A Report of the
Planning, Implementation and Evaluation (PIE) System
By the Evaluation Criteria Working Group
November 2008

Background
The National Research Council (NRC) report, *Evaluation of the Sea Grant Review Process* (2006), made several recommendations for changes and improvements to the process by which Sea Grant programs are assessed. In order to address these recommendations, the National Sea Grant College Program developed an Integrated Planning, Implementation and Evaluation (PIE) System, which functions at both the national and local program levels. This report focuses on the evaluation aspects of the new system.

In the new PIE system, there are four parts to the evaluation process:
- Annual Reports
- Site visits
- Performance Review Panel (PRP)
- National Sea Grant Office Review

In order to develop evaluation criteria for the new PIE system, the National Sea Grant College Program Director formed an Evaluation Criteria Working Group (working group). The charge of this working group was to: (1) develop draft evaluation criteria for the review of state Sea Grant programs objectively; (2) provide guidance on how the NSGO should form an overall rating based on the reviews; (3) provide guidance on how this information may translate into funding for the programs; and, (4) explore how information collected for reviews could be used to support the national and state Sea Grant programs and shared across the programs to help them learn from each others' experience.

Members of this working group include: Sami Grimes (NSGO), Chair, Jim Hurley (NSGO), Russ Moll (SGA), Chuck Hopkinson (SGA), Peter Bell (NSGAB), and Dick West (NSGAB). Shelley Metzenbaum, a performance management and evaluation expert, served as a consultant to this group to help formulate the evaluation criteria. (Shelley Metzenbaum is the director of the Collins Center for Public Management at the McCormack Graduate School of Policy Studies, University of Massachusetts-Boston, where she is establishing a new Center for Public Management. She holds a PhD in public policy from the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University and is also the former head of that school's Performance Management Project.)

The working group held a number of conference calls, and met on July 16-18th, in Silver Spring, MD to draft evaluation criteria for two components of Sea Grant's new evaluation process: 1) the Performance Review Panel (PRP); and, 2) site visits to the Sea Grant Programs. In addition, the working group drafted guidance on how the ratings should translate into resource allocation for the Sea Grant programs.

As a starting point for developing new criteria, the working group considered past Sea Grant evaluation criteria such as those used in the Program Assessment Team (PAT)

system. The PAT Manual (March 2005) provided guidance on program evaluation in four main categories: Organizing and Managing the Program; Connecting with Users; Effective and Aggressive Long-Range Planning; and, Producing Significant Results. The PAT category—Effective and Aggressive Long-Range Planning—will not be among the new criteria since the planning and implementation elements of the new process will ensure that all programs' planning efforts are compatible with national plans and appropriately vetted by the National Sea Grant Office and the National Sea Grant Advisory Board prior to implementation. The working group also considered the following National Research Council (NRC) recommendations:

- Reducing the overall number of scored criteria by combining various existing criteria, while adding cooperative, network-building activities. (Rec. 7)

- Ranking the individual Sea Grant programs based on an evaluation process that includes more robust, credible, and transparent annual assessments. (Rec. 15)[1]

In preparation for this task, the working group reviewed other performance and reporting systems, including the National Institute of Health (NIH), Department of Transportation (DOT), and the National Research Council's report on the metrics for the Climate Change Science Program. The working group also reviewed the PAT Manual (March 2005), Indicators of Performance for Program Evaluation (March 2003), the Integrated Planning, Implementation and Evaluation Document (April 2008), and the new National Sea Grant Strategic Plan (March 2008).

Principles

There were some basic principles that the working group followed/adopted in developing the evaluation criteria. The evaluation criteria should be:

- Consistent, insofar as possible, with relevant recommendations of the National Research Council report, "Evaluation of the Sea Grant Program Review Process."
- Different in terms of purpose, context and structure, between the site visit and PRP processes. Therefore, these differences should be reflected in the two sets of criteria.
- Designed to provide a straightforward, simple, transparent and standard means of translating program performance.
- Developed based on the new Planning, Implementation and Evaluation (PIE) system (April 2008)[2].
- Descriptive so programs understand what is being asked, but not so prescriptive that the criteria impose limitations on both the program and the reviewers.

[1] According to Sea Grant's new legislation, programs will no longer be ranked, but the working group embraces the recommendation of developing an evaluation process that is more robust and transparent.

[2] This document is available at http://www.seagrant.noaa.gov/other/admininfo/nsgonewsletters/integrated_planning_implementation_and_evaluation_system.pdf

Given Sea Grant's new legislation, the working group concluded that an overall score for a program was no longer necessary since ranking is no longer part of the process. This gave the working group more flexibility in deciding options for allocating funding.

Below are recommendations and suggestions for each of the part of the PIE system. In addition, the Draft PIE Manual (Appendix A) includes more details of the PIE system, and is based on the original PIE document (April 2008).

State Strategic Planning

Since the new evaluation system is now tied closely to state plans, the working group discussed the need for programs to make strategic decisions on their investments—an exercise involving more than the alignment of state plans. For programs interested in redeveloping their state plans, the working group suggests that programs be given all of 2009 to complete their 2009/10-2013 plans. A new 2014-2017 national plan will be developed by the National Program and by state programs starting in 2012. (See Draft PIE Manual, page 1 for planning timetable.)

National and State Program Evaluation

Based on the new PIE system, there are four parts to program evaluation: (1) annual reports, (2) site visits, (3) a Performance Review Panel review, and (4) the National Sea Grant Office (NSGO) Fall Review.

(1) Annual Reporting

Annual reports will be used by programs to evaluate progress in meeting performance measures and metrics over a one-year period as outlined in their state plans. These reports will be used by the NSGO, focus teams and programs to track and report progress. They will also be used by site visit and Performance Review Panel members as important sources of information with which to evaluate progress.

In order to simplify program reporting, the working group suggests that all information for site visits and for the PRP be reported through annual reports. Within the new National Information Management System (NIMS), reports tailored for each review could be developed so that the site review team, for example, would only be given the specific set of information needed to evaluate the program based on the site visit evaluation criteria. The working group also suggests amendments should be made to NIMS to allow summary sections of information on a project-by-project level that would be pertinent to the site review team and to the PRP. NIMS should also reflect state plans in some way, so that programs can report back on the measures and metrics listed in their own plans, or request changes within the state plans through NIMS. Finally, NIMS should be updated for the next annual report so that appropriate information is collected based on the new evaluation criteria outlined in the PIE Manual.

(2) Site Visits

Site visits are used to review and discuss the Sea Grant program's management and organization and stakeholder engagement. Consistent with the PIE system document (April 2008), the site visit team will not rate the program, but will report their findings and

recommendations to the NSGO. The report will be based on the site visit criteria, which can be found below and in the Draft PIE Manual (Appendix A).

The NSGO will review the site visit findings during its Fall Review to determine if each program has an acceptable level (no significant issues) of management and stakeholder engagement. If the NSGO determines there are no significant management, organizational or stakeholder concerns, the program will be assessed as "passing" the site visit review. If there are significant issues, the NSGO will take corrective actions with the program to establish a means to address these issues.

Below is a list of questions the working group developed as criteria for the site visit.

Program Management and Organization

- Is the Director engaged with the program?
- Is the host university engaged with the program?
- Is there an active advisory system?
    - Does the advisory system contribute to the strategic plan?
    - How much contact do advisory board members have with constituents of the program?
    - How often does the advisory system meet?
    - How much opportunity exists for new membership (turn over)?
- Is there adequate circulation of RPFs?
- Is there an overall balance of research, extension, and education within the program and are the program's functional areas integrated?
- Is the program transparent (as to what gets funded)?
- Are peer reviews adequate and well designed with clearly identified criteria?
- Are results of funded projects appropriately measured and assessed?
- Is the program a trusted and immediate point of contact for information on coastal and Great Lakes issues?
- Are the program's practices or projects promising and worth sharing?

Stakeholder Engagement

- Is there coordination/cooperation with other federal agencies in the state/region/nation?
- How has the program chosen and developed partnerships?
    - How many and what quality of partnerships exist?
    - How many new partnerships have been formed?
- Are results of the program getting back to appropriate stakeholders?
- Is there clear support from stakeholders for the program's work?

The working group discussed the need for the Federal Program Officer (FPO) to coordinate the site visits with the program and with the review team prior to the review. Each site visit should only last two days, no matter the size of the program, with a day and a half spent with the program, and a remainder of the time spent writing the report and briefing the Sea Grant program on the contents of the site visit report. The Federal

Program Officer will be responsible for the site visit report. The Sea Grant program and the NSGO will receive the final site visit report.

(3) Performance Review Panel (PRP) Evaluation

The Performance Review Panel (PRP) portion of the evaluation will review the programs' accomplishments and impacts towards reaching the goals outlined in the state plans. The state plans will have been aligned to the national plan, and approved by the Director of the National Sea Grant College Program. The PRP will review all Sea Grant programs at the same time and give each program a matrix of ratings from 1 (excellent) to 5 (needs improvement) based on performance relative to the programs' state plans.

The materials the PRP will use for the evaluation include annual reports and program summaries, both of which will be part of the National Information Management System (NIMS).

The working group developed three options outlining what the PRP will rate and which indicators the PRP will use in its review. In each of the three options, state programs are not required to address every focus area. Instead, through the state strategic plan alignment process (several years prior to the evaluation phase), each program will work closely with its FPO to decide which areas the program will address (and therefore be accountable for), and which areas the program will not address (and therefore not be evaluated on). If the state plan changes during the implementation period, the program will need approval from the National Sea Grant College Program Director.

OPTION 1

This matrix is based on the cross-cutting goals of the national plan (the Sea Grant functional areas of research, outreach and education) and the focus areas of the national and state strategic plans.

Cross-cutting Goals	Healthy Coastal Ecosystems	Sustainable Coastal Dev't	Safe & Sust. Seafood Sup.	Hazard Resilience	Other Program focus area(s)[3]
Research					
Outreach					
Education					

Figure 1

Below is a list of questions the working group developed for Option 1 that the PRP will use in its evaluation as indicators of performance.

Research Indicators:

- What are the contributions to science and engineering: new understanding, products, processes, and technology?

[3] The number of columns is determined by the number of focus areas the program has in its state plan.

- How were the contributions made: Seminal publications? Patents? Licenses? Other? What is the area of impact: Local/State? Regional/National? International?
- What has been Sea Grant's role in producing this contribution?
- Who are the partners, if any? What has been their role?
- Would constituents/partners support these claims?
- Are the number of published peer reviewed research papers commensurate with the size of the research program?

Outreach: Extension/Communication Indicators:

- For the stated objectives, did extension produce significant results?
- For the stated objectives, did communications products contribute to significant results?
- Were proven prevention/preparedness practices adopted?
- Did the program reach identified target audiences?

Education Indicators:

- For the stated objectives, did the education program produce significant results?
- What role has the Sea Grant program had in increasing the diversity of students in marine programs?
- Where have Sea Grant-supported graduate students gone following completion of their studies? What have they accomplished?
- How successful has the program been in competitions for: Knauss fellows? Sea Grant/NOAA Fisheries Fellows? Other fellows?
- Are school programs teaching students information provided by SG education materials/workshops/trainings, etc?
- Are schools using curricula developed by Sea Grant?
- Are students, teachers, and members of the public attending SG-funded educational events?

Networking

This category will be rated (1-5) as an overall networking score for the program, and not by focus area. The criteria the PRP will consider for this category are:

- Does the program contribute to the cohesiveness of the network?
- Is there effective communication and collaboration between the program and other Sea Grant programs and with the National Sea Grant Office?
- Does the program support activities that support the overall network?

OPTION 2

In this option, programs will receive a matrix of ratings based on how well they reached their strategic plan goals based on focus areas (only one overall rating per focus area). Programs will not be given a rating in a focus area in which they do not participate.

State Program Plan Goals	Healthy Coastal Ecosystems	Sustainable Coastal Dev't	Safe & Sust. Seafood Sup.	Hazard Resilience	Other Program focus area(s)
Goal 1					
Goal 2					
Goal 3					
Goal 4					

Figure 2

The PRP will evaluate the program against each of the focus areas (with stated goals, strategies/objectives, and performance measures) articulated in the state plan. The PRP will then produce a report for the program and for the NSGO, which will include the matrix of ratings, the program's weaknesses and strengths, recommendations for improvement, and best practices employed by the program.

Below is a list of questions the working group developed for Option 2 that the PRP will use in its evaluation as indicators of performance.

- What resources has the program had to work with to achieve these benefits? Dollars? Human resources?
- What are the economic benefits claimed? How are they presented: Sales? Profits? Jobs?
- New or expanded industries, companies, businesses? Cost savings/productivity improvements?
- What are the social benefits claimed? How are they presented: Improved management of resources? Better-informed public/constituent group on a major issue? Changes in constituent group/public opinions/behavior? Better public health/safety? Other?
- Would constituents/partners support these claims?
- What is the area of impact: Local/State? Regional/National? International?
- Is there a quantitative analysis to support the claims?
- What has been Sea Grant's role in producing this benefit?
- Did the program accomplish what it set out to do in its strategic and implementation plans?
- How does the return on Federal investment—relative to outputs (products) and outcomes/impacts—compare with the stated goals of the state program?
- Although the strategic plan is a "living" document, it is expected to form the basis for most program activities. Were the areas of emphasis consistent with those laid-out in previous strategic plan(s)? Were there clear justifications for any shifts away from those planned priorities?
- Does the program have a process for evaluating its success in meeting planned outcomes? How are those evaluations used?

Networking
Similar to Option 1, this category will be rated (1-5) as an overall networking score for the program, and not by focus area. The criteria the PRP will consider for this category are the same as Option 1, above.

OPTION 3
Option 3 is a hybrid of both Option 1 and Option 2, in which the review matrix is based on the program's state plan, with separate ratings assigned for research, education, outreach and networking, encompassing relevant focus areas (Figure 4).

State Program Plan Goals	Healthy Coastal Ecosystems	Sustainable Coastal Dev't	Safe & Sust. Seafood Sup.	Hazard Resilience	Other Program focus area(s)
Goal 1					
Goal 2					
Goal 3					
Goal 4					

Figure 3 – The indicators that the PRP will consider for this matrix are the ones in Option 2.

Program Element	**Rating**
Research	
Education	
Outreach	
Networking	

Figure 4 – Each of the program elements listed above will be given a rating by the PRP based on the indicators listed above under Option 1.

By majority consensus, the working group suggests that the PRP matrix ratings are the final ratings for the program. Funding decisions should be made based on these PRP ratings if the program passes the site visit portion of the review. If the program does not pass the site visit review, it will not be eligible for merit/program development funding. There are two types of allocation decisions made by the NSGCP Director – one is for program development and the other is for merit. Below are suggested ways in which the NSGCP Director may allocate additional funds.

Program Development:
(1) **Mission-focused corrective action**: This is to assist areas of a program that may need assistance to enhance the overall program. Programs that have a low rating in a particular category, but a high rating in other categories, are eligible for funding. The working group concluded that if many programs were given a low score, then the NSGCP Director may request proposals (outlining a plan for improvement) from the eligible programs and base the funding on those proposals.
(2) **Network incentives:** Additional allocation of funding may be used to help the program achieve goals, outcomes and strategies in the national plans that have not yet been met.

(3) **Measurement money/effectiveness needs assessments:** The Director of the NSGCP may also allocate funding for needs assessment for research, outreach or education projects.

Merit Funding

There are two options for how merit funding can be allocated to programs that are producing significant results at the highest level:

(1) The NSGCP Director may allocate funding for those programs that are rated excellent in a certain row or column of the PRP matrix.

(2) Allocation of funds will be given to the programs based on performance against their state plans and their impacts on society. Programs successful in reaching the goals, strategies, and milestones in their plans will be given the highest rating and the most allocated dollars from the merit pool. Since there is no longer a need to limit the number of programs reaching the highest rating, all programs have the opportunity to receive highest scores in their review.

(4) The NSGO Fall Review

Once every four years, the NSGO Fall Review will decide whether or not a program has performed at a high enough status to be recertified for the next four years. The technical staff of the NSGO will review the PRP reports and ratings, the site visit reports, and the state programs' response memoranda. Based on these findings and program responses, the NSGO will decide to either recertify the program for another four years, or place the program on a probationary period for at least two years (based on unsuccessful ratings and results from the PRP and site visit report).

During this four year review, the NSGO will also decide on the allocation of funds based on the PRP ratings and based upon one of the suggested ways to allocate funding, outlined above.

The working group suggests that there should not be an overall rating of the program at the NSGO fall review; rather, the program will receive a matrix of final ratings from the PRP, a site visit report, and a report from the NSGO stating that the program is either recertified or on probation.

Program Rating Appeal

The working group suggests waiting until after the first PRP takes place in order to see how the system functions before deciding upon an appeal process. The working group realizes that without an appeal, the ratings of the program will remain the same for four years (which the NRC was trying to avoid in its report). A decision on appeals will need to be made soon.

Appendix A

The Integrated Planning,
Implementation and Evaluation (PIE) Manual

The National Sea Grant College Program (NSGCP) places a premium on careful planning and rigorous evaluation at the state program and the national level to ensure both localized and broader impacts for the program as a whole. Better integration of planning, implementation, and evaluation activities maximizes Sea Grant's efficiency and effectiveness at state and national levels and makes the best use of limited resources.

The Planning, Implementation and Evaluation **(**PIE) system begins with strategic planning at both the national and state levels that represents the first two years of an eight year cycle (planning two years, implementation four years, evaluation two years). State Sea Grant programs implement the national and state plans with coordinated and collaborative research, outreach and education activities. Upon completion of research, outreach, and education activities, individual state programs, and the entire National Sea Grant College Program are evaluated to assess the success of these efforts in meeting the objectives set forth in the national and state plans. This is a concurrent and iterative process, in which before the first eight year cycle is complete (Table 1 – red cells), the second eight-year cycle has already begun (Table 1 – blue cells).

	Calendar year											
Activity	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
FY 10-13 strategic planning												
FY 10-13 implementation												
FY 10-13 evaluation												
FY 14-17 strategic planning												
FY 14-17 implementation												
FY 14-17 evaluation												
FY 18-21 strategic planning												
FY 18-21 implementation												
FY 18-21 evaluation												

Table 1: The first two years of the cycle are scheduled for the planning process, the following four years represent the implementation of the program plan, and the last two years is an evaluation of the planned outcomes. This is a concurrent and iterative process, in which before the first eight year cycle is complete (red), the second eight year cycle has already begun (blue).

Sections I, II, III, and IV below, describe each component of the integrated PIE system.

I. PLANNING

A. National Strategic Planning

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Every four years, the National Sea Grant College Program develops a new national strategic plan. At the same time, state Sea Grant programs develop their own strategic plans in order to ensure that state strategic plans reflect national priorities. Likewise, stakeholder input collected for state Sea Grant planning efforts in conjunction with other relevant local and regional plans is used to inform the national planning process. In addition, NOAA's strategic plan, the Ocean Research Priorities Plan (and its successors), NOAA's five-year Research Plan, and other relevant coastal and ocean plans provide national stakeholder input and help set a national context for the plan.

Sea Grant's national strategic plan identifies a limited set of national priorities that serve as the foci for Sea Grant's next four-year implementation cycle. Upon completion of the national strategic plan, the network then develops an implementation plan to provide more detail for action in each of the national priority areas.

National Planning Guidelines:
The national planning process begins with the appointment of a National Sea Grant Strategic Planning Steering Committee with members representing the following organizations: (1) Sea Grant Association, (2) National Sea Grant Advisory Board, (3) a university with ocean/coastal/Great Lake programs, (4) National Sea Grant Office, and (5) a NOAA representative with a thorough understanding of programs and priorities across NOAA line offices. These five Strategic Planning Steering Committee members will serve to accomplish all strategic planning tasks. An experienced strategic planner will facilitate the execution of the planning guidance, serving in an advisory capacity to the Steering Committee, and will be responsible for carrying out the tasks as outlined in this strategic planning framework guidance. This individual, directed by the other five members of the Steering Committee, could report directly to the Steering Committee Chair (if they so choose to nominate/elect such a person). This individual may be an outside consultant or internal to NOAA (i.e., Coastal Services Center).

The planning process takes place about one or two years prior to execution. This ensures ample time for state programs to align their plans to the national plan and also allows sufficient time to develop omnibus proposals that respond to the plan. The process for developing the national plans involves the entire Sea Grant network and includes:

- Planning for both thematic (national ocean, coastal, Great Lake priorities) and functional (research, education, outreach) areas, including review of conditions, performance, and other relevant data;
- Input of stakeholders before the plan is finalized;
- Capturing the "strategic planning landscape" by conducting both top-down and bottom-up assessment – review of existing national and state plans and priorities before finalizing a national plan;
- Making connections to other ocean/coastal/Great Lake agencies and stakeholders, and articulating timelines for completion of a national plan;
- Explaining how the national planning process was "strategic" by elaborating upon the specific strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and niches for Sea Grant;
- Conducting gap and risk analyses in order to identify those priorities and niches; and

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- Recognizing that the continuum of planning stems from a robust national strategic plan to aligned state strategic plans to a supportive and clear implementation plan (with clearly articulated milestones and expected outcomes that can easily be tracked for annual reporting and evaluation) to incorporating a process for the regular evaluation and revision of strategic plans.

It is vital that local, regional and national stakeholders be included in the National Sea Grant College Program strategic planning process. Stakeholders include: NOAA leadership and NOAA line offices and programs, the National Sea Grant Advisory Board, closely allied federal, non-governmental offices, industry partners, and other relevant constituents (with topically significant ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes research, education and outreach portfolios).

The National Plan should include the following elements:

- **Vision:** Defined as a description of the ideal future contribution/state of the organization. A consciously created image of what the organization would ideally like to be.
- **Goals:** Defined as broad strategic positions or conditions which the organization desires to reach. Goals close the gap between the organization's preferred vision and its current status. Ideally, strong goals represent national needs appropriate to Sea Grant's strategic niche; which are sufficiently challenging; and, where Sea Grant can have significant ownership.
- **Priorities:** Defined as the finite areas that will be addressed given consideration of vision, capabilities, finances and competitive position.

B. State Planning

The national strategic and implementation plans serve as the basis for state programs to complete development of their four-year plans. State plans should include metrics and performance measures that align with and support national measures and metrics for a set of national focus/priority areas articulated in the plans. Since each state has its unique set of local and regional stakeholders, partners and priorities, individual program plans will not necessarily address all of the national priority areas, and, the plans may include additional emphases as appropriate.

Programs should develop state plans with assistance from the Sea Grant Federal Program Officer (FPO). All plans will be reviewed and approved by the National Sea Grant Office (NSGO) in consultation with the National Sea Grant Advisory Board.

Sea Grant programs use their plans to guide and inform their requests for proposals. In addition, these plans are used as the basis for subsequent program evaluation (described later in the document). With the understanding that these plans are "living documents," programs may adapt their plans during the implementation phase, subject to approval by the FPO, and changes are documented for eventual evaluation purposes.

It is up to the discretion of the individual Sea Grant programs whether or not to develop both a strategic plan and implementation plan, or to integrate all planning components (goals, objectives/strategies, performance measures, metrics and targets) into the same plan.

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State Strategic Planning Guidelines:
Each program will develop its own plan that addresses its long-range goals and objectives and describes a strategy for achieving the objectives. The plan must align to the national Sea Grant College Program plan for the four-year implementation phase. The state plan should specifically identify resource needs, how program management will meet those needs, and should document the roles and responsibilities of the program within that context.

The process of developing a strategic plan represents the principal mechanism for each Sea Grant institution to set program direction, goals and objectives. Therefore, it is essential that strategic planning has broad input and consensus from the program's major constituents (e.g., the public, advisory groups, university officials).

The plan should describe succinctly the program's vision, focus, goals and performance targets for the coming four-years. An institutional strategic plan may include:

- Brief History, Overview, Context
- Mission Statement
- Planning Process
- Value Statement
- Future Vision
- Specific Goals (programmatic, functional)
- Measurement of Progress Toward Past Goals
- General Strategies
- Resources Needed
- Budget projections
- Evaluation, Review, Monitoring of plan

The NSGO does not intend that all program state plans conform to an identical prescribed format, but rather, expects the planning process to shape program direction and performance.

The strategic planning process should be completed every four years, and the plan may be updated more frequently, as needed. A program will begin the planning process in 2012-13, for the 2014-2017 strategic plan. Interaction with the FPO in the state program planning process is strongly encouraged. The updated strategic plan should be in place in time to guide planning for the next four-year implementation phase.

II. IMPLEMENTATION

A. National Implementation

In order to advise the National Sea Grant College Program on best ways to implement and accomplish the goals and strategies outlined in the national strategic plan, the National Sea Grant Office (NSGO), in conjunction with the Sea Grant Association, established focus teams to help lead and coordinate Sea Grant's activities in the focus areas described in the national plan. The focus teams are charged with drafting a national implementation plan once the strategic plan is developed. Focus teams are also charged with organizing and mobilizing the Sea Grant network to address the goals and objectives defined for each focus area in the national plan. The focus area teams are responsible for:

- Facilitating planning, implementation, synthesizes and reporting of Sea Grant activities and accomplishments in the identified focus areas;

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- Looking across Sea Grant activities within focus areas to find effective programs and practices worth advocating, and promoting their adoption by other Sea Grant programs;
- Identifying new opportunities and directions for national and regional initiatives;
- Catalyzing cooperative efforts among Sea Grant programs, the NSGO, NOAA, other agencies and NGOs; and,
- Providing a mechanism to further solidify Sea Grant's local, regional and national identity.

Focus teams are in place for the duration of the national strategic plan. Members of the teams include representatives from the NSGO, the National Sea Grant Advisory Board, Sea Grant Directors and other network (research, extension, education and communications) and outside expertise (including NOAA), as appropriate. Ideally, a focus team consists of seven to ten members and, members agree to commit a portion of their time to focus team activities for the duration of the four-year implementation phase.

B. State Program Implementation

Sea Grant programs consider the local, regional and national priorities identified in the national and in their own state plans as they implement their research, outreach and education activities. Each program retains the authority to implement its program as it sees fit in order to achieve optimal results.

The PIE system and subsequent changes to program implementation makes it easier for programs to plan and act on a regional and national scale. For instance, project competitions, omnibus grant applications and awards are synchronized to facilitate collaborative efforts among programs. There is a common format for annual reports so that each state program's accomplishments can more easily be synthesized into national impacts.

III. EVALUTION

Sea Grant's program evaluation process shows how its research, outreach and education programs produce local, regional and national impacts related to goals identified in the national and state plans. Program evaluation provides constructive criticism in order to promote the continued improvement of individual state programs and, in turn, the national program. Evaluation also helps guide the national and state Sea Grant programs towards better meeting overall goals, challenges and the charges of Congress.

A. National Evaluation

National focus teams will review the performance of the entire national program each year according to the priorities set forth in the national strategic and implementation plans. Specifically, focus teams will:

- Review annual reports to develop a focus team annual report for each of the focus areas within the national plan.
- Advise the National Sea Grant College Program where adjustments or investments need to be made to reach the goals in the national strategic plan, and suggests ways to reach/accomplish the goals.

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- Provide the basis for the "State of the Sea Grant College Program" Report conducted by the National Sea Grant Advisory Board every two years.

The National Sea Grant College Program is formally reviewed by the National Sea Grant College Program Advisory Board every two years, through the "State of the Sea Grant College Program" Report to Congress.

B. State Program Evaluation

State programs are evaluated according to the priorities set forth in their state plans, and programs are held accountable for collecting the metrics and performance measures established in those plans, studying the measures and other relevant data to guide future action, and applying that information in implementation. Evaluation is a continual process, both internal and external, and involves all facets of the Sea Grant network. Programs are evaluated in three general areas: 1) on their approach to management (via a site visit); 2) on the scope and success of their engagement with stakeholders (via a site visit); and, 3) on the impact their program has on society from both an environmental and a socio-economic perspective (via a Performance Review Panel evaluation). Evaluation is based on the metrics and performance measures established in the national plan and reflected in the state plans, but the process is also intended to recognize that unplanned or rapid-response activities may have significant impact.

Components of the evaluation process include: annual reports, a site visit, a Performance Review Panel evaluation, and an annual National Sea Grant Office review. Each element is described in more detail below.

Annual Reporting

Annual reports are used by programs to document and assess annual progress towards achieving the goals and outcomes presented in their strategic plans. Annual reports are submitted through the National Information Management System (NIMS), and include the following elements: the strategic plan and any updates or modifications, program accomplishments, and program impacts. A summary table of funded projects by focus area is to be included. Also included is a matrix of applicability (to the national plan), in which the program will show the focus areas in which it is invested (and will be held accountable for during the Performance Review Panel evaluation [PRP].) The PRP is described in more detail, below.

In order to simplify and standardize processes for program reporting, all information required for site visits and for the PRP evaluation is submitted by the state programs through annual reporting. Submission/report criteria are tailored for each review (site visit and PRP), ensuring that the respective review teams would receive specific information relevant to their review. Prior to the site visit and PRP evaluation, programs are able to include a summary addendum to their annual report in order to present information that cannot be reported on a project-by-project level but may be pertinent to the site review team and to the PRP. This feature is available at an overall program level, as well as at a focus area level.

Site Visits

Once every four years, a review team visits each Sea Grant program to review program management and organization, and stakeholder engagement over a two-day period. The review

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team is chaired by the FPO, co-chaired by a member of the Advisory Board, and includes a Sea Grant Director. Additional team members may be drawn from outside Sea Grant as needed.

The site visit team is provided with a limited and focused set of briefing materials, which include the program's state plans and annual report information. During a program's site visit, the review team will assess program management and organization, and stakeholder engagement. A report citing best management practices, conclusions and recommendations, if any, to improve the Sea Grant program's performance is written by the site review team and given to the program. There is not a rating tied to the site visit, but the report also goes to the National Sea Grant Office for use in the NSGO Fall Review.

During the site visit, the review team meets with the program's management team, advisory committees, university administration and stakeholders to review and discuss broad issues related to program management, organization and stakeholder engagement. Programs are encouraged to brief the team, providing an overview of the state program at the start of the site visit. The review team is particularly interested in **the Sea Grant program Director's engagement with the program and the university, the advisory system, the involvement of partners, the omnibus proposal development process, the balance of research, outreach and education, and stakeholder support and engagement**. Below is a list of questions that programs can expect the site team to address.

Program Management and Organization

- Is the Director engaged with the program?
- Is the host university engaged with the program?
- Is there an active advisory system?
    - Does the advisory system contribute to the strategic plan?
    - How much contact do advisory board members have with constituents of the program?
    - How often does the advisory system meet?
    - How much opportunity exists for new membership (turn over)?
- Is there adequate circulation of RPFs?
- Is there an overall balance of research, extension, and education within the program and are the program's functional areas integrated?
- Is the program transparent (as to what gets funded)?
- Are peer reviews adequate and well designed with clearly identified criteria?
- Are results of funded projects appropriately measured and assessed?
- Is the program a trusted and immediate point of contact for information on coastal and Great Lakes issues?
- Are the program's practices or projects promising and worth sharing?

Stakeholder Engagement

- Is there coordination/cooperation with other federal agencies in the state/region/nation?
- How has the program chosen and developed partnerships?
    - How many and what quality of partnerships exist?
    - How many new partnerships have been formed?
- Are results of the program getting back to appropriate stakeholders?

DRAFT

- Is there clear support from stakeholders for the program's work?

The site visit lasts a total of two days, with the first day and a half dedicated to assessing the program. The last half day is devoted to writing the summary report and briefing the program management team and appropriate university officials on the team's conclusions.

Performance Review Panel

Every four years, following the completion of every Sea Grant program site visit, a Performance Review Panel (PRP) conducts a retrospective evaluation of each program's impact relative to its four-year state plans. The PRP evaluates the program's planned outcomes and overall impact on society from both an environmental and a socio-economic perspective. Annual reports, combined with a brief four-year summary document prepared by the programs, provide the basis for the review. The PRP is composed of 15 members with approximately half of the members drawn from the Advisory Board, and the remainder drawn from senior-level academia, government and industry.

The purpose of the PRP is to determine best practices of the program and to provide recommendations to areas in which the program could improve. The PRP also evaluates the programs based upon performance and assigns ratings, which is the basis for allocating additional program resources. The PRP reviews all Sea Grant programs to calibrate ratings across programs, and assigns each program a matrix of ratings based on the program's impacts relative to its plan. Programs are given a rating in each of the matrix categories that apply to/correlate with the focus areas outlined in the program's strategic/implementation plan. The rating scores are: 1 = excellent, 2 = very good, 3 = good, 4 = fair, and 5 = needs improvement.

PRP Matrix and Evaluation Criteria

TBD

PRP Process and Report:

There are a total of 15 PRP members, and each member is the lead reviewer for at least two programs, and serves as a secondary reviewer for at least four programs so that each program is reviewed by at least three different individuals. A final report is written by the lead reviewer with assistance from the FPO to help standardize all final Sea Grant program PRP reports. Final reports and the rating matrix are considered final and will not be changed, and are distributed to the program and to the NSGO.

IV. NATIONAL SEA GRANT OFFICE FALL REVIEW & RESOURCE ALLOCATION

The NSGO meets in the fall of each year to discuss the progress of each state program relative to its plan, and to identify potential areas for improvement. There is no rating or resource allocation decision associated with the annual fall review in years 1-4 of a given cycle, with the exception of every four years, where the Director of the National Sea Grant College Program (NSGCP) makes allocation decisions. These decisions are based on PRP ratings if the program passes the site visit portion of the review. If the program does not pass the site visit review, it is not eligible for merit/program development funding.

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