EXAMPLE 2-YR CYCLE OF RESEARCH COORDINATOR ACTIVITIES
(this follows the RFP cycle so starts in mid-summer)

Drafted by: Valerie Brady, Mary Newton-Lima, Alan Desbonnet, Mona Behl, Sam Lake
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NOTE: this document is not official guidance per the National Sea Grant Office, and is not intended to supersede official job descriptions put in place by a Research Coordinator's home institution and supervisor.

A major strength of the Sea Grant Network is the ability to tailor national priorities to local needs. Each state Sea Grant program shapes their competitions slightly differently and at different times of the year. The purpose of this document is to outline Research Coordinator (RC) activities during an example two-year cycle. It was developed using the collective experience of the Research Coordinator Network, as of February 2021. Most programs run biennial research competitions in cycle with the rest of the Sea Grant network, and this two-year plan takes that cycle into account. However, your program may also run annual competitions, adding additional responsibilities in any given year. Also, it is important to note that reporting requirements often change, and not all reporting and fiscal responsibilities and decisions are up to the RC.

YEAR 1:

<u>Summer-Early Fall:</u>
Fellowships:
- Notify applicants about the decision of their fellowship applications (from prev. early spring).
- Mid-year Research Program Performance Report (RPPR) reports due for current Knauss Fellows.

RFP:
- Decide primary foci of biennial research competition (RCs typically discuss with the state Sea Grant program director to determine these priorities. Many programs poll their extension educators, advisory boards/committees, and/or communities they serve to determine research needs.)
- Determine the process for running a biennial research competition. This includes: determining whether or not the competition will have a pre-proposal phase (pre-proposals are not required, so some programs may choose to solicit only full proposals), drafting a timeline for soliciting proposals, determining a process for proposal evaluation (includes recruiting out-of-state experts for peer review and technical review panel) and determining ways in which proposals shall be received by the state Sea Grant program (many programs use eSeaGrant, a third-party software program specifically designed for Sea Grant programs to facilitate management of RFP and annual reporting tasks).

<u>Fall:</u>
RFP:
- Draft request for proposals (RFP). Follow Competition Policy from NSGO and Good Practices guidance from the RCN (see https://seagrant.noaa.gov/insideseagrant/Implementation)
- Please note that all RFPs must be sent to the assigned NSGO program officer for concurrence prior to publication and distribution (allow for up to 10 days review period).
- Work with your webmaster or communications personnel to prepare a website for a new RFP.
- Create/update proposal submission system/platform for receiving pre-proposals or letters of intent. (Note that a pre-proposal step is not required and some programs move straight to proposals)
- Distribute RFP broadly leveraging communications department, listservs, and social media promotion.

The aforementioned steps are applicable to regional research competitions as well. For a joint or multi-program RFP, usually one program takes the lead and joint proposals are submitted through only one of the collaborating Sea Grant programs. This is not the only option, and other options are outlined in the RCN good practices document.

<u>Mid-Late Fall:</u>
Fellowships:

- Fellowship deadlines and guidance are released by NSGO; watch for [Knauss Marine Policy Fellowship Program](#), [Coastal Management and Digital Coast Fellowship Program](#), and [NMFS/Sea Grant Population Dynamics/Marine Resource Economics](#) fellowships announcements.
  - Most Sea Grant programs update the fellowship section of their website with the new information, broadly disseminate information about these opportunities, and may post fliers, give seminars, and/or host webinars to attract and recruit diverse applicants, usually in late fall/early winter.
  - Set up/update proposal submission system/platform to accept fellowship applications, which are typically due in late January through February.
- Collaborate with Fiscal Officer and others to arrange travel to Washington, D.C. for Placement Week for successful Knauss Finalists.

Late Fall/Early Winter:
Fellowships:
- Host webinars and give seminars, as appropriate.
- Collaborate with Fiscal Officer and others to help Knauss Fellows in their transition to, or away from, Washington, D.C. at the beginning/end of their fellowship year.

Omnibus:
- Omnibus annual RPPR due through grants.gov at the end of November.

RFP:
- Release RFP.
  - Update website; Set up/update proposal submission system/platform to accept applications, etc.
- Broadly share information and engage in research outreach to recruit diverse applicants (Many programs host webinars for potential applicants).
- Set up a merit review process for pre-proposal evaluation, if using (e.g., review panel, review criteria; this will be outlined in your RFP).

NSGO Funding Opportunities:
- The NSGO releases [National Strategic Investments (NSI) and co-sponsored research competitions](#) as early as November each year. Additional funding opportunities may continue to be released throughout the spring.
- Broadly share opportunities with researchers in your local network, connect researchers to each other and/or extension staff, and sometimes serve as a PI.
- Collaborate with Fiscal Officer to answer questions alongside NSGO staff.

Late Winter:
Fellowships:
- Accept fellowship applications.
- Arrange for fellowship applicants to be interviewed by the state Sea Grant program director.
- Set up a merit review panel for evaluating fellowship applications to determine nominations for various fellowship competitions (each Sea Grant program can typically

nominate up to 6 applicants for the Knauss Marine Policy Fellowship Program, and 3-4 finalists for the Coastal Management and Digital Coastal Fellowship Program, depending on the year).
- Final RPPR reports due for Knauss Fellows who are completing their fellowship.

RFP:
- Accept pre-proposal applications and implement the merit review process to evaluate the applications.
- Notify all applicants of the decisions following the pre-proposal merit review process (see NSGO policy).
- Ensure that the application management system (eSeaGrant or any other platform that the program uses) is ready to receive full proposals. Some programs host a webinar for applicants to walk them through proposal steps. (Pro-tip: Begin identifying potential reviewers based on pre-proposal topics. Start this process early).

NSGO Funding Opportunities:
- The NSGO may release additional competitions that are open to any PI or restricted to state Sea Grant programs until April.
- Share opportunities with researchers in your network, connect researchers to each other and/or extension staff, and sometimes serve as a PI.
- Collaborate with Fiscal Officer to answer questions alongside NSGO staff.

Early Spring-early summer:
Fellowships:
- Collaborate with Fiscal Officer to complete fellowship application packets (budgets, federal forms, etc.) and submit to NSGO by the competition deadline.
- Respond to NSGO requests for information about the state competition process.

RFP:
- Accept full proposals; review proposals for meeting minimum requirements.
- Prepare proposals for the merit review process and package full proposals for written peer review (e.g., remove identifying information if you have chosen to do blind reviews; compile all into a PDF if not using an online submission system).
- Send full proposals out for 3 written peer reviews each.
- Identify experts for the review panel and reserve the date. Most programs host virtual panels due to the cost and difficulty of organizing in-person panels, but some programs prefer to host them in-person.
- Check with the director to determine how and when the advisory board/committee is consulted on proposals and get this set up.

Previously funded proposals:
- Request an annual report (or final report, as necessary) from PIs who have on-going or just-ending projects. Report forms should be structured so that they solicit all pertinent information that needs to be submitted in PIER. Request PDFs of theses, dissertations, and manuscripts for submission to the Sea Grant library.

- Collaborate with your Communications group to submit annual report components (usually due in PIER in early June).

NSGO Funding Opportunities:
- Selections and announcements are generally made by June.

YEAR 2:

<u>Summer-Early Fall:</u>
Fellowships:
- Notify applicants about the decision of the success of their fellowship applications (follow guidance from NSGO on when to communicate fellowship announcements more broadly; work with your Communications group to coordinate this effort).
- Mid-year RPPR report due for current Knauss Fellows.

RFP:
- Provide written peer reviews and full proposals to review panel members. Host review panel and then relevancy review panel (if your program does this). (Note: some programs allow PIs to respond to written peer review comments at this point and show these responses to the review panel.)
- Based on merit review and selection criteria outlined in your RFP, the program director selects proposals to recommend for funding. Work with the director to write a Letter of Intent (LOI) to the program officer detailing which proposals have been selected for funding, details of the merit review process, and the scores of all proposals. See NSGO competition policy and RCN good practices documents for more details.
- After receiving concurrence from the program officer, notify all applicants about the status of their application. Most programs provide blinded review comments to PIs at this time.
- Work with Fiscal Officer to complete and/or ensure accuracy of all forms (particularly, 90-2 and 90-4 forms and budgets) for all proposals selected for funding.
- Ensure all proposals submit data management plans and assist PIs with Abbreviated Environmental Compliance (NEPA) forms, as necessary (a NEPA form will be required for almost all proposals, see NEPA guidance). Remember to collect copies of all required permits for field activities.

<u>Mid-Late Fall:</u>
Fellowships:
- Fellowship deadlines and guidance are released by NSGO; watch for Knauss Marine Policy Fellowship Program, Coastal Management and Digital Coast Fellowship Program, and NMFS-SG Fellowship Program announcements.
  - Most Sea Grant programs update the fellowship section of their website with the new information, send out emails about these opportunities, and may post fliers, give seminars, and/or host webinars to attract and recruit diverse applicants, usually in late fall/early winter.

- o Set up/update system to accept fellowship applications, which are typically due in late January through February.
- Collaborate with Fiscal Officer and others to arrange travel to Washington, D.C. for placement week for successful Knauss Finalist(s).

RFP:
- Collaborate with Fiscal Officer to submit the recommended proposals for approval to NOAA through the Grants Online system, via their home institution's sponsored program office. Proposals will either be included with program application materials for the new omnibus, or submitted to the existing omnibus award using an Award Action Request to satisfy the Specific Award Conditions for the appropriate Future Competed Placeholder project. If this is a new omnibus submission, RC may work with the Fiscal Officer to integrate the competitively selected research proposals with the omnibus proposal. The due date for Grants Online submission (whether omnibus or an award action request) is typically end of October.
  Note: Do not submit reviews, scores, or the LOI with the grants online package.
- Ensure that selected PIs know that they have only been "recommended" for funding and that the decision is not official until the NSGO approves these awards. Also notify selected PIs that funding is dependent on timing and decisions related to congressional appropriations for the National Sea Grant College Program.
- Notify non-selected PIs and provide them with blinded reviews, if this has not already been done.

Late Fall/Early Winter:
Fellowships:
- Host webinars and give seminars as appropriate.
- Collaborate with Fiscal Officer and others to help Knauss Fellow(s) transition to, or away from, Washington D.C. at the beginning/end of their fellowship year.

RFP:
- Many PIs will not begin permitting processes until after you have notified them of the tentative selection for funding. So during this time PIs should be working to gather necessary permits to collect field data. Follow up with all PIs that have outstanding permit requirements.

Omnibus:
- Omnibus annual RPPR due through grants.gov at the end of November.

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Fellowships:
- Accept fellowship applications.
- Arrange for fellowship applicants to be interviewed by the Sea Grant director.
- Set up a merit review panel for evaluating fellowship applications to determine nominations for various fellowship competitions (each Sea Grant program can typically nominate up to 6 applicants for the Knauss Marine Policy Fellowship Program, and 3-4 for the Coastal Management and Digital Coastal Fellowship Program, depending on the year).
- RPPR report due for Knauss Fellows that are already in their fellowship.

RFP:
- Collaborate with Communications group to announce funded projects, once notified of acceptance and approval by Program Officer.
- Once funding arrives, provide selected PIs with policies and procedures for Sea Grant awards and work with Fiscal Officer to get funding to PIs.
- Work with the Fiscal Officer to review any specific award conditions that may have been placed on the award prohibiting activities on particular research projects (most likely for lack of permits or unknown field locations). Gather information from PI as necessary and work with the Fiscal Officer to respond to those specific award conditions.

<u>Early Spring-early summer:</u>
Fellowships:
- Complete fellowship application packets and submit to NSGO by the competition deadline.

Newly funded proposals:
- Request PIs to provide information about undergraduate and graduate students to be supported on their Sea Grant funded research project, including social media handles or other information your communications partners may require. Ask PIs to connect to Sea Grant social media (Twitter, LinkedIn, etc.) and provide their OrcID for easy tracking.

Previously funded proposals:
- Request an annual report (or final report, as necessary) from PIs who have on-going or just-ending projects. Report forms should be structured in a way so that they solicit all pertinent information that is needed to be submitted for the Sea Grant program's annual report in PIER. Request PDFs of theses, dissertations, and manuscripts for submission to the Sea Grant library.
- Collaborate with your Communications group to submit annual report components (usually due in PIER in early June).

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- The NSGO may release additional competitions that are open to any PI or restricted to state Sea Grant programs until April.
- Share opportunities with researchers and/or extension staff in your network, connect researchers to each other and/or to extension staff, and sometimes serve as a PI.

- Collaborate with Fiscal Officer to answer questions alongside NSGO staff.

ANY TIME IN THIS TWO YEAR PERIOD:
- Review the need for NEPA forms for colleagues at your local Sea Grant program who are submitting proposals to NOAA (RCs often serve as the Point of Contact for NEPA forms for their program). Assist colleagues in developing NEPA materials as appropriate.
- Respond to National Strategic Investments, or competitions hosted by the NSGO, by sharing opportunities with researchers in your local network, connecting researchers to each other or to extension staff, or serving as a PI. It often falls to state or local RCs to answer questions alongside NSGO staff.