Criteria Used for Evaluating Project Investigation Plans for the 2024 Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program

To be eligible for funding, project narratives or investigation plans must have a direct linkage to a subsistence fishery within a Federal Conservation System Unit. Project proposals will be evaluated using the following five equally weighted criteria and scored up to 20 points in each criterion.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

The Office of Subsistence Management is targeting this Funding Opportunity towards projects that address specific priority information needs. The **2024 Priority Information Needs** can be accessed at the Monitoring Program's webpage at https://www.doi.gov/subsistence/frmp/funding. Applicants wishing to address information needs other than those identified in the list must include compelling rationale regarding strategic importance and application to Federal subsistence management. To assist in evaluation of submittals for projects previously funded under the Monitoring Program, investigators must summarize project findings in their investigation plans. This summary should clearly and concisely document project performance, key findings, and uses of collected information for Federal subsistence management. Applicants must demonstrate how a proposed project will address a strategic priority information need. Projects should address the following topics to demonstrate links to strategic priorities:

- Federal jurisdiction—The extent of Federal public waters in or nearby the project area
- Direct subsistence fisheries management implications
- Conservation mandate—Threat or risk to conservation of species and populations that support subsistence fisheries
- Potential impacts on the subsistence priority—Risk that subsistence harvest users' goals will not be met.
- Data gaps—Amount of information available to support subsistence management and how this project answers specific questions related to these gaps.
- Role of the resource—Contribution of a species to a subsistence harvest (number of villages affected, pounds of fish harvested, miles of river) and qualitative significance (cultural value, unique seasonal role).
- Local concern—Level of user concerns over subsistence harvests (upstream vs. downstream allocation, effects of recreational use, changes in fish abundance and population characteristics).

TECHNICAL-SCIENTIFIC MERIT

Technical quality of study designs must meet accepted standards for information collection, compilation, analysis, and reporting. To demonstrate technical and scientific merit, applicants should describe how projects will:

- Advance science
- Answer immediate subsistence management or conservation concerns
- Have rigorous sampling and/or research designs

- Have specific, measurable, realistic, clearly stated, and achievable (attainable within the project's proposed project period) objectives
- Incorporate traditional knowledge and methods

Data collection, compilation, analysis, and reporting procedures should be clearly stated. Analytical procedures should be understandable to the non-scientific community.

To assist in evaluation of submittals for continuing projects previously funded under the Monitoring Program, summarize project findings and justify continuation of the project, placing the proposed work in context with the ongoing work being accomplished.

INVESTIGATOR ABILITY AND RESOURCES

Investigators must show they are capable of successfully completing the proposed project by providing information on the ability (training, education, experience, and letters of support) and resources (technical and administrative) they possess to conduct the work.

Investigators that have received funding in the past, via the Monitoring Program or other sources, will be evaluated and scored on their past performance, including fulfillment of meeting deliverable and financial accountability deadlines.

A record of failure to submit reports or delinquent submittal of reports will be considered when rating investigator ability and resource. New investigators may want to provide letters of support to demonstrate abilities and resources.

PARTNERSHIP AND CAPACITY BUILDING

Investigators must demonstrate that capacity building has already reached the communication or partnership development stage during proposal development, and, ideally, include a strategy to develop capacity building to higher levels, while recognizing that in some situations higher level involvement may not be desired or feasible by local organizations.

Investigators are requested to include a strategy for integrating local capacity development in their study plans or research designs. Investigators should inform communities and regional organizations in the area where work is to be conducted about their project plans, and they should also consult and communicate with local communities to ensure that local knowledge is utilized and concerns are addressed. Investigators and their organizations should demonstrate their ability to maintain effective local relationships and commitment to capacity building. This includes a plan to facilitate and develop partnerships so that investigators, communities, and regional organizations can pursue and achieve the most meaningful level of involvement. Proposals demonstrating multiple, highly collaborative efforts with rural community members or Alaska Native Organizations are encouraged.

Successful capacity building requires developing trust and dialogue among investigators, local communities, and regional organizations. Investigators need to be flexible in modifying their work plan in response to local knowledge, issues, and concerns, and must also understand that capacity building is a reciprocal process in which all participants share and gain valuable knowledge. The reciprocal nature of the capacity building component(s) should be clearly demonstrated in proposals.

Investigators are encouraged to develop the highest level of community and regional collaboration that is practical including joining as co-investigators.

Capacity can be built by increasing the technical capabilities of rural communities and Alaska Native Organizations. This can be accomplished via several methods, including increased technical experience for individuals and the acquisition of necessary gear and equipment. Increased technical experience would include all areas of project management including logistics, financial accountability, implementation, and administration. Other examples may include internships or providing opportunities within the project for outreach, modeling, sampling design, or project specific training. Another would be the acquisition of equipment that could be transferred to rural communities and tribal organizations upon the conclusion of the project.

A "meaningful partner" is a partner that is actively engaged in one or more aspects of project design, logistics, implementation, and reporting requirements. Someone who simply agrees with the concept or provides a cursory look at the proposal is not a meaningful partner.

Any letters of support from local communities or organizations that will either support or partner on the proposed project must be included in the Application Package. Letters should be addressed to the Assistant Regional Director of the Office of Subsistence Management.

COST/BENEFIT

This criterion evaluates the reasonableness (what a prudent person would pay) of the funding requested to provide benefits to the Federal Subsistence Management Program. Benefits could be tangible or intangible. Examples of tangible outcomes include data sets that directly inform management decisions or fill knowledge gaps and opportunities for youth or local resident involvement in monitoring, research and/or resource management efforts. Examples of possible intangible goals and objectives include enhanced relationships and communications between managers and communities, partnerships and collaborations on critical resource issues and potential for increased capacity within both communities and agencies.

Applicants should be aware that the Government shall perform a "best value analysis" and the selection for award shall be made to the applicant whose proposal is most advantageous to the Government. The Office of Subsistence Management strives to maximize program efficiency by encouraging cost sharing, partnerships, and collaboration.