Central and Northern California Ocean Observing System
Framework for Decision Making
Approved July 16, 2013

This document contains the basic components of a structured priority setting and project consideration process, which will allow the Council, in coordination with the Director, to make strategic decisions about future CeNCOOS endeavors and choices. It is meant to be used as a guidance tool, leaving the Council and Director with enough flexibility to adequately respond to changing circumstances.

1. **About Statement** *(approved by GC on July 16, 2013)*
    CeNCOOS is one of 11 regional organizations under the U.S. Integrated Ocean Observing System, a national-regional partnership working to provide new tools and forecasts to improve safety, enhance the economy, and protect our environment. CeNCOOS is a consortium of member organizations with a coordinating central program office and democratically elected governing council.

2. **Vision Statement** (approved by GC on Jan. 14, 2013)
    CeNCOOS will be a leader within U.S. IOOS, and be recognized and relied upon regionally and nationally as a trusted source of data, information, and expertise to inform wise use of the ocean off central and northern California.

3. **Mission Statement** (approved by GC on Oct. 24, 2012)
    The Central and Northern California Ocean Observing System (CeNCOOS) is a collaborative that enables sustained and coordinated measurements, model nowcasts and forecasts, and integrated products to inform decisions about our regional ocean.

4. **Decision-making responsibility** (approved by GC on Jan. 14, 2013)
    CeNCOOS is an open membership organization with a Governing Council democratically elected by CeNCOOS Party Members. The CeNCOOS Governing Council, in concert with the Program Director, will set the priorities according to objective criteria, calling upon outside experts as necessary. The Executive Committee, elected by the Governing Council, will assist the Director in making decisions during situations requiring a quicker response than can be achieved with the entire council. The Governing Council represents a geographically widespread and diverse group of interests. One-year terms for the Executive Committee and designated seats for various types of member organizations on the Governing Council ensure a governing structure that will retain diversity and continue to draw from the remarkable array of expertise found throughout the Central and Northern California region. Refer to the CeNCOOS MOA for more details on CeNCOOS governance.

5. **Principles** (approved by GC on Jan. 14, 2013)
    CeNCOOS will be guided by the following principles when setting priorities and making decisions regarding activities to engage in. It is anticipated that these principles will apply over the long-term, whereas priorities (section 9) may change over shorter time scales.

CeNCOOS will strive to maintain a suite of activities and products that:

- Spans the CeNCOOS geographic region
- Is inclusive across the IOOS themes (coastal hazards; marine operations; climate variability and change; and ecosystems, fisheries and water quality) and State priorities; recognizing that federal or state agency partners may be the lead in some of these
- Includes a diverse set of funded projects and recipients
- Supports a stable, trained workforce to ensure continuity of core capabilities
- Leverages the intellectual capacity and resources within the CeNCOOS network to position CeNCOOS as a leader within IOOS
- Promotes partnering among stakeholders in the CeNCOOS region.

6. **Activities** (approved by GC on Jan. 14, 2013)
   Approved CeNCOOS activities are listed in Table 1 with those in Category 1 being most essential, and those in Categories 2a and 2b being supporting activities.

Table 1: CeNCOOS Activities

Overarching CeNCOOS Activities:		
Responsive and adaptive strategic planning and coordination		
Governance, Management and Fundraising		
Category 1	**Category 2.a.**	**Category 2.b.**
Observing and Modeling	Product Development and Dissemination	Education
Data Management & Communications	Research (investment in future, developing new approaches, models and sensors)	Outreach
Engagement and identification of information needs		

7. **Core capabilities** (approved by GC on Jan. 14, 2013)
   Funding permitting, CeNCOOS is committed to maintaining the following core capabilities, with the recognition that these may change as the program evolves:

- Scientific and technical expertise/leadership to identify and address ocean observing and modeling needs
- HF radar – coastal surface circulation
- Shore stations – measuring water quality, hydrography, HABs
- Ships/gliders/moorings – monitoring offshore subsurface variables for applications in climate, productivity, circulation, physical processes, and model assimilation
- Numerical models
- Seafloor/habitat mapping – data delivery
- Data serving, including metadata and QC as appropriate
- Data products

8. **Stakeholder input** (approved by GC on Jan. 14, 2013)
   Stakeholders are defined to be data and information providers and users. Stakeholder input will be solicited via: Expressions of Interest (Appendix III), Governing Council and Joint Strategic Advisory Committee meetings, the CeNCOOS website and, when appropriate, targeted visits, surveys and workshops.

9. **Priority-Setting Considerations** (approved by GC on Jan. 14, 2013)
   Core capabilities listed in Section 7 will be considered high priorities unless otherwise stated. The intent of these considerations is to give additional guidance to the Council when setting strategic programmatic priorities. After the initial priority-setting exercise using the process outlined in this document, CeNCOOS will re-evaluate its priorities on a periodic basis dovetailing with the IOOS funding cycle, which is anticipated to be every five years from 2016 onwards. The CeNCOOS strategic plan will be updated in concert with the re-evaluation of priorities.

   The process of establishing the CeNCOOS priorities, which may be refined annually based on funding availability, will take into consideration the following factors.

Table 2: A Matrix of Priority-Setting Considerations[1]

Responsiveness to Established Federal, State, or Regional Priorities (i.e. priorities set by bodies other than CeNCOOS GC, such as WCGA)	• IOOS requirements, or national or state priorities: applies to issues, technology, variables • Regional priorities (including those of neighboring RAs): applies to issues, geography, variables, end users
Reinforcement of Unique or Partner Role of CeNCOOS	• Is CeNCOOS uniquely suited, within the region, to undertake this activity? To what extent are other organizations or consortia already addressing this need or issue? • Availability of personnel and expertise within CeNCOOS region to make significant progress in this area • Does CeNCOOS stand to be a national leader in this area?
Legacy and Sustainability Considerations	• Was it included in the current IOOS proposal? • What has CeNCOOS done in the past?
Time	• Time scale to make an impact in this area
Cost and Funding	• Potential to leverage existing funds or attract future funds

[1]Within the "primary" and "other" categories, sequence of criteria is based on a logical progression from broad to specific considerations, and is not intended to imply any prioritization or relative weighting of considerations

As an example, currently we might express high priorities for CeNCOOS as:

• IOOS Themes and State priorities: climate variability and change; and ecosystems, fisheries and water quality
• Issues: HABs, ocean acidification
• Geography: San Francisco Bay, Monterey Bay, continental shelf
• Technology: HF radar, automated shore stations, ocean circulation models
• Variables: surface currents, water quality variables
• End-users: state agencies, shellfish growers

Again, as an example, in the future priorities might change to emphasize the nearshore zone or biological variables.

10. Criteria for project selection (approved by GC on Jan. 14, 2013)

While Section 9 outlines considerations which will be used to set annual priorities for the CeNCOOS program as a whole, the following table of criteria will be used on an ongoing basis to help determine whether specific activities should be pursued. These criteria will be reviewed and updated in concert with re-evaluation of the CeNCOOS priorities and strategic plan.

Table 3: A Matrix of Projection Selection Criteria[2]

Primary Criteria	**Responsiveness to Established CeNCOOS Priorities**	• How does it map to the CeNCOOS strategic plan and priorities? • Does it align with a CeNCOOS core capability?
	Reinforcement of Unique or Partner Role of CeNCOOS	• Is CeNCOOS uniquely suited to undertaking this activity or project? To what extent are other organizations or consortia already addressing this need or question? • Does it demonstrate the integrated and interoperable nature of CeNCOOS? • Does the activity promote partnering within the CeNCOOS region?
	Impact of Project	• Is there an identified end user or a clear articulation of the end-to-end use of the proposed product or activity? • Number or category of people impacted by the decisions the data, product, or activity inform • Significant biological resources impacted by the decisions the data, product, or activity inform • Economic impact of the data, product, or activity • Does it fill an identified gap? • Local vs regional impact • Real-time vs delayed mode vs historical data
	Likelihood of success	• Is this project likely to meet its goals, as agreed upon by the proposer and CeNCOOS management, with the funding provided by CeNCOOS and other sources?

Other Criteria	Legacy and Sustainability Considerations	• Was it included in current proposal to IOOS?
		• What has CeNCOOS done in the past? Is this activity worth continuing into the future? What will be the impact if we drop a currently funded activity?
		• Does the project ensure CeNCOOS longevity and a succession path by developing internal expertise?
		• Lifetime of the activity or project – potential to sustain it over time, or transition it to another organization; vs. shorter-term activities
		• Will the project help sustain the CeNCOOS workforce?
	Time Scale for Project	• Time scale to spin up the activity or product
	Cost and Funding	• What's the cost to CeNCOOS of the activity?
		• Is targeted funding available for this specific activity?
		• Potential to leverage existing funds or attract future funds
		• Has the PI been able to attract other funding based on CeNCOOS funding or a CeNCOOS letter of support – and if so can they keep going without base CeNCOOS funding?

[2]Within the "primary" and "other" categories, sequence of criteria is based on a logical progression from broad to specific considerations, and is not intended to imply any prioritization or relative weighting of considerations

11. Gantt Chart (approved by GC on July 16, 2013)

Activity	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Council Elections		■										
Executive Comm. Elections			■									
IOOS Meeting and Congressional Visits			■									
PI Progress Report Input Due					■						■	
IOOS Progress Reports Due						■						■
JSAC Meeting						■						
GC Working Meeting							■					
GC Stakeholder Meeting^	■											■
Solicitation of EOIs								■				
EOIs due											■	
Descoping decisions*	■	■	■	▦	▦	▦						
NOPP Progress Report Due											■	
IOOSA Board Meeting											■	

^ *Will be held in December or January, scheduling dependent.*
* *Will depend on the receipt of final budgeting numbers from NOAA.*

12. Expressions of Interest (approved by GC on July 16, 2013**)**

What they are, why we need them, who should submit them
In order to develop and maintain a portfolio of projects of interest to member organizations and other stakeholders, CeNCOOS will request general Expressions of Interest annually, to be valid until the next call for EOIs. These are not intended to replace Letters of Intent or proposals for specific RFPs. EOIs may be submitted by past, present and prospective data and/or information providers and users, henceforth to be called stakeholders in this context. Teams of stakeholders, particularly including both providers and users, are encouraged to collaborate on EOIs. Proposed projects may include any activities that fit within CeNCOOS objectives and are consistent with the CeNCOOS mission. EOIs will provide a formal but flexible mechanism for suggesting new projects, participants, and priorities.

PIs (funded or unfunded) on the active core CeNCOOS grant who wish to be considered for funding in the following year, should also submit an EOI.

What the call for EOIs will include
The annual call for EOIs will include a description of the CeNCOOS priority-setting process, including: vision and mission statements; CeNCOOS activity categories and core capabilities; the considerations used in establishing priorities and who has responsibility for setting the priorities. A list of the current CeNCOOS priorities and activities will also be included. Criteria and methods by which EOIs will be evaluated for core CeNCOOS funding will be included, and any information regarding upcoming funding opportunities will be provided. A description of how the EOIs will be used, with an explicit statement that those submitting an EOI are not guaranteed to receive funding through CeNCOOS, will be included.

What the EOIs will be used for
The EOIs will be used in selecting continuing and new projects to pursue in alignment with CeNCOOS goals. In addition to being considered when making funding decisions with core CeNCOOS funds from the IOOS Program, the portfolio of EOIs will serve as an index of current expertise and interest within CeNCOOS, and will be consulted when new opportunities arise. They will allow the Director and Governing Council to forward announcements of opportunity and funded requests for assistance to appropriate people, and to make informed initial responses until more complete proposals can be formulated. They will facilitate the pairing of data and information providers with end users. The portfolio of EOIs will also be used in soliciting funds for CeNCOOS activities.

The timing of the calls
Generally, the EOI call will be made in the August prior to the funding year (June 1 – May 31). While EOIs will be accepted at any time, they must be submitted by November 30 for priority consideration. The exact date of these calls will be schedule dependent and decided by the CeNCOOS program office.

What the EOIs will need to include

EOIs should be 1-2 pages in length and include: principals and organizations involved; a description of the proposed project; a statement of how the proposed activity relates to the CeNCOOS mission and vision; the objectives, outcomes, deliverables, and end users for the project; anticipated costs and timeline; relationship to current CeNCOOS funding or activities if appropriate; and existing and potential funding sources other than core CeNCOOS funds from the IOOS Program. Resubmittals from previous years are acceptable as long as they are marked as such.