

**The National Sea Grant College Program’s
2018-2023 Planning, Implementation and Evaluation (PIE) Policy**

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Overview

This National Sea Grant Office (NSGO) policy document provides the processes to address both the statutory and regulatory requirements of the National Sea Grant College Program (Sea Grant) for strategic planning, program implementation, annual reporting, recertification of programs and determination of merit fund eligibility through evaluation.

Sea Grant is committed to careful planning and rigorous evaluation at both the individual Sea Grant Program¹ and national levels in order to ensure that Sea Grant has meaningful local, regional and national impacts. The revised Planning, Implementation and Evaluation (PIE) system builds on regular assessments and feedback, and more importantly focuses on program improvement. The PIE system includes three phases:

- **Planning** at both the national and state levels that is strategic and ambitious in addressing local, regional, and national needs;
- **Implementation** of strategic plans within each state, with coordinated and collaborative research, outreach, and education activities for the 2018-2023 six-year cycle (four years during standard cycles); and
- **Evaluation** of those efforts in meeting the goals, measures, and objectives set forth in both national and program level strategic plans.

The primary drivers for planning and evaluation are found in the National Sea Grant College Program Act legislation and the Sea Grant College Federal Code of Regulations.

Statutory drivers for planning and evaluation processes reside in Sea Grant’s legislation requirements under the National Sea Grant College Program Act ([33 USC § 1121 et seq](#)) and recent National Sea Grant College Program Amendments Act of 2020 ([S.910](#)).

Regulatory drivers according to the Federal Code of Regulations for the eligibility, qualifications, and responsibility of Sea Grant Programs reside in [15 Code of Federal Regulations \(CFR\) 918.3 and 918.5](#), which states that Sea Grant Programs must meet the criteria encompassed by these categories. In addition, to be eligible as a Sea Grant program, the institution must meet the qualifications set forth above as evaluated by a site review team. As a result of this review, Sea Grant programs must be rated highly in all of the Sea Grant Program *Standards of Excellence* criteria (see Appendix A). Designation will be made on the basis of merit per Sea Grant Federal Regulation [15 CFR 918.4 and 918.6](#) upon the ability to maintain a high quality of performance consistent with the requirement outlined above.

¹ Sea Grant College Programs, Sea Grant Institutional Programs, Sea Grant Coherent Area Programs, and the National Sea Grant Law Center are collectively referred to as “Sea Grant Programs” throughout this document.

In 2016, the National Sea Grant Advisory Board (NSGAB) assessed the efficacy and implications of the Planning, Implementation, and Evaluation (PIE) system and recommended revisions to improve and streamline the process where possible. This policy document incorporates many of the 2016 PIE II assessment recommendations for improving the PIE process.

The overall revised PIE system ensures that all programs are managed effectively and continue to meet the *Standards of Excellence* (see Appendix A) expected of all Sea Grant Programs. Sections I-IV below describe each component of the integrated PIE system.

Timeline

The timeline provides a high-level view of three PIE implementation cycles: 2014-2017, *2018-2023 and 2024-2027.

Three Full PIE Cycles	Year3	Year4	Year1	Year2	Year3	Year4	Year1	Year2	Year3	Year4	Year5	Year6	Year1	Year2	Year3	Year4	Year1	Year2
	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029
Strategic Planning	Red	Red			Blue	Blue			Blue		Green	Green						
Implementation			Red	Red	Red	Red	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Green	Green	Green	Green		
Full Cycle Evaluation							Red	Red	**				Blue	Blue				Green

* While the typical PIE timeline consists of up to two years of planning, four years of implementation, and up to two years of evaluation, this timeline was altered for the 2018-2023 cycle.

** Due to the 2019 federal government shutdown, the 2014-2017 full cycle evaluation was completed in 2020.

I. Planning

National Strategic Plan

Strategic planning is a cornerstone of effective program management. Traditionally, every four years, Sea Grant revisits the national strategic plan to determine if it needs to be updated. For this cycle, a temporary change has been made in the traditional process that allows both the national plan and the strategic plans of individual Sea Grant programs to be extended or updated for two additional years of implementation through 2023.

The national strategic plan is completed iteratively with the development of strategic plans for the individual Sea Grant Programs. The national strategic plan priorities serve as the foci for Sea Grant’s next implementation cycle, and the results obtained contribute to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s (NOAA) strategic objectives. NOAA’s strategic priorities, NOAA’s Five-Year Research Plan, OAR’s Strategy 2020-2026, and other relevant national plans provide a broad set of potential priorities for Sea Grant’s national planning effort. Likewise, stakeholder input collected for individual Sea Grant Program planning efforts is integrated with other relevant local and regional plans to identify the most appropriate national priorities. The national strategic

plan includes national focus areas, goals, desired outcomes, performance measures, and metrics that each Sea Grant Program is expected to align with their respective individual strategic plans to the greatest degree possible.

Individual Sea Grant Program Strategic Plans

The national strategic plan serves as the framework for individual Sea Grant Programs to complete their individual strategic plans. The strategic plans of each Sea Grant Program include performance measures and metrics that align with and support national performance measures and metrics for the national focus areas. Since each Sea Grant Program has a unique set of local and regional stakeholders, partners and priorities, the individual Sea Grant program strategic plans are not required to address all of the national focus areas and may include elements that fall outside of the national focus areas.

The strategic plans of Sea Grant Programs are expected to be developed through an inclusive stakeholder process and in collaboration with the assigned federal program officer and approved by the national Sea Grant director.

Strategic planning is key to prioritizing locally and nationally-relevant priorities, effective management and oversight of the Sea Grant programs. The strategic plans of each Sea Grant Program guide and inform requests for proposals (RFPs) and all other research, extension, outreach, and education activities. In addition, the strategic plans of each Sea Grant Program are used as the basis for evaluation. Annual reports and the full cycle evaluation are framed in the context of accomplishments and impacts relative to the goals and objectives outlined in the individual Sea Grant Program's strategic plan during the review period.

The strategic plans of Sea Grant Programs may be adapted to address emerging and/or unexpected needs (e.g., Hurricane Sandy, Deepwater Horizon, Fukushima debris field, etc.). Changes should not be routine and must be approved by the national Sea Grant director with input from the federal program officer. Any proposed changes must be consistent with that program's strategic plan priorities to ensure that the program maintains its approved focus and makes progress towards accomplishing outcomes while adjusting to new trends and opportunities.

Reference:

Planning and other related guidance documents are located on Inside Sea Grant website:
<https://seagrant.noaa.gov/insideseagrant/Planning>

II. Implementation

Implementation happens at different levels within Sea Grant. Once the strategic plans of individual

Sea Grant Programs are approved, the programs have the authority to implement their plans in order to achieve optimal results. Programs consider the local, regional, and national priorities identified during the planning process as they conduct research, outreach, and education activities. These efforts support national priorities. Two-way flow of information and services ensures that Sea Grant actions meet demonstrated needs, help support communities and businesses and enable policy-makers to make balanced, well-informed decisions.

Most implementation activities are funded by federal and matching funds in each Sea Grant Program's omnibus grant; the start and end dates of which correspond with the effective dates of the program strategic plans. However, some activities may be funded from other sources. In areas in which additional investment is needed, the National Sea Grant Office (NSGO) may develop and invest in National Strategic Investments (NSIs), which complement strategic objectives of the individual Sea Grant programs. NSIs have a national focus and are intended to enhance Sea Grant's capabilities (research, education, extension, and outreach) to respond to high priority issues and opportunities. NSI projects are generally selected through annual national competitions.

The PIE system contributes to improved regional and national coordination of Sea Grant activities, identification of new opportunities, fostering external partners, and communicating impacts and accomplishments. For instance, funding competitions, omnibus grant applications and awards have separate reporting requirements but are synchronized to facilitate collaborative efforts among programs. There is a common format for annual reports so that impacts of individual projects and Sea Grant Programs can more easily be synthesized to communicate program accomplishments and nationwide achievements.

Reference:

Implementation and other grant-related policy and guidance documents are located on the Inside Sea Grant website: <https://seagrant.noaa.gov/insideseagrant/Implementation>

III. Evaluation

Sea Grant's program evaluation processes are designed to ensure the greatest benefit for the federal and state/local investments, and they support continued improvement and impact of Sea Grant activities. The major goal of the evaluation process is to help Sea Grant improve. The goals of reporting are to provide data on a routine basis to determine progress being made by individual Sea Grant Programs. The drivers of evaluation are to meet mandates for evaluation and merit, conduct external review to evaluate overall effectiveness of programs, and to improve program performance.

The evaluation system of the individual Sea Grant Programs includes annual and full cycle

evaluations. Annual evaluations include annual reporting and a mid-cycle NSGO Review with feedback to the program. The full cycle evaluation includes site review visits, an external evaluation, and a full cycle NSGO Review. The evaluation system supports continuing feedback and improvement, program recertification and a determination of merit fund eligibility for each program. The integrated components of program reporting and evaluation within Sea Grant are described in more detail in the sections below.

Annual Evaluations

The annual evaluations include review of the program annual report and submission of publications to the Sea Grant Collection at the NOAA Library, discussion(s) with your federal program officer, and a mid-cycle NSGO review after Year 3 of implementation. The goals of annual evaluations are to evaluate progress relative to each Sea Grant Program's strategic plan, which includes assessing common national performance measures and metrics, financial management, and impacts and accomplishments. These reviews are used to evaluate each program's impacts on science, society, economy, and environment according to the priorities set forth in the individual Sea Grant Program strategic plans. Annual reports are also a way for the program to conduct a self-evaluation of its progress toward addressing the national strategic plan. Annual reporting also serves as the basis for the full cycle evaluation.

Annual Reports

Annual reports serve as an opportunity for programs to provide updates on progress and performance and to work closely with their federal program officer to discuss progress, changes, challenges, and successes. The annual reports are used to evaluate each program's impacts according to the priorities set forth in the strategic plans of individual Sea Grant Programs. The annual report is also a source of information about how well the program is progressing towards its strategic goals, and whether the program is changing course, seizing new opportunities, or perhaps not performing in some areas that are important to the program.

Programs submit annual reports through an online database, Planning, Implementation, and Evaluation Resources (PIER). Annual report information provided in PIER is used by each program and the NSGO to evaluate progress relative to the program's strategic plan. These annual reports include estimated level of effort per focus area to demonstrate the amount of effort in dollars dedicated to each national focus area, leveraged funding that programs use to carry out their missions, project impacts and accomplishments, and national performance measures and metrics which track program progress against their strategic plan and thus towards the national strategic plan.

Additionally, each Sea Grant Program submits documents and publications resulting from Sea Grant funded work to the Sea Grant Collection at the NOAA Library. Documents submitted to the Sea Grant Collection serve as supporting records of program achievements.

The annual report and the documents and publications resulting from Sea Grant-funded work are the source of much of the information that NSGO will use to describe the program to the public, NOAA, and Congress, and program review helps ensure the information is accurate and thoughtfully prepared.

After the annual report review, NSGO staff provide feedback, as necessary, to each Sea Grant Program, and the programs then have the opportunity to respond. Constructive feedback on a regular basis provides opportunities for program advancement and improvement.

Reference:

Annual reporting guidance and other annual report supporting documentation is located on the Inside Sea Grant website: <https://seagrants.noaa.gov/insideseagrant/Reporting-Evaluation>

Mid-Cycle NSGO Review

The NSGO staff meets mid-cycle after Year 3 of annual reporting to discuss the progress of each Sea Grant program relative to its strategic plan, and any program opportunities, challenges, and potential improvements to further support the program. The mid-cycle NSGO Review is a qualitative review that looks at progress towards each program's strategic plan as well as impacts emerging from past activities. The mid-cycle review conducted by the NSGO is essential for effective program management. To effectively administer the program, the NSGO must be aware of the activities, accomplishments, opportunities, and challenges faced by the individual Sea Grant Program. The national Sea Grant director utilizes the information provided through annual reports and the mid-cycle NSGO review to effectively convey information about these activities, accomplishments, opportunities, or challenges to NOAA, the Department of Commerce, and Congress.

After the mid-cycle NSGO Review, the NSGO provides feedback to each Sea Grant Program, and the programs then have the opportunity to respond. Constructive feedback on a regular basis provides opportunities for program advancement and improvement, as well as related documentation for this. Program improvement is taken into account as part of the full cycle evaluation.

Full Cycle Evaluation

The full cycle evaluation takes place in or around the year following the expiration of the national and program level strategic plans and looks at the integrated impact of each Sea Grant Program towards that plan and assesses each program's success in meeting the Sea Grant *Standards of Excellence* (Appendix A). The full cycle evaluation process builds on the annual evaluation process and mid-cycle review, and includes a site review visit, an external evaluation and a full cycle NSGO Review that results in program recertification and a determination of merit fund

eligibility for each program.

Site Review Visit

The primary purpose of the site review visit is to help the NSGO determine whether the programs included in Sea Grant are meeting the primary drivers for planning and evaluation processes found in statutory requirements (see Overview above) and that Sea Grant Programs are meeting the Sea Grant *Standards of Excellence* per [Sea Grants Federal Regulations \(15 CFR 918\) \(Appendix A\)](#).

A Site Review Team (SRT) visits Sea Grant Programs to assess, discuss, and report on broad issues related to how the program is managed, the program's impacts, and if the program meets the Sea Grant *Standards of Excellence*. All programs are evaluated, to the extent possible, in a similar manner and against common national performance measure and metric benchmarks. The program's annual reports, the findings from the mid-cycle NSGO review, and the program director's response are included in the materials provided to the SRT during the program site review visit evaluation for consideration.

The SRT is responsible for providing a finding addressing whether the program meets the Sea Grant *Standards of Excellence* and a rating per national focus area for each program that participates within national focus areas as identified in the program's strategic plan.

The SRT uses the site review materials and feedback during the site review visit to determine each program's progress in the four areas within the Sea Grant *Standards of Excellence*:

- Program Management and Organization (organization, program team approach, and support),
- Stakeholder Engagement (relevance, advisory services, and education and training),
- Collaborative Network Activities (relationships and coordination), and
- Performance Review (leadership and productivity).

The site review visit also includes a more in depth review of the performance section of the Sea Grant *Standards of Excellence* to evaluate how effectively the program performed with respect to leadership and productivity. This evaluation will look into the program's progress towards its own strategic plan by the national focus areas. During this review, impacts, accomplishments, and success reaching performance measures will be assessed. The SRT uses the following rating scale to determine progress towards and alignment with national focus areas.

- *Highest Performance* - exceeds expectations by an exceptional margin in most areas/aspects (1)
- *Exceeds Expectations* by a substantial margin in some areas/aspects (2)
- *Meets Expectations* in most areas/aspects (3)
- *Below Expectations* in some areas/aspects (4)
- *Unsuccessful* in most areas/aspects (5)

At the conclusion of each site review visit, the SRT produces a report which describes findings, determines if the program meets the *Standards of Excellence*, provides numerical ratings based on a performance review of the program's national focus areas, and makes suggestions and recommendations to improve the Sea Grant Program's management and organization, stakeholder engagement, networking activities, and performance.

Reference:

Site Visit Guidance is located on the Inside Sea Grant website:

<https://seagrants.noaa.gov/insideseagrant/Reporting-Evaluation>

External Evaluation

After site review visits are complete, the Evaluation Committee of the NSGAB will provide an external review of all the site review visit findings and responses from the Sea Grant programs to ensure that all site review visits were conducted in a consistent and equitable manner. At the conclusion of the external evaluation process, the chair of the Evaluation Committee will report the findings of the Evaluation Committee to the NSGAB for approval. Once findings are approved by the NSGAB, the Evaluation Committee's findings about individual programs will be provided to the national Sea Grant director in advance of the full cycle NSGO review (see below).

Full Cycle NSGO Review

The evaluation process wraps up with a full cycle NSGO Review. The full cycle NSGO Review includes a complete program evaluation review that is based on the findings from the site visit and Evaluation Committee.

During the full cycle NSGO Review, the national Sea Grant director will make the final determination of whether or not an individual Sea Grant Program meets the *Standards of Excellence* and thus if a program is: 1) recertified, 2) eligible for merit funding, and the 3) determination of final merit score. While occurring very rarely, the national Sea Grant director may require a program that doesn't meet the *Standards of Excellence* or has poorly rated performance, to submit a corrective action plan for a particular area that is not meeting standards.

Recertification of the Sea Grant Programs

The Office of Management and Budget, the NSGAB, and other entities have recommended that the Sea Grant Programs be recertified on a reasonable and regular schedule. The full cycle evaluation, including the program site review visit, the Evaluation Committee findings, and full cycle NSGO review, constitutes the program recertification process. A successful review results in recertification of the program for the next four years. Recertification is required for a program to maintain its federal funding.

At the end of the full cycle review process, the national Sea Grant director will submit to each Sea Grant Program a final evaluation and recommendation letter that summarizes the findings from the site review visit and the Evaluation Committee. The letter will include recertification status and details on the program's eligibility for merit funding. If the program is eligible for merit funding the letter will include an overall merit score that determines the estimated amount of merit funding the program will receive over the next four-year cycle.

A determination that a program 'meets' the Sea Grant *Standards of Excellence* per [Sea Grant's Federal Regulations \(15 CFR 918.3\)](#) (Appendix A) results in recertification of the program for the next four-year omnibus cycle. Programs that meet the Sea Grant *Standards of Excellence* are then eligible for merit funding. Recertification and merit funding timelines are below:

- 2010-2013 evaluation results in recertification and merit funding for 2018-2021
- 2014-2017 evaluation results in recertification and merit funding for 2022-2027
- 2018-2023 evaluation results in recertification and merit funding for 2028-2031

If a program does not meet the Sea Grant *Standards of Excellence* based on the program site review visit or if the program's overall performance is determined to be "unsuccessful in most areas/aspects," the program is placed on probationary status. Any program on probation will not be eligible for merit funding. Once a program is on probation, the program will be assessed to determine if the program is making progress towards meeting the Sea Grant *Standards of Excellence* on a yearly basis after each annual reporting cycle. If progress is satisfactory, the program will be allowed to continue on probation until the next site review visit. Any program placed on probation as a result of the site review visit must be rated *Meets expectations in most areas/aspects* or higher in the next site review visit. If, at the next site review visit, the program meets the Sea Grant *Standards of Excellence*, the program is considered recertified. However, if progress toward meeting the Sea Grant *Standards of Excellence* is not being made for two annual reporting years, or if a program does not reach the Sea Grant *Standards of Excellence* for a second consecutive full cycle evaluation, the national Sea Grant director will refer the matter to the NSGAB for consideration of whether to recommend decertification of the program.

Allocation of Merit Funding

A merit pool of funds has been established in the Sea Grant budget to be allocated to individual Sea Grant Programs on the basis of overall performance. If programs are eligible for merit funding, then the individual program's national focus area ratings from the site review visit are used to assign each program an overall merit score. The following rating scale is used during the site review visits:

- *Highest Performance* - exceeds expectations by an exceptional margin in most areas/aspects (1)
- *Exceeds Expectations* by a substantial margin in some areas/aspects (2)

- *Meets Expectations* in most areas/aspects (3)
- *Below Expectations* in some areas/aspects (4)
- *Unsuccessful* in most areas/aspects (5)

The overall merit score and the available funds in the merit pool determine the amount of merit funding a program will receive in the next four-year cycle. For each program the national focus area rating is weighted based on the proportion of funding resources allocated (by estimated level of effort) by the program to that national focus area. A final merit score is determined for each program by weighting the ratings by the proportion of Sea Grant-appropriated funding resources allocated by the program to that focus area. “Sea Grant appropriated funding resources” include all Sea Grant-appropriated funds (federal base and merit funds, and associated match) and all other funds arising from Sea Grant’s appropriation (e.g., aquaculture and other national initiatives) that are managed by programs and used to meet the goals and objectives of the program’s strategic plan. Leveraged funds and pass-through funds (even if passed through Sea Grant) will no longer be included in the calculation of how a program plans for and invests its ‘core’ Sea Grant funding, but will be seen as additional resources that a program obtained to achieve its strategic goals.

For example, if a program allocated 25% of its Sea Grant-appropriated funding resources to the HCE focus area and was rated a 2, allocated 15% of its resources to SFA focus area and was rated a 2, allocated 20% of its resources to RCE focus area and was rated a 3, and allocated 40% of its resources to ELWD focus area and was rated a 3, then it would score an overall weighted rating of 2.6, calculated as follows:

$$\begin{array}{ccccccc} \text{HCE} & & \text{SFA} & & \text{RCE} & & \text{ELWD} \\ [25\% \times 2] + & & [15\% \times 2] + & & [20\% \times 3] + & & [40\% \times 3] & = 2.6 \end{array}$$

The final merit score is 2.6, corresponding to a rating of “*Exceeds Expectations by a substantial margin in some areas/aspects.*” The final merit score determines merit funding levels. Final merit funding levels depend on the size of the merit pool of funds available, which cannot be finalized until Sea Grant’s appropriation levels are known. Any program that does not meet the Sea Grant *Standards of Excellence* based on the site review visit or is on probation will not be eligible for merit funding.

IV. Independent Review Panel

The Evaluation Committee of the NSGAB will also convene an Independent Review Panel (IRP) to provide an external evaluation of the effectiveness of the NSGO and Sea Grant overall. The main purpose is to evaluate Sea Grant in its entirety (i.e., all the individual Sea Grant Programs as well as the NSGO at least once every five years). This approach allows external reviewers to move beyond evaluating recertification and ratings, challenges and progress made in individual

programs, and to consider the broader issues by evaluating the management of the NSGO and the overall impact of Sea Grant. These include identifying areas for growth or improvement, exploring ways to strengthen the Sea Grant network relationships, examining the nature of the individual program's relationship with the NSGO, and the effectiveness of annual evaluation. The IRP is comprised of members from the NSGAB, NOAA, Sea Grant Association (SGA), leaders from academia/industry, and state/federal agencies.

At the conclusion of the IRP process, the chair of the Evaluation Committee will report the findings from the IRP to the NSGAB for approval. The IRP report will also be provided to the individual programs and subsequently shared with Oceanic and Atmospheric Research (OAR) and NOAA leadership and the SGA, and incorporated into the next NSGAB Report to Congress.

V. Report to Congress

“The State of Sea Grant” Report to Congress

The NSGAB provides a “State of Sea Grant” report to Congress as mandated by Sea Grant legislation “at least once every four years on the state of the National Sea Grant College Program and shall notify Congress of any significant changes to the state of the program not later than two years after the submission of such a report.” The report assesses the overall progress of Sea Grant in addressing the focus areas highlighted in the national strategic plan and a summary of research conducted under the program. The report communicates Sea Grant priorities and progress to legislators. The report relies extensively on information collected through PIER from Sea Grant Program annual reports and the subsequent analysis of the national focus areas. It also informs the next network-wide strategic planning process.

Appendix A: Sea Grant Program Standards of Excellence

This section lists the Sea Grant *Standards of Excellence* expected of every Sea Grant Program. This information is in the [Sea Grant's Federal Regulations \(15 CFR 918.3\)](#). The site review teams (SRTs) are responsible for reviewing all of the qualifications set forth below plus “collaboration” (collaboration was added based on a recommendation from the 2006 National Research Council Report, Evaluation of the Sea Grant Review Process). The federal regulations state that Sea Grant Programs “must rate highly in all of the following qualifying areas.”

Site Review Criteria

- **Program Management and Organization**
 - **Organization.** The Sea Grant Program under review must have created the management organization to carry on a viable and productive Sea Grant program and must have the backing of its administration at a sufficiently high level to fulfill its multidisciplinary and multifaceted mandate.
 - **Programmed team approach.** The Sea Grant Program under review must have a programmed team approach to the solution of ocean, coast, watershed and Great Lakes problems which includes relevant, high quality, multidisciplinary research with associated educational and advisory services (e.g., extension and outreach) capable of producing identifiable results.
 - **Support.** The Sea Grant Program under review must have the ability to obtain matching funds from non-federal sources, such as state legislatures, university management, state agencies, business and industry. A diversity of matching fund sources is encouraged as a sign of program vitality and the ability to meet the Sea Grant requirement that funds for the general programs be matched with at least one non-Federal dollar for every two Federal dollars.

- **Stakeholder Engagement**
 - **Relevance.** The Sea Grant Program under review must be relevant to local, state, regional or national opportunities and problems in the ocean, coast, watershed and Great Lakes environment. Important factors in evaluating relevance are the need for ocean, coast, watershed and Great Lakes resource emphasis and the extent to which capabilities have been developed to be responsive to that need.
 - **Extension/Advisory services.** The Sea Grant Program under review must have a strong program through which information, techniques, and research results from any reliable source, domestic or international, may be communicated to and utilized by user communities. In addition to the educational and information dissemination role, the advisory service program (e.g., extension and outreach) must aid in the identification and communication of user communities' research and educational needs.
 - **Education and training.** Education and training must be clearly relevant to national, regional, state and local needs in fields related to ocean, Great Lakes and coastal resources. As appropriate, education may include pre-college, college, post-graduate, public (e.g., outreach events) and adult (e.g. job training) levels.

- **Collaborative Network Activities**

- **Relationships.** The Sea Grant Program under review must have close ties with federal agencies, state agencies and administrations, local authorities, business and industry, and other educational institutions. These ties are: (i) To ensure the relevance of its programs, (ii) to give assistance to the broadest possible audience, (iii) to involve a broad pool of talent in providing this assistance (including universities and other administrative entities outside the Sea Grant Program), and (iv) to assist others in developing research and management competence. The extent and quality of an institution's relationships are critical factors in evaluating the institutional program.
- **Collaboration.** The Sea Grant Program under review must provide leadership in ocean, coast, watershed and Great Lakes activities including coordinated planning and cooperative work with local, state, regional, and federal agencies, other Sea Grant Programs, and non-Sea Grant universities.

- **Performance Review**

- **Leadership.** The Sea Grant Program under review must have achieved recognition as an intellectual and practical leader in marine science, engineering, education and advisory service (e.g., extension and outreach) in its state and region.
- **Productivity.** The Sea Grant Program under review must have demonstrated a degree of productivity (of research results, reports, employed students, service to State agencies and industry, etc.) commensurate with the length of its Sea Grant operations and the level of funding under which it has worked.