NERACOOS Strategic Planning and Implementation Team Guidance Document for the 2015 Proposal Submission

The Strategic Planning and Implementation (SPI) team of Northeastern Regional Association of Coastal and Ocean Observing systems (NERACOOS) is soliciting proposals for activities related to the production, integration, and communication of high quality information about the coastal ocean. Proposals are requested for activities that NERACOOS deems to be in its strategic interest and relevant to existing or future stakeholders. A number of documents, formulated by the NERACOOS Board of Directors and SPI team are available at www.neracoos.org/grants to assist proposers in understanding the potential importance and relevance of their activities to NERACOOS:

- NERACOOS SPI Team Strategic Priorities
- NERACOOS SPI Team Project Template
- NERACOOS SPI Team Review Criteria

Anyone can submit a proposal on behalf of their institution, which should consist of no more than 3 pages, be submitted using the provided template, and provide an informal cost estimate. No formal budgets are required at this time. Additional instructions are provided below. The received proposals will be evaluated by members of the SPI team and ranked according to a suite of review criteria. These rankings, geographic distribution, prior performance, and contribution to a comprehensive observing system will be used to determine high, moderate, and low priority projects. Based on these criteria, a subset of the proposals will be combined to formulate NERACOOS' submission to the upcoming NOAA-IOOS Federal Funding Opportunity (FFO) for 2016-2020. Submission of a proposal to this process is an implicit agreement to participate in the FFO submission. No funding will be directly awarded as part of the present process, but rather the ability to participate in NERACOOS proposals for potential funding opportunities.

Timeline

February 1:	Open Call for Project Templates
February 4:	SPI Team Informational Webinar
March 6:	Deadline for receipt of templates
March:	SPI Team 'Mail' reviews
April:	SPI Team Review Panel Meeting
	Initial slate distributed
May:	Slate finalized; Writing Team and IOOS FFO co-investigators selected
	Writing Team for the IOOS FFO kick-off call/meeting
August:	Submission to IOOS FFO

Instructions

A project template should be completed for each proposed activity (see below for definition of activity). Completion of the template is not meant to be an onerous task, but instead strike a balance between allowing the proposer to quickly and effectively describe the activity, the resources required, and its importance to NERACOOS. This process will also allow the SPI team to carefully evaluate all potential components of an observing system in terms of how each would benefit NERACOOS. The following list of guidelines should be adhered to when formulating and completing a project template:

- Individual templates are required for each asset. An asset is defined as a buoy system (including hardware, instrumentation, and communication systems), a model product, a radar system, etc.
- Activities that are currently funded by NERACOOS are required to complete a project template.
- If economies of scale exist in operating multiple assets (i.e., an array of buoys, models, radars, etc.), list the per unit costs in the individual templates along with guidance on the scale necessary to achieve that cost. (e.g. operation and

maintenance of Buoy X will cost $Y per project year, assuming a total of 4 buoys are maintained by the proposers via NERACOOS support).

- Integration activities that span the NERACOOS region (i.e. a data management system, the integration of remote sensing observations into value-added products, etc.) can be thought of as individual assets.
- New additions to presently funded activities/assets require additional templates.
- Region-wide activities of a similar, targeted, nature (e.g. adding a particular sensor to a number of buoys in order to measure a new parameter) can be treated as a single asset.
- Do not include a formal budget from your grants and contracts or budgeting office. Only informal estimates are needed with the project template.
- Do not attach additional documentation (CV's, publications, etc.) to the template. They will not be considered.

All templates should be emailed to Cassie Stymiest by email at cassie@neracoos.org) as native Word documents (*.doc or *.docx file types) by Midnight EST, March 6th, 2015.

Proposal Process

The over-arching goal of this process is to objectively evaluate and prioritize the proposed activities to ensure they meet NERACOOS priorities.

- **Highest Priority**: These activities are to be considered most important and are likely to be funded as part of a successful IOOS award.
- **Moderate Priority**: These activities are important and will be included in the proposal submission, but are less likely to be funded, at least initially, given present IOOS funding levels.
- **Low Priority:** These activities are potentially important but deemed either not appropriate for the IOOS submission, incomplete, or not cost-effective for NERACOOS to support at this time.

The following review process will be used to sort proposed activities into high, moderate, and low priorities:

1. Templates will be evaluated based on the review criteria by 3 or more SPI team members in a mail review process occurring in March. Reviewers will be chosen by staff from those members of the SPI team who have some expertise in the area but would not benefit financially from or have competing interests with the project.
2. Initial rankings and feedback for the proposed activities will be reviewed by the entire SPI team at an in person meeting in April. Proposers, if present, will be able to answer questions regarding the activity, but may not be present for the final debate and scoring of proposed activities. If possible, the SPI team will offer recommendations on the initial slate based on the panel discussions.
3. The NERACOOS Executive Director will then consider the SPI team's rankings and guidance along with the geographic distribution and prior performance in order to formulate a draft slate of projects that will produce a coherent, functional, and competitive observing system.
4. The slate will be reviewed over a two week comment period and finalized by the SPI team.

It is expected that a maximum of $4M per year will be allowed in the upcoming IOOS FFO for 2016-2020. However, the amount of funding that NERACOOS is likely to receive is closer to $2M, based on the present-day and projected future funding levels of IOOS. It is therefore unlikely that all projects will be funded, and de-scoping will be necessary each year of the award. However, projects will be archived and available to seek alternative funding as opportunities arise.

Questions should be directed to Cassie Stymiest (cassie@neracoos.org) or Ru Morrison (ru@neracoos.org).