

**Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission**  
**Request for Proposal**  
**At-Sea Monitoring Training for the National Marine Fisheries Service,**  
**Northeast Fisheries Science Center**

**Summary**

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC), in cooperation with National Marine Fisheries Service's (NMFS) Northeast Fisheries Science Center (NEFSC), is issuing a Request for Proposal (RFP) to conduct components of the At-Sea Monitoring (ASM) Program training for the NEFSC. The Awardee shall conduct 4-6 trainings per year for a total of approximately 140 at-sea monitors. The additional monitors are needed to cover an increased number of sea days in the future.

**Application and Submission Information**

Applications shall be limited to five pages and must be in a format with at least 12-point font, single spaced with 1 inch page margins. Tables and visual materials, including charts, graphs, maps, photographs and other pictorial presentations are included in the three-page limit. Budget, project summary and other appendices do not count towards the page limit. Proposals must include the following information in the format outlined below.

Project Summary:

1. Organization title
2. Principal Investigator(s)
3. Address, telephone number, and email address of Principal Investigator(s)
4. Project title
5. Project objectives
6. Budget Information (must include total funds requested from ASMFC)

Project description:

Describe the project completely and accurately. The main body of the proposal should clearly state the proposed work and indicate how the Awardee will meet specific objectives and performance measures for the period of the proposed work and the expected significance.

Project Budget:

The proposal must include a detailed narrative for each category providing an explanation and/or process for how funds will be used. Describe and justify the budget in the proposal using the mandatory budget categories listed below.

1. Personnel (including Fringe Benefits): Include the salary detail for all employees assigned to the project. Explain the duties for each individual identified by position. State the time commitments such as hours and percent of time for each position. List the total charges for each person. Provide details on all fringe benefits in correlation to the employee's hourly wage and the number of hours to be worked in association with the proposed project. Identify what types of fringe benefits are being covered. Describe the total charges for each person listed along with an explanation of how the charges were calculated.
2. Travel: Costs include lodging, travel, per diem, ground transportation and other directly-related expenses incurred while traveling for the purpose of the proposed project. Identify why the requested travel is directly relevant to the successful completion of the project.

3. Contractual: Include all expenditures associated with contractually-related activities that are directly associated with the proposed project. List each contract as a separate item. Describe the applicability to the project for each contract to be acquired.
4. Supplies: Include a description of all equipment that individually costs under \$5,000 and miscellaneous supplies and materials that are required for the purpose of the proposed project. Itemize supplies by type of material or nature of expense. Identify how the proposed supplies are necessary for the successful completion of the project.
5. Equipment: Include items that individually cost more than \$5,000. For any items of equipment whose costs exceed \$5,000, a description of the item and associated costs is required. List each item of equipment being requested. For each item of equipment, please identify the number of units, cost per unit, and total cost specified. Explain why each item of equipment is necessary for the successful completion of the project.
6. Indirect Costs: Costs incurred as a result of administering the proposed project but not directly associated with project implementation. Indirect costs generally include rental space, utilities, postage, data processing, training, safety management, affirmative action programs, administrative support, and supervisory oversight. ASMFC has the option to limit award recipient indirect cost recovery at 15%, consistent with the indirect rate applied to the agreement between NOAA and the ASMFC. Applicants may request a copy of the ASMFC indirect policy if needed for application materials.

#### **Instructions, Conditions and Notices to Proposers**

Questions regarding the RFP should be submitted to:

Ms. Laura Leach  
Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission  
Lleach@asmfc.org  
(703) 842-0740

#### Submission, Modification, Revision, and Withdrawal of Proposals

1. The deadline for proposals is May 19, 2021. Proposals should be submitted to Ms. Laura Leach at [Lleach@asmfc.org](mailto:Lleach@asmfc.org)
2. ASMFC reserves the right to consult with and to consider information from its own sources, including information from state and federal agencies regarding the proposer's prior performance or the status of outstanding investigations or warrants involving the proposer.

#### Late proposals

1. Any proposal, modification, or revision received after May 19, 2021 is "late" and will not be considered.
2. If an emergency or unanticipated event interrupts normal ASMFC processes so that proposals cannot be received by May 19, 2021, and urgent ASMFC requirements preclude amendment of the solicitation, the time specified for receipt of proposals will be deemed to be extended to the same time of day specified in the solicitation on the first work day on which normal ASMFC processes resume.
3. Proposals may be withdrawn by written notice received at any time before award.
4. Withdrawals are effective upon receipt of notice by Ms. Laura Leach.
5. Proposers shall submit proposals in response to this solicitation in English and in U.S. dollars.
6. Proposers may submit modifications to their proposals at any time before the solicitation closing date and time.
7. Proposers may submit revised proposals only if requested or allowed by ASMFC after the closing date May 19, 2021.

8. Proposer shall submit the name, address, and telephone number of the person(s) with the authority to bind the firm, as well as to answer questions or provide clarification concerning the applicant's proposal.
9. ASMFC is not liable for any costs incurred by vendors/contractors in developing or submitting their response to this RFP.

### **Proposal Evaluation**

1. All proposals received in accordance with the RFP instructions will be evaluated to determine if they are complete and meet the specified requirements.
2. All proposals which meet the above criterion will be reviewed, analyzed, evaluated, and scored in accordance with the criteria described below. If needed, additional information may be requested from one or more proposers.
3. During the evaluation period, ASMFC may request additional information in order to fairly evaluate a proposal. If such information is required, the proposer will be notified in writing (or by email) and will be permitted a reasonable period of time to respond.
4. By use of numerical and narrative scoring techniques, proposals will be evaluated by the Proposal Review Committee against the factors specified below. The Proposal Review Committee will be comprised of NMFS staff and ASMFC staff. The relative weights of the criteria – based on a 100 point scale – are shown in parentheses. The evaluation criteria are: a) qualifications, experience, references, and ability to address the described scope and outcome (30 points); b. Work Plan/Training Approach (40 points); c. Cost/Project Budget (30 points). The average scoring for each project will have a strong influence over the final funding decisions. However, other factors may influence final selection by the Proposal Review Committee.

### **Conflict of Interest**

1. A conflict of interest exists when financial interests or other opportunities for tangible personal or professional benefit could influence or appear to influence the professional judgment of a member of the Proposal Review Committee. Improper influence could be used to not only advance one's own research program, but also to unfairly promote a family member's, colleague's or former student's program. Thus, care will be exercised to avoid a conflict of interest during the proposal review process and the discussion of past, current, or proposed research. A conflict of interest also exists when circumstances simply have the appearance of compromising the professional judgement of a member of the Proposal Review Committee. It is the policy of ASMFC that conflicts of interest or the appearance of conflicts of interest shall be avoided wherever possible and disclosed and minimized in situations where interests cannot be reasonably separated. Whenever a conflict of interest arises during discussions of the Proposal Review Committee, the member in question shall disclose the possible conflict and excuse themselves from the discussion.

### **Grant Award**

1. All qualified proposals will be evaluated and an award will be made to the proposed project whose combination of cost and technical details are deemed to best address the required scope and outcomes of the RFP. Final award to the selected project is expected to begin on June 1, 2021.
2. ASMFC reserves the right to reject any and all proposals and make no award under the RFP if such action is in the best interest of the ASMFC and the NEFSC. The RFP may be reissued if a suitable proposal is not submitted.

## **Observer Program Background**

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) has an extensive program to monitor and observe living marine resources and associated communities to provide information on biota, their habitats, and the human activities and actions that may impact coastal and ocean ecosystems. Data are the foundation of scientific advice, which provides information to management to support decision-making. A more consistent flow of high quality, credible information is required to improve decision-making. To collect the quantity and quality of data necessary, NMFS intends to improve its capacity to conduct surveys and to conduct research and studies for better understanding of ecosystems. These efforts rely on extensive collaboration with fisheries participants and other stakeholders in the living marine resource decision process.

Observers are the only independent data source for some types of at-sea information such as bycatch composition and mortality, and marine mammal, seabird and sea turtle interactions. Although vessel self-reporting is often utilized, only limited data collection demands can reasonably be placed on the captain and crew. In addition, the reliability of self-reported information is a concern for scientists and policy makers, who use the data to make fishery management decisions for the purpose of maintaining the nation's marine resources.

Currently, there are an estimated 100 observers who are deployed in three observer programs (Northeast Fisheries Observer Program (NEFOP), Industry Funded Scallop (IFS) Program, and the ASM administered through the Fishery Monitoring and Research Division (FMRD) of the Northeast Fisheries Science Center (NEFSC). The ASM program was designed as an industry-funded program for quota monitoring for the groundfish fleet. The ASM program is meant to ensure that regulated groundfish discards are accurately estimated and that annual catch limits are not exceeded. The mandated coverage rate represents the combined coverage rate for both NEFOP and ASM coverage. In fishing year 2019 (5/1/19-4/30/20) the combined coverage was 31%. Fishing year 2020 had a coverage rate of 40% with fewer trips covered by NEFOP. Observer attrition during the 2020 fishing year was high overall due to challenges associated with COVID-19 and the blanket observer waiver that was in effect from March 2020 through August 2020. Furthermore, Amendment 23 of the Northeast Multispecies Fishery Management Plan is expected to be implemented in the 2022 groundfish fishing year at an expected coverage rate of 100%.

NMFS observer data is essential to reliably estimate catch and bycatch and in helping to implement programs to reduce bycatch. Additional benefits of enhanced observer programs are near real-time monitoring of biological and environmental conditions and sampling opportunities not available from dockside sampling. This includes information on marine mammals, turtles and seabirds, resource abundance, contaminants, habitat, life history, and other basic biological information.

NMFS is required to collect scientific, management, regulatory compliance, and economic data for fisheries by placing observers aboard U.S. domestic fishing vessels. These data cannot be obtained at the dock or on Government research vessels. These data are needed for the management of fisheries occurring in the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and the high seas beyond the EEZ. NMFS requires Awardee support, as described below, to satisfy these requirements.

## **Scope and Outcomes**

The Awardee shall provide and retain the necessary qualified personnel, materials, equipment, services, and facilities (except as otherwise specified) to conduct components of the ASM training for the NEFSC. The Awardee shall conduct approximately 4-6 trainings per year. Each training shall be approximately 3

weeks long in total. The training will be conducted as a collaborative effort between NMFS and the Awardee; where some components of the training will be conducted by the Awardee and some training components will be conducted by NMFS training staff or NMFS subject matter experts.

Class size is expected to range from 8 to 24 students with preference given to larger class sizes. The providers will be given at a minimum 45 (forty five) days' notice before an ASM training class is scheduled. ASM trainings will be scheduled approximately every 1 – 3 months. Scheduling may vary and is dependent on program needs and observer attrition. The NMFS maintains a projected training schedule each year to help predict future trainings and to communicate that information to staff, observer providers, and observers. The Awardee will share projected training dates with NMFS. The Awardee and NMFS will collaborate to maintain a projected training schedule for ASM trainings to ensure proper support is available for each projected ASM training. The provider will utilize the projected training schedule to help predict and plan for safety training needs on an annual basis. Awardee will provide NMFS with a finalized projected training schedule within 60 (sixty) days of the projected training. Awardee will notify providers of the training within 45 (forty five) days of the projected training. The Awardee will be responsible for providing the NMFS with candidate packages within 30 (thirty) days of a scheduled training. The Awardee and NMFS will collaborate on the vetting of candidates. The Awardee will conduct preliminary checks to ensure the candidates meet NMFS eligibility requirements. The Awardee will provide all the necessary information including candidate resumes so that NMFS can conduct data quality checks and background security checks for the trainee Common Access Card (CAC) application process.

#### *At- Sea Monitor Eligibility Requirements*

For an individual to be certified as an at-sea monitor, the service provider must demonstrate that each potential monitor meets the following criteria:

- A high school diploma or legal equivalent.
- Successful completion of all NMFS-required training and briefings before deployment
- Must meet the At-Sea Monitor program standards
- Physical and mental capacity for carrying out the responsibilities of an at-sea monitor on board fishing vessels, pursuant to standards established by NMFS such as being certified by a physician to be physically fit to work as an at-sea monitor. The physician must understand the monitor's job and working conditions. Physical considerations include, but are not limited to the following:
  - Susceptibility to chronic motion sickness;
  - Ability to live in confined quarters;
  - Ability to tolerate stress;
  - Ability to lift and carry heavy objects up to 50 pounds;
  - Ability to drag heavy objects up to 200 pounds; and
  - Ability to climb a ladder.
- A current Red Cross (or equivalent) CPR/first aid certification.
- Absence of fisheries-related convictions based upon a thorough background check
- Independence from fishing-related parties including, but not limited to, vessels, dealers, shipping companies, sectors, sector managers, advocacy groups, or research institutions to prevent conflicts of interest

#### **Objectives**

A sufficient number of At-Sea Monitors are needed to accomplish the coverage rate set forward by the Greater Atlantic Regional Office (GARFO) to effectively monitor discards in the groundfish fishery.

Amendment 23 will go into effect at the start of the 2022 groundfish fishing year in May 2022 with a target ASM coverage rate of 100%. More at-sea monitors are needed than NMFS currently has capacity to train; therefore, NMFS has developed this project to allow for a collaboration between an Awardee and NMFS to conduct ASM trainings. This will allow for more ASM trainings to occur as NMFS alone cannot fulfill the number of ASM trained observer candidates needed for the coverage rate while properly balancing the needs of other Northeast Observer Program trainings. The Awardee will be responsible for conducting the introductory portion of ASM training for new observer candidates in coordination with NMFS staff to facilitate the quick turnaround of trained monitors. The Awardee shall work closely with NMFS staff to organize and conduct ASM trainings for observer candidates. NMFS staff will play an active role in training planning, logistics, and implementation. NMFS staff may also assume permanent roles or take over portions of ASM training as necessary. NMFS training staff will conduct regular audits of the ASM trainings and will address any concerns with the Awardee as necessary.

### **Policies and Regulations**

In addition to the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) clauses referred to and listed in the Request for Proposal (RFP), the Awardee shall comply with the Federal Regulations, Acts, Executive Orders, Special Publications, Guidelines, NOAA Directives and Policies and standards listed below.

This listing is not all-inclusive and is not intended to relieve the Awardee of its responsibilities for identification of applicable statutes, regulations and procedures and compliance therewith, when performing work under this SOW.

- Magnuson-Stevens Fishery, Management, and Conservation Act (MSA)
- Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA)
- Endangered Species Act (ESA)
- Data Quality Control Act (P.L. 106-514)
- Information Technology Security Policy
- Fisheries Management Plans (FMP)
- Biological Opinions (BO)
- Take Reduction Team (TRT)
- NOAA Safety Standards
- Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA)
- Service Contract Act (SCA)
- Department of Labor Wage Determinations
- Applicable Federal and State labor laws
- Observer Health and Safety regulations
- Federal, state, and local safety regulations

### **Place of Performance**

The Awardee is responsible for organizing a suitable location for conducting the trainings. The location must be within 125 miles of the Northeast Fisheries Observer Program training facility at Falmouth Technology Park, East Falmouth, MA. The other requirements for a suitable training location include

- Must have the capacity for 45 people including sufficient space for all ASM candidates and miscellaneous training staff
- Must have a classroom type layout with table or desk space and a projector with screen for presentations
- Location must have the ability and connections for NMFS staff to remote into the training for oversight
- Must have internet and multiple electrical outlets for utilizing electronic resources

- Internet broadband must be strong enough to support 30 people uploading information at the same time
- All participants must have access to electrical outlets at their work station
- Participants may need to use personal laptop for hybrid trainings
- Appropriate and comfortable work space with heat and AC
- Space for workshops and hands-on activities, such as subsampling scenario and using observer gear
- Freezer and lab space for biological samples for marine species identification
- All in-person activity must follow Center for Disease Control (CDC) and State guidance for Covid-19

**7.0 Period of Performance**

The period of performance is for one base year and one option year.

	<b>Period of Performance</b>
Base Year	1 June 2021 - 1 June 2022
Option Year 1	1 June 2022 - 1 June 2023

**Requirements**

The standard ASM training occurs over three weeks and covers a multitude of topics. The Awardee is responsible for conducting initial ASM trainings with assistance from NMFS staff as some vital pieces of the training require subject matter experts.

Awardee Training Staff

The Awardee shall provide qualified individuals with sufficient education, training and experience to adequately maintain the quality standards at an acceptable level that is consistent with identified standards in this statement of work. Previous experience as an At- Sea Monitor, Sea Sampler, or Observer is highly desirable. The Awardee must submit staff candidate packages to NMFS for approval.

Awardee Technical Support Staff

The Awardee shall provide a qualified technical support (IT) individual with sufficient education, training and experience to adequately maintain the quality standards at an acceptable level that is consistent with identified standards in this statement of work. NMFS understands that portions of the technical support needed can only be accomplished by NMFS personnel, however, it is expected that all other technical support will be provided by the Awardee. The IT support staff require permissions to access government equipment and networks. The Awardee and staff requiring these permissions must complete a background check with a favorable result, which includes acquiring and maintaining a government common access card (CAC) and all requirements thereof. The Awardee must submit staff candidate packages to NMFS for approval.

Training Topics

The order of topics presented is not intended to represent guidance in what sequence these topics should be taught, as many of these topics may be better taught in a different sequence or may be integrated as appropriate into other areas of observer training. NMFS estimates the minimum time needed to cover these topics and lists those hours according to the specific safety training. Curriculum hours are exclusive of lesson preparation, assessment time, breaks, lunch, and travel time. Thirty calendar days prior to each class, the Awardee will provide NMFS with a training agenda listing subjects to be covered, intended method of instruction (i.e., video, lecture, PDFs, hands-on, etc.), approximate

start and finish times for each topic, and list of materials and/or equipment participants are required to wear/bring.

The main topics of instruction are listed below but not limited to species identification and log/tabs, fisheries gear, catch estimation, haul log/tab, fishery and program background, safety training, virtual training, and other trip data points required for a complete data collection.

### Species Identification

Goal: Teach observers to identify and recognize NMFS At-Sea Monitor Program identified species of the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic regions. This section can be broken down into identification categories of 1) fish and invertebrates 2) marine mammals 3) seabirds 4) sea turtles 5) sturgeons 6) sharks and rays.

Objectives: By the end of this section, the trainee will be able to:

- Successfully identify species of each identification category by photograph
- Successfully identify thawed samples of species of each identification category
- Understand what logs are used to record the occurrence of each species

### Species Logs/Tabs

Goal: Teach observers to complete paper logs, worksheets and electronic submissions of species occurrence in accordance with the observer program guides and resources which will be provided by NMFS.

Objectives: By the end of this section, the trainee will be able to:

- Understand the protocols for when species fields and tabs should be used
- Correctly fill out the IAL Individual Animal Logs fields and tab
- Correctly fill out the identification portion of the marine mammal fields and tab
- Demonstrate understanding of the sea turtle resuscitation procedure
- Correctly fill out the identification and resuscitation portion of the sea turtle fields and tab
- Correctly fill out the identification and resuscitation portion of the sea bird fields and tab
- Correctly fill out the identification portion of the incidental take fields and tab
- Correctly fill out the protected species sighting fields and tab
- Photos required for all Incidental Takes
- Photos required for all Individual Animal (IAL) species
- Achieve length frequencies of species

### Fisheries Gear

Goal: Recognize and record information related to the fishing gear being used on a trip. Gears taught will include gillnet, trawl, handline and longline.

Objectives: By the end of this section, the trainee will be able to:

- Understand the main gear components of a bottom trawl
- Understand the main gear components of a gillnet
- Understand the main gear components of a longline
- Understand the main gear components of a handline
- Demonstrate knowledge of gear codes
- Understand how to ask or determine gear characteristics
- Correctly fill out a gear fields and tabs for each major gear type

### Catch Estimation Program

Goal: Appreciate the basic procedures of the FMRD approved catch estimation methods and techniques that can be used on a trip.



Objectives: By the end of this section, the trainee will be able to:

- List the catch estimation method options on a trip
- Understand the pros and cons and level of confidence of each of the different catch estimation methods
- Recognize situations and able to implement where different catch estimation methods should be used
- Demonstrate competency in the tally and basket/tote count methods
- Demonstrate competency in achieving actual weights
- Demonstrate competency of volume-to-volume, count-to-count, weight-to-weight, and cumulative sum
- Record all calculations on the ASM Catch Estimation Worksheets
- Understand the policy to photograph and upload the ASM Catch Estimation Worksheets

### Haul Logs/Tabs

Goal: Correctly complete haul fields and tabs for each major gear type Objectives: By the end of this section, the trainee will be able to:

- Understand the major pieces of information recorded on the haul fields and tabs
- Understand how start and end haul are recorded for each gear type
- Understand how to record environmental conditions such as temperature and weather
- Be able to correctly record catch estimation procedures on the haul fields and tabs, in addition to the catch estimation worksheets
- Be able to correctly fill out the NMFS specified section haul fields and tabs for each gear type. Some fields and tabs may be retained by NMFS for FMRD staff to teach by example
- Identify where to locate positional information on a commercial fishing vessel (e.g. GPS) within the wheelhouse
- Determine Statistical Area using charts
- Determine Statistical Area using Program approved website

ASM Gear:

Goal: The trainee will be able to understand how to properly use and maintain:

- Large handheld scale (100 - 110 lb.), Small handheld scale (10 - 12 lb.), Marel Scale, Vernier calipers, length frequency board, length frequency strips, depth stick, measuring tape, waterproof notebook, bushel baskets, ID guides (i.e. Fish, Marine Mammal, Sea Bird, Sea Turtle), NMFS issued tablet, inReach and digital camera.

### Fishery and Program background information

Goal: Give trainees a broad overview of the observer program, data quality, and the groundfish fishery

Objectives: By the end of this section, the trainee will be able to:

- Understand the role of At-Sea Monitors
- Understand the current regulatory framework of the Northeast multispecies or groundfish fishery
- Understand the major uses of ASM data
- Understand the role of data quality checks in the ASM program
- Understanding the importance of effective communication with the fishing industry and FMRD program staff
- Enter data properly, complete, and transcribed from the waterproof notebook
- Properly upload a trip with necessary photographs
- Understand the timeline of data submission of the electronic and paper data

### Safety Training

The Awardee will be responsible for ensuring that all candidates approved as At-Sea Monitors to collect data for the Northeast Fisheries Science Center meet all of the safety training requirements and policies of the NOAA Fisheries National Observer Program and the NEFSC FMRD. The Awardee shall coordinate safety trainings for the initial ASM trainings and shall work directly with a safety contractor or other certified staff when scheduling trainings.

The Awardee should follow the NOAA Fisheries Observer Safety Training Standards found here: <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/webdam/download/91187978>. The Awardee will submit to NMFS a completed safety skills checklist (pg. 31 of safety standards) for all ASM candidates upon completion of training. Additionally, the Awardee will certify that all candidates have met the following requirements upon the completion of the course:

- Approved and current CPR/First Aid certification (hands on component required)
- Program specific safety trainings to include:
  - General Health and Safety, Harassment, Conflict Resolution, Infections, Survival Training, Safety Concerns on Commercial Fishing Vessels, Seasickness, Fatigue/Sleep Deprivation, Drug & Alcohol Issues, Appropriate Clothing, Hypothermia, Cold Water Survival Skills, Embarking/Disembarking a vessel, Sampling Safety, Hazardous Marine Organisms, Vessel & Rigging Hazards, Gear Hazards, Falls & Slips, Man Overboard, Abandon Ship, Safety Regulations and USGC Procedures, Commercial Fishing Vessel Safety Regulations, USCG Helicopter Evacuations, Safety Orientation of a Vessel, Pre-Trip Vessel Safety Checklist, Simulation Orientation or Dockside Tour, Safety Equipment, Personal Floatation Devices, Immersion Suits, Life Rafts/Hydrostatic Releases, SOLAS Kits, EPIRB, Fires & Fire Extinguishers, Communication Equipment & Mayday Calls, Flares, and Signaling Devices, Understand Safety Deficiency Report (SDR) and when to issue, and Issue and use an EVIC.
- Physical Standards as noted below

### **Physical Standards**

All ASM candidates must be certified by a licensed physician to be physically fit to work as an observer on domestic commercial fishing vessels or at shore-side processing plants. The physician must understand the monitor's job and working conditions. Physical considerations include, but are not limited to:

1. Ability to swim 100 meters
2. Ability to swim 25 meters in an immersion suit
3. Ability to tread water for three minutes
4. Ability to don an immersion suit in 60 seconds or less
5. Ability to perform various water survival skills, e.g., boarding life raft, cold water skills.
6. Ability to climb a ladder (up to 30 feet for some programs)
7. Ability to properly lift and carry 50 pounds
8. Ability to properly drag heavy objects up to 200 pounds
9. Ability to manage chronic motion sickness
10. Ability to live in confined quarters
11. Ability to tolerate stress

### Hybrid Training

The Awardee should prepare for a virtual component to comply with COVID-19 recommendations and regulations. There is flexibility in this plan, but it is something that will be in early discussions between the Awardee and NMFS.

- The training must be a hybrid training with a partial remote and partial in person component, but cannot be a fully remote training as certain elements of the training will require in person and hands-on skills
- Prior to onboarding the trainees the Awardee will work with the At-Sea Monitoring providers to ensure the trainees have adequate internet and equipment to include:
  - Personal laptop/computer with camera and microphone capabilities
  - Ensure laptops have enough memory space to download presentations/files/etc., or access to a memory stick. The NMFS issued tablet cannot be used for this.
  - Reliable internet
  - Ability to join sessions via Google Meet
  - Updated NMFS issued tablets to be issued prior to the start of training, if remote
  - Adobe Acrobat most up-to-date and recent version
  - A quiet workspace
  - Access to all training gear prior to the start of training (e.g. marel scale, calipers, manual resources, etc.)

#### ASM Training and Sampling Gear

NMFS will order, purchase and send all the NMFS issued ASM training and sampling gear to the trainees via UPS prior to a virtual onboarding for ASM training. In cases where the onboarding or training is not done virtually, the Awardee will be responsible for picking up the training gear from the NMFS facility in East Falmouth, MA and distributing it to trainees. The Awardee will be responsible for ensuring that all provider issued ASM gear and provider training resources are distributed to the trainees prior to the start of training.

#### Vessel Training Trips

Vessel training trips aboard commercial vessels are an integral component of the ASM training for trainee development where the skills learned in training can be applied, hands-on during an at sea fishing trip. The ASM training must contain a vessel training trip aboard a commercial trawl vessel. The Awardee and NMFS will work collaboratively to manage the training trips for each ASM training. In the event that a vessel training trip cannot be completed during an ASM training due to inclement weather or other extenuating circumstances, vessel orientation sessions at the dock may be considered as an alternative upon NMFS approval.

NMFS will maintain their current contracts with vessels to conduct the trips and will remain the POC. The vessels that NMFS contracts with are covered under the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) which allows for the catch and handling of marine mammals, sea turtles, seabirds and sturgeons. NMFS will maintain their species permits through GARFO which allows for the catch and handling of North Atlantic fish species. All catch and protected species interactions on the trips must be accounted for, therefore the Awardee must report the catch totals to NMFS after each trip. NMFS will be solely responsible for all reporting associated with the contracts and permits necessary to conduct the vessel training trips at sea.

For each training trip there shall be one NMFS staff and one Awardee staff aboard the vessel with no more than five trainees per vessel per trip. The number of training trips required for each training will depend on the class size. NMFS will provide staff that are NEPA trained and will take the lead in the event an incidental take is caught on the trip, ie. marine mammal, sea turtle, seabird or sturgeon. All training staff (NMFS and Awardee) must have current First Aid, CPR and marine offshore safety training certifications.

The Awardee will be responsible for providing all safety gear necessary for the training trips to include:

- Valise Life Raft -as required based on the total number of persons onboard and United States Coast Guard (USCG) regulations
- Valise Ditch Kit (if required)
- Staff immersion suits with strobe light attachment, signal mirror attachment, Personal Locator Beacon (PLB) attachment, and whistle attachment
- Staff personal floatation device (PFD) with strobe light and whistle attachments
- First Aid Kit
- inReach satellite communication device

The Awardee will be responsible for completing a pre-trip vessel safety checklist in accordance with current FMRD observer protocols prior to the scheduled training trip to ensure that all the required safety gear is up to date and in good working order, including a current USCG safety decal sticker. We recommend the pre-trip safety check is completed at least a week prior to the scheduled training trip so that any deficiencies can be mitigated. All vessels must successfully pass the pre-trip vessel safety checklist the morning of the training trip. The Awardee will be responsible for the logistics involved with the training trip to include trainee transportation to and from the vessel, parking, getting trainees and gear safely on and off the vessel, and vessel orientation. The Awardee and NMFS will collaborate on coordinating the vessel training trips with the captain of the contracted vessels. NMFS will remain the POC for communications with the vessels, however, the Awardee may establish trip dates and times with the captain.

The Awardee must develop an Emergency Action Plan (EAP) to facilitate and organize the actions needed in the event of an emergency. The EAP must be submitted to NMFS for approval prior to being awarded the grant to conduct the ASM trainings. The Awardee must also develop a Float Plan for each individual vessel training trip and submit it to NMFS at least 24 hours prior to each trip. The float plan should include NMFS personnel and should designate a shore side individual for communication while on a training trip. The training trip lead must communicate with shore support and NMFS via cell phone or inReach when the vessel departs and returns, upon any injuries or mishaps, if any incidental takes are caught, if the vessel is boarded by enforcement, and when any safety issue is of concern, ie. deteriorating weather.

The Awardee will be responsible for simulating a gillnet trip during the course of the ASM training via training workshops. NMFS will share training resources such as presentations and videos with the Awardee. The Awardee will be responsible for acquiring gillnet gear training aids for in-training instruction, to include: full surface and ground gear, gillnet panel with bridel, high flyer with radar reflector, buoy ball with marker, weak links, danforth anchor, pingers, tiedowns, float line and sink line.

### **Training Resources**

The government will provide the following resources:

- Electronic copies of training materials such as presentations and home work for the Awardee to utilize as needed and recommended. NMFS will update the materials as necessary and share any updated documents with Awardee.
- Program manuals, ID guides, gear lists and all other program resources for the trainees to utilize when learning sampling and Program protocols
- Any ASM program paper logs/worksheets for trainees to use during the training process
- Electronic field sampling equipment to include tablets that can hold training presentations for trainees to practice recording data, digital cameras, inReach devices, and digital Marel scales

The Awardee shall provide all training materials not supplied by NMFS, including, but not limited to:

- A venue for training to be conducted
- Use of an electronic Learning Management System (i.e., Smart Courses via Confluence by Atlassian) for ease of storing and sharing training materials between NMFS and Awardee
- Use of Google Suite, including Google Meet for virtual training purposes and Google Drive for class folders
- Printed or electronic home work and/or assessments for the trainees to complete
- Transportation of trainees to the location of safety training as needed and transport to the location of vessel training trips or vessel orientations
- Fish, invertebrates, and protected species frozen specimens for use in the species identification labs, including a large enough freezer to house the specimens so that the smell is not distracting to trainees. Specimens should be properly stored and handled as marine mammals can carry diseases that can infect humans. Identification will need to be confirmed by NMFS staff before being an approved specimen. The Awardee will be responsible for maintaining any permits necessary for acquiring specimens used for species identification.
- All other training material not supplied by NMFS or the trainees' service provider
- The Awardee shall ensure that electronic memory space is supplied by the service providers, if required

#### **Quality Assurance/Progress/Compliance**

During all training, the safety of the trainees is paramount and NMFS expects the Awardee to conduct training accordingly. Good communication between Awardee and NMFS staff shall be maintained as well as pre- and post-training briefings. The Awardee shall participate in at least 2 (two) assessment meetings with NMFS staff per year to review trainings, performance, and discuss possible modifications and improvements to the curriculum, training styles, and training content and material. The Awardee will acknowledge feedback in writing with NMFS to ensure understanding and compliance of agreed upon feedback resulting from the assessment meetings.

The Awardee shall engage in post-training, wrap-up meetings following each training session. The wrap-up meetings will be an opportunity for NMFS to provide feedback on Awardee performance; evaluate the current training curriculum and instruction and make adjustments as necessary; discuss any issues; provide student feedback on Awardee performance; and plan for prospective trainings. Post-training meetings will occur within 1 (one) week following the completion of training. The NMFS will be solely responsible for conducting overall student and course performance evaluations for each class and will share any pertinent feedback with the Awardee. The Awardee will be responsible for weekly student progress reports to be shared with each individual provider, as well as with NMFS. Mid-term reports and final reports will be shared with NMFS during the training and at the completion of each training. Should an observer need to be dismissed from a training, the Awardee will be responsible for the dismissal process and should include NMFS in any decision-making processes. If an observer needs reasonable accommodation during any portion of the training the Awardee should bring this to the attention of NMFS and NMFS can provide guidance. All observer candidates attending training should be informed at the beginning of the program of the standard training accommodations. A request must be made by the observer candidate or by the observer candidate's service provider to an Awardee staff member. Special accommodations should be provided to the trainee by their service provider.

## **Deliverables**

- The Awardee shall participate in at least 2 (two) assessment meetings with NMFS staff per year to review trainings, performance, and discuss possible modifications and improvements to the curriculum, training styles, and training content and material.
- The Awardee shall engage in post-training, wrap-up meetings following each training session.
- The Awardee shall report to the POC immediately if any trainee was unable to complete the required skills, exercises, and/or demonstrations or did not meet Training and Program Standards requirements.
- The Awardee shall provide all assessment metrics (i.e. ID exams, assessments, exams, and home work) at the end of training for all students who attended training and copies to the POC within 1 (one) week of training completion.
- The Awardee shall provide NMFS with a finalized projected training schedule within 60 (sixty) days of the projected training. Awardee will notify providers of the training within 45 (forty five) days of the projected training.
- The Awardee shall provide a training curriculum 30 (thirty) calendar days prior to a scheduled training to the POC.
- The Awardee shall provide training lesson plans for each training session 30 (thirty) calendar days prior to a scheduled training.
- The Awardee will provide PDFs of all training presentations, documents, handouts, worksheets, etc. to the POC 30 (thirty) calendar days prior to a scheduled training.
- The Awardee shall coordinate safety trainings for the initial ASM trainings and ensure all trainees have met the safety requirements of the NOAA National Observer Program. The Awardee shall work directly with a safety contractor or other certified staff when scheduling trainings.
- The Awardee shall submit an Emergency Action Plan to NMFS for approval prior to the start of ASM training.