

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE RESPONSE TO IPR FINAL REPORT

In 2012, the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP) underwent a comprehensive 5-year independent program review (IPR), the second such review conducted by the program under the terms of the original Memorandum of Understanding. The 2012 review culminated in the approval of the *2012 Independent Program Review (IPR) Panel Report* by the ACCSP Coordinating Council in November 2012. The independent review panel rendered 67 recommendations for ACCSP to consider in improving its effectiveness and achieving its mission. This document constitutes the work to date by the ACCSP partners in developing an implementation plan in response to those recommendations.

In a preliminary triage of the recommendations, ACCSP staff developed an online survey to summarize partner sentiments on what group within ACCSP should initially address and what the appropriate timeline should be for each recommendation. Based on that survey, ACCSP staff grouped the recommendations into those that should be initially addressed by the Operations Committee, ACCSP staff, or the Executive Committee/Coordinating Council. Each group has considered the recommendations in more detail, providing insight into the appropriate action(s), expected benefits and outcomes, and a timetable/priority for their completion. The result of that effort is compiled in this Response document. Once approved by the ACCSP Coordinating Council, this document will form the basis for the ACCSP Strategic Plan and guidance in writing future Annual Implementation Plans.

Overview

Throughout the process of writing and reviewing the follow-up actions and expected outcomes to the recommendations of the IPR document, it became evident that there are several central themes to the responses.

Items related to the '*Data Warehouse and the Standard Atlantic Fisheries Information System (SAFIS)*' were categorized together to address the recommendations that make reference to these fundamental products of the ACCSP Data Center. '*Funding*' was given a category designation to focus on the recommendations that indicate how to improve upon ACCSP as a distributor of funds for Atlantic coast fishery-dependent data collection projects. '*Outreach and Communications*' is a category to spotlight those recommendations that recognize collaborating with program partners and their constituents to disseminate information and advance the Program is a crucial component to all ACCSP functions. Lastly, '*Program Management*' was designated as a category to encompass recommendations with a broader leadership theme.

Implementation and Monitoring

The Program proposes to implement the recommendations by incorporating them into various planning documents, thus as plans are executed, the recommendations will be implemented (see below). A joint Coordinating Council and Operations Committee composed of the Council Chair and Vice-chair and the Operations Chair and Vice-chair and the Program Director will monitor the process of implementing the recommendations and reporting to the Executive Committee as needed and provide updates to the Coordinating Council during regular Council meetings. The exception is the Governance Review which will be conducted separately and planned and executed by the joint committee with input as needed from other committees.

The following is a brief synopsis of the overarching expectations produced as a result of the actions addressing these recommendations by theme. It is important to recognize that with each of these

themes, staff, the Operations Committee, and the Executive Committee are responsible for various components under different timetables. For a quick snapshot of the recommendations addressed by each theme, please see *Table 1: Recommendation by Theme, Response Group, and Timetable* (page 4).

Data Warehouse and SAFIS

The Data Warehouse and SAFIS are dynamic and will undergo continual software upgrades to better serve the partners needs. These upgrades will not only make information more readily available, but will also become more user-friendly, document information on the synchronization process, other external data sources, pedigree, and standardized processes and best practices. This documentation will be incorporated as a part of a Standard Operations Procedure (SOP) document.

Along with the software upgrades to both the Data Warehouse and SAFIS will be the additional component of continuous communication and outreach with stakeholders using these systems. Some feedback loops may already exist; however improving upon these interactions (i.e., perhaps collecting feedback more immediately or making the feedback more transparent) will be a direct result of the recommendations of the IPR. These interactions will improve response time and customer satisfaction.

Funding

As mentioned under the Data Warehouse and SAFIS category, ACCSP will be producing a SOP document as a result of the recommendations from the IPR. This document will incorporate many reoccurring funding issues, including a Long Term Funding Strategy. The Long Term Funding Strategy will address a process for identifying additional funding alternatives, budget shortfalls, state partner's reliance on maintenance funding, as well as how the Coordinating Council would address a significant change in funding priorities.

Outreach and Communications

The most significant product to address the recommendations that focus on outreach and communications is an updated Outreach Strategic Plan. The Outreach Plan from 2008-2012, while addressing many stakeholder needs, was heavily driven by staff resources. The updated Strategic Plan will incorporate actions of the newly formed Data Warehouse and SAFIS Outreach Groups (both of which have members from the Operations Committee). These groups, along with the recently formed Atlantic Coast Fisheries Communications Group, will lead in the process of articulating the ACCSP mission, goals, and partner responsibilities (including data collection, consolidation and distribution services) and improving collaboration between ACCSP and its federal partners. This Outreach Strategic Plan will be reviewed annually.

In the future there will also be considerable weight placed on feedback of the Data Warehouse and SAFIS. As mentioned above (see Data Warehouse and SAFIS section), these interactions will improve response time and customer satisfaction.

Program Management

The SOP document will incorporate many of the results of the management recommendations. This document will provide continuity for the future and guidance on the Program's daily activities. Also, as a part of the annual implementation plan several items will be added to better review planned vs. actual accomplishments. For instance, a prioritized list of critical functions will be used to assist with

planning and focusing resources. These will all help to improve the monitoring of the Program's performance.

Also, as a part of improving program management would be the engagement of the Executive Committee. Meetings will continue to occur more often and consistent updates will directly involve its member with the Program. This in turn will help to better engage the Coordinating Council as several of its members have a much more detailed understanding of the Program's function and process. This may also be a start in the process of reviewing and changing the current governance policy as recommended in the IPR report.

GUIDE FOR THE RESPONSE TO IPR FINAL REPORT

This Response to IPR Recommendations document is structured in order of how the recommendations appeared in the final IPR report. The final report provided recommendations for 6 topics: Program Mission (PM), Organization (ORG), Partner Projects (PP), Data Collection Standards (DCS), Data Management (DM), SAFIS (S), and Program Management (PM). Each recommendation was initially addressed by a response group (ACCSP committee or staff) and given a response timetable. Both, the Response Group and the timetable, were identified as the result of a survey distributed to the IPR Panel, Coordinating Council, Operations Committee, as well as staff.

Responding Group: Program Director, Staff, Operations Committee, Executive Committee (a subset of the Coordinating Council consisting of the Chair and Vice-chair of the Coordinating Council, the Executive Director of ASMFC, a delegate from NOAA Fisheries, USFWS, a fishery management council, as well as a Northeast, Mid-Atlantic, and South Atlantic state partner). The Response Group has been highlighted by color to quickly identify who initially addressed the recommendation:

- Staff responses are highlighted in yellow,
- Operations Committee responses are highlighted in purple, and
- Executive Committee responses are highlighted in turquoise.

Timetable: Short term (< 1 year); Mid term (1 – 3 years); Long term (> 3 years)

Acronyms:

API: Application programming interface

ASMFC: Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

CSV: Comma separated-values

FMP: Fishery management plan

FIS: Fisheries Information System

FOSS: Fisheries One Stop Shop

FUS: Fisheries of the United States

HMS: Highly Migratory Species

IPR: Independent Program Review

ITQ: Individual Transferable Quota

MRIP: Marine Recreational Information Program

MSFCMA: *Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act*

NEFMC: New England Fishery Management Council

PIs: Principal investigators

SAFIS: Standard Atlantic Fisheries Information System

SAFMC: South Atlantic Fishery Management Council

SEDAR: Southeast Data Assessment and Review

TOR: Terms of Reference

Supplemental information can be found in the appendices listed below:

Appendix A: Terms of Reference

Appendix B: Recommendations by Response Group and Time Frame with IPR Report Context

Table 1: Recommendation Topics by Theme, Response Group, and Timetable

Response Group: Staff = yellow, Operations Committee = purple, Executive Committee = turquoise
Timetable: st = Short term; mt = Mid term

Theme	Data Warehouse & SAFIS	Funding	Outreach & Communications	Program Management
Program Mission (PM)	PM-12*: mt	PM-02: mt PM-03: mt PM-04: mt PM-05: mt PM-06: st PM-07: st	PM-01: st-mt PM-09: mt PM-12*: mt	PM-08: mt PM-10: st (jointly w/ Staff) PM-11: st (jointly with Staff) PM-13: st
Organization (ORG)			ORG-10: st	ORG-01: mt ORG-02: mt ORG-03: mt ORG-04: st ORG-05: st ORG-06: st ORG-07: st ORG-08: st ORG-09: st ORG-11: st ORG-12: st
Partner Projects (PP)		PP-01: mt PP-02: mt PP-03: mt PP-04: mt PP-05: st PP-06: mt		PP-07: mt PP-08: mt PP-09: st PP-10: st (jointly w/Staff)
Data Collection Standards (DCS)				DSC-01: mt DSC-02: mt DSC-03: mt
Data Management (DM)	DM-01: st DM-03*: mt DM-04: mt DM-05: mt DM-06: st DM-09: mt DM-10: mt DM-12: mt DM-13: mt		DM-02: mt DM-03*: mt DM-08*: mt	DM-07: st DM-08*: mt DM-11: mt
SAFIS (S)	S-04*: mt S-05: st-mt S-06*: mt S-07: mt S-08: mt		S-01: st S-02: st-mt S-03: mt S-04*: mt S-06*: mt S-09: mt (jointly w/Staff)	
Program Management (M)	M-03: st	M-05: st	M-01: mt M-02: st M-07: mt (jointly w/Staff)	M-04: st M-06: st

* Indicates that this appears in the Outreach & Communications theme, as well as another theme relevant to the recommendation due to overlapping roles.

PROGRAM MISSION (PM)

PM-01 ACCSP must clearly define its value and continue strategic outreach and communications that articulate that value. (TOR 4, 5e)

Responding Group: Staff

Actions: (RECOMMENDED) The value of ACCSP lies in the cooperative nature of the program and the approach in which ACCSP staff and committees took in developing the standards. Outreach and communications must therefore be more strategic and use this same approach. Staff will encourage program partners to be more forthcoming in sharing that value via outreach and communication tools. For instance, there should be more specific outreach teams (SAFIS and Data Warehouse), program partners, and committee chairs could contribute more to newsletters, there could be an annual award to the partner that best embodies the ACCSP value/mission, also within 3 years staff should visit every partner for training and/or site visits.

Expected Outcomes: ACCSP partners will have an understanding of the value of ACCSP and be able to articulate that value to other partner staff members. There will also be more collaboration between partners in developing outreach strategies.

Timetable: Short to Mid term

PM-02 State partners should communicate ACCSP's value to their congressional delegations in order to effectively advocate for future funding. (TOR 5e)

Responding Group: Executive Committee

Actions: (RECOMMENDED) ACCSP staff (with cooperation from regional fishery management councils) will reengage with regional and state staff through regional workshops, in part designed to provide participants with specific information detailing the benefits of the Program within their state or region. Partners will be encouraged to share this information with congressional delegations.

Currently, ASMFC is representing ACCSP interests in Congress. The ACCSP Director participated directly in the preparation of ASMFC testimony during the MSFCMA re-authorization process. This will continue in the future.

Expected Outcomes: Accurate and complete information is available to Partners who use it in future advocacy efforts.

Timetable: Mid term

PM-03 The Coordinating Council should aggressively pursue funding, including non-appropriated funds and non-traditional funding sources. (TOR 2)

Responding Group: Executive Committee

Actions: (RECOMMENDED) A Long Term Funding Strategies Committee will be formed (a sub-committee of the Coordinating Council) to monitor and encourage activities. This new committee will be tasked with developing a strategy on how ACCSP can effectively enhance and make use of ASMFC and state partner congressional efforts. This Committee shall report activities to the Coordinating Council annually. Planning for the Long Term Funding Strategies Committee (or analogous process) will be included in the strategic planning. (see PM-04)

Expected Outcomes: A funding strategy document is integrated into the current Standard Operating Procedures of the Program. Appropriate elements are integrated into strategic and implementation plans resulting in improved and varied funding sources.

Timetable: Mid term

PM-04 The ACCSP Coordinating Council should revitalize and task a Legislative Committee with responsibility of seeking funding, including through non-traditional funding sources (e.g., NGO's). (TOR 2, 5e)

Responding Group: Executive Committee

Actions: (RECOMMENDED) A Long Term Funding Strategies Committee will be formed (a sub-committee of the Coordinating Council) to monitor and encourage activities. This new committee will be tasked with developing a strategy on how ACCSP can effectively enhance and make use of ASMFC and state partner congressional efforts. This Committee shall report activities to the Coordinating Council annually. Planning for the Long Term Funding Strategy Committee (or analogous process) will be included in the strategic planning. (See PM-03)

Expected Outcomes: A funding strategy document is part of the Standard Operating Procedures of the Program. Appropriate elements are integrated into strategic and implementation plans resulting in improved and varied funding sources.

Timetable: Mid term

PM-05 State partners should communicate ACCSP's value to their Executive Branches and Legislatures in order to secure state funding for maintenance level data collection. (TOR 2, 5e)

Responding Group: Executive Committee

Actions: (RECOMMENDED) ACCSP staff (with cooperation from regional fishery management councils) will reengage with regional and state staff through regional workshops, in part designed to provide participants with specific information detailing the benefits of the Program within their state or region. Partners will be encouraged to share this information with state and congressional delegations and state Executives (commissioners, directors, senior leadership, etc).

Expected Outcomes: State partners are less reliant on the Program to provide maintenance funding thus allowing forward motion on other priorities.

Timetable: Mid term

PM-06 Constituent partners who do not have federal lobbying prohibitions should participate in the next MSFCMA reauthorization and be supportive of ACCSP funding. (TOR 2, 5e)

Responding Group: Executive Committee

Actions: (RECOMMENDED) Currently, ASMFC is representing ACCSP interests in Congress. The ACCSP Director participated directly in the preparation of ASMFC testimony during the MSFCMA re-authorization process. This will continue in the future.

Expected Outcomes: Increased funding for the Program through the MSFCMA.

Timetable: Short term

PM-07 ACCSP should develop a well-defined and strategic process to address budget shortfalls, both anticipated (congressional budgets) and unanticipated (within fiscal year rescissions). (TOR 2)

Responding Group: Executive Committee

Actions: (RECOMMENDED/IN PROGRESS) In response to the 2013 sequestration, a process was developed to review severe budget shortfalls and make appropriate decisions in cases that go beyond the currently defined Funding Decision Process.

Staff has completed a catalog of work tasks, assigned priorities and estimated hours per task.

The Funding Decision Process should be amended to include specific guidance and incorporated into Bylaws or Standard Operating Procedure documents (see ORG-12).

Expected Outcomes: The Funding Decision Document is amended to include this process which can then be utilized in the event of budget shortfalls.

Timetable: Short term

PM-08 An annual review of ACCSP's budget, objectives, and milestones should be conducted to evaluate planned vs. actual accomplishments in relation to costs (earned value management). (TOR 2, 7)

Responding Group: Operations Committee

Actions: (RECOMMENDED) Reinvigorate the Operations Committee's responsibility for oversight of the Administrative grant, possibly through an annual action plan of sorts. Review could be incorporated into the current process of presentations from the PIs on other maintenance and new grants.

Expected Outcomes: A review of the planned vs. actual accomplishments within annual action plans occurs yearly as part of the PI presentations process.

Timetable: Mid term

PM-09 The Program should more clearly communicate ACCSP's mission and goals, and partner responsibilities, to better align each and to align with the Program's technical capabilities and resource capacity. (TOR 1, 5e, 6)

Responding Group: Operations Committee

Actions: (RECOMMENDED) This recommendation is perhaps related to the perception of overlap between the missions of the NOAA Fisheries Science Centers and ACCSP. ACCSP does not adequately articulate its value nor clearly distinguish its efforts from those of the Science Centers. Those redundancies need to be articulated, and discussed with reference to whether any changes are needed.

Expected Outcomes: The Operation Committee, as well as staff are engaged with the process of articulating the ACCSP mission, goals, and partner responsibilities.

Timetable: Mid term

PM-10 ACCSP should focus resources on critical business functions and priorities that demonstrate return on investment. (TOR 7)

Responding Group: Operations Committee (jointly with Staff)

Actions: (RECOMMENDED) Develop two lists a) critical functions from the MOU and original Program Design that have shown returns, and b) non-critical initiatives. Set aside the non-critical and redirect resources to critical outstanding priorities. These two lists would provide more clear guidance to staff and committees as to whether new and existing tasks/partner requests are within the Program's core mission.

Expected Outcomes: A prioritized list of critical functions are used to assist with planning and are available for focusing resources.

Timetable: Short term

PM-11 As part of an ongoing strategic planning process, the original ACCSP objectives and priorities should be examined to determine if they are equally valid now and address the most pressing needs of fishery managers, scientists, and fishermen today. (TOR 5, 6)

Responding Group: Operations Committee (jointly with Staff)

Actions: (RECOMMENDED) Develop two lists a) critical functions from the MOU and original Program Design that have shown returns and b) non-critical initiatives. Set aside the non-critical and redirect resources to critical outstanding priorities. These two lists would provide clear guidance to staff and committees as to whether new and existing tasks/partner requests are within the Program's core mission.

Expected Outcomes: A prioritized list of critical functions are used to assist with planning and are available for focusing resources.

Timetable: Short term

PM-12 ACCSP should continue to collect and incorporate stakeholder input on what products and services are most valuable to ACCSP customers and how existing products and services can be improved. (TOR 1, 3, 5d, 5e)

Responding Group: Staff

Actions: (RECOMMENDED) Staff will work more closely together to share when upgrades are made to SAFIS and/or the Data Warehouse. For instance, a summary on how it affects the efficiency of the data systems and/or the user should be provided each time there is an upgrade. Also, staff can improve upon the collection of stakeholder data. As of right now the Data Warehouse confidential and non-confidential account holders, as well as those that seek custom data requests are surveyed annually. For users that use the Data Warehouse, surveying once a year is most likely enough. Reviewing the feedback and sharing that information more often with staff, the Operations, and the Data Warehouse Outreach Committee would be useful. However, in the past those that respond to the survey have always sent mostly positive remarks and those that are unfavorable are discussed and work continues based on that feedback (i.e., non-account holder access, Data Warehouse manual updates, etc). We also seek feedback from webinars and have received completely positive marks all around. SAFIS is monitored, however the feedback is not transparent and the follow-up is not shared.

Expected Outcomes: The follow-up and feedback for surveys distributed on the Data Warehouse are acknowledged more often and shared with any committees that request that information. SAFIS follow-up is more transparent.

Timetable: Mid term

PM-13. ACCSP should strengthen its relationship with the ASMFC to leverage their fisheries specific subject matter expertise co-housed with ACCSP. (TOR 5b, 6)

Responding Group: Executive Committee

Actions: (RECOMMENDED/IN PROGRESS) The most important aspect of an ASMFC and ACCSP collaboration is a promotion of understanding with relation to data. ACCSP staff must understand the data needs of the ASFMC and ASMFC staff must understand the capabilities of ACCSP and be active participants in the process to identify data needs and work with ACCSP to improve their capabilities to meet them.

Co-location of staff has already resulted in much improved communications through informal discussions and direct interactions. Discussions are under way between the staffs with regards to data needs for the various fisheries management plans and ASMFC staff now routinely work

with ACCSP on data related issues when needed. As a consequence many ASMFC FMPs now include references to ACCSP standards and use data obtained from ACCSP.

ASMFC is a partner and actively participates in many of the technical and policy committees of the ACCSP providing a coast-wide perspective for their constituents.

ACCSP will work with ASMFC in stock assessment planning and execution to optimize data products and better acquaint ASMFC with data that are available through the Data Warehouse.

Planning is ongoing for a series of small, short briefings and workshops to be held at ASMFC. Presenters will alternate between ACCSP and ASMFC. ASMFC staff will provide updates on various management and data related activities conducted by it. ACCSP staff will explain and demonstrate the capabilities of the various systems in its portfolio and provide updates as the Program moves forward towards full implementation.

This ongoing dialog should be implemented as part of the strategic plan and be integrated in the annual implementation plans.

Expected Outcomes: Improved collaboration between ACCSP and ASMFC staff, resulting in increased fisheries expertise among ACCSP staff and enhanced data products to serve ASMFC staff and stock assessments.

Timetable: Short term

ORGANIZATION (ORG)

ORG-01. The Program should employ methods and best practices to ensure continuity of institutional knowledge in the case of staff turnover. (TOR 2, 8)

Responding Group: Staff

Actions: (IN PROGRESS) A documentation library that identifies software, hardware, and Program processes has been established and is in the process of being enhanced. This library will be used to provide continuity for the future, as well as day-to-day guidance.

Expected Outcomes: A Standard Operating Procedures or handbook (set of protocols) to provide continuity for the future and guidance on the Program's daily activities.

Timetable: Mid term

ORG-02. The Program should continue to build project and database management expertise among ACCSP staff. (TOR 2, 4, 8, 9)

Responding Group: Staff

Actions: (IN PROGRESS) Staff will be encouraged to take appropriate training classes within the limits of the training budget by incorporating training requirements into annual performance plans. Team leads and the Program Manager will be encouraged to take at least one project management class. Also, currently two staff are trained as database managers, with a third likely to begin training in 2013. Oracle database administration is a highly technical and very expensive skill to obtain. Training must remain within limited budgetary constraints.

Expected Outcomes: Program management classes are completed by Team leads and the Program Manager. A third staff member is trained as a database manager.

Timetable: Mid term

ORG-03. Program managers should develop methods to positively reward staff and recognize accomplishments, including staff behind the scenes as well as those who are the public face of the Program. (TOR 2)

Responding Group: Staff

Actions: (RECOMMENDED/IN PROGRESS) The ACCSP practice is to use a merit based rewards system based on the review process used at NOAA Fisheries. In addition, staff are often rewarded with bonuses when unusual or extraordinary tasks are accomplished.

The website now boasts more detailed information on staff responsibilities. This information was also included in the ASMFC Commissioner's manual. Newsletters will also highlight staff specifically, as opposed to highlighting "staff", "Data Team", or "Software Team".

Expected Outcomes: Newsletters highlight individual staff members, instead of teams. During updates for Coordinating Council and Operations Committee meetings, specific teams and staff are recognized for their work. Current bonus and salary increase policy remains in effect.

Timetable: Short term

ORG-04 Revisit the timing and frequency of ACCSP Coordinating Council meetings to improve attendance and focus. (TOR 5c)

- Avoid scheduling the meeting on the final day of ASMFC meetings
- Conduct annual in-person meetings with quarterly webinars

Responding Group: Executive Committee

Actions: (RECOMMENDED/IN PROGRESS) In an effort to improve attendance and focus during Coordinating Council meetings, the ACCSP Director has maintained a dialogue with ASMFC during the meeting planning phase, which has resulted in changes in the scheduling during Council meetings, making them easier for members to attend. While not always possible, an ongoing attempt will be made to ensure that meetings are no longer held at the end of the Commission meeting weeks, but rather try to schedule them in the earlier part of the meeting week.

Expected Outcomes: Improved attendance and better engagement of Council members.

Timetable: Short term

ORG-05 The Coordinating Council should be strengthened through re-energized Executive and Legislative Committees. The partner Memorandum of Agreement should be reviewed to clarify the composition of the Executive Committee. (TOR 5c)

Responding Group: Executive Committee

Actions: (RECOMMENDED/IN PROGRESS) The Executive Committee has been meeting regularly. The partner MOU may be amended to better codify the membership of the Executive Committee and create a Long Term Funding Strategies Committee (as noted in PM-4) if the need to do so is identified during strategic planning or a potential governance review.

A less complicated approach might be to create Program Bylaws or Standard Operating Procedures that outline the composition and functions of committees and documents processes and procedures that are specific to the Program not directly specified in the MOU (see ORG-12).

Expected Outcomes: Routine meetings of the Executive Committee occur which more directly engage it's members with the Program. This in turn helps to better engage the Council since several of its members have a much more detailed understanding of the Program's function and processes and realize more of a stake in the decision making process.

Timetable: Short term

ORG-06 Given its financial stake in the Program, NOAA Fisheries must be an active participant on the Coordinating Council's Executive Committee. (TOR 5)

Responding Group: Executive Committee

Actions: (RECOMMENDED/COMPLETED) The Director of NOAA Fisheries' Office of Science and Technology is now a member of the Executive Committee. However, a review of the Council minutes shows that NOAA Fisheries was always intended to be a member of the Executive Committee. It appears that through a series of changes in leadership that a discontinuity in participation occurred.

This points to a lack of continuity in processes and suggests that development of a set of Standard Operating Procedures or ByLaws that articulate specific processes and policies not directly outlined in the MOU as suggested in ORG-05.

Expected Outcomes: NOAA Fisheries is a member of the Executive Committee.

Timetable: Short term

ORG-07 Strategies to improve continuity of program oversight should be implemented, including a review of the leadership term on the Coordinating Council. (TOR 5c)

Responding Group: Executive Committee

Actions: The responsibilities of the Council Chair and Vice-chair will be clearly articulated and a transition process defined that is designed to ensure continuity. The Vice-chair will be directly involved in the decision and consultative processes which will help in preparation for the following Chair position.

This process should be documented in some kind of Program Bylaws or Standard Operating Procedures that outline the composition and functions of committees and documents processes and procedures that are specific to the Program, but not directly specified in the MOU (see ORG-05).

Expected Outcomes: Improved continuity of oversight when Council Chairs rotate and an improved understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the Council Chair and Vice-chair.

Timetable: Short term

ORG-08 The Program should undergo a governance review. The Panel realizes that the situation today is very different than 1995, when the ACCSP was created. ACCSP needs a better relationship and interface with ASMFC, and linkages established and strengthened. Consideration should be given to placing ACCSP as a program under ASMFC, which could possibly re-engage the state directors. There are issues of economy of scale and potential improvements to efficiency that could be gained, working relationships strengthened, resources leveraged, etc. (TOR 2, 4)

Responding Group: Executive Committee

Actions: (RECOMMENDED) Records of the previous governance review will be presented to the Executive Committee for further discussion. Based on the consensus of the Executive Committee, a recommendation may be made to the Coordinating Council to identify resources and funding necessary to conduct workshops and whatever meetings are necessary to review the current system and weight the potential costs and benefits of various scenarios.

Expected Outcomes: Recommendation(s) to maintain status quo, or make adjustments to the current governance policy are made for Council action.

Timetable: Short term

ORG-09 Given the potential for resource shortages and increased workload in the future, streamline the number of technical committees and leverage virtual meetings to reduce the burden on partner staff members, while at the same time optimizing partners' engagement. (TOR 2, 4)

Responding Group: Operations Committee

Actions: (RECOMMENDED/IN PROGRESS) Have already started doing this by significantly decreasing the number of in-person meetings and increasing the use of conference calls/webinars. However, there is a limit since some issues/committees still need in-person meetings. Webinars, while low cost and convenient, can create the reverse effect by creating less productive meetings (e.g., limited attendance, increased distractions in office environment). The alternative would be to partially adjust the budget back to in-person meetings for

those issues/committees that request them in place of support to projects.

Expected Outcomes: A balanced approach that incorporates the advantages of each format, and established guidelines for weighing the benefits of in-person vs. webinars to accomplish ACCSP's mission.

Timetable: Short term

ORG-10 Consider an ACCSP hosted annual or bi-annual conference where key issues are discussed, keynote speakers are invited, and all those interested in fisheries data can network and share ideas. (TOR 4, 5b, 5c, 5f)

Responding Group: Operations Committee

Actions: (RECOMMENDED/IN PROGRESS) Has already been considered and not done mainly due to lack of resources (cost). The following are additional alternatives that will be considered: combine with existing meetings (e.g., Operations Committee meetings); utilize existing outreach opportunities to network and share ideas; look for external funding (e.g., NFWF Fisheries Innovation Fund); or consider other less costly ways to do this.

Expected Outcomes: A balanced approach that incorporates the advantages of each format, and established guidelines for weighing the benefits of in-person vs. webinars to accomplish ACCSP's mission.

Timetable: Short term

ORG-11. Regular communication should be enhanced between ACCSP staff and the Coordinating Council and its leadership. (TOR 2)

Responding Group: Staff

Actions: (RECOMMENDED/IN PROGRESS) Current ACCSP practice is to communicate when specific business is required. Monthly conference calls between the Coordinating Council Chair, Vice-chair and the Director will be made. The Executive Committee has been more active and is meeting via teleconference regularly and meeting prior to all Coordinating Council meetings.

Expected Outcomes: Improved communication between staff leadership.

Timetable: Short term

ORG-12. The Coordinating Council should consider utilizing the executive committee or forming an administrative oversight committee (a subset of the Coordinating Council) to more frequently track the performance of ACCSP and its staff. (TOR 2, 5c)

Responding Group: Executive Committee

Actions: (RECOMMENDED/COMPLETED): Since the beginning of 2012, the Executive Committee has been meeting routinely and been taking on this function. Executive Committee meetings or conference calls will be made at least bi-monthly, more often when needed as determined by the Council Chair. In addition, monthly conference calls between the Director, Coordinating Council Chair, and Vice-Chair have occurred and will continue. These briefings greatly improve oversight and allow for a routine flow of information and feedback to occur between the parties.

This process should be documented in some kind of Program Bylaws or Standard Operating Procedures that outline the composition and functions of committees and documents processes and procedures that are specific to the Program, but not directly specified in the MOU (see ORG-05).

Expected Outcomes: Improved monitoring of Program performance.

Timetable: Short term

PARTNER PROJECTS (PP)

PP-01 ACCSP partners should come to agreement on a new and more rigorous threshold for allocating maintenance funding in order to better balance innovation and maintenance. (TOR 2, 7)

Responding Group: Operations Committee

Actions: (RECOMMENDED) This issue has been discussed many times and a subcommittee between the Operations and Coordinating Council was formed, with the current funding process as the result. However, given the prominence of this issue by both partners and staff during the IPR surveys and resulting recommendation from the reviewers, this could again be referred to the sub-committee (as was done in 2009).

Expected Outcomes: Determination by the Coordinating Council if a significant change in funding priorities is required.

Timetable: Mid term

PP-02 The partner project process should be reviewed in light of anticipated budget climate and a strategic process developed to respond to potential shortfalls, including reviewing funding formula and ability to fund base-level programs to help prevent degradation of time series data (i.e., backsliding). (TOR 2)

Responding Group: Operations Committee

Actions: (RECOMMENDED) This issue has been discussed many times and a subcommittee between the Operations and Coordinating Council was formed, with the current funding process as the result. However, given the prominence of this issue by both partners and staff during the IPR surveys and resulting recommendation from the reviewers, this could again be referred to the sub-committee (as was done in 2009).

Expected Outcomes: Determination by the Coordinating Council if a significant change in funding priorities is required.

Timetable: Mid term

PP-03 Consider methods to incentivize and leverage additional state or private funding for partner projects (e.g., matching grant program). (TOR 2)

Responding Group: Operations Committee

Actions: (RECOMMENDED) This issue has been discussed many times and a subcommittee between the Operations and Coordinating Council was formed, with the current funding process as the result. However, given the prominence of this issue by both partners and staff during the IPR surveys and resulting recommendation from the reviewers, this could again be referred to the sub-committee (as was done in 2009).

Expected Outcomes: Determination by the Coordinating Council if a significant change in funding priorities is required.

Timetable: Mid term

PP-04 Subject states who return for maintenance funding year after year to a higher degree of review to ensure that the project provides an adequate return on investment. (TOR 2)

Responding Group: Operations Committee

Actions: (RECOMMENDED) This issue has been discussed many times and a subcommittee between the Operations and Coordinating Council was formed, with the current funding process as the result. However, given the prominence of this

issue by both partners and staff during the IPR surveys and resulting recommendation from the reviewers, this could again be referred to the sub-committee (as was done in 2009).

Expected Outcomes: Determination by the Coordinating Council if a significant change in funding priorities is required.

Timetable: Mid term

PP-05 Take steps to ensure that politics do not exert undue influence in funding decisions at the Coordinating Council. (TOR 2, 6)

Responding Group: Executive Committee

Actions: (NOT RECOMMENDED) It is part of the responsibility of the Council to weigh “political” issues when making decisions. For this reason, it is the recommendation of the Executive Committee that this recommendation not be considered.

Expected Outcomes: Status quo

Timetable: Short term

PP-06 If a data collection need is driven by federal fishery management regulations, states should seek funding directly from NOAA Fisheries to meet those needs. (TOR 2)

Responding Group: Operations Committee

Actions: (RECOMMENDED) This issue has been discussed many times and a subcommittee between the Operations and Coordinating Council was formed, with the current funding process as the result. However, given the prominence of this issue by both partners and staff during the IPR surveys and resulting recommendation from the reviewers, this could again be referred to the sub-committee (as was done in 2009).

Expected Outcomes: Determination by the Coordinating Council if a significant change in funding priorities is required.

Timetable: Mid term

PP-07 Ensure that ACCSP data management practices and funding processes adhere to NOAA Fisheries procedural directives and Information Quality Act requirements to provide metadata and data management plans. (TOR 8)

Responding Group: Operations Committee

Actions: (REFER TO APPROPRIATE COMMITTEE) It may not be practical to entirely adhere to NOAA Fisheries procedural directives and Information Quality Act requirements. It is reasonable, however, to modify the ACCSP internal procedures and standards that govern the data management systems and bring them into compliance within the limits of the resources of the Program. The appropriate NOAA procedural directives can then be forwarded to the Information Systems Committee for action to review and incorporate into ACCSP policy as appropriate. Those related to funding processes and NOAA Fisheries are being addressed by the Executive Committee Funding Subcommittee in their review of potential alternative funding processes.

Expected Outcomes: The newly developed Standard Operations Procedure document includes ACCSP data management practices and funding processes.

Timetable: Mid term

PP-08 Develop Service Level Agreements (SLAs) between ACCSP and each partner with set expectations, minimum requirements, and process for how to address when unmet expectations, and maintain annual reviews. (TOR 3, 7)

Responding Group: Operations Committee

Actions: (RECOMMENDED IN PART) Developing SLAs for each partner may not be the most practical solution for ACCSP. We can determine the general components of an SLA, clarify what the reviewers felt needed to be added to the process, and adapt ACCSP's funding and grant review process accordingly.

Expected Outcomes: Expectations, requirements, and processes between partners and ACCSP are clearly articulated.

Timetable: Mid term

PP-09 ACCSP should account for the true costs of partner specific projects, e.g. FUS, FIS/FOSS, HMS, MRIP and lobster database, that ACCSP has taken responsibility for outside of the partner project funding process. This will further define those tasks that ACCSP does accomplish on behalf of specific partners using internal funding from the Administrative Budget. (TOR 2)

Responding Group: Staff

Actions: (RECOMMENDED): In many cases, the Program has received funding to accomplish specific tasks (e.g., MRIP PSE project). For those that the Program has taken on without additional funding it will be necessary to better track the actual hours individual staff members spend on specific projects and work areas. In preparation for this increased accountability, staff now supplies the Director with weekly work summaries that identify which tasks were performed.

In the longer term, the Program will deploy software that can track individual projects and tasks and the estimated hours dedicated to each. Once deployed, this system will allow the Director to better account for true project costs.

Expected Outcomes: Detailed time tracking that allows for reporting by specific project.

Timetable: Short term

PP-10 Partner projects that are directly supported by ACCSP staff, should provide initial and maintenance resources to support those projects. (TOR 2)

Responding Group: Operations Committee (jointly with Staff)

Actions: (RECOMMENDED) There is need for clarification from the reviewers on this item. Was the intent to push partners to pick up the cost of ACCSP staff contributing to a project, or for partners to pick up the cost of their own staff that provides data to ACCSP (e.g., recurring maintenance costs and/or ACCSP "coordinators" for state partners funded by ACCSP)? If the former, how does one account for the cost associated to each partner?

Expected Outcomes: To be determined

Timetable: Short term

DATA COLLECTION STANDARDS (DCS)

DCS-01 Periodically review the data standards to ensure they are still pertinent and address the needs of program partners and move the program towards full implementation (TOR 5).

Responding Group: Operations Committee

Actions: (RECOMMENDED/IN PROGRESS) The ACCSP data collection standards were just reviewed/updated/approved in 2012. However, the frequency of review needs to be defined.

Additionally, those standards that are less well defined (e.g., socio-economic) need to be reviewed more frequently.

Expected Outcomes: Documentation of the process and periodicity by which standards are reviewed (to be incorporated as a part of the Standard Operating Procedure).

Timetable: Mid term

DCS-02 Continue to facilitate discussion through the Program's committee process to assess, capture, and adjust to the frequently evolving requirements of fisheries data collection coast-wide implementation (TOR 5).

Responding Group: Operations Committee

Actions: (RECOMMENDED) Initiate a review of those partners that are not already meeting the standards of the program. Regional management committees/councils (e.g., ASMFC, NEFMC, SAFMC) can review FMPs and provide information as to where information is lacking or which partners are falling short.

Expected Outcomes: Continue to utilize the ACCSP committee process to serve as the central clearinghouse for updating data collection needs.

Timetable: Mid term

DCS-03 Examine the costs, benefits, opportunities, and threats inherent in establishing the data standards as compliance requirements in fishery management plans (TOR 5).

Responding Group: Operations Committee

Actions: (RECOMMENDED) Initiate a review of those partners that are not already meeting the standards of the program. Regional management committees/councils (e.g., ASMFC, NEFMC, SAFMC) can review FMPs and provide information as to where information is lacking or which partners are falling short.

Expected Outcomes: Produce a report developed by the Operations Committee on the feasibility of establishing ACCSP data standards as a requirement in Atlantic coast FMPs.

Timetable: Mid term

DATA MANAGEMENT (DM)

DM-01 Consider utilizing the data warehouse as an online portal to other pre-existing and alternatively hosted datasets (TOR 4, 5).

Responding Group: Staff

Actions: (RECOMMENDED) Opportunities exist for ACCSP to integrate results from various sources to show a combined response (such as recreational and commercial results, summarizing various trip reporting results, or biological data compilations). Upon this recommendation, this task will undergo several levels of implementation requiring different resources to develop and maintain.

a) Within one year, the Data Team will be able to improve the links and descriptions on the ACCSP website to other data sets available through partner websites and data access programs.

b) Longer term strategic planning could determine if new technologies (oracle portal) should be implemented to present other data sets within the umbrella of ACCSP website queries or redirect requests to partner systems (To be discussed with data managers under item DM-9).

As links or portals to other data sets are created, ACCSP will make clear that these data systems may have different results/information than presented by ACCSP due to policies on confidential data and/or presentation needs.

Expected Outcomes: Links to appropriate external data sources.

Timetable: Short term

DM-02 Determine the core data stakeholders based on the Program’s mission and prioritize the focus on them by addressing their data needs. This will allow for a more focused approach to ensure success of the program. (TOR 4, 5)

Responding Group: Staff

Actions: (RECOMMENDED/IN PROGRESS) Through expanded outreach efforts, staff will continue to identify and work with core stakeholders. Part of this process will include ongoing discussion of data needs or products. Where necessary, products maybe developed or customized to better meet customer needs.

Expected Outcomes: Core data stakeholders are identified and data products created to meet their needs.

Timetable: Mid term

DM-03 Focus resources on improving the user interface of the data warehouse through user feedback and user-centered design. (TOR 4, 5)

Responding Group: Staff

Actions: (RECOMMENDED/IN PROGRESS) The ACCSP practice is to conduct data request surveys annually to gauge customer satisfaction. Users also have the opportunity to share feedback with an exit survey linked to the Data Warehouse. Staff also has presented several Data Warehouse webinars which solicited feedback from participants. ACCSP and ASMFC Technical Committees will also have the opportunity to review the discoverer interface and where possible, suggestions have been implemented.

Staff has recently upgraded the Oracle data access tools to improve security and functionality with current web browsers and has deployed an online custom data request form to guide users in clarifying their needs. Staff recognizes the need for more routine maintenance and revisions to the discoverer queries including workbook names and improved guidance to end users on what data is available in each workbook.

Unfortunately, detailed feedback has been difficult to obtain. Mid- to long-term improvements should be guided by focus groups. ACCSP will conduct a focus group with the Data Warehouse Outreach Group to gather feedback on how to improve the interface of the Data Warehouse.

Expected Outcomes: An improved user interface is deployed resulting in improved ease of use and better customer satisfaction.

Timetable: Mid term

DM-04 Enhance the query capabilities of the data warehouse to be more accessible to non-technical users. (TOR 4, 5)

Responding Group: Staff

Actions: (RECOMMENDED) Staff recognizes that Data Warehouse queries and recommended usage with regards to non-technical users are in need of functionality updates, graphics, and explanations.

With guidance from the Data Warehouse Outreach Group, Commercial Technical Committee, Information Systems Committee, and the Recreational Technical Committees, staff will develop a simpler query interface in a different tool similar to SAFIS online reports (i.e., Apex) for non-technical users.

Expected Outcomes: An improved user interface is deployed resulting in improved ease of use and better customer satisfaction.

Timetable: Mid term

DM-05 Provide clear guidance on when and how all datasets are updated with new data in the data warehouse. (TOR 4, 5)

Responding Group: Staff

Actions: (RECOMMENDED/IN PROGRESS) Staff is in the process of providing tools to show the status of available data. This includes recent data loads or updates and includes tables showing both overview and detailed information.

In the longer term, staff will develop the data pedigree and partner validation for information in the Data Warehouse.

Staff has developed and deployed updated graphics and text to explain the data consolidation process of the commercial catch and effort data load. This was included in the 2012 annual report and the website. In addition, near real time data status will be provided through the website.

Expected Outcomes: Easily accessible information on data status and pedigree is available to end users, Partners and the general public.

Timetable: Mid term

DM-06 Consider relaxing the log-on credentialing requirement for those requesting access to non-confidential data. (TOR 4, 5)

Responding Group: Staff

Actions: (RECOMMENDED/COMPLETED) New software has been deployed that allows for non-confidential access to the data query tool without a user identification or password.

It should be noted that named user logins were first implemented to as a way to track metrics, however alternative measures are available such as total number of queries run by

the public access account. There will be a loss of contact information for non-confidential accounts, reducing the ability of staff to contact/survey users on their satisfaction with the Data Warehouse tools and ACCSP information products. Metrics on number of queries by types of individuals (agency staff, academics, public) will need to be adjusted.

Expected Outcomes: Open access to the data query tool without a user identification and password.

Timetable: Short term

DM-07 Develop a more timely process for granting access (e.g. institute maximum time period of one week) to information for confidential data users. (TOR 4, 5)

Responding Group: Staff

Actions: (RECOMMENDED/IN PROGRESS) In 2011, an automated web-based system was deployed that meets program partner legal requirements. The system currently sends emails to the security contacts of program partners within one hour of request submission. ACCSP staff is copied on the email but user access depends on partner security review to be returned to ACCSP. Upon receipt of partner response user accounts are typically updated within one business day and the user is automatically emailed of the status change. While most user requests are handled quickly (within 2 weeks), some have a more significant user wait time. The longest delays exist at the partner review stage. Staff will create weekly automated email reminders to security contacts and is will work through the Commercial Technical Committee and/or Operations Committee on ways to improve the process.

Expected Outcomes: Improved speed and transparency on user requested confidential data access.

Timetable: Short term

DM-08 Increase collaboration among the ACCSP, NOAA Fisheries Science Centers, and other federal partners, especially at the leadership level (TOR 5).

Responding Group: Executive Committee

Actions: (RECOMMENDED) Work with Director and federal partners to schedule an initial meeting between appropriate

ACCSP and Partner staff. This would primarily focus on NOAA Fisheries personnel (e.g., Science Center or Regional Directors and NOAA Fisheries Headquarters Directors) with a goal of creating a better understanding of the role of each partner in the data collection and dissemination process. These meetings would be specific to the region and to the leadership level with a formulated agenda planned in conjunction with federal partner staff. For instance, if staff is new more time would be taken to bring leadership up-to-speed on ACCSP. The objectives of these meetings would be to have NOAA Fisheries staff, as well as ACCSP staff, leave with an understanding of 1) how ACCSP designs, collects, and disseminates marine fisheries statistics, 2) how the Science Centers specifically utilize ACCSP data, 3) if they currently do not, why the Science Centers do not incorporate ACCSP data, and 4) a discussion of how ACCSP might better collaborate with the NOAA Fisheries entity involved. Then establish a routine coordination/collaboration mechanism that keeps leadership informed and involved in making decisions to improve collaboration and reduce redundancies.

Expected Outcomes: Improved collaboration between ACCSP and its federal partners which helps eliminate misunderstandings and redundancies amongst the group.

Timetable: Mid term

DM-09 Define clear data management roles between ACCSP and the NOAA Fisheries Science Centers and communicate those roles to program partners and customers. (TOR 4, 5)

Responding Group: Staff

Actions: (RECOMMENDED) Staff will work with partner data managers to document currently understood data collection, consolidation, and dissemination roles and responsibilities. This will include a discussion of data access and usage. Roles such as end user support, revisions to supporting data codes, software maintenance, data quality and revisions, and infrastructure support shall be clearly defined. Once drafted, the document will be available to partners and customers.

Expected Outcomes: Clear documentation of the understood roles and responsibilities is included in the Standard Operating Procedures document and made available.

Timetable: Mid term

- DM-10 Develop a clear ‘future-state’ vision for the data warehouse system architecture in relation to other East Coast fishery data repositories to avoid redundancy and ensure that resources among organizations are allocated wisely (TOR 1).**
Responding Group: Operations Committee
- Actions:* (RECOMMENDED) Need to start by addressing the recommendation in DM-09 to define clear data management roles between ACCSP and NOAA Fisheries Science Center and communicate those roles to program partners and customers. Once this is addressed, then DM-10 can follow.
- Expected Outcomes:* Clear documentation of the understood roles and responsibilities is included in the Standard Operating Procedures document and made available.
- Timetable:* Mid term
- DM-11 Examine potential cost efficiencies in cloud hosting and virtualization of the data (TOR 4).**
Responding Group: Staff
- Actions:* (NOT RECOMMENDED) Cloud hosting is prohibitively expensive and many solutions have inherent security and confidentiality risks which preclude deploying confidential fisheries data.
- Expected Outcomes:* Status quo
- Timetable:* Mid term
- DM-12 Develop process for synchronization of data between ACCSP and the Northeast and Southeast Regions. An emphasis needs to be placed in the Southeast Region since more work needs to be accomplished in that region (TOR 5).**
Responding Group: Staff
- Actions:* (RECOMMENDED) A full analysis of policies, data availability, and alignment of data compilation/presentation rules amongst the Program and Regions is required to ensure that datasets are synchronized in space and time in the distributed, regional, systems. In addition, staff recognizes that data gaps exist in all regions (eel and shad in the northeast and golden crab, logbooks, and ITQ data in the southeast). Coordinated partner evaluation of data flow and

sharing of datasets will be accomplished in order to move forward (see DM-9).

Expected Outcomes: A commonly understood synchronization process is deployed and documented between the Program and NOAA Fisheries Regions.

Timetable: Mid term

DM-13 Provide clear guidance on when and how all datasets are updated with new data in the data warehouse. (TOR 4, 5)

Responding Group: Staff

Actions: (RECOMMENDED/IN PROGRESS) Staff is in the process of providing tools to show the status of available data. This includes recent data loads or updates and includes tables showing both overview and detailed information.

In the longer term, staff will develop the data pedigree and partner validation for information in the Data Warehouse.

Staff has developed and deployed updated graphics and text to explain the data consolidation process of the commercial catch and effort data load. This was included in the 2012 annual report and the website. In addition, near real time data status will be provided through the web site.

Expected Outcomes: Easily accessible information on data status and pedigree is available to end users, Partners and the general public.

Timetable: Mid term

SAFIS (S)

S-01 ACCSP needs to better identify the services SAFIS provides to partners for collection [web form] and consolidation [database] of data. (TOR 4, 5)

Responding Group: Staff

Actions: (RECOMMENDED) There will be a conference call in the summer of 2013 dedicated to SAFIS outreach. The goal of this call is to create a network of those that work with dealers and harvesters to share training strategies (e.g., video tutorials), as well as success stories which can be used to better promote the program.

Individuals from all partners using SAFIS have been identified for the SAFIS Outreach Group. Planning for a call

at the end of August is underway and an agenda has been made. This recommendation is part of the long term goals of the group.

Expected Outcomes: Better information on the data collection, consolidation and distribution services will be made available partners.

Timetable: Short to Mid term

S-02 That status of partners achievement of the full standards needs to be better identified and ACCSP needs to work with partners as a resource to foster their full achievement (TOR 4, 5).

Responding Group: Operations Committee

Actions: (RECOMMENDED) Raise awareness through improved outreach (e.g., don't just focus on the "hole" in the data, but also the successful cooperative relationships among ACCSP partners that are currently providing more comprehensive data). Improve communication specifically on the program website.

Expected Outcomes: The Operations Committee is fully engaged in improving outreach to better identify full standards and work with partners as a resource to foster their full achievement.

Timetable: Mid term

S-03 ACCSP needs to better promote their accomplishments and remaining work in SAFIS targeted to those that may influence funding decisions. (TOR 4, 5)

Responding Group: Staff

Actions: (RECOMMENDED) Staff will work with the Executive Committee and other executive level constituents to determine who these individuals are and a strategy that would best be used to influence funding decisions.

Individuals from all partners using SAFIS have been identified for the SAFIS Outreach Group. Planning for a call at the end of August is underway and an agenda has been made. This recommendation is a part of the long term goals of the group.

Also, ACCSP will work with the Executive Committee on what information they would like included in the 2014-2018 Outreach Strategic Plan.

Expected Outcomes: Individuals identified to have influence in funding decisions have information targeted at the funding decision process.

Timetable: Mid term

S-04 Focus resources on improving the user interface of all SAFIS products through user feedback and user-centered design, incorporating new or technology improvements, as needed. (TOR 3, 4)

Responding Group: Staff

Actions: (RECOMMENDED/IN PROGRESS) The Software Team is in the process of upgrading SAFIS applications. One of the goals of this upgrade is to improve system performance. This will be achieved through improvements in the Apex tool and tuning software and database structures.

Mid- to long-term improvements should be guided by focus groups. ACCSP will conduct a focus group with the SAFIS Outreach Group to gather feedback on how to improve the interface of SAFIS. Also, annual feedback will begin to be employed just as it is with the customer satisfaction surveys for the Data Warehouse.

Expected Outcomes: An improved user interface is deployed resulting in improved ease of use and better customer satisfaction.

Timetable: Mid term

S-05 Improve the response time of the SAFIS web applications. (TOR 4)

Responding Group: Staff

Actions: (RECOMMENDED/IN PROGRESS) The Software Team is in the process of upgrading SAFIS applications. One of the goals of this upgrade is to improve system performance. This will be achieved through improvements in the Apex tool and tuning software and database structures.

Expected Outcomes: Improved SAFIS response times and increased customer satisfaction with the SAFIS tool.

Timetable: Short to Mid term

S-06 Provide advisory services and best-practices to state and other customers on custom scripting for exporting SAFIS data in near real-time. (TOR 4)

Responding Group: Staff

Actions: (RECOMMENDED/IN PROGRESS) Staff will work to determine how/if data are being retrieved from SAFIS. Currently, all SAFIS interactive reports have the capability of downloading into CSV format. Staff will work with various partners to advise on the most appropriate mechanism for data retrieval and provide support for that process once implemented. After a review, ACCSP will develop a document applicable to all partners outlining how data are being retrieved into reports from SAFIS.

Expected Outcomes: Partners have ready access to standardized processes and best practices for real-time SAFIS data retrieval.

Timetable: Mid term

S-07 Consider building a local SAFIS software client for customer workstations to complement the existing web applications. (TOR 4)

Responding Group: Staff

Actions: (RECOMMENDED) Some PC based tools already exist developed by third party vendors and contractors. However they are not designed for bulk data entry, but are targeted at commercial dealers and fishermen. Resources will be either identified in house or contracted to develop a tool designed for bulk entry of commercial dealer and trip data.

Expected Outcomes: A PC based data entry system is available to partners designed to facility the input and transmissions of large numbers of transactions.

Timetable: Mid term

S-08 SAFIS be made more user friendly, both from a data entry and data query perspective as implied by these recommendations from the Interview/Survey Report. (TOR 4, 5)

Responding Group: Staff

Actions: (RECOMMENDED/IN PROGRESS) The Software Team is in the midst of an upgrade intended to address many of these issues. The upgrade will utilize advances in software and should provide some ease for users. It is expected that program partners will provide feedback on new techniques and additional improvements.

Expected Outcomes: Improved customer satisfaction with the SAFIS suite of tools.

Timetable: Mid term

S-09 ACCSP should consider changing the partnership working mode to one that has a more direct role in assisting partners in the short term to realize the full SAFIS standards. (TOR 4, 5)

Responding Group: Operations Committee (jointly with Staff)

Actions: Partial implementation of SAFIS as the reporting mechanism by partners is likely a combination of both funding limitations and concerns as outlined in the Panel Report. For the latter, staff's implementation of recommendations S4-S7 (e.g., improving the SAFIS user interface, improving the web application response time) would likely promote increased utilization by partners. In terms of changing the partnership working mode, including assessing the point in implementation each partner has attained, this recommendation will directly benefit from an initiative recently created through the Outreach Committee. They have formed an "issue specific" SAFIS outreach group in which a representative from each Partner relative to SAFIS will be identified. The goals include improving training materials, increasing communication between partners both familiar with and new to SAFIS, and providing a central clearinghouse for partner-specific SAFIS issues.

Expected Outcomes: The Operations Committee is fully engaged in improving outreach to better identify full standards and work with partners as a resource to foster their full achievement.

Timetable: Mid term

PROGRAM MANAGEMENT (M)

M-01 Develop overall communication plan that encompasses strategic viewpoints and priority needs of the program, defines stakeholders, and includes updated outreach plan.

Responding Group: Operations Committee

Actions: A new outreach plan will be developed for 2014-2018. However, an overall communication plan may differ, such that it is more holistic and incorporates more input from the Operations Committee in terms of Program priorities and targeted messages to, and input from, defined stakeholders. Need to identify the differences, what additional components are needed, and incorporate that into the new outreach plan.

Expected Outcomes: A new Outreach Plan for 2014-2018 will be developed.

Timetable: Mid term

M-02 More clearly communicate data consolidation process to users. (TOR 4)

Responding Group: Staff

Actions: (RECOMMENDED/IN PROGRESS) Staff is in the process of providing tools to show the status of available data. This includes recent data loads or updates and includes tables showing both overview and detailed information.

In the longer term, staff will develop the data pedigree and partner validation for information in the Data Warehouse.

Staff has developed and deployed updated graphics and text to explain the data consolidation process of the commercial catch and effort data load. This was included in the 2012 annual report and the website. In addition, near real time data status will be provided through the website.

Expected Outcomes: Easily accessible information on data status and pedigree is available to end users, partners, and the general public.

Timetable: Short term

M-03 Adopt an improved “trouble” ticket and enhancement request management system, specifically including response from staff on expected timeline until completion. This should not be a list available on only one staff member’s computer, but a more transparent living document. (TOR 4)

Responding Group: Staff

Actions: (RECOMMENDED/REFER TO APPROPRIATE COMMITTEE) This recommendation will be referred to the Information Systems Committee. That committee may be able to wade through the complex nature of implementing an automated trouble ticket/process management software solution, which can also be time consuming and expensive.

The Information Systems Committee will provide a report after their evaluation of the complex nature of implementing trouble ticket/process management software solutions. The Program will then take action based on the recommendation.

Expected Outcomes: A deployed automated trouble ticket system that is available to staff and management that manages time and outcomes.

Timetable: Short term

M-04 Adopt an internal strategic planning and execution process, using quality program, project and business management best practices. This is not data quality assurance and quality control (QA/QC) which, of course, remains of critical importance, but is about getting more focused on your mission and business layer, not just the IT layer, including, for example, change management processes and data management plans inclusive of disaster planning. (TOR 4)

Responding Group: Staff

Actions: (IN PROGRESS) The ACCSP practice has been to comply with current Strategic Plans. Part of the strategic planning process was to conduct this review.

The ACCSP will develop a new and updated Strategic Plan for 2014-2018 using this review, best practices and other documents as a guide. The strategic plan will then serve as a guide for annual implementation plans.

Note that change management is addressed in a previous recommendation (see M-3).

Expected Outcomes: An adopted Strategic Plan that includes the integration of quality control and assurance and is focused on critical mission areas.

Timetable: Short term

M-05 Develop a well-defined and strategic process to address budget shortfalls, both anticipated (congressional budgets) and unanticipated (within fiscal year rescissions). (TOR 2, 4)

Responding Group: Executive Committee

Actions: (RECOMMENDED) In response to the 2013 sequestration, a process was developed to review severe budget shortfalls and make appropriate decisions in cases that go beyond the currently defined Funding Decision Process.

Staff have completed a catalog of work tasks, assigned priorities and estimated hours per task.

The Funding Decision Process should be amended to include specific guidance and incorporated into Bylaws or Standard Operating Procedure documents (see ORG-05).

Expected Outcomes: Integrated into a Standard Operating Procedures document is a process for addressing budget shortfalls.

Timetable: Short term

M-06 Develop and maintain a transparent and comprehensive system of annual performance plans and evaluations for the Executive Director and staff, with methods to acknowledge and reward success and achievements. (TOR 2)

Responding Group: Executive Committee

Actions: (RECOMMENDED/COMPLETED) A standardized, objective mechanism for staff performance planning, appraisal, and reward is already in place, based on the processes established by the previous director. It utilizes an objective, point based system with specific goals and objectives similar to that currently used in NOAA. The process invites feedback from staff when revising yearly goals and has written feedback and evaluations from the Director. Staff then review feedback and sign for the coming year. The end result is both a review of the previous year and a new performance plan for the following year. Work is under way to implement the process for the Executive Director as outlined in the MOU.

Most recent appraisal period ended June 31, 2013. Appraisals have been completed and Performance Plan revisions are under way.

This process differs somewhat from the current ASMFC practice, but has been in use by ACCSP since the previous Director. ASMFC Executive Director Beal has been briefed on the process and is comfortable with the approach. Copies of the Plans and Reviews are kept on file in the ASMFC Human Resources office.

Expected Outcomes: Status quo

Timetable: Short term

M-07 Develop and monitor Program level performance measures and communicate to stakeholders. (TOR 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9) These may include within established priorities:

- **Level of achievements of full standards selected by individual partners.**
- **Engagements with individual partners to forward achievement of ACCSP standards (data management, data collections, permitting, legislation, etc...).**
- **Participation in data workshops such as SEDAR.**
- **Active and ongoing communications with Partners to achieve increases in leveraging and efficiencies.**

Responding Group: Operations Committee (jointly with Staff)

Actions: Some of this information is already available in the annual report, newsletters and on the website. However, it needs to be better defined, easily accessible, and differentiated by partner. In conjunction with staff, and in particular as part of developing the new Outreach Plan for 2014-2018, issues related to better communicating partner program level performance measures will be reviewed.

Expected Outcomes: A new Outreach Plan for 2014-2018 is developed, which includes performance measures monitored by the Operations Committee. This information is communicated to partners through the Outreach Plan.

Timetable: Mid term

Terms of Reference for the
Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP)
2012 Independent Program Review Panel

The Review Panel is tasked with providing an external review of the ACCSP program, with emphasis on a broad evaluation of how ACCSP is meeting the goals and mission of the program. The Program Design of the ACCSP (November 2004 edition, p. 12) calls for external peer reviews, at least every five years, to evaluate the program's success in meeting the needs of fisheries managers, scientists, and fishermen.

Terms of Reference

1. Review the structure of ACCSP to draw general conclusions on the overall effectiveness of the Program in fulfilling its mission and vision as perceived by end user scientists, managers, and stakeholders.

2. Review the operating environment including program organization/governance and, in particular, the interaction between the Coordinating Council Chairman, the Director and the staff to determine how well staff manages work plans and accomplishes the work of the 2008-2012 Strategic Plan. Review funding of Partner projects, allocation of Partner staff resources, and adequacy of funding levels.

3. Review the process used by the Program to evaluate customer needs and Program deliverables to meet those needs. Review the adequacy of the mechanism used to respond to stakeholders and customer feedback and ensure continuous improvement.

4. Review the information technology program to evaluate if: data systems are meeting constituents' needs; data management needs are being met on an efficient and timely basis; there are sufficient processes in place to ensure coordination and communication between partners; improvements or updates are meeting the growing data management objectives for constituents and partners.

5. Review Program Goals and Strategies articulated in the 2008-2012 Strategic Plan to determine continued relevancy, and evaluate current (2008 – 2012) performance in program accomplishment in the context of the Plan. These are:
 - a. Create and manage a fully integrated data set that represents the best available fisheries data
 - b. Continue working with the ACCSP program partners to improve fisheries data collection in accordance with the ACCSP standards
 - c. Strengthen collaboration and involvement among partners at all levels
 - d. Monitor and improve the usefulness of ACCSP's products and services
 - e. Improve outreach and education and maintain support from all stakeholders and constituents
 - f. Support nationwide systems used for collecting, managing, and disseminating marine fisheries information as defined in the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Reauthorization of 2006

Appendix A: Terms of Reference for IPR Panel

6. Draw general conclusions on the overall effectiveness of the Program in fulfilling its mission and vision as perceived by end user scientists, managers, and advisors. Assess overall program effectiveness: e.g. “Are better decisions being made as a result of ACCSP?”
7. Are the partners generally satisfied with the investment they have made in ASSCP and how do they feel their investments can yield a higher return.
8. Make recommendations for the future, including specific recommendations for program improvements, organization/governance and priorities.
9. Review the completion rate of previous Program Review recommendations and evaluate subsequent actions taken in response and their efficacy towards improving the program.

APPENDIX B: Recommendations by Response Group and Time Frame with IPR Report Context

RESPONSE GROUP: STAFF

Short term

- PM-01 ACCSP must clearly define its value and continue strategic outreach and communications that articulate that value. (TOR 4, 5e) *Short to Mid term**
IPR Report Context: Achieving the ACCSP mission depends upon sufficient consistent, reliable funding of the Program to achieve its goals. ACCSP does not adequately articulate its value nor does it clearly distinguish its efforts from those of NOAA Fisheries Science Centers.
- Response Page:* 5
- ORG-03 Program managers should develop methods to positively reward staff and recognize accomplishments, including staff behind the scenes as well as those who are the public face of the Program. (TOR 2)**
IPR Report Context: ACCSP staff is very helpful and responsive to its program partners and customers. ACCSP staff works quickly and effectively to resolve partner issues. Staff members frequently go above and beyond the call of duty, and (the Panel) salutes staff for their dedication and expertise.
- Response Page:* 12
- ORG-11 Regular communication should be enhanced between ACCSP staff and the Coordinating Council and its leadership. (TOR 2)**
IPR Report Context: There are conflicting perceptions on the level of accountability and oversight that is needed for ACCSP. (Some) partners believe that ACCSP could benefit from additional guidance from the Coordinating Council around program priorities.
- Response Page:* 16
- PP-09 ACCSP should account for the true costs of partner specific projects, e.g. FUS, FIS/FOSS, HMS, MRIP and lobster database, that ACCSP has taken responsibility for outside of the partner project funding process. This will further define those tasks that ACCSP does accomplish on behalf of specific partners using internal funding from the Administrative Budget. (TOR 2)**
IPR Report Context: The Panel would highly recommend (steps) to preserve the integrity of the program, its practices and processes, and to ensure each partner's commitment and engagement in the Program (TOR 8).
- Response Page:* 21
- DM-01 Consider utilizing the data warehouse as an online portal to other pre-existing and alternatively hosted datasets. (TOR 4, 5)**
IPR Report Context: The Program is making significant strides toward creating a user-friendly, comprehensive Data Warehouse and needs to continue to work towards making itself the "go to" site for East coast fisheries data. Stock assessments must still compile data from several different sources to have the best available data.
- Response Page:* 23
- DM-06 Consider relaxing the log-on credentialing requirement for those requesting access to non-confidential data. (TOR 4, 5)**

Appendix B: IPR Recommendations by Response Group and Time Frame with IPR Report Context

	<i>IPR Report Context:</i>	For those utilizing the Data Warehouse who do not need access to confidential data, the program needs to consider creating a non-confidential login for general users that does not require a user account.
	<i>Response Page:</i>	26
DM-07	Develop a more timely process for granting access (e.g. institute maximum time period of one week) to information for confidential data users. (TOR 4, 5)	
	<i>IPR Report Context:</i>	For confidential data users, the Program has to address the concern that there needs to be a timelier turnaround for processing confidentiality requests.
	<i>Response Page:</i>	26
DM-13	Provide clear guidance on when and how all datasets are updated with new data in the data warehouse (TOR 4, 5).	
	<i>IPR Report Context:</i>	It is imperative that the data in the Data Warehouse and the data from the various partners are routinely compared and that a process is in place to accomplish this task.
	<i>Response Page:</i>	29
S-01	ACCSP needs to better identify the services SAFIS provides to partners for collection [web form] and consolidation [database] of data. (TOR 4, 5) *Short to Mid term	
	<i>IPR Report Context:</i>	Some fishery managers do not know that much of the East coast landings data are collected and compiled by ACCSP.
	<i>Response Page:</i>	30
S-05	Improve the response time of the SAFIS web applications. (TOR 4) *Short to Mid term	
	<i>IPR Report Context:</i>	State fishery management staff and commercial industry members who frequently enter data through SAFIS are frustrated at the slow response time of the web-application.
	<i>Response Page:</i>	31
M-02	More clearly communicate data consolidation process to users. (TOR 4)	
	<i>IPR Report Context:</i>	Having and communicating clear goals and accountability through “best practices” in program and project management can help ensure program success. Communication, outreach, and responsiveness to and between stakeholders remain an issue.
	<i>Response Page:</i>	34
M-03	Adopt an improved “trouble” ticket and enhancement request management system, specifically including response from staff on expected timeline until completion. This should not be a list available on only one staff member’s computer, but a more transparent living document. (TOR 4)	
	<i>IPR Report Context:</i>	Having and communicating clear goals and accountability through “best practices” in program and project management can help ensure program success. Communication, outreach, and responsiveness to and between stakeholders remain an issue. The value of the stakeholders input into the ACCSP is also very important and they need to feel value in their input to ACCSP.
	<i>Response Page:</i>	34

- M-04** **Adopt an internal strategic planning and execution process, using quality program, project and business management best practices. This is not data quality assurance and quality control (QA/QC) which, of course, remains of critical importance, but is about getting more focused on your mission and business layer, not just the IT layer, including, for example, change management processes and data management plans inclusive of disaster planning. (TOR 4)**

IPR Report Context: Having and communicating clear goals and accountability through “best practices” in program and project management can help ensure program success. There is no internal strategic planning or evaluation process to help guide the Coordinating Council, Executive Committee, or Program staff.

Response Page: 35

Mid term

- PM-12** **ACCSP should continue to collect and incorporate stakeholder input on what products and services are most valuable to ACCSP customers and how existing products and services can be improved. (TOR 1, 3, 5d, 5e)**

IPR Report Context: ACCSP has taken on too many initiatives given its current staffing and funding levels. Consequently, execution and results are not being achieved at the level they could be for core mission activities. ACCSP is not always realistic about what it can accomplish and commits to projects outside its core mission.

Response Page: 9

- ORG-01** **The Program should employ methods and best practices to ensure continuity of institutional knowledge in the case of staff turnover. (TOR 2, 8)**

IPR Report Context: ACCSP staff is very helpful and responsive to its program partners and customers. There is continued risk of staff turnover and loss of valuable institutional knowledge.

Response Page: 11

- ORG-02** **The Program should continue to build project and database management expertise among ACCSP staff. (TOR 2, 4, 8, 9)**

IPR Report Context: ACCSP staff is very helpful and responsive to its program partners and customers. There is continued risk of staff turnover and loss of valuable institutional knowledge.

Response Page: 12

- DM-02** **Determine the core data stakeholders based on the Program’s mission and prioritize the focus on them by addressing their data needs. This will allow for a more focused approach to ensure success of the program (TOR 4, 5)**

IPR Report Context: The Panel discussed the need for prioritization. There was concern that the Data Warehouse is trying to be “all things to all people”. The Program should focus its efforts on meeting the needs of one group (based on who are the core stakeholders of the program) and, once success has been achieved, expand to the needs of other groups. Ultimately, this issue will need to be decided by the Coordinating Council.

Response Page: 23

- DM-03** **Focus resources on improving the user interface of the data warehouse through user feedback and user-centered design. (TOR 4, 5)**

Appendix B: IPR Recommendations by Response Group and Time Frame with IPR Report Context

	<i>IPR Report Context:</i>	There are usability concerns in relation to the Data Warehouse. The interface of the Data Warehouse appears outdated. State and federal data consumers want access to confidential data sets that are not always available.
	<i>Response Page:</i>	24
DM-04	Enhance the query capabilities of the data warehouse to be more accessible to non-technical users. (TOR 4, 5)	
	<i>IPR Report Context:</i>	The requirement to create a log-on credential to access the Data Warehouse, even for public data, deters some users from the Data Warehouse. The Data Warehouse query tools are not as intuitive as they could be and have a steep learning curve. Therefore, not all the rich data sets can be utilized by the average user.
	<i>Response Page:</i>	25
DM-05	Provide clear guidance on when and how all datasets are updated with new data in the data warehouse. (TOR 4, 5)	
	<i>IPR Report Context:</i>	There is not a clear cadence as to when each data set within the Data Warehouse is updated.
	<i>Response Page:</i>	25
DM-09	Define clear data management roles between ACCSP and the NOAA Fisheries Science Centers and communicate those roles to program partners and customers. (TOR 4, 5)	
	<i>IPR Report Context:</i>	There are disconnects between the data provided in the Data Warehouse and data sets provided by NOAA Fisheries Science Centers and other partners. ACCSP and NOAA Fisheries data sets at times appear duplicative and/or have discrepancies in similar data sets. NOAA Fisheries data portals at times pre-empt the Data Warehouse as the go-to source for federal fishery management analysis and planning. Some data consumers use the NOAA Fisheries data sets out of habit.
	<i>Response Page:</i>	27
DM-11	Examine potential cost efficiencies in cloud hosting and virtualization of the data. (TOR 4)	
	<i>IPR Report Context:</i>	There are disconnects between the data provided in the Data Warehouse and data sets provided by NOAA Fisheries Science Centers and other partners.
	<i>Response Page:</i>	28
DM-12	Develop process for synchronization of data between ACCSP and the Northeast and Southeast Regions. An emphasis needs to be placed in the Southeast Region since more work needs to be accomplished in that region. (TOR 5)	
	<i>IPR Report Context:</i>	With the implementation of SAFIS in the Northeast, much work on synchronizing the data has been accomplished in that region although there is still work to be done. However, in the Southeast, there needs to be a more defined process implemented to ensure that the data are routinely synchronized.
	<i>Response Page:</i>	28
S-03	ACCSP needs to better promote their accomplishments and remaining work in SAFIS targeted to those that may influence funding decisions. (TOR 4, 5)	

Appendix B: IPR Recommendations by Response Group and Time Frame with IPR Report Context

- IPR Report Context:* Some fishery managers do not know that much of the East coast landings data are collected and compiled by ACCSP.
- Response Page:* 30
- S-04 **Focus resources on improving the user interface of all SAFIS products through user feedback and user-centered design, incorporating new or technology improvements, as needed. (TOR 3, 4)**
- IPR Report Context:* The SAFIS interface is not well designed for user experience. Some fishery management organizations with in-house capability have built scripts to automatically download near real-time SAFIS data [database] into their own data programs. This capability greatly increases the ability of the product.
- Response Page:* 31
- S-06 **Provide advisory services and best-practices to state and other customers on custom scripting for exporting SAFIS data in near real-time. (TOR 4)**
- IPR Report Context:* Some fishery management organizations with in-house capability have built scripts to automatically download near real-time SAFIS data [database] into their own data programs. This capability greatly increases the ability of the product.
- Response Page:* 32
- S-07 **Consider building a local SAFIS software client for customer workstations to complement the existing web applications. (TOR 4)**
- IPR Report Context:* Some fishery management organizations with in-house capability have built scripts to automatically download near real-time SAFIS data [database] into their own data programs. This capability greatly increases the ability of the product.
- Response Page:* 32
- S-08 **SAFIS be made more user friendly, both from a data entry and data query perspective as implied by these recommendations from the Interview/Survey Report. (TOR 4, 5)**
- IPR Report Context:* The SAFIS interface is not well designed for user experience.
- Response Page:* 32

RESPONSE GROUP: OPERATIONS COMMITTEE

Short term

- PM-10 **ACCSP should focus resources on critical business functions and priorities that demonstrate return on investment. (TOR 7) (jointly with Staff)**
- IPR Report Context:* ACCSP has taken on too many initiatives given its current staffing and funding levels. Consequently, execution and results are not being achieved at the level they could be for core mission activities. ACCSP is not always realistic about what it can accomplish and commits to projects outside its core mission.
- Response Page:* 9
- PM-11 **As part of an ongoing strategic planning process, the original ACCSP objectives and priorities should be examined to determine if they are equally valid now and address the most pressing needs of fishery managers, scientists, and fishermen today. (TOR 5, 6) (Jointly with Staff)**

Appendix B: IPR Recommendations by Response Group and Time Frame with IPR Report Context

IPR Report Context: ACCSP has taken on too many initiatives given its current staffing and funding levels. Consequently, execution and results are not being achieved at the level they could be for core mission activities.

Response Page: 9

ORG-09 Given the potential for resource shortages and increased workload in the future, streamline the number of technical committees and leverage virtual meetings to reduce the burden on partner staff members, while at the same time optimizing partners' engagement. (TOR 2, 4)

IPR Report Context: The organization's structure and committee system is a logical and effective decision making framework with the potential for continuous improvement. While the general structure is good, the challenge is ensuring that members attend ACCSP meetings consistently.

Response Page: 15

ORG-10 Consider an ACCSP hosted annual or bi-annual conference where key issues are discussed, keynote speakers are invited, and all those interested in fisheries data can network and share ideas. (TOR 4, 5b, 5c, 5f)

IPR Report Context: A crucial challenge remains in maintaining the enthusiasm and involvement of all partners to continue advancing the program forward at a pace that matches management and data needs, and assures appropriate oversight and support to the Program's administrative staff.

Response Page: 16

PP-10 Partner projects that are directly supported by ACCSP staff, should provide initial and maintenance resources to support those projects. (TOR 2) *Jointly with Staff

IPR Report Context: ACCSP has not realized the original vision to provide start-up funding to partner projects that would eventually be taken over and funded independently. Panel would highly recommend the following items to preserve the integrity of ACCSP, its practices and processes, and ensure each partner's commitment and engagement in the Program.

Response Page: 21

Mid term

PM-08 An annual review of ACCSP's budget, objectives, and milestones should be conducted to evaluate planned vs. actual accomplishments in relation to costs (earned value management). (TOR 2, 7)

IPR Report Context: There are conflicting perceptions on the level of accountability and oversight that is needed for ACCSP. Other partners believe that ACCSP could benefit from additional guidance from the Coordinating Council around program priorities.

Response Page: 8

PM-09 The Program should more clearly communicate ACCSP's mission and goals, and partner responsibilities, to better align each and to align with the Program's technical capabilities and resource capacity. (TOR 1, 5e, 6)

IPR Report Context: Achieving the ACCSP mission depends upon sufficient consistent, reliable funding of the Program to achieve its goals. There is overall consensus among the program review interviewees, survey respondents, and the Panel that "Inadequate funding is the most significant barrier to the continued success of the ACCSP program."

Response Page: 8

Appendix B: IPR Recommendations by Response Group and Time Frame with IPR Report Context

- PP-01 ACCSP partners should come to agreement on a new and more rigorous threshold for allocating maintenance funding in order to better balance innovation and maintenance. (TOR 2 and 7)**
IPR Report Context: ACCSP has not realized the original vision to provide start-up funding to partner projects that would eventually be taken over and funded independently.
Response Page: 17
- PP-02 The partner project process should be reviewed in light of anticipated budget climate and a strategic process developed to respond to potential shortfalls, including reviewing funding formula and ability to fund base-level programs to help prevent degradation of time series data (i.e. backsliding). (TOR 2)**
IPR Report Context: ACCSP has not realized the original vision to provide start-up funding to partner projects that would eventually be taken over and funded independently.
Response Page: 18
- PP-03 Consider methods to incentivize and leverage additional state or private funding for partner projects (e.g., matching grant program). (TOR 2)**
IPR Report Context: ACCSP has not realized the original vision to provide start-up funding to partner projects that would eventually be taken over and funded independently.
Response Page: 18
- PP-04 Subject states who return for maintenance funding year after year to a higher degree of review to ensure that the project provides an adequate return on investment. (TOR 2)**
IPR Report Context: ACCSP has not realized the original vision to provide start-up funding to partner projects that would eventually be taken over and funded independently.
Response Page: 19
- PP-06 If a data collection need is driven by federal fishery management regulations, states should seek funding directly from NOAA Fisheries to meet those needs. (TOR 2)**
IPR Report Context: ACCSP has not realized the original vision to provide start-up funding to partner projects that would eventually be taken over and funded independently.
Response Page: 19
- PP-07 Ensure that ACCSP data management practices and funding processes adhere to NOAA Fisheries procedural directives and Information Quality Act requirements to provide metadata and data management plans. (TOR 8)**
IPR Report Context: Additionally, the Panel would highly recommend the following items to preserve the integrity of ACCSP, its practices and processes, and ensure each partner's commitment and engagement in the Program (TOR 8).
Response Page: 20
- PP-08 Develop Service Level Agreements (SLAs) between ACCSP and each partner with set expectations, minimum requirements, and process for how to address when unmet expectations, and maintain annual reviews. (TOR 3, 7)**

Appendix B: IPR Recommendations by Response Group and Time Frame with IPR Report Context

	<i>IPR Report Context:</i>	The Panel would highly recommend (steps) to preserve the integrity of the program, its practices and processes, and to ensure each partner's commitment and engagement in the Program (TOR 8).
	<i>Response Page:</i>	20
DCS-01	Periodically review the data standards to ensure they are still pertinent and address the needs of program partners and move the program towards full implementation. (TOR 5)	
	<i>IPR Report Context:</i>	The data standards are an essential ACCSP initiative that has greatly improved the uniformity of data collection on the East coast.
	<i>Response Page:</i>	22
DCS-02	Continue to facilitate discussion through the Program's committee process to assess, capture, and adjust to the frequently evolving requirements of fisheries data collection coast-wide implementation. (TOR 5)	
	<i>IPR Report Context:</i>	Some program partners still face challenges in fully adopting and implementing the data standards.
	<i>Response Page:</i>	22
DCS-03	Examine the costs, benefits, opportunities, and threats inherent in establishing the data standards as compliance requirements in fishery management plans. (TOR 5)	
	<i>IPR Report Context:</i>	Some program partners still face challenges in fully adopting and implementing the data standards. The data standards do not align with all of the specific data needs of state and federal partners, including NOAA Fisheries, which must track annual catch limits and employ accountability measures at a vessel and trip level.
	<i>Response Page:</i>	22
DM-10	Develop a clear 'future-state' vision for the data warehouse system architecture in relation to other East Coast fishery data repositories to avoid redundancy and ensure that resources among organizations are allocated wisely. (TOR 1)	
	<i>IPR Report Context:</i>	There are disconnects between the data provided in the Data Warehouse and data sets provided by NOAA Fisheries Science Centers and other partners.
	<i>Response Page:</i>	28
S-02	That status of partners achievement of the full standards needs to better identified and ACCSP needs to work with partners as a resource to foster their full achievement. (TOR 4, 5)	
	<i>IPR Report Context:</i>	Some fishery managers do not know that much of the East coast landings data are collected and compiled by ACCSP. The implication of this concern is that the program needs to be better marketed.
	<i>Response Page:</i>	30
S-09	ACCSP should consider changing the partnership working mode to one that has a more direct role in assisting partners in the short term the full SAFIS standards. (TOR 4, 5)	
	<i>IPR Report Context:</i>	The major issues with SAFIS range from a lack of funding for some partners to completely implement it and to change how ACCSP operates, to being more forceful in working with partners or at least more open about where different partners are in implementation (TOR 2).
	<i>Response Page:</i>	33

- M-01 **Develop overall communication plan that encompasses strategic viewpoints and priority needs of the program, defines stakeholders, and includes updated outreach plan.**

IPR Report Context: Communication, outreach, and responsiveness to and between stakeholders remain an issue. The Survey/Interview Report indicated ACCSP must clearly define its value and continue strategic outreach and communications that articulate that value. The value of the stakeholders input into the ACCSP is also very important and they need to feel value in their input to ACCSP.

Response Page: 33

- M-07 **Develop and monitor Program level performance measures and communicate to stakeholders. (TOR 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9) These may include within established priorities:**

- **Level of achievements of full standards selected by individual partners.**
- **Engagements with individual partners to forward achievement of ACCSP standards (data management, data collections, permitting, legislation, etc...).**
- **Participation in data workshops such as SEDAR.**
- **Active and ongoing communications with Partners to achieve increases in leveraging and efficiencies.**

IPR Report Context: There is no internal strategic or evaluation process to help guide the Coordinating Council, Executive Committee or Program staff. Communication, outreach, and responsiveness to and between stakeholders remain an issue. The Survey/Interview Report indicated ACCSP must clearly define its value and continue strategic outreach and communications that articulate that value. The value of the stakeholders input into the ACCSP is also very important and they need to feel value in their input to ACCSP.

Response Page: 37

RESPONSE GROUP: EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Short term

- PM-06 **Constituent partners who do not have federal lobbying prohibitions should participate in the next MSFCMA reauthorization and be supportive of ACCSP funding. (TOR 2, 5e)**

IPR Report Context: Achieving the ACCSP mission depends upon sufficient consistent, reliable funding of the Program to achieve its goals. Inadequate funding is the most significant barrier to the continued success of the ACCSP program. In the current austere budget environment, both State and Federal funding is being cut. The future of critical data collection, analysis, and dissemination efforts is at risk.

Response Page: 7

- PM-07 **ACCSP should develop a well-defined and strategic process to address budget shortfalls, both anticipated (congressional budgets) and unanticipated (within fiscal year rescissions). (TOR 2)**

IPR Report Context: Achieving the ACCSP mission depends upon sufficient consistent, reliable funding of the Program to achieve its goals. Inadequate funding is the most significant barrier to the continued success of the ACCSP program. In the current austere budget environment, both State and Federal funding is being cut. The future of critical data collection, analysis, and dissemination efforts is at risk.

Response Page: 7

Appendix B: IPR Recommendations by Response Group and Time Frame with IPR Report Context

- PM-13. ACCSP should strengthen its relationship with the ASMFC to leverage their fisheries specific subject matter expertise co-housed with ACCSP. (TOR 5b, 6)**
IPR Report Context: Fishery data is highly complex and nuanced. Without a strong core of fisheries specific subject matter expertise in-house, ACCSP underestimates the requirements for implementation of fisheries data solutions.
Response Page: 10
- ORG-04 Revisit the timing and frequency of ACCSP Coordinating Council meetings to improve attendance and focus. (TOR 5c)**
 - **Avoid scheduling the meeting on the final day of ASMFC meetings**
 - **Conduct annual in-person meetings with quarterly webinars***IPR Report Context:* The Coordinating Council is not optimally engaged, although it has overall accountability for the Program. Its Executive Committee is currently under-utilized. A crucial challenge remains in maintaining the enthusiasm and involvement of all partners to continue advancing the program forward at a pace that matches management and data needs, and assures appropriate oversight and support to the Program's Administrative staff.
Response Page: 13
- ORG-05 The Coordinating Council should be strengthened through re-energized Executive and Legislative Committees. The partner Memorandum of Agreement should be reviewed to clarify the composition of the Executive Committee. (TOR 5c)**
IPR Report Context: The Coordinating Council is not optimally engaged, although it has overall accountability for the Program. Its Executive Committee is currently under-utilized.
Response Page: 13
- ORG-06 Given its financial stake in the Program, NOAA Fisheries must be an active participant on the Coordinating Council's Executive Committee. (TOR 5)**
IPR Report Context: The Coordinating Council is not optimally engaged, although it has overall accountability for the Program. Its Executive Committee is currently under-utilized.
Response Page: 14
- ORG-07 Strategies to improve continuity of program oversight should be implemented, including a review of the leadership term on the Coordinating Council. (TOR 5c)**
IPR Report Context: The Coordinating Council is not optimally engaged, although it has overall accountability for the Program. Its Executive Committee is currently under-utilized.
Response Page: 14
- ORG-08 The Program should undergo a governance review. The Panel realizes that the situation today is very different than 1995, when the ACCSP was created. ACCSP needs a better relationship and interface with ASMFC, and linkages established and strengthened. Consideration should be given to placing ACCSP as a program under ASMFC, which could possibly re-engage the state directors. There are issues of economy of scale and potential improvements to efficiency that could be gained, working relationships strengthened, resources leveraged, etc. (TOR 2, 4)**

Appendix B: IPR Recommendations by Response Group and Time Frame with IPR Report Context

IPR Report Context: The ACCSP structure and committee system is a logical and effective decision making framework with the potential for continuous improvement.

Response Page: 15

ORG-12 The Coordinating Council should consider utilizing the executive committee or forming an administrative oversight committee (a subset of the Coordinating Council) to more frequently track the performance of ACCSP and its staff. (TOR 2, 5c)

IPR Report Context: There are conflicting perceptions on the level of accountability and oversight that is needed for ACCSP. (Some) partners believe that ACCSP could benefit from additional guidance from the Coordinating Council around program priorities. The Coordinating Council itself is not dedicated enough to provide adequate oversight. Coordinating Council members have many responsibilities in their other roles and not all members can dedicate adequate time to ACCSP tasks.

Response Page: 17

PP-05 Take steps to ensure that politics do not exert undue influence in funding decisions at the Coordinating Council (TOR 2, 6).

IPR Report Context: Politics at the Coordinating Council level influence the allocation of funding towards existing state maintenance projects, which may conflict with funding recommendations from the Operations Committee.

Response Page:

M-05 Develop a well-defined and strategic process to address budget shortfalls, both anticipated (congressional budgets) and unanticipated (within fiscal year rescissions). (TOR 2, 4)

IPR Report Context: There is no internal strategic planning or evaluation process to help guide the Coordinating Council, Executive Committee, or Program staff.

Response Page: 19

M-06 Develop and maintain a transparent and comprehensive system of annual performance plans and evaluations for the Executive Director and staff, with methods to acknowledge and reward success and achievements. (TOR 2)

IPR Report Context: There is no internal strategic planning or evaluation process to help guide the Coordinating Council, Executive Committee, or Program staff.

Response Page: 36

Mid term

PM-02 State partners should communicate ACCSP's value to their congressional delegations in order to effectively advocate for future funding. (TOR 5e)

IPR Report Context: Achieving the ACCSP mission depends upon sufficient consistent, reliable funding of the Program to achieve its goals. Inadequate funding is the most significant barrier to the continued success of the ACCSP program. In the current austere budget environment, both State and Federal funding is being cut. The future of critical data collection, analysis, and dissemination efforts is at risk.

Response Page: 5

PM-03 The Coordinating Council should aggressively pursue funding, including non-appropriated funds and non-traditional funding sources. (TOR 2)

Appendix B: IPR Recommendations by Response Group and Time Frame with IPR Report Context

IPR Report Context: Achieving the ACCSP mission depends upon sufficient consistent, reliable funding of the Program to achieve its goals. Inadequate funding is the most significant barrier to the continued success of the ACCSP program. In the current austere budget environment, both State and Federal funding is being cut. The future of critical data collection, analysis, and dissemination efforts is at risk.

Response Page: 6

PM-04 The ACCSP Coordinating Council should revitalize and task a Legislative Committee with responsibility of seeking funding, including through non-traditional funding sources (e.g., NGO's). (TOR 2, 5e)

IPR Report Context: Achieving the ACCSP mission depends upon sufficient consistent, reliable funding of the Program to achieve its goals. Inadequate funding is the most significant barrier to the continued success of the ACCSP program. In the current austere budget environment, both State and Federal funding is being cut. The future of critical data collection, analysis, and dissemination efforts is at risk.

Response Page: 6

PM-05 State partners should communicate ACCSP's value to their Executive Branches and Legislatures in order to secure state funding for maintenance level data collection. (TOR 2, 5e)

IPR Report Context: Achieving the ACCSP mission depends upon sufficient consistent, reliable funding of the Program to achieve its goals. Inadequate funding is the most significant barrier to the continued success of the ACCSP program. In the current austere budget environment, both State and Federal funding is being cut. The future of critical data collection, analysis, and dissemination efforts is at risk.

Response Page: 7

DM-08 Increase collaboration among the ACCSP, NOAA Fisheries Science Centers, and other federal partners, especially at the leadership level (TOR 5).

IPR Report Context: There are disconnects between the data provided in the Data Warehouse and data sets provided by NOAA Fisheries Science Centers and other partners. The data management responsibilities between ACCSP and the Science Centers are not clear, leading to disconnects in quality assurance and quality control.

Response Page: 27

ACCSP Rankings Summary (prepared July 2013)

The following documents a summary of the procedures used by the Biological Review Panel, Bycatch Prioritization Committee and Operations Committee/Advisors to rank species, fleets and proposals respectively. In the case of the Bycatch Prioritization Committee changes are currently underway and have been noted. This document is intended to be a general reference and committee members are urged to refer to the extensive committee level guides, keys, minutes, SOP documents, etc. for specific direction.

Biological Review Panel

The Biological Sampling Priority Matrix (the Matrix) is a tool designed to rank species that have a fishery based on a number of criteria and be used during the annual ACCSP funding process. This tool is additionally used for prioritization of sampling at the Partner level. The criteria used to prioritize species include state and federal priorities, changes in management and landings, the adequacy of current sampling and characteristics of the fishery and species, such as resiliency. The Matrix is currently filled out on a biennial basis by the members of the Biological Review Panel.

Each column in the Matrix is listed below along with a brief description of how the score is developed. All scored fields, reference fields are noted and not included in the final score, are summed to provide a final ranking for the species.

Column scores are determined by group consensus unless otherwise stated (e.g. ASMFC priority, Council priority, NMFS priority, state priority). Consensus scores, such as significant changes in management, are retained from year to year unless a change in score is suggested. All score change suggestions, which must be submitted with a reason for the change, are submitted to ACCSP staff, collated and distributed prior to the annual meeting. All change suggestions and reasons are discussed during the meeting and a single score is decided upon by the group. If a score is not provided (by NEFMC, MAFMC, SAFMC, ASMFC, states or NOAA Fisheries) the Panel will provide a default score as noted. Each partner should be providing scores based on their own group or agency perspective. However, the final scores will reflect a more coastal view.

1. Fishery status: The status of the fishery is indicated as known or unknown. Known is further broken down into overfished, overfishing or approaching an overfished condition. This criterion is retained for informational purposes and is updated by ACCSP staff, it does not contribute to overall score.
2. Most recent/current or next stock assessment: These two columns provide the year of the most recently completed stock assessment and the year of the current or next planned stock assessment. This criterion is retained for informational purposes and is updated by ACCSP staff, it does not contribute to overall score.
3. Council priority: (0 = not available, 1 = low – 5 = high) The level of priority assigned by the council(s) to the fishery determines this score. If two councils provide scores, the higher value will be used.

4. ASMFC priority: (0 = not available, 1 = low – 5 = high) The level of priority assigned by the ASMFC to the fishery determines this score.
5. State priority: (0 = not available, 1 = low – 5 = high) The level of priority assigned by the Program Partner states to the fishery determines this score. The total score is the **average (including zeros)** of the scores assigned by all Program Partner states rounded to the nearest tenth.

NOTE: The calculation of this score was intensely discussed during the creation of the Matrix in 2003 and has since been a topic of discussion at multiple meetings. The majority opinion of the Biological Review Panel is that it recognizes that there are pros and cons to various calculation methods of this column; however, the inclusion of all states in an average that includes zeros is the method that best represents a coastal perspective, which is the objective of the matrix.

6. NOAA Fisheries Priority: (0 = not available, 1 = low – 5 = high) The level of priority assigned by NOAA Fisheries to the fishery determines this score. The total score is the **maximum** of the scores assigned by the Northeast Region, Southeast Region and Highly Migratory Species.
7. Fishery managed: 0 = No, 1 = Yes
8. Significant change in landings within 24 months (1 = <25% change, 3 = 25% - 75% change, 5 = >75% change) Information on significant change in landings is retrieved from the ACCSP Data Warehouse. This column reflects the most recent complete year of landings to the previous two years. For example, at the January 2012 meeting for the 2013 matrix, this column compared landings from 2008, 2009 and 2010. The 2011 landings were not complete at that time. ACCSP staff will update this column.
9. Significant change in management within 24 months: (0 = none, 1 = minor – 5 = significant) This column should refer to the previous calendar year and pending management as deemed appropriate. Significant known changes that will impact or be implemented in the current year that will be funded through the RFP should be taken into consideration. The management change and the year of change will be noted. A single change may not be used as a score justification on more than one matrix round. “Stock-wide” management changes should be considered, not State management. Note that significant changes in quota may not be considered if the mechanism for lowering or raising the quota has been in place.
10. Adequacy of level of sampling: (0 = oversampled, 1 = adequate – 5 = no sampling) This score is for adequacy of the current level of sampling **species-wide**. The score is determined by consensus of the Biological Review Panel, not necessarily by stock assessment biologists.
11. Stock resilience (1 = resilient – 5 = vulnerable) When scoring “resilience” the Panel/SAW/Technical Committees should consider fishery age/maturity, reproductive biology, fecundity, spawning aggregations, and degree of habitat dependence.

NOTE: The definition of this score is currently under refinement by a small group. They will be updating the definition and new base scores will be established and approved by the entire committee.

12. Number of sampling strata: (1 = <20 strata, 3 = 20 – 75 strata, 5 = > 75 strata) This captures the complexity of the fishery in terms of the overall number of sampled units(strata), as determined by the combination of gears used and areas fished. A fishery is not well sampled when a significant portion of potential strata are not sampled.
13. Seasonality of fishery: (1 = > 9 months, 3 = 1-9 months, 5 = < 1 month) This score reflects the length of the fishing season. The rationale is that the longer the fishing season the greater the opportunity to acquire samples but also an increased sampling burden to obtain samples throughout the entire season.

Bycatch Prioritization Committee

The Bycatch Priority Matrix was recently revised to move from a species/gear basis to a fleet basis. This change has prompted the need for further edits to the matrix. The current and continuing primary purpose of this matrix is to inform the ACCSP funding process. The committee intends for the changes to the matrix to include the additional use of defining gaps in coverage in terms of sea days as opposed to the current practice of simply noting inadequate coverage. The committee's perspective on the matrix is that is intended to be a coastwide, simple analytical tool that covers federal and state species, turtles, marine mammals and sea birds. The concept is to have a non-overlapping sampling frame in which fleets are defined as adequately or inadequately sampled and those in the latter category are prioritized and gaps are determined, as possible, in number of sea days. Sea day calculations will be dependent upon the availability of data and will vary by fleet.

The fields in the current bycatch priority matrix are listed below. All of the current and expected new fields are either calculated or derived by consensus. **All partners are encouraged to participate and considered equal when discussing consensus fields.**

Current fields pertaining to information on the fishery:

- Consensus
 - Is the fishery managed?
 - Have there been significant changes in management within the past 36 months that would have impact on this process?
 - Change in Prior Year's Landings or Effort
- Calculated
 - Number of trips (general indication of the number of the total number of trips)
 - Percentage of total landings (general indication of what percentage of total landings for that species is comprised of landings by this gear)

Current fields pertaining to discard information: (all consensus)

- Amount of regulatory discards of target species (percent by total weight of all targeted species)
- Protected species interactions (general indication of protected species interactions in the targeted fishery)
- Amount of regulated species discards (general indication of the weight of discards of other regulated species, relative to total landings)
- Impact of discards on other regulated fisheries

- Amount of non-regulated species discards (general indication of the weight of discards of other non-regulated species, relative to total landings)
- Impact of discards on non-regulated species stocks (general indication of the condition and biomass of the non-regulated species being discarded)

Current field pertaining to adequacy of level of sampling: (calculated as possible)

A score given by consensus of the Bycatch Prioritization Committee to reflect how well sampled a fishery is. This score is not based on stock assessments.

Yes = Adequate sampling is occurring based on 2% or 5% observer trip coverage or 20-30% PSE. It is recognized that for some fisheries, it is not feasible be able to obtain 2% or 5% trip coverage based on the size of the fishery.

No = Fisheries not adequately being sampled are those that do not have 2% or 5% observer trip coverage or 20-30% PSE.

Unknown = Level of sampling remains unknown.

Advisors and Operations Committees

The Advisors and Operations Committees' process for ranking proposals is detailed in the 2014 Ranking Guide (Attachment I).

Every member of the Advisors and Operations Committee can submit individual proposal ranking scores. Within each committee separately, for each proposal, the average of all the members' scores are combined to produce one final ranking score per proposal.

Members of the Advisory Committee consist of up to one each of a recreational and commercial representative from each of the State Partners.

The current membership of the Operations Committee is a direct result of the motion made at the May 20, 2013 Coordinating Council meeting.

Motion from the May 20, 2013 Coordinating Council Meeting:

Motion that the five representatives from the NMFS' officers – that is the Northeast Regional Office, the Northeast Fisheries Science Center, Science and Technology, the Southeast Regional Office, and the Southeast Fisheries Science Center – will fully participate in the operations committee for two ranking cycles; fiscal year 2014 and fiscal year 2015. The operations committee will subsequently review and analyze the effects of membership weighting. Motion carried on Page 25.

Prior to that motion the make-up of the Operations Committee was a result of the amendment to Section 8.B in the Memorandum of Understanding of 2002.

Section 8.B is amended to read:

B. ACCSP Operations Committee. The ACCSP Operations Committee will recommend program priorities, funding criteria, and other items as requested by the Coordinating Council, Executive Committee, and/or ACCSP Director. The Operations Committee is

comprised of an experienced staff person from each partner and one representative each from the National Marine Fisheries Headquarter Office of Science and Technology, Southeast Fisheries Science Center and Northeast Regional Office.



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Guide for Ranking Proposals FY2014 Edition

INTRODUCTION

Each year, the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (Program) distributes a [Funding Decision Document](http://www.accsp.org/documents/RFP2014/FY14FundingDecisionDocument.pdf) (<http://www.accsp.org/documents/RFP2014/FY14FundingDecisionDocument.pdf>) outlining the priorities for the coming fiscal year. These priorities are reviewed by the Coordinating Council each spring before the request for proposals is distributed. The Funding Decision Document is available to all ACCSP grant applicants.

We cannot assume that all proposals will meet the guidelines set forth by the document. This is precisely why we need a diverse set of eyes to review the proposals so we can distribute the funds in accordance with Program guidelines.

PHILOSOPHY

What is most important to remember as a proposal ranker is that you are consistent when reviewing the proposals. Many people have different viewpoints as to what would receive a high score. For instance, someone might think it is worth 10 points if a proposal states that it will collect all minimum data elements of catch and effort, whereas, someone else might view a proposal that collects all minimum data elements as worthy of 7 points, which would leave room if another proposal went above and beyond with an innovative data verification program.

It is entirely up to you how you view these proposals. We realize each proposal ranker is coming from a different perspective and we look forward to gathering a diverse set of rankings for each proposal. The most important aspect to ranking proposals is to remain consistent from proposal to proposal.

CATEGORIES FOR RANKING

For FY2014, there are three categories used to rank the project proposals:

- 1) *Primary Program Priority*;
- 2) *Project Quality Factors* (Partners, Funding and Data); and
- 3) *Other Factors*.

SCORING

The factors of each category carry a different weight. For instance, when ranking these proposals the score of the primary module (a factor of *Primary Program Priority*) given to the proposal is given a weight of 3 (the score given is multiplied by 3). Whereas, the improvement in data quality/quantity/timeliness and impact on stock assessments (both categories of *Project Quality Factors*) are given a weight of 2 (the score given is multiplied by 2). Finally, if the proposal is properly prepared (a category of *Other Factors*) is given a weight of 1 (the score given is multiplied by 1). Review the [Ranking Criteria Spreadsheet](http://www.accsp.org/documents/RFP2014/AppendixIV_RankingCriteria.pdf) (http://www.accsp.org/documents/RFP2014/AppendixIV_RankingCriteria.pdf) and the multiplier that is applied to each factor.

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PRIMARY PROGRAM PRIORITY

Projects must be rated on how well the data being collected by the project fit the current [Atlantic Coast Fisheries Data Collection Standards](#)

(http://www.accsp.org/documents/programdesign/2012/ACCSP_StandardsandAppendices2012_Final105082012.pdf). You will rate only one module in addition to metadata. If a secondary one is recognized, it will be considered during the *Project Quality Factors*.

The highest possible score for this section (PRIMARY PROGRAM PRIORITY) is 32. The score of this category is 44% of the total score of the project.

A. *Catch and Effort* – ACCSP is principally seeking to collect catch and effort data in FY2011. If a proposal description states that it will primarily collect catch and effort data, the proposal may score a maximum of 10 points.

How does a proposal receive the maximum 10 points? The ACCSP standard for commercial catch and effort statistics is mandatory, trip-level reporting of all commercial harvested marine species, with fishermen and/or dealers required to report standardized data elements for each trip by the tenth of the following month.

The ACCSP standard for recreational catch and effort statistics are covered in more detail in the current [Atlantic Coast Fisheries Data Collection Standards](#).

Something you may want to consider when ranking proposals is whether or not all data elements outlined in the [Atlantic Coast Fisheries Data Collection Standards](#).

To determine scoring for this factor consider the following:

- 1) If they collect the minimum data elements would the proposal be ranked a 5 and thus for all additional information it would lead up to the highest possible score – a 10?
- 2) Is the data collection method they used (1 ticket vs. 2 ticket) a determining factor on the final score given in this category?
- 3) Also, is data validation a consideration for this ranking?

B. *Biological Sampling* – A secondary priority for ACCSP for FY2014 is the collection of biological data. If a proposal description states that it will primarily collect biological data, the proposal may score a maximum of 8 points.

How does a proposal receive the maximum 8 points? [The FY2014 Biological Matrix](#)

(http://www.accsp.org/documents/RFP2014/AppendixI_FY2014BiologicalPriorities.pdf) identifies the top quartile of all species ranked by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, regional councils, NOAA Fisheries, and the states. The top quartile species are grouped by average priority and biological sampling adequacy. The proposals should be given a high ranking if data are collected on species with high average priority and inadequate adequacy (FY2014 species: *no species*). A mid-level score would be given to those proposals that have a low average priority and inadequate sampling (FY2014 species: *weakfish, yellowtail flounder, Northern shortfin, and squid*) or high average priority and adequate sampling (FY2014 species: *black sea bass, winter flounder, dogfish, scup, summer flounder*). A low level score would go to those species that have a low average priority and are adequately sampled (FY2014 species: *snomy grouper, shad, winter skate, blueline tilefish, gray triggerfish, grouper, river herring, little skate, fine tooth shark, red grouper, tilefish, American lobster*).

C. *Bycatch/Species Interaction* - A third priority for ACCSP for FY2014 is the collection of bycatch data. If a proposal description states that it will primarily collect bycatch data, the proposal may score a maximum of 6 points.

How does a proposal receive the maximum 6 points? [The FY2014 Bycatch Matrix](#)

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(http://www.accsp.org/documents/RFP2014/AppendixII_FY2014BycatchPriorities.pdf) identifies the top quartile of all groups of fisheries ranked by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, regional councils, NOAA Fisheries, and the states. The top fisheries are grouped by average priority and adequate sampling targets (days at sea). High sampling targets would include those fisheries that need more than 101 days at sea and adequate sampling targets would be those fisheries that need less than 100 days at sea. The proposals should be given a high ranking if data are being collected on fisheries with high average priority and high sampling targets (FY2014 fisheries: *South Atlantic coastal gillnet, south Atlantic shrimp trawl, New England lobster pot, Mid-Atlantic small mesh otter trawl (bottom), New England large mesh gillnet, New England large mesh otter trawl (bottom), Mid-Atlantic inland gillnets*). A mid-level score would be given to those proposals that have a low average priority and high sampling targets (FY2014 fisheries: *Mid-Atlantic pound net, Mid-Atlantic large mesh otter trawl (bottom), New England extra large mesh gillnet, Mid-Atlantic extra large mesh gillnet*) or high average priority and adequate sampling targets (FY2014 fisheries: *Southeastern, Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico HMS pelagic longline, South Atlantic skimmer trawls, and South Atlantic snapper-groupers handline/electric reel*). A low level score would go to those fisheries that have a low average priority and are adequately sampled (FY2014 fisheries: *Mid-Atlantic general cat. Access area scallop dredge*).

The Definition of bycatch as defined in the Atlantic Coast Fisheries Data Collection Standards includes:

D. *Social and Economic* – Another important priority, although low for ACCSP in FY2014, is the collection of social and economic data. If a proposal description states that it will primarily collect social and economic data, the proposal may score a maximum of 4 points. How does a proposal receive the maximum 4 points? Standards for commercial social and economic data collection are under construction by the Committee on Economic and Social Science. There is a list of data elements found in the [Atlantic Coast Fisheries Data Collection Standards](#) in you may want to consider as a proposal ranker. The ACCSP has established standards for social and economic data collection in recreational and for-hire finfish fisheries. Our standard is voluntary surveys of finfish fisheries conducted at least every three years.

E. *Metadata* – All proposals are collecting some degree of metadata. The [2010 Metadata Directory](#) will provides the most up-to-date metadata submitted by each partner. A score of 0-2 points is subjective based on a review of the proposal and how data collected can best be integrated into the Metadata Directory.

PROJECT QUALITY FACTORS (Partners, Funding and Data):

A. *Multi-Partner Regional impact including broad applications* (PARTNERS) - To determine scoring for this factor (a score of 0-5) consider the following:

- 1) Does this project involve one or multiple partners?
- 2) Does this project collect data from one or multiple partners?
- 3) What is the timeline for benefiting from the data?
- 4) Does this project have a narrow or broad scope of work?

The highest possible score for the above section (PARTNERS) is a 5. The score of this category is 7% of the total score of the project.

B. *Contains funding transition plan/Defined end point* (FUNDING) - To determine scoring for this factor (a score of 0-4) consider the following:

- 1) How long has the project been receiving funds from ACCSP or other sources?

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- 2) Does the project have an end point or continue year after year?
- 3) If the project continues does this project explain how new funds will be applied in coming years?
- 4) Is there a transition plan?

C. *In-kind contribution (FUNDING)* – To determine scoring for this factor (a score of 0-4) consider the following:

- 1) Is the partner adding funds as well as ACCSP?
- 2) At what level is the partner applying additional funds?
- 3) Is it at a level that is acceptable for the ACCSP standards?

The highest possible score for the above section (FUNDING) is a 12. The score of this category is 17% of the total score of the project.

D. *Improvement in data quality/ quantity/ timeliness (DATA)* - To determine scoring for this factor (a score of 0-4) consider the following:

- 1) At what rate can this project provide data to the ACCSP Data Warehouse?
- 2) Are the data collected from this project a higher pedigree than in previous years?
- 3) Does this project include innovative ways to collect data?
- 4) Does this project outline a clear and timely mechanism for sharing data to ACCSP?

E. *Potential secondary module as a by-product (In program priority order) (DATA)* – In determining what (if any) score to give for a proposal that addresses a secondary module as a byproduct consider the following, if the secondary module is:

- 1) Catch and effort data receives a score of 4;
- 2) Biological data receives a score of 3;
- 3) Bycatch data receives a score of 2; and
- 4) Social and economic data receives a score of 1.

F. *Impact on stock assessment (DATA)* – To determine scoring for this factor (a score of 0-3) consider the following:

- 1) Does this project collect data from a species that has a stock assessment in the next few years (see ACCSP distributed news release “[2012 – 2014 Stock Assessments](http://www.accsp.org/PressReleases/2012-2014StockAssessmentSchedule.pdf)” <http://www.accsp.org/PressReleases/2012-2014StockAssessmentSchedule.pdf>)?
- 2) Does this project collect data that can be organized in a fashion suitable for the ACCSP Data Warehouse that can be used for a stock assessment when needed?

The highest possible score for the above section (DATA) is 18. The score of this category is 25% of the total score of the project.

OTHER FACTORS

A. *Properly Prepared* – To determine scoring for this factor (a score of 0-5) consider the following:

- 1) Does the proposal follow the guidelines of the [Funding Decision Document](#)?
- 2) Does this proposal follow the directions of the guidelines set forth by the request for proposals?

The highest possible score for the above section (OTHER FACTORS) is a 5. The score of this category is 7% of the total score of the project.

If you have any additional questions it is best to consult with the Operations Committee member from your state, agency or organization. Committee lists can be found at <http://www.accsp.org/committees.htm>.

Thank you for your hard work and dedication in reviewing the proposals!

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS COMMONLY FOUND IN PROPOSALS

Access sites: Areas where fishermen fish from shore. Or access sites can be defined as the place fishermen board or leave a boat to go fishing.

Bank: A stretch of rising land at the edge of a body of water not washed by high water, which could be rocks or an overhanging cliff.

Beach: A level stretch of pebbles, bedrock shore, or sand beside a body of water (often washed by high water).

Breachway: Shore along a connecting channel.

Breakwaters: An offshore structure used to protect a harbor or beach from the forces of waves.

Bridge: A structure carrying a pathway or roadway over a body of water.

Bulkhead (as known as seawall): A retaining wall along a waterfront.

Bycatch (2 accepted definitions):

a. Fish which are harvested in a fishery, but which are not sold or kept for personal use, and includes economic discards and regulatory discards. Such term does not include fish released alive under a recreational catch and release fishery management program. *From Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act*

b. Discarded catch of any living marine resource plus retained incidental catch and unobserved mortality due to a direct encounter with fishing gear. *From NOAA Fisheries Service (used for its National Bycatch Strategy and bycatch reduction efforts)*

Catch: The total number, weight, or other measure of marine resources (fish, invertebrates, or others) which are captured and retained, released, or discarded.

Advisory Committee: Finfish, shellfish, and protected species that are captured, whether retained, released, or discarded.

Discarded or released catch: The portions of the catch that is not retained (i.e., discarded or released at sea dead or alive) and includes incidental take of protected species.

Advisory Committee: Recommends deleting the definition above and replacing it with:

Economic, social, and cultural discard: Finfish and shellfish that are the target of a fishery, but which are not retained because they are undesirable size, sex, or quality, or for other economic, social, or cultural reasons.

Regulatory discard: Finfish, shellfish, and protected species harvested in a fishery which fishermen are required by regulation to discard.

Immediate use catch: Use of the retained catch for food or bait before the end of the trip.

Landed catch: The total number, weight, or other measure of all marine resources (fish, invertebrates, others) captured, brought to shore and retained at the end of a trip. This includes catch that is discarded or not sold after being landed. This type of catch is indicated by disposition codes.

Advisory Committee:

Landed Catch: Finfish, shellfish, and protected that are captured, brought to shore and retained at the end of a trip.

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Causeway: An elevated or raised way across wet ground or water.

Charterboat: *Trip Definition* - Any trip of a vessel-for hire engaged in recreational fishing (VHERF) that is hired on a per trip basis. For survey purposes, and possible alternative definitions, information should be gathered on: a) number of anglers (refers to all marine recreational resource users); b) size of boat; and c) where fishing occurred. *Boat Definition* - A charterboat is any VHERF that typically is hired on a per trip basis.

Commercial and recreational fisherman: For statistical purposes only, anyone who sells or barter any portion of the catch from a trip is a commercial fisherman for that trip, and any marine resources that are sold or bartered are considered a commercial product. All other fishermen and catches are considered recreational. Commercial trips with effort but no catch are still commercial trips and should be reported.

Commercial dealer: A seafood dealer is defined as any person or entity other than the final consumer, who purchases, ships, consigns, transfers, transports, barter, accepts (maintains) or packs any marine fishery products received from marine resource harvesters or marine aquaculturists. Any marine fishery products landed in any state must be reported by a dealer or a marine resource harvester acting as dealer in that state. Any marine resource harvester or aquaculturist who sells, consigns, transfers, or barter marine fishery products to anyone other than a dealer would himself be acting as a dealer and would therefore be responsible for reporting as a dealer. This definition is provided for purposes of statistical gathering only.

Docks: Structure built out over water and supported by pillars/anchors with long-term docking facilities for boats.

Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ): Offshore waters 3-200 miles on Atlantic coast. For the Gulf coast it is 9-200 miles from the shoreline.

Effort: Estimated number of fishing trips taken by an individual (recreationally).

Entanglements: A condition in which any part of a protected species is tangled, wrapped and snared, hooked, or otherwise attached to fishing gear.

Fisheries-dependent: Information collected directly from the commercial, for-hire, and recreational fisheries.

Fisheries-independent: Information gathered independent of the fisheries through direct or indirect sampling of the stocks.

Fishing guide: A person hired by a recreational fisherman to aid in fishing activities.

Fishing trip: A period of time over which fishing occurs. The time spent fishing includes configuring, deploying, and retrieving gear, clearing animals from the gear, and storing, releasing or discarding catch. When watercraft are used, a fishing trip also includes the time spent traveling to and from fishing areas or locales and ends when the vessel offloads product at sea or returns to the shore. When fishing from shore or man-made structures, a fishing trip may include travel between different fishing sites within a 24-hour period.

Commercial Trip: Any trip where the retained catch is or would be sold or bartered. This includes trips with effort but no catch.

For-hire Trip: Any shore or vessel trip whose participants are engaged in a marine resources recreational activity that is contracted for a fee.

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Recreational Trip: Any trip for the purpose of recreation from which none of the catch is sold or bartered. This includes trips with effort but no catch.

Split Trip: A split trip is any angler trip in which a portion of the landings are sold commercially and a portion of the landings are retained for personal use.

Gear: Anything used to catch marine resources.

Gear configuration: Materials, construction, measure (e.g., mesh size, length of gear), and deployment of gear.

Guided beach trip: Any shore-based trip where a guide is hired or provided.

Guided fishing trip: A fishing trip on which a fishing guide is hired to provide services directly related to fishing activities.

Headboat: *Trip* - Any trip of a VHERF that is hired on a per person basis. For survey purposes, and possible alternative definitions information should be gathered on: a) number of anglers (refers to all marine recreational resource users); b) size of boat; and c) where fishing occurred. *Boat* - A headboat is any VHERF that typically is hired on a per person basis.

Inland: Waterbodies less than zero miles from the shoreline. Also, includes waterbodies found inside the boundaries for territorial waters.

Intercept survey: On-site interviews which gather data from fishermen during or upon completion of their fishing trip at access sites.

International: Offshore waters greater than 200 miles from the shore line

Integrated Taxonomic Information System (ITIS): A taxonomic database for terrestrial and aquatic plants and animals. The product of a partnership of federal agencies collaborating with systemists in the federal, state and private sectors to provide scientifically credible taxonomic information.

Jetties: A kind of wall, usually made of rocks, built into the water to restrain currents or protect a harbor.

Metadata: Metadata are corollary or descriptive information, both numeric and non-numeric, which may qualify or explain primary data.

Mode of fishing: The method by which a recreational fishing trip is taken, e.g. private/rental boat, shore, or for-hire.

Multi-trip fisheries: Multiple trip fisheries are characterized by a large number of relatively short duration trips employing the same type of gear, (e.g. lobster pots), and resulting in catch of the same species (e.g. lobster), or relatively few species

Non-consumptive use: Any activity related to marine resources where no take of marine resources is attempted. Examples include photographing wildlife in natural or managed areas, SCUBA diving to view jewfish, whale watching, etc.

Observer: A trained agent (employee, contractor, grantee, etc.) of any ACCSP partner acting as an unbiased data collector observing fishing operations on fishing vessels at sea.

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Other fishing modes: Any other non-boat fishing.

Piers: Structure built out over water and supported by pillars without long-term docking facilities for boats.

Person: Any individual, corporation, partnership, association or other entity, or any federal, state, local, or foreign government or any entity of such governments, including regional fishery management councils.

Port agent/sampler: A trained agent (e.g., employee, contractor, grantee, etc.) of any partner acting as an unbiased data collector, collecting data after the completion of a fishing trip.

Post stratification: Summarization of data into strata different from strata design used during data collection.

Price: The dollar amount per landed unit (e.g. pounds, bushels) of a given species (or species landing condition and market category).

Private access sites: Privately owned riparian land with dock/shoreline, waterfront residential developments, or marinas inaccessible to intercept sampling.

Private boat: *Trip* - Any boat trip for which no fee is paid for use of the boat. *Boat* - Any boat for which no fee is paid for use of the boat.

Protected species: Any organism listed under the MMPA, ESA, or the Migratory Bird Treaty or any state protected species legislation. The term protected species can include protected finfish species (e.g., Atlantic salmon, shortnose sturgeon), invertebrates (e.g., Queen conch), sea birds, and plants (e.g., sea oats).

Protected species interactions: Any interaction with a fishery, which results in the harassment, harm, or death of individuals of a species.

Public: Any user of non-confidential information.

Rental boat: *Trip* - A trip on a boat that is rented or leased. No captain or crew is hired. *Boat* - A boat that is rented or leased. No captain or crew is hired.

Retained catch: The number or weight of marine resources caught and kept for immediate use (e.g., bait, food) or for landing.

State territorial seas: Inshore 0-3 miles on Atlantic coast. Gulf coast is 0-9 miles from the shoreline.

Strandings: A marine mammal or sea turtle where: 1) the specimen is dead and/or moribund on the beach or shore or in a coastal waterway or EEZ, or 2) the specimen is alive and is on the beach or shore and is unable to return to the water under its own power, or 3) the specimen is in the EEZ or a coastal waterway where the water is so shallow and/or inhospitable that the specimen is unable to return to its natural habitat under its own power.

Stratification: The process of dividing a population into two or more non-overlapping comprehensive subpopulations, called strata, for the purpose of conducting independent surveys of these subpopulations.

Stratum: An identifiable sub-population of a population that is being sampled.

Team Fish: The cooperative harvesting of the resource by a group of fishermen. These fishermen may be formally organized in a sector or coop. Cooperation may take many forms (information-sharing on the

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location of the stocks, rationalization of the group's fleet, coordinate access to fishing grounds to avoid congestion and gear conflicts, search for lost gear, etc.), but in most cases the main objective is to increase the profits of the whole group.

Trip (see **fishing trip**): A trip is shore to shore by gear/area combination, or in the case of transfers at sea, an offloading at sea is a trip.

Trip duration: *Recreational Trip Duration:* A day of fishing measured in hours fished for the shore mode and dock-to-dock duration for the private/rental boat mode. *For-hire Trip Duration:* Dock-to-dock duration measured in hours fished

Unique Identifier for commercial fisheries: The unique identifier for commercial fisheries trip data is the trip start, the vessel identifier, and trip number when a vessel is involved; the trip start, the individual identifier, and the trip number when a vessel is not involved. Reporting of the unique identifier is required of both commercial fishermen and dealer on all submitted reports.

Unique identifier for recreational fisheries: The unique identifier for recreational trip data is the date of return, the sampler number, the record number, and the individual.

Value: The total landed dollar amount of a given species (or species landing condition and market category). Example: 100 pounds of lobster at a price of \$3.50 per pound will have a value of \$350.

Vessel directory frame: A list of known vessels operating in a particular fishery, which can be used to sample that fishery.

Waterbodies: Bodies of waters used for defining areas fished and identified by standard codes.