Appendix A:

FUNDING DISBURSEMENT MECHANISMS

Fund Disbursement Mechanisms

About this Document

This memorandum is an overview of the processes and mechanisms by which funds could be disbursed and partnerships pursued to advance the Statewide MPA Monitoring Program. A diversity of funding disbursement mechanisms will enable State investments to be strategically targeted to maximize cost-effectiveness, transparency, and efficiency across the breadth of activities within the program. We provide specific recommendations for when to apply each mechanism, considerations, and estimated timelines for each process. Additionally, Appendix A contains templates for each of these mechanisms, and Appendix B is a more detailed memorandum focused on developing and implementing an Expressions of Interest (EOIs) process.

Requests for Qualifications (RFQs)

Description and Considerations

A RFQ lays out a very specific project plan and solicits competitive bids for completion of the work (see Appendix A for an example). RFQs are most appropriate when the funder already has a very clearly defined need and approach to a project, for example, if the project requirements are known in great detail (e.g., sites, metrics, sampling frequency) or if the RFQ is meant to infuse funds into (or replicate) an existing monitoring program. In these more specific cases, RFQs represent a more efficient option than RFPs and ensure that program needs are met in the first solicitation. The level of review of responses to RFQs is typically less rigorous and is set against the specifics of the RFQ itself. However, for RFQs targeting high value or multi-year projects, review from an outside source knowledgeable in the project specifics may be useful to ensure that the selected response meets the requirements, sets a reasonable timeline, and upholds the scientific rigor required by the program. One potential drawback is that, although possible, highly specific RFQs may not be as well suited for finding contractors with existing monetary support that can leveraged against State funds.

RFQs typically have short open periods (2-4 weeks) and can be used for a variety of projects. For example, an RFQ could target multi-year projects to track the condition of a selected ecosystem or human use category (i.e., consumptive or non-consumptive),or focus on integrative analyses in advance of an anticipated management review. For cases in which the resulting contract extends over multiple years, annual disbursements contingent on performance can protect the State investment.

Estimated time to complete

- 2-4 week open period
- 2 weeks for internal review (add 2-3 weeks for external review)
- 1-2 weeks for revisions respondent(s) (*optional*)

Total: 5-11 weeks, plus time for internal contract/grant execution

Requests for Proposals (RFPs)

Description and Considerations

When operational requirements are more loosely defined than described in the RFQ example above or when multiple approaches may be employed to address a component of monitoring, a RFP allows for more creativity and innovation on the part of applicants (see Appendix A for an example). This is a good option when there is a clearly defined goal, research, or management question, but the approach, tools, location, mechanisms, and/or experimental design are undefined/unrestricted or unknown. Ideally, RFPs allow a funder to solicit and consider a wide range of proposed technical and programmatic approaches, and select the proposal that meets identified evaluation criteria. There may be greater financial risk in this approach, but it can be valuable in stimulating innovation.

Proposals should be peer-reviewed for consideration of the evaluation criteria described in the RFP, often including scientific and technical merits, whether the proposed project meets RFP goals, and overall cost-effectiveness. Peer review processes associated with RFPs typically involve formal internal and external review steps. There are many different approaches to these peer review processes. (See Appendix 2 for examples.)

Estimated time to complete

- 8-12 week open period
- 6-8 weeks for peer review process (often two steps)
- 2 weeks for proposal revision by respondent(s) (*optional*)

Total: 16-22 weeks, plus time for internal contract/grant execution time

Expressions of Interest (EOI)

Description and Considerations

There are two rather different situations in which EOIs are a good tool. First, EOIs are a good fit when limited funding is available and/or the intent is to provide matching funds for an existing program or research project. Second, EOIs are a useful tool when the sampling methods or other project details are unknown. In this case, the EOIs could be used to shape a RFQ or RFP. In both of these situations, EOIs can be used either as the end point (i.e., funding decisions made based on the EOIs) or to create a list of potential contractors from whom full proposals will be requested. In the former case (matching funds), full proposals may not be necessary since the respondent will have already developed a full proposal that was reviewed and funded by another source. The MPA monitoring funder could request the existing proposal as part of the EOI response package. (See Appendix A for an EOI opportunity announcement template.) Leveraging funding from other sources can help the State to move forward more quickly on research and program goals that are of interest to other funders and at the federal level as well. For example, network evaluation questions could be answered through basic research that might attract support from funders such as the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration and National Science Foundation.

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EOIs can be an efficient way to solicit and understand interest, develop a standing list of vendors, and seek matching funds. However, if there is targeted or specific need that the State needs to move forward on quickly, it can add an extra step in the proposal process and may not be needed. If the main goal of the EOI process is provide matching funds to existing programs or projects, establishing a pool of funds to be used for this purpose can be a highly cost-effective approach to incentivizing relevant and useful research and monitoring. This approach can be especially useful for components of the program without strict temporal requirements, and those that would benefit from advancing knowledge and best practices and/or development of new methodologies or technologies. See Appendix B for more information on EOIs.

Estimated time to complete

- 4-8 week open period
- 1-2 weeks for internal review (add 2-3 weeks for external review)
- 2-4 weeks for full proposal development by respondents (*optional*)
- 1-2 weeks for internal review (add 2-3 weeks for external review) (*if requesting full proposals*)

Total: 5-13 weeks (*if funds disbursed based on EOIs*), 8-22 weeks (*if requesting full proposals*), plus time for contract/grant execution time

Sole-sourcing

Description and Considerations

In limited circumstances, it can be most efficient and cost-effective to engage directly with a consultant or contractor team with unique expertise or knowledge of the project of interest. For example, sole-sourcing may be most efficient for implementing coordination and synthesis activities, consistent with the rules associated with the funding source and disbursing organization. This approach leverages existing institutional capacity and knowledge developed through the last decade of MPA implementation and MPA monitoring. This option is particularly well-suited for existing grants or contracts that the State is seeking to extend.

Estimated time to complete

- 2-4 weeks for contract/grant development with consultant or contractor team

Total: 2-4 weeks, plus time for contract/grant execution time

Partnerships

Description and Considerations

In many cases, ongoing work by existing programs, institutions, agencies, etc. can directly provide useful data or syntheses that inform our understanding of the ocean conditions and trends inside and outside MPAs. Maintaining and building partnerships can help capitalize on these opportunities. In some cases, a partnership may involve a formal written agreement outlining specific terms and commitments (e.g.,

memorandum of understanding). In others, the intent to work together may be reflected by mutual acknowledgment of shared interests in planning or other strategic documentation.

Partnerships can also be useful for sharing resources such as infrastructure and technology, and for collaborating on sharing monitoring results. In some cases, funding may be needed to support participation in a partnership, such as a post-doctoral fellow to conduct data analysis. Even when not directly sharing resources, partners can make a valuable contribution simply by maintaining capacity (e.g., trained technicians, databases, visualization tools), which lowers the year-to-year cost of MPA monitoring.

Summary

Funding Mechanism	Purpose/Outcome	Duration
Request for Qualifications (RFQ)	• Clearly defined needs and approach provided by funder	5-11 weeks
Request for Proposals (RFP)	• Open ended solicitation of proposals where innovative solutions or flexible solutions are preferred	16-22 weeks
Expression of Interest (EOI)	• Determine interest of researchers, consultants, NGOs, etc. • Help scope final RFP/RFQ • Searching for leveraged funds	5-22 weeks
Sole-sourcing	• Very specific contract with established or previous vendor	2-4 weeks

Appendix A. Funding Mechanism Templates

This appendix includes templates for disbursing and implementing state funded research and monitoring for the MPA Monitoring Program through three funding mechanisms:

- Expression of Interest Opportunity (EOI) Announcement

- Request for Qualifications (RFQ) template, including selection criteria and process

- Request for Proposals (RFP) template, including selection criteria and process

The California Ocean Protection Council (OPC), California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), and California Ocean Science Trust (OST) developed these templates collaboratively.

Template: Expressions of Interest (EOI) Opportunity Announcement

Summary

This template is provides the State and its partners draft language and instruction from which to draft and complete an EOI opportunity announcement and process each year, or as needed, in support of its Statewide MPA Monitoring Program.

Section 1: In Brief

Instructions: Provide a very brief synopsis of the type of funding, the amount, and the timeline. Keep to three sentences/lines, max.

Sample Language: OPC, CDFW, and its partners are seeking expressions of interest from research teams to address the State's long-term monitoring and research needs in relation to its extensive MPA network. [*FOCAL STATEMENT ABOUT TARGETED QUESTIONS OR R&D TOPIC AREA, ETC.*] EOIs are due on *MM DD, YYYY*. If selected, projects could be awarded up $*XX*.

Section 2: Priorities for funding this cycle

Instructions: Create clearly stated priorities for funding. The first step in developing the EOI announcement should be to identify the priority questions/topics prior to each release. The team should work together to decide upon a timeline, process, key partners, and level of detail for developing this information. Link to any information online with the State's funding priorities, bond priorities, strategic plans, etc. for which applicants should tailor the response and research. This section should be as clear and concise as possible with a goal of 5-6 sentences max.

Section 3: Timeline for EOIs

Instructions: Provide all timeline information related to submission and notification to applicants of successful EOIs invited to submit full proposals.

Information to include:

- Date for submission of EOIs
- Date for notification of EOIs invited to submit a full proposal

Section 4: Submission Instructions

Instructions: Provide clear and concise instructions on how, where, and what to submit. Complete the information on how and where an applicant submits the EOI and then tailor the submission instructions to meet the goals and requirements of the current funding cycle, as needed.

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Information to include:

- Submission date

- Amount and year range for grant awards

- Where to submit applications (e.g., letter, online, email, etc.)

- Eligibility to submit (or frame as who is not eligible to apply for funds)

- Submission length and required content (select from and edit the following as needed):

  o *Team/Partners (1 paragraph)*: Request a list of the proposed project team and brief description of roles for each.

  o *Amount range; year range proposed (1 sentence)*: State the funding available through this EOI announcement, max per project (if applicable), and project timeline.

  o *Approach to the project and/or project proposal (1-2 paragraphs)*: Request a brief, high-level statement of the approach proposed (if applicant is seeking funds for a defined project, or if announcement targets a specific project that meets the priorities and goals of the particular funding cycle).

  o *Alignment with funder priorities (1 paragraph)*: Request a description of how the proposed project aligns with funder priorities (as outlined in the EOI announcement).

  o *Matching funds (1 paragraph, bulleted list, or table)*: Request a description or list of the matching funds, including other grant funds, in-kind support, etc. (either secured or submitted), that would augment the State's investment in the proposed project.

  o *Other relevant materials*: Request any of the following materials, as needed –

    ▪ Relevant experience via resumes/curriculum vitae of project staff

    ▪ Relevant supporting documents (e.g., funded research proposal(s) for any matching funds, letters of support from project partners)

    ▪ List any current, pending, or potential funds (bulleted list including project title, grantor, and award amount)

Section 5: Process for Selection of EOIs

Instructions: Provide all process information related to submission, selection, and notification to applicants of successful EOIs invited to submit full proposals.

Information to include:

Selection criteria: EOIs will be scored based on the following criteria and weights. (*Select from the following list as applicable. Include weights for criteria.*)

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- Relevance and applicability to priorities of the Statewide MPA Monitoring Program (20%): Assessment of alignment of project goals with the MPA Program purposes and priorities and stated priorities for the current funding cycle.

- Scientific/technical merit (20%): The degree to which the proposed project is innovative and will advance the state of the science or discipline through rigorous state-of-the-art research.

- Users, Participants, and Partnerships (20%): The degree to which users or potential users of the results of the proposed project have been brought into the planning of the project, will be brought into the execution of the project, and will use results. Researchers must work with end-users to develop relevant proposals. Demonstrated knowledge, partnerships, relationships, collaborations or other mechanisms for bringing users and partners into the project.

- Project costs and funding leverage (5%): Description of funds already leveraged or under development for the proposed project. Demonstrated efficiencies in data collection, partnerships, etc.

- Qualifications of project lead(s) and demonstrated access to facilities and resources (10%): Assessment of whether the applicants possess the necessary knowledge, experience, training, facilities, and resources to complete the project

- Project management experience, expertise, and skills (10%): Assessment of project management experience, including a proven track record in completing contracts on-time and within budget; and experience managing and working in multi-party, multidisciplinary teams. Demonstrated list of grants, bringing things to fruition, deliver on contracts, grants, etc.

- Timeliness/Urgency of the Research (5%): Due to changing ocean conditions as a result of both human and natural causes, priority given to research addressing issues needing immediate attention can arise and are not amenable to waiting until the next funding cycle.

- Proof of Concept/Preliminary Data (10%): Does the proposal have proof of concept through a previously funded or currently funded pilot project? Does it already have preliminary data in hand to hone a research proposal or leverage existing data?

Process for evaluating the selection criteria (2-3 sentences)

- Information about review process (e.g., panel/committee, independent reviewers, state agency representatives, etc.)

- Information about how the review process will operate (e.g., scoring, entity with final decision-making authority)

Contact

Questions may be directed to [*NAME*], [*TITLE*], [*ORGANIZATION*], at [*EMAIL*] or [*PHONE*].

Template: Request for Qualifications (RFQ)

Section 1: Summary

Instructions: This section will provide a high-level summary of the work, objectives, and submission deadline.

Sample Language: The [*AGENCY/ORGANIZATION*] is seeking qualified contractors or teams of contractors (Contractor(s)) to support [*DESCRIBE THE WORK, BRIEFLY, HERE*]. [*ADD 1-2 SENTENCES, AS NEEDED, TO PROVIDE ADDITIONAL DETAILS*] Professional services under this Request for Qualifications will focus on [*#*] main objectives: [*OBJECTIVE 1*], and [*OBJECTIVE 2*]. The deadline for receipt of submissions is [*TIME*] PST on [*DATE*].

Section 2: Background

Instructions: This section will include a description of the organization issuing the RFQ, brief overview of the policy guidance (e.g., MLPA, MLPA Master Plan, Partnership Plan), introduction to the other documents (e.g., workplan, monitoring plan), and where to find additional background information.

Section 3: Description of Work

Instructions: This section will include objectives, a summary of the work (including a list of recommended sites), an outline of expected deliverables and major milestones, and the main tasks associated with the work.

Section 4: Qualifications, Skills, and Expertise

Sample Language: The [*AGENCY/ORGANIZATION*] seeks Contractor(s) with the expertise, demonstrated skills, and proven experience necessary to conduct the MPA monitoring activities described above. Expertise, skills, and experience [*TIE TO DESCRIPTION OF WORK*] and should include the following:

- Extensive experience, rigorous theoretical grounding and proven success in designing and implementing scientific monitoring activities

- [*RELEVANT TOPICAL EXPERTISE, e.g., kelp forest ecology, rocky intertidal ecology*]

- Proven experience building and stewarding broad collaborations among diverse organizations and across disciplines

- Demonstrated excellence in project management and client communication, including proven ability to develop high-quality deliverables and to work within established project timelines and budget.

- Ability to communicate effectively with a broad range of stakeholders a plus

- [*ADD ADDITIONAL EXPERTISE, SKILLS, AND EXPERIENCE, AS RELEVANT/IDENTIFIED*]

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Section 5: Terms

Sample Language: Contactors will report directly to the [*ORGANIZATION*] [*POSITION/TITLE*] and will receive organized advice from [*ORGANIZATION*] staff and partners. Contractors will be expected to coordinate effectively with the [*ORGANIZATION*] using electronic and telephone communication, on-line collaboration tools, in-person meetings, or other appropriate means. The selected Contractors will provide services through [*DATE*] on a contract basis. The fee will be negotiated at the time of selection.

Section 6: Submission Requirements

Sample Language: Respondents should submit their qualifications electronically to [*AGENCY/ORGANIZATION*] no later than [*DATE*]. Submissions should be sent by email to ([*EMAIL ADDRESS*]) with subject line "Response to Statewide Monitoring RFQ".

All submittals must include:

1. A cover letter

2. A statement demonstrating the applicant's understanding of the project, indicating how the applicant meets the desired qualifications, skills and experience

3. An overview of the proposed scope of work and project approaches and key components, including a proposed schedule with approximate schedule or timing of key milestones

4. A description of the applicant's qualifications, such as a resume

5. A statement of availability and loaded daily or hourly rates including fringe and overhead through [*DATE*].

6. A minimum of three references relating to completed projects for the services being requested with full name, title, address, and phone numbers.

Submissions should be no longer than 15 pages. Additional pages are permissible only if or as needed to provide resumes of key personnel. Submissions should be provided as a single electronic file, ideally in PDF format.

Section 7: Submission Review & Selection Process

Sample Language: [*AGENCY/ORGANIZATION*] will evaluate submissions against the following criteria:

1) *Relevance and applicability to the objectives of the Statewide MPA Monitoring Program*: Assessment of alignment of project goals with the Monitoring Program objectives, including:

   - Efficiencies in data collection to address multiple program priorities

   - Ability to conduct paired (inside-outside) monitoring of priority MPAs at the sampling frequency and scope identified for the target ecosystem or human use category (i.e., consumptive or non-consumptive)

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2) *Scientific/technical merit*: Assessment of the conceptual framing and technical approaches proposed to achieve project goals

3) *Partnerships, collaborations, and local expertise*: Assessment of whether the proposal takes best advantage of the knowledge and capacity existing within [*INSERT RELEVANT REGION(S) OR STATEWIDE*], including broad partnerships (e.g., tribes, citizen scientists, fishermen) and multiple forms of science (e.g., traditional ecological knowledge, local knowledge)

4) *Project costs and funding leverage*: Assessment of cost-effectiveness, including project cost relative to Monitoring Program objectives (see above), and ability to leverage other available funds to conduct the project, to reach a minimum of [*XX*]% matching funds

5) *Qualifications of project lead(s) and demonstrated access to facilities and resources*
Assessment of whether the applicants possess the necessary knowledge, experience, training, facilities and resources to complete the project

6) *Project management experience, expertise, and skills*: Assessment of multiple facets of project management, including a proven track record in completing contracts on-time and within budget, experience managing and working in multi-party, multidisciplinary teams, and communication skills. Communication skills include the ability to provide clear and effective communication of project goals, approaches and results to diverse audiences interested in monitoring information.

When considered together, these criteria will provide the basis for evaluating the overall value of each submission with the aim of securing the most advantageous arrangement to meet the program objectives. Selection of the preferred Consultant(s) is expected to be a two-step process in which short-listed applicants will be contacted for follow-up telephone and/or in-person meetings. Should more than one applicant advance beyond step one, these short-listed applicants may be requested to make brief presentations in support of their applications. We expect that Consultant(s) will be selected by [*DATE*].

Contact

Questions may be directed to [*NAME*], [*TITLE*], [*ORGANIZATION*], at [*EMAIL*] or [*PHONE*].

Template: Request for Proposals (RFP)

Section 1: Summary

Instructions: This section will provide a high-level summary of the objectives, scope, and submission deadline.

Sample Language: [*STATEMENT ABOUT HOW THIS RFP AND OTHER GUIDING DOCUMENTS (e.g., workplan) WAS DEVELOPED*] [*HIGH-LEVEL STATEMENT ABOUT FUNDING SOURCE*]

Proposals are requested that address two main objectives:

1. To assess the condition of [*INSERT ECOSYSTEM OR HUMAN USE CATEGORY (I.E., CONSUMPTIVE OR NON-CONSUMPTIVE) HERE*] inside and outside MPAs

2. To assess the trend in condition of [*INSERT ECOSYSTEM OR HUMAN USE CATEGORY (I.E., CONSUMPTIVE OR NON-CONSUMPTIVE) HERE*] using newly collected data together with data from the baseline monitoring program and other existing data, where available.

All proposals will be evaluated against the criteria listed in Section X, including alignment with objectives, scientific and technical merit, demonstration of partnerships, incorporation of local expertise, costs, funding leveraging, and qualifications of project leads. [*INSERT 2-4 SENTENCES THAT DESCRIBE THE EVALUATION AND SELECTION PROCESS SPECIFIC TO THIS ANNOUNCEMENT*] Final decisions will be made jointly by staff of [*AGENCIES/ORGANIZATIONS*].

Questions related to proposal requirements should be directed to [*AGENCY/ORGANIZATION*] (see Section X for guidance and contact information). Answers to frequently asked questions and any updates relating to this RFP will be available on the [*AGENCY/ORGANIZATION*] website ([*ENTER WEBSITE HERE*]). Persons intending to submit proposals in response to this RFP should consult this website frequently for updates and additional information. The deadline for receipt of submissions is [*TIME*] PST on [*DATE*].

Section 2: Background

Instructions: This section will include a description of the organization issuing the RFP, brief overview of the policy guidance (e.g., MLPA, MLPA Master Plan, Partnership Plan), introduction to the other documents (e.g., workplan, monitoring plan), and where to find additional background information.

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Section 2: Objectives

Instructions: This section will describe the objectives specific to the ecosystem or human use category (i.e., consumptive or non-consumptive) being targeted with the RFP.

Sample Language: The projects described herein have [*#*] objectives:

1. Assess the condition of [*INSERT ECOSYSTEM OR HUMAN USE CATEGORY (I.E., CONSUMPTIVE OR NON-CONSUMPTIVE) HERE*] inside and outside MPAs in the [*INSERT TARGET REGION(S) OR STATEWIDE*]. Activities must focus on the sites identified in the Scope (see Section X) and metrics identified in the Statewide MPA Monitoring Action Plan.

2. Assess the trend in condition of [*INSERT ECOSYSTEM OR HUMAN USE CATEGORY (I.E., CONSUMPTIVE OR NON-CONSUMPTIVE) HERE*] inside and outside MPAs in the [*INSERT TARGET REGION(S) OR STATEWIDE*]. This should include using newly collected data together with data from the baseline monitoring program and other existing data, where available.

[*INSERT ADDITIONAL OBJECTIVE(s) HERE, AS IDENTIFIED*]

Section 4: Scope

Instructions: This section will describe the geographic (list of recommended sites), temporal, and scientific scope for proposals.

Section 5: Guidance and Deliverables

Instructions: This section will describe the programmatic guidelines (e.g., focus on objectives, importance of a partnership-based approach) and expected deliverables (e.g., data and metadata, progress reports, final report).

Section 6: Application and Submission Information

Instructions: This section will include requirements and guidelines for developing and submitting application packages, including proposal components (e.g., cover letter, narrative, budget with match/leveraging) and other required documents (e.g., curriculum vitae, letters of support).

Section 7: Proposal Review

Sample Language: [*AGENCY/ORGANIZATION*] will evaluate submissions against the following criteria:

1) *Relevance and applicability to the objectives of the Statewide MPA Monitoring Program*: Assessment of alignment of project goals with the Monitoring Program objectives, including:

   • Efficiencies in data collection to address multiple program priorities

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- Ability to conduct paired (inside-outside) monitoring of priority MPAs at the sampling frequency and scope identified for the target ecosystem or human use category (i.e., consumptive or non-consumptive)

2) *Scientific/technical merit*: Assessment of the conceptual framing and technical approaches proposed to achieve project goals

3) *Partnerships, collaborations, and local expertise*: Assessment of whether the proposal takes best advantage of the knowledge and capacity existing within the [*INSERT TARGET REGION(S) OR STATEWIDE*], including broad partnerships (e.g., tribes, citizen scientists, fishermen) and multiple forms of science (e.g., Indigenous traditional knowledge, fishermen's knowledge, local knowledge)

4) *Project costs and funding leverage*: Assessment of cost-effectiveness, including project cost relative to Monitoring Program objectives (see above), and assessment of ability to leverage other available funds to conduct the project, to reach a minimum of [*XX*]% matching funds

5) *Qualifications of project lead(s) and demonstrated access to facilities and resources*: Assessment of whether the applicants possess the necessary knowledge, experience, training, facilities and resources to complete the project

6) *Project management experience, expertise, and skills*: Assessment of multiple facets of project management, including a proven track record in completing contracts on-time and within budget, experience managing and working in multi-party, multidisciplinary teams, and communication skills. Communication skills include the ability to provide clear and effective communication of project goals, approaches and results to diverse audiences interested in monitoring information.

[*ADDITIONAL SELECTION CRITERIA: Additional selection criteria should be added that are specific to the announcement described in the RFP.*]

When considered together, these criteria will provide the basis for evaluating the overall value of each submission with the aim of securing the most advantageous arrangement to meet the program objectives. Selection of the preferred Consultant(s) is expected to be a two-step process in which short-listed applicants will be contacted for follow-up telephone and/or in-person meetings. Should more than one applicant advance beyond step one, these short-listed applicants may be requested to make brief presentations in support of their applications. We expect that Consultant(s) will be selected by [*DATE*].

Section 8: Selection Process

Instructions: This section will include a description of the review & selection process, which may vary based on the specifics of the announcement described.

Contacts

Questions may be directed to [*NAME*], [*TITLE*], [*ORGANIZATION*], at [*EMAIL*] or [*PHONE*].

Appendix B. Expressions of Interest: Overview and Process Design

Background

As the regional baselines near completion, California is designing and implementing Phase 2 of the Statewide MPA Monitoring Program -- long-term, statewide monitoring. Phase 2, reflects current State priorities and management needs, while building on the knowledge, capacity, and unique considerations for each region. With an efficient, leveraged, long-term monitoring program, California is delivering on data and information that support near-term and long-term decisions.

Strategic investments in research and development and long-term monitoring can advance us toward programmatic objectives, from addressing short- and long-term evaluation questions to advancing technology and fundamental research to improve MPA monitoring approaches. To advance the efficacy and efficiency of the MPA Monitoring Program, a transparent and competitive process is needed to select contractors for future work in these areas.

Expressions of Interest (EOI) are one of the ways in which companies, NGOs, foundations, and governmental organizations can begin the grant or contracting process. It is one of several options for proposal processes from which either all or just one can be done, depending upon the needs of the funder (See Table 1). EOIs are often done earlier in the granting process, than, for example, a Request for Qualifications, especially when either the institutions interested or the types of solutions or research needed to address the scientific or industry problem are largely unknown.
California intends to use an EOI for the following purposes:

- To create a short list of vendors from which to solicit full proposals later in a process/ get applicants interested in applying with a full proposal later in the process.

- To solicit for research and monitoring in support of the program for which matching funds are already in hand from other sources (e.g. NOAA, NSF, SeaGrant, State General Funds).

Table 1: A short description of the different types of proposal solicitations and associated terminology.

Type of process (in order of specificity)	Purpose/Outcome
Request (or Registration) for information (RFI)	• Determining stakeholder and client interest and needs • Supplier pre-qualification process (get on list to submit EOIs or proposals later)
Expression of Interest (EOI)	• Determine interest of researchers, consultants, NGOs, etc. • Help scope final RFP/RFO/RFQ
Request for Proposals/Request for Offer (RFP/RFO)	• Open ended solicitation of proposals where innovative solutions or flexible solutions are preferred
Request for Qualifications or Quotation (RFQ)	• Clearly defined needs and approach provided by funder

Developing the EOI Announcement

The first step in developing the EOI announcement should be to identify the priority questions/topics prior to each release. The team should work together to decide upon a timeline, process, key partners, and level of detail for developing this information.

Once the priority questions are developed the team can then create the EOI announcement itself. EOIs can contain a wide array of information provided by the funder about the opportunity, including details about information requested from the applicant. We have provided an initial list of both of these for the group to consider when crafting the EOI announcement. The end of this document contains links to example EOI announcements. The goal length for the entire EOI announcement should be 2-4 pages.

Other example EOI announcements include some of the following information by the funder:

- Clearly define the opportunity and/or project

- Provide a solid process plan with timelines

- Clearly stated priorities

- Include a general outline of the evaluation criteria for the subsequent proposal submission, evaluation, and selection process

- Address potential questions (e.g., FAQs such as who is eligible to apply)

- Submission length and required content

- Invite those who are interested to respond

- Amount range; year range up for grabs

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Applicants are often asked to provide the following information in their EOI:

- Team/partners and key personnel

- Relevant experience, submitted as a resume or curriculum vitae (*often an evaluation criterion*)

- Approach to the project (1-2 paragraphs)

- Scientific merit (*often an evaluation criterion*)

- How the proposal is in alignment with the funder stated priorities (*often an evaluation criterion*)

- Any current, pending, or potential matching funds (*submitted as an attachment with all funds listed with grantor, title, award amount, etc.*)

- Details about matching funds, in kind support, etc. (*often an evaluation criterion*)

- Relevant supporting documents (e.g., funded research proposal(s) for matching funds, resume/curriculum vitae, letters of support from project partners, etc.)

Solicitation, Evaluation, & Selection Processes

EOI announcements should have a relatively clearly delineated process for soliciting, evaluating, and selecting applicants from whom to solicit full proposals. Likewise, the proposals received should also have a clearly delineated evaluation and selection process.

Questions and examples for consideration are provided below for each of three process steps:

Solicitation

Questions and issues to address include:

- How will the solicitation be publicized and through what channels

    o OceanSpaces blog & newsletter

    o CDFW blog

    o OPC listserv

    o Ocean Science Trust newsletter

    o Collaborative Network newsletter

    o OPC-SAT: request members send it through their home institution channels

    o Tribes: consider sending out letters, presenting at a Fish and Game Commission Tribal Committee Meeting, regional Tribal Chairmen's Association Meetings, and other formal bodies

    o MPA Statewide Leadership Team: request members send it through their agency/organization channels

    o FGC Marine Resources Committee: consider presenting at a Committee meeting

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- o Secretary Laird's twitter feed

- o FGC: consider requesting Craig Shuman include this in his Marine Region update or make an announcement during the public comment period at relevant/upcoming FGC Meeting (if timing works out)

- How will we ensure to reach and appeal to the right depth and breadth of teams to apply?

    - o Distribution to the above list

    - o Appeal: Invite academic creativity and innovation in the project described in the EOI.

    - o Breadth: Evaluation criteria and expression of prioritization emphasize partnerships, interdisciplinary approaches (if applicable), etc.

- How often is the EOI announcement released? (e.g., rolling/always open? open period once per year or twice per year? if not rolling/always open, what time of year?)

    - o Funding cycle may govern this – open period once a year may make sense, from a funding perspective

    - o Timing of the first release -- need to consider R&D needs in upcoming funding cycle (FY17.18), and future data collection needs in FY18.19 funding cycle

Evaluation

Evaluation criteria vary depending on the funder, type of grant, and monetary amount. Evaluation criteria can be very project specific. Evaluation criteria can also be made to be very general. The team should work together to determine which level of criteria or combination thereof makes the most sense for this particular EOI process (and proposals), considering Monitoring Program goals to decide priority evaluation criteria. Example evaluation criteria are provided below:

- Relevance and applicability to priorities of the Monitoring Program: Assessment of alignment of project goals with the Monitoring Program purposes and priorities

- Scientific/technical merit: The degree to which the proposed project is innovative and will advance the state of the science or discipline through rigorous, state-of-the-art research.

- Users, participants and partnerships: The degree to which users or potential users of the results of the proposed project have been brought into the planning of the project, will be brought into the execution of the project, and will use results. Researchers must work with end-users to develop relevant proposals. Demonstrated knowledge, partnerships, relationships, collaborations or other mechanisms for bringing users and partners into the project.

- Project costs and funding leverage: Description of funds already secured or under development for the proposed project. Demonstrated efficiencies in data collection, partnerships, etc.

- Qualifications of project lead(s) and demonstrated access to facilities and resources: Assessment of whether the applicants possess the necessary knowledge, experience, training, facilities and resources to complete the project

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- Project management experience, expertise, and skills: Assessment of project management, including a proven track record in completing contracts on-time and within budget, experience managing and working in multi-party, multidisciplinary teams. Demonstrated list of grants, bringing projects to completion, delivering on contracts and grants, etc.

- Communication/Outreach component: Include the ability to provide clear and effective communication of project goals, approaches, and results to diverse audiences interested in monitoring information. Ability to create text, figures, documents for a variety of audiences outside of academia. Demonstrated established channels or partnerships on project team for outreach efforts.

- Timeliness/Urgency of the research: Due to changing ocean conditions as a result of both human and natural causes, priority given to research addressing issues needing immediate attention can arise and are not amenable to waiting until the next funding cycle.

- Proof of concept/Preliminary data (*if applicable*): Does the proposal have proof of concept through a previously funded or currently funded pilot project? Does it already have preliminary data in hand to hone a research proposal or leverage existing data?

Evaluation criteria, once selected, need to be weighted for their importance for use in the final scoring process (i.e., scientific/technical merit is 20% of the score, while partnerships is 30%).

Selection

Selecting EOIs to continue on to a full proposal submission often takes the form of peer review for many granting authorities (e.g., Sea Grant, NIH, NSF). Sometimes a peer review panel or committee is selected by the funder and either meets in-person to score and make selections, or reviews and scores independently, submitting their reviews to the funder, who makes a final funding decision. In other cases, the selection process has multiple steps, including independent reviews, followed by an in-person review panel. Examples are provided below:

- National Science Foundation (detailed and clearly delineated approach to their review methodologies): http://www.nsf.gov/bfa/dias/policy/merit_review/

- California Sea Grant: https://caseagrant.ucsd.edu/grants-and-funding/call-for-full-proposals

The project team should decide upon an EOI selection process that takes into consideration:

- How to nominate and select peer reviewers, such as –

  o Who should select the review team?

  o Is there a role for the OPC-SAT?

  o Is there a role for the MPA Statewide Leadership Team?

  o What should the composition of reviewers be? (e.g. one CDFW, One OPC, academic, NOAA, etc.)

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- Does the team remain the same or change from year-to-year or from EOIs to full proposals?

- Are reviewers compensated for their time?

- How to score the EOIs under review: There are many different options – .

    o Average of scored reviews (reviewers score independently): if there is a wide range of scores then this method may not be viable

    o Consensus, following independent reviews and in-person discussion

    o Lead reviewer considers all independent reviews and makes final decision

- What sort of transparency should there be in terms of sharing reviews and providing feedback to teams who submitted EOIs or full proposals?

- How will the reviews be conducted?

    o Independent ("mail-in") review

    o Conference call with review panel/committee

    o In-person workshop

    o Combination of the above

- Is the same review process used for EOIs as for full proposals? Or are different approaches used?

Selected example EOIs

- *Schmidt Ocean Institute*: http://schmidtocean.org/apply/expression-of-interest/
Partial list of example evaluation criteria from the Schmidt Ocean Institute (full list here: http://schmidtocean.org/apply/expression-of-interest/) –

    Opportunities for the advancement of ocean research technologies, practices, and method: Do the project objectives include R&D, prototyping, or testing of new oceanographic technologies, practices, or methods? How significant are the implications of the proposed technology/methodology R&D for ocean sciences? How clearly is the proposed R&D approach articulated? How well does the proposed R&D approach address the key pertinent project challenges?

    Evidence of significant intrinsic intellectual merit and impact potential: How important is the proposed research for ocean sciences? How significant are the implications of the proposed research for the society? What is the quality of the proposed research plan? How comprehensively does the proposed research plan address the stated project objectives?

- *Florida Sea Grant*: https://www.flseagrant.org/funding/open/biennial_call_for_proposals/

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Example evaluation criteria from Florida Sea Grant EOI announcement –

Scientific Merit: The degree to which the proposed project is innovative and will advance the state of the science or discipline through rigorous state-of-the-art research.

Users, Participants and Partnerships: The degree to which users or potential users of the results of the proposed project have been brought into the planning of the project, will be brought into the execution of the project, and will use results. Researchers must work with end-users to develop relevant proposals.

Expected Results, Applications and Benefits: The degree to which the completed project is expected to create new commercial opportunities, improve technological and economic efficiency, promote environmental sustainability, or improve management decisions, in Florida or possibly nationally.

- ***European Science Foundation***: http://www.esf.org/index.php?eID=tx_nawsecuredl&u=0&g=0&t=1471543933&hash=1623a13d905e0f82eac3f0e525d1ac3395b86256&file=fileadmin/be_user/activities/Career_Tracking/CT_CALL_TEXT_final.pdf