly engaged in project implementation and, as a result, should be able to answer each of the three criteria above definitively. If a reserve is not directly engaged in the proposed work, that reserve should not be listed as a partner on the project title page and the manager will not be expected to submit a proposal assessment.

3) Data Management

NOAA requires that environmental and social science data collected and/or created under NOAA grants and cooperative agreements be made visible, accessible, and independently understandable to general users, free of charge or at minimal cost, and in a timely manner (typically no later than two (2) years after the data are collected or created), except where limited by law, regulation, policy, or security requirements.

Applicants that propose the collection of new data are required to develop and include a Data Sharing Plan (DSP) as a part of their full proposal package. This plan must address elements such as methods and protocols for data collection, data quality control/quality assurance (QA/QC) procedures, metadata, data access, and data archival. A valid data sharing plan may include only the statement that no detailed plan is needed, as long as the statement is accompanied by a clear justification, e.g., no new data are being collected.

Applicants must account for the costs and personnel associated with implementing a DSP in their budget and project narrative. Additional guidance and details for support in developing a DSP can be found in the proposal requirements section below.

Letter of Intent Requirements

Applicants are required to submit a Letter of Intent by 11:59pm EST on Friday, December 8, 2017. Proposals submitted without first submitting an LOI by this deadline will not be considered.

Letters of Intent (LOI) must be provided as a single, one-page pdf file using 12-point, Times New Roman font and one-inch margins. Please organize your LOI using the following headers:

1) Project Lead – Name, institution, telephone, and e-mail address
2) Planned Team Members – Names and institutions. Note: Team members may be added or removed at the proposal stage.
3) Name of Reserve(s) – Identify the reserve(s) that are expected to be directly engaged in the project.
4) Project Objective(s) – Indicate the RFP objective(s) to which your project idea relates. I.e., Objective 1: Facilitate the development of *new* collaborative science ideas; Objective 2: Amplify or enhance *existing* collaborative research efforts; and/or Objective 3: Conduct NERRS System Wide Monitoring Program (SWMP) syntheses for a regional and/or national application.
5) Draft Project Title
6) Project Topic – Provide no more than one paragraph describing the planned work.

Information gathered through LOIs will be used exclusively to guide recruitment of appropriate reviewers and will not influence the proposal evaluation process.

How to Submit Your Letter of Intent

Access the application page at http://graham.umich.edu/application-request/42152 to start a new application and upload your LOI.[6] You will receive a confirmation email when you have successfully submitted your LOI. This email will also include a unique URL specific to your application. **Save this email – you will need this URL to submit your proposal.**

If you do not receive a confirmation email, your LOI was not submitted properly and you should resubmit or contact us directly at NERRS-info@umich.edu.

[6] You will need a U-M Account or Friend Account to start an application and submit your LOI. You will be prompted to login or create an account when you access the application page.

Proposal Requirements

Proposals must be submitted by 11:59pm EST on Wednesday, February 21, 2018.

Proposals must be provided as a single pdf file using 12-point Times New Roman font, no less than single space, with one-inch margins and be organized using the headers below. Proposals must include a title page, up to 10-page maximum narrative, and appendices as outlined below. **Proposals not meeting these requirements, including the header requirements, will be removed from the competition without further review.**

Title Page (up to two pages):
Organize your title page using the following headers:

1) Project Title
2) Project Lead / Principal Investigator (primary contact for the project) –
    a) Title / Position
    b) Institution
    c) Telephone Number
    d) Postal Mailing Address
    e) E-mail Address
3) Additional Team Members (anyone receiving project resources or contributing significant resources to the project) – Name, institution, telephone, e-mail, and role, e.g., project lead, collaboration lead, technical lead, end user, team member, etc. **Note: Project and collaborative leads are required.** One person can serve multiple roles. See team section for definitions of these roles.
4) Fiscal Agent – Provide the name of the fiscal agent. If different than the project lead, include contact information.
5) Name of Reserve(s) – Identify the reserve(s) that are directly engaged in the project. See the reserve engagement section for a detailed definition of "directly engaged reserve."
6) Budget Request – Requested dollar amount. Total request must fall within the range of $75,000 to $250,000. Budgets of $250,000 are expected to be most appropriate for multi-reserve projects.
7) Project Duration – Projects should start on September 1, 2018 and end no later than August 31, 2019.
8) Project Summary – Provide a 200-word summary of the proposed project that is suitable for a non-technical audience. Include the project's objectives, responsiveness to end user needs, and planned outputs/outcomes.

Project Narrative (10-page maximum):
Organize your narrative using the following headers:

1) Objective & End User Need –

    a) Identify the issue the project will address. Discuss the importance and context, with particular emphasis on how the project will address one or more reserve management needs.

    b) Be explicit about which of the eligible RFP objective(s) you seek to achieve and how it aligns with an end user need. If you are building on existing work, explain how the proposed work is distinct and addresses end user needs. In your discussion of end user needs, identify the end users, how their input helped to shape the project, and how the work is designed to meet their needs. This should be corroborated by letters of support in Appendix E.

2) Outputs and Outcomes – Clearly distinguishing between the two, provide a list of the planned outputs and anticipated outcomes. Describe these briefly, clearly stating how the outputs meet the end user and reserve management needs discussed in the "objective and end user need" section and how the outputs will help lead to the anticipated outcomes.

    a) *Output* – A specific product that is developed during or upon project completion; there may be several outputs associated with a project. See example outputs provided above. Outputs must address end user and reserve management needs.

    b) *Outcome* – An expected impact of the project process and outputs; there may be several outcomes associated with a project. See example outcomes provided above.

3) Project Approach – Provide a detailed description of the project approach, including the specific activities that will achieve the project outputs and outcomes. **Note: The proposal must include one or a combination of the core activities of this RFP.** Identify specific methods and tools you will use, e.g., survey instruments, models, analytical approaches. Describe the collaborative process that will be followed to ensure iterative engagement with end users, including a mechanism(s) for being adaptive and responsive to their input.

4) Team – Identify each team member and explain how the team and its expertise are well qualified to implement the project, including the collaborative approach. Describe the role(s) of each team member, e.g., project lead, collaboration lead, technical lead, end user, team member, and explain each member's contribution to the project. **Note: Project lead[7] and collaborative lead[8] must be specified for**

[7] The project lead ensures all elements of the project are being implemented.
[8] The collaborative lead is responsible for the full engagement of end users by helping to develop and manage a process that ensures iteration with them, including mechanisms for being adaptive and responsive to their input.

this RFP. One person can serve multiple roles. Two-page resumes for all team members must be included in Appendix F.

5) Data Accessibility – For projects using existing datasets, identify who owns them and how the project team will access them. Demonstrate permission for accessing core, required datasets by including letters of support in Appendix E.

Appendices: All appendices are required.

A. Timeline – Using the required timeline template found on the application website, provide the following:
   i. Project start and end dates. Projects should start on September 1, 2018 and end no later than August 31, 2019.
   ii. A schedule with key tasks and deliverables. This schedule must:
      a) Identify significant tasks, including end user engagement;
      b) Cite and connect directly to the outputs identified in the project narrative;
      c) Include project lead and the collaboration lead attendance at the NERRS Science Collaborative project workshop in the fall of 2018 (the Science Collaborative will provide travel support, outside of the project budget); and
      d) Indicate completion of all final project outputs.
B. References
C. Budget & Budget Narrative – Use the budget template found on the application website to provide an itemized estimate of all project costs. The total amount requested must fall within the range of $75,000 to $250,000. Budgets of $250,000 are expected to be most appropriate for multi-reserve projects. **Proposals with budgets that exceed $250,000 will be disqualified from the competition.**

   Multi-reserve projects are complex and require an efficient subcontracting process to ensure project teams are able to begin their work quickly. It is important to identify a lead fiscal agent who is familiar with the subcontracting process and has mechanisms currently in place in order to facilitate the subaward process effectively.

   The overall budget must include a separate budget for each subcontract (using the budget template). The Science Collaborative will reimburse overhead costs up to the subcontractor's federally negotiated indirect cost rate agreement. Unless otherwise noted in the indirect cost rate agreement, indirect costs may only be applied to the first $25,000 of each subcontract.

   Budget Narrative – Provide a budget narrative to justify expenses in all budget categories. Please note the following:

i. Personnel costs must be broken out by team member including number of months and percentage of time requested.

ii. Any unnamed personnel, e.g., reserve staff, graduate students, post-doctoral researchers, technicians, must be identified by their job title, and their personnel costs explained similar to that described above.

iii. The contribution of any personnel to the project goals shall be explained even if not receiving support under this grant. In particular, all reserve staff time anticipated for the project must be accounted for, even if funds are not being requested to support that time.

iv. Equipment costs must describe the equipment to be purchased and its contribution to the achievement of project goals. If a piece of equipment costs more than $5,000, a cost analysis will be required. If a lease vs. purchase analysis cannot be completed at the time of proposal development, a statement is needed that the analysis will be completed before the equipment is purchased. This analysis will compare the cost of purchasing a piece of equipment against the cost of leasing the same piece of equipment. The benefits of leasing or purchasing should be addressed in this analysis as well.

v. Travel costs must be broken out by number of people traveling, destination, and purpose of travel, and projected costs per person. Domestic and foreign travel should be itemized separately. Foreign travel must comply with the Fly America Act which limits the use of foreign flag carriers. For more information, go to http://www.gsa.gov/portal/content/103191.

vi. If collecting new data, proposals must include appropriate budgets to support required data management activities. It is anticipated that for projects proposing significant new data collection efforts, appropriate personnel time should be committed for data QA/QC and metadata development. For budget allocation guidance, it is anticipated that 10% to 15% of the overall budget should go to support data management activities.

vii. Overhead may be charged up to the fiscal institution's federally negotiated indirect cost rate.

viii. A separate budget narrative is required for each subcontract, including the same detail as is required for the overall budget. As noted above, unless otherwise noted in the indirect cost rate agreement, overhead may only be applied to the first $25,000 of each subcontract.

If a proposal includes an estimate for a subcontract, for example, for work that will be competitively bid after the project is awarded, the budget narrative should include a summary of and justification for the subcontract services. If the project is selected for funding, exact costs must be provided before funding is awarded. In all cases, contractual expenses will be capped at the amount listed in the budget.

D. Fiscal Letters of Commitment – The fiscal agent's home unit and institution must provide a letter of commitment approving the proposal submission, including approval of any subcontracts included in the proposal. There is no standardized form for this letter. A letter of commitment is also required from each subcontracting institution.

E. Letters of Support – Provide letters from individuals and/or partners confirming contributions to and support for the project. Include letters from the following:

   a) End users who will be engaged throughout the project and will use the outputs. In their letters of support, end users should describe how they have been engaged with the development of the proposal and how they anticipate using project outputs. **All proposals must include at least one letter of support from an end user.**

   b) Team members or partners included in the project approach but not funded in the budget.

   c) Individuals, groups, and/or institutions that have agreed to provide data/access to data or other resources necessary for the project.

F. Resumes – Two-page resumes for each team member are required. Resumes will be used by reviewers to determine whether the team has the requisite technical and collaborative skills and experience to undertake the project successfully.

G. Data Sharing Plan – All Science Collaborative proposals must address data management requirements in one of two ways:

   i. For projects that propose the collection of new data: A Data Sharing Plan (DSP) of two to five pages is required for all proposals that collect new data. Use the Data Sharing Plan Requirements and Outline available on the funding opportunity website to develop a DSP.

   ii. For projects that do not propose the collection of new data: A statement that "no detailed data sharing plan is needed," accompanied by a clear justification as to why, e.g., no new data are being collected.

The Centralized Data Management Office is the coordinating entity for Science Collaborative data management activities and will provide data management guidance during proposal development and technical support for funded projects. Clarifying information and opportunities for questions and answers about DSP requirements will be made available during the webinars described below.

How to Submit Your Proposal

Proposals must be submitted by 11:59pm EST on Wednesday, February 21, 2018 at the unique URL emailed to you when you submitted your LOI.

The unique URL emailed to you when you submitted your LOI will prompt you to log in and then direct you to your application page. Submitting your proposal will consist of reviewing and updating information, as needed, in the fields of the application form and uploading a single PDF of your proposal to your application. Once logged in, you will need to update your project information at the top of the form, then scroll down towards the end of the page to the proposal upload field, upload your proposal, and click on the "save" button. Please note that in order to submit, your login credentials must be the same as those used to submit your LOI.

You will receive an email confirming successful submission; if you do not receive this email, your application was not submitted properly and you should resubmit or contact us directly at NERRS-info@umich.edu.

Please email NERRS-info@umich.edu in advance if you anticipate challenges accessing your existing account.

Evaluation Criteria

Proposals must comply with all submission instructions and requirements to be considered for funding. Proposals not meeting these requirements will be removed from the competition without further review.

Each compliant proposal will be evaluated based on the criteria listed below. Proposal review will also be informed by reserve manager assessments to determine the extent to which projects addresses reserve management needs.

1) Priority Issue
   a) Does the proposal clearly articulate at least one of the eligible RFP objectives and how it aligns with an end user need(s)?
   b) Does the proposed work relate to at least one reserve management need as confirmed by the relevant reserve manager(s)?
2) Collaboration and End User Integration
   a) Does the proposal identify appropriate end user(s) and clearly articulate their needs?
   b) Will the outputs meet the identified end user's needs, as indicated in letters of support from the end user(s)?
   c) Does the project team clearly indicate how end user input will be incorporated into the final outputs?

3) Project Approach
    a) Is the approach appropriate for achieving the project outputs?
    b) Are the methods sufficiently detailed and technically sound?
    c) Does the approach incorporate the appropriate level of end user input?
4) Feasibility
    a) Does the team have adequate expertise and experience for the proposed work?
    b) Is the timeline realistic for the proposed work and does it include sufficient time for integrating end user input and completing proposed project outputs?
    c) Is the budget appropriate for the proposed work and does it include sufficient resources for integrating end user input?
    d) Does the proposal demonstrate access to and/or availability of necessary resources, including data? Where relevant, is this corroborated in letters of support?
5) Potential Impact – Are the proposed process and outputs likely to lead to the desired outcomes, including catalyzing collaborative science?

Review and Selection Process

Review Process

The review process for collaborative science catalyst proposals is as follows. A more detailed summary of the review process, including decision points, inputs to each decision, and a summary of the process participants can be found here.

1) **Letter of intent** – Submitting a letter of intent by the December 8, 2017 deadline is the first required step of the application process. Proposals not meeting this requirement will be removed from the competition without further review. LOIs will be used by Science Collaborative staff to inform proposal reviewer recruitment; they will not be used as an evaluative tool.
2) **Minimum requirements assessment** – Science Collaborative staff will review all submitted proposals with an LOI to confirm that they meet the requirements as described in this RFP, including all proposal elements, the budget request, and adherence to header requirements. Proposals not meeting these requirements will be removed from the competition without further review.
3) **Written review** – Each proposal that meets the minimum requirements will be matched to non-conflicted technical experts who will conduct written reviews. Reviewers will consist of technical experts from the specific content area of the proposed work and collaboration practitioners with experience working on natural

resource issues. Reviewers will be asked to rate each proposal according to the evaluation criteria.

4) **Panel review** – The proposals and written reviews will be shared with a panel of experts in collaborative research and/or estuarine science representing diverse geographic regions of the U.S. The panel review is distinct from the written review and there is no overlap in membership. Panelists will convene for an in-person meeting to discuss the outcomes of the written reviews and the proposal assessments submitted by relevant reserve managers. For each proposal, panelists will discuss strengths and weaknesses and any discrepancies among the written reviews. Panelists will identify projects that are supportable in rank order as input to the final selection process as outlined in the following section. Applicants will receive a copy of the panel summary along with the blinded written reviews.

Selection Process

Final funding recommendations will be based on the panel recommendation of supportable projects in rank order. In consultation with the NOAA Program Manager, the NERRS Science Collaborative shall award projects based on available funds in rank order unless a proposal is justified to be selected out of rank order based upon one or more of the following factors:

1) Availability of funding;
2) RFP objective type, i.e. Objective 1: Facilitate the development of *new* collaborative science ideas; Objective 2: Amplify or enhance *existing* collaborative research efforts; and/or Objective 3: Conduct NERRS System Wide Monitoring Program (SWMP) syntheses for a regional and/or national application[9];
3) Balance/distribution of funds geographically by NERRS regions; and
4) No reserve will serve as the lead reserve on more than one proposal.

Funding notifications are expected in May 2018.

Environmental Compliance Review

Applicants should be aware of the following environmental compliance requirements:

NOAA requires that, prior to award, every Science Collaborative project recommended for funding undergo review for potential impacts to the environment and/or cultural resources. This initial review process by NOAA takes a minimum of 30 days.

[9] Application of this selection factor would mean that one project of each objective type would be selected before funding another of the same type.

Projects that are identified by NOAA as potentially impacting the environment and/or cultural resources, e.g., involve field work, and/or are conducted in areas where historic or archeological artifacts might be present, will require further review by the agency. NOAA will be reviewing for compliance with the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), the Endangered Species Act (ESA), the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA), and the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act related to essential fish habitat (EFH). If the proposed project is placing fixed structures in the environment, consultation with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers may also be required. NHPA, ESA, MMPA, and EFH reviews take a minimum of 30 days to complete, but can often take 60 to 90 days.

Guidance to Applicants

All applicants should plan for a minimum 30-day initial review process by NOAA; this process will be initiated immediately after funding notifications. If funded, a detailed description of field sampling methods along with a map showing the location of each field site, including each field site's latitude and longitude will need to be provided to NOAA. Questions regarding this requirement should be directed to Dwight Trueblood (603-862-3580, Dwight.Trueblood@noaa.gov).

Proprietary Information & Intellectual Property

Applicants should be aware that the disclosure of patentable ideas, trade secrets, and privileged, confidential, commercial, or financial information can hinder an applicant's chances to secure patents, trademarks, or copyrights.

Proprietary information of this kind should only be included in proposals when it is necessary to convey an understanding of the proposed project. Applicants must mark proprietary information clearly in the proposal with appropriate labels, such as, "The following is (proprietary or confidential) information that (proposing entity) requests not be released to persons outside the NERRS Science Collaborative, except for purposes of review and evaluation."

Please protect your intellectual property rights at the proposal preparation stage as appropriate. This will allow you to speak freely about ideas and avoid the inadvertent loss of intellectual property rights. You should contact your institution's technology transfer or intellectual property office to determine the best way to protect your intellectual property.

Questions Regarding this Request for Proposals

Question and Answer Record

Responses to all questions, without reference to project specifics, will be posted on a rolling basis for all interested applicants to view online at http://graham.umich.edu/water/nerrs/funding/catalyst.

Question and Answer Webinars

The Science Collaborative will host question and answer webinars at the following times:

- **November 29, 2017 at 12pm EST**. To register, go to https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/3451213453920543235
- **January 18, 2018 at 1pm EST**. To register, go to https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/4483414079665414145

After each webinar, questions and responses will be incorporated into the online Q&A Record and webinar slides will be posted online at http://graham.umich.edu/water/nerrs/funding/catalyst.

Email

The Science Collaborative will accept and reply to written questions regarding this request for proposals until 12pm EST on February 19, 2018. Questions should be submitted to nerrs-info@umich.edu.

Phone

The Science Collaborative will also accept questions via phone regarding this request for proposals. Questions should be directed to Maeghan Brass (734-763-0727) or Lynn Vaccaro (734-763-0056).

Other Information

More information about the NERRS Science Collaborative can be found at http://graham.umich.edu/water/nerrs.