

Project Title: Development and deployment of an Incident Management Team (IMT) through the continued support of the Specially Trained Animal Response Team (START)

Project Duration: September 1, 2015 through August 31, 2016

Legal Name: Riverhead Foundation for Marine Research and Preservation

Principal Investigator:

Robert A. DiGiovanni Jr.
The Riverhead Foundation for Marine Research and Preservation
467 E. Main Street
Riverhead, New York 11901
631-369-9840
rdigiovanni@riverheadfoundation.org

This proposal will address the following national and regional priorities identified in proposal category B2

National Program Funding Priorities:B2.1b. B2.1c. B2.1e. (Regional B2.iv)

- **Project Objectives:**

1. Continue training and deployment of the existing highly-trained, independently functioning response team (START) Continue training additional network members in the use of Incident Command System (ICS)
2. Provide logistical support to network participants during any phase of stranding response which goes beyond the normal operation capacity of the organization without adding additional workload.
3. Develop an incident management team (IMT) training and mentoring plan to mentor additional incident management team members to enhance response capabilities to the network.
4. Participate in training drills throughout the network on mass stranding, unusual mortality events, unusual stranding events, large whale events and with the US Coast Guard on Regional Response Teams on oil spill preparedness and disasters
5. Continue to develop an Incident Management Team (IMT) to work with the region and headquarters on high profile events such as unusual mortality events, unusual stranding events, mass strandings, natural disasters and oil spills, while assisting with data collection and information dissemination.

Project Costs:

Federal Funds:	\$ 50,000
Applicant's Match:	\$ 17,640
Total Project:	\$ 67,640

Project Description
Project Goals and Objectives

The primary objective of this project is to continue to support the development and deployment of the highly trained independently functioning Specially Trained Animals Response Team (START). This project will build on the lessons learned during the previous four years of operation and meets the National Priority B2.1.b, B2.1.c. and addresses the ICS portion of the National and Regional Priority B2.1e. and B2.iv of the John H. Prescott Marine Mammal Rescue Assistance Grant Program. The initial training of START members revolved around single resource and response. This training included HAZWOPER, first aid, live capture and response and basic ICS training. Individuals then moved on to advanced section chief and IMT training positions. Training topics also included mass strandings and participation in oil spill response drills on a regional and national level.

Recent decreases in funding have left many of the stranding network organizations understaffed, overworked, stressed during daily operations, and in need additional assistance when challenging or unusual stranding events occur. START members will be available and trained to assist with both day-to-day operations of the impacted organization, in areas related to animal husbandry, carcass recovery, necropsy and sampling, and in special responses such as mass strandings, large whale strandings, hazardous material spills and out of habitat monitoring and capture events. These team members will provide the extra set trained resources to enable the responding organization to examine the overall response. START can function as a single resource or a complete Type 3 incident management team (IMT) which can help organize the event, allowing local resources to focus on the stranding response.

The organizations that make up Greater Atlantic Region have a history of close collaboration during live cetacean strandings, live animal transfers, large whale strandings, unusual mortality events, mass strandings, and mass necropsy efforts. Recent events on the west coast with the 2013 California Sea Lion UME and the east coast 2013-2014 Mid-Atlantic bottlenose dolphin UME have shown the need for expanding the network's ICS training and developing an incident management team (IMT) which can help on a larger scale. Currently, START has seven member organizations from six states and has 14 team members (Appendix 1.0). The seven organizations represented on START are the Riverhead Foundation for Marine Research and Preservation (RFMRP), International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW), Mystic Aquarium, New England Aquarium (NEAq), Virginia Aquarium and

Science Museum, Pacific Marine Mammal Center (PMMC), and National Aquarium. The organizations which make up the core team bring together the expertise needed for future training. As a member of the Greater Atlantic Region, the Marine Mammal Rescue and Research Program of IFAW has agreed to provide help for START by training members in mass stranding planning, logistics and operations. This will be accomplished by team members traveling to the Cape Cod, MA to participate in tabletop exercises and through participation in mass stranding events. The RFMRP rescues, rehabilitates, and releases multiple pinnipeds and sea turtles each year including some animals transferred to the facility from other network participants. RFMRP has also successfully rehabilitated and released (or transferred to a permanent care facility) seven cetaceans: two Risso's dolphin, three harbor porpoises, and two offshore bottlenose dolphins. RFMRP is experienced with in-water captures of cetaceans and applying satellite tags on pinniped and cetacean species for post release monitoring. The RFMRP has also used ICS to coordinate seal capture projects in the northwest Atlantic in MA and ME. These projects were conducted in conjunction with the Northeast Fisheries Science Center. The PMMC has expertise in sea lion rescue and rehabilitation. The PMMC was also involved in the 2013 CASL UME and worked with START to implement ICS at their facility. Through this proposal we plan on adding five additional members to the team through training. As ICS training has been a priority for the network, we suspect there are other individuals who may want to join and continue their training. We will seek out other network participants who have similar training and invite them to participate with our drills, exercises and workshops.

Individuals who join the team have committed to volunteer up to 120 hours per year to the project for training, drills and deployment. This commitment is made by their parent organization after consultation with the P.I. on the START project. This project will continue to develop an individual who can be deployed as a single resource (strike team or task force) to assist organizations with an event. These individuals will understand how to use the Incident Command System (ICS) as a tool, and will deploy with the support of START Logistics Section Chief. Our work on two previous Prescott grants has enabled us to develop a training structure which helps facilitate the use and implementation of ICS in existing events. Once we started taking ICS classes it became apparent that the biggest hurdle with ICS was learning how to view it as a toolbox. The most commonly heard issue is that we do not have all the people to fill these positions or time to develop this complex structure. It is with this information we started looking at ICS as a tool box and like a tool box if you are working on a project you do not need to use every tool in the box. What you want to do is choose the correct tool for the job. This team has progressed from the

development of single resource deployment (California Sea Lion UME, mass stranding events, out of habitat events) to the development, training and deployment of an Incident Management Team (IMT) during the 2013-2014 Mid-Atlantic Bottlenose dolphin UME. After taking with the Virginia Aquarium Stranding Response team it was decided that they greatly needed necropsy help and assistance with removing animals from the beach. In accordance with ICS structure, we developed a Typing document (Appendix 2.0), for necropsy performance, and a second document for response. It is important to note that these Typing documents are specific to the event are not as comprehensive as our training Typing documents. If we think of the comprehensives Typing documents as the tool box the event specific Typing documents are the tools we need to meet our objectives during the event. We were then able to circulate these documents to the regional stranding coordinators and the network. Organization could easily identify what type of resources they could provide and send back an organized list of resources (Appendix 2.0). This resource availability was forwarded to START through the e-mail system (UMELogistics@riverheadfoundation.org). The Logistics Section Chief would then list these resources and availability on a modified 215 ICS form (Appendix 3.0). This would then be conveyed to the IMT thought the Tactics and planning meetings (Appendix 4.0) displays the planning “P” or meeting schedule. The team will then know if they are able to provide the support needed to obtain the objectives.

The second objective for this project is to be able to deploy resources throughout the network to assist with stranding events. The first step in giving help is to determine what the organization or the event is attempting to accomplish (establish objectives) then, identify the resource types (people, supplies, and equipment) needed to help meet those objectives. The organization needing assistance would say they need three “Type 2” necropsy assistants per day for the next two weeks and the logistics would consult the “215” form and see what resources were available. If resources are available, logistics would then coordinate travel arrangements and let the receiving organization know who was arriving and when they would start work. These individuals would know where, when and to whom they are reporting to, as well as having a general understanding of what the objectives are for this event. They will know what equipment they need or if it will be provided. Once on scene, they will be met by their immediate supervisor and put to work. They will follow all reporting procedures as established by the event response organization. To keep track of time on event and activities performed unit logs will be used. Unit logs are submitted to the appropriate person at the completion of each operational period.

Through the training of START members as outlined above, the individual resources will have a common language and will have established task books (toolbox), which allows the team to track their skill sets for future deployments. These individuals will understand span of control, IAP, unit logs and the reporting structure as established using the Incident Command System.

The third objective of the project is to identify and train new team members to function as IMT trainees. New IMT trainees will be selected from the individuals trained as a single resource / responder. The individuals will then be invited to the IMT training team and will be required to commit up to 200 hours per year to training and deploy. We will work with these individuals to identify the areas where the team needs support and the skill set of the individual. Once this has been established the trainee will be enrolled in the appropriate section chief training module; Planning, Logistics, Operation, Finance, Safety Officer, Public Information Officer and Incident Commander. The team will balance the needs of the IMT, network and organizations when assigning these roles. One of the function of the trainees is to maintain START's roster and on call schedule. The team will develop a website for data sharing and as a source of ICS documents. The site will list training information, schedules and current deployments.

The forth objective is to have team members participate in drills, workshops and exercises with network members, U.S. Coast Guard in the area of oil spill response and disaster management. In addition, the team would reach out to the large whale response community to assist with the implementation of ICS. The RFMRP runs all their stranding events including large whale events under ICS. Most large whale events which occur in New York become high profile events. Therefore building on previous events RFMRP will request that START IMT participates in a training scenario of addressing the large whale logistics issues facing New York, and the New York Bight. The IAP produced through this training exercise will be made available to all organizations who respond to large whale strandings for use during their next stranding event.

Over the last three years members of START have been participating in oil spill drills conducted by Area Planning Committees(APC) and Regional Response Teams (RRT) coordinated by the U.S. Coast Guard. This involvement has been a valuable experience for all parties involved. Not the least of which is getting the RRT and APC along with the state and U.S. Coast Guard to understand all wildlife is not the same and that dealing with marine mammal and sea turtles presents unique challenges. We have worked with NOAA's Scientific Support

Coordinator in providing real time data to proposed oil spill exercises. This input has enabled START to develop an IAP and contingency plan for oil spill response in Long Island Sound, NY. This document was a valuable tool during the US and Canada oil spill drill CANUSLANT which took place during the summer of 2013.

The fifth objective is to provide support for the deployment and training of IMT members. Continued support will enable the IMT to participate in drills, exercises, and workshops related to disasters, unusual events and oil spills. This training will be in the area of “exercise development and evaluation” and “train the trainer” courses which will enhance the team’s ability to mentor new candidates. This objective differs from objective four in that the IMT will be deployed to work on events as a incident management team (IMT). These team members agree to donate up to 100 hours annually to continued training and up to 200 hours per year to deployments, exercises and conducting workshops and drills. This proposal request funds to support team members during deployments. The team will also identify training officers to establish routine training drills and exercises to be conducted in conjunction with planned meeting (such as national meeting, regional meetings, and scientific meetings) so as to reduce cost of travel and lodging.

The IMT will work with the network to identify training opportunities which would allow the IMT trainees to work through the process and develop an Incident Action Plan (IAP) template for future events. Team members will work with the regional coordinators and headquarters to develop exercises to address future concerns. The intent is to move to more of a proactive approach to incident management. These exercises will emphasize the importance of spinning up a team earlier in an event to maximize its effectiveness and impact. By making the network more aware of START and the IMT, we intend to give them a tool to call upon before the event grows to a critical mass. Through the combination of training and deployments we will reduce the concerns the network has about asking for help too soon. The good rule of thumb is if you start thinking you need help you probably already do.

The frequency of exercises will depend on the frequency of real world deployments. We have found through our work on the California Sea Lion UME and the 2013-2014 Mid-Atlantic Bottlenose dolphin UME that tense events are the best training grounds for team development. As part of the training modules START will develop a website to be made available to network participants for training materials, and historical IAP’s from training events. The site will also be a place for our online Task books for marine mammals as well as links to the all

hazard task books developed under ICS. IMT members will agree to be on call and rotate through their trained position. This on call status will depend on the number of individuals in each position. For example if we have four logistic section chiefs then each one can be on call once a month. There will be an Incident Commander (IC) designated by the team to be on call each week. This individual will be rotated through the team to avoid burnout and will be responsible for fielding initial request for support either formal or informal. The Incident Commander will then follow the established procedures for deployment and team activation.

The two deployment comparisons we have to show the need for early notification are the, California Sea Lion UME and the 2013-2014 Mid-Atlantic Bottlenose dolphin UME. In the former the team was spun up after the peak event had occurred. Our team deployed as a single resource into an event where organization were already responding to and rehabilitating a staggering number of California Sea Lions. As the event covered a large region and numerous organizations the available resources were limited. In comparison when the 2013-2014 Mid-Atlantic Bottlenose dolphin UME began to spin up START was introduced at the beginning of the event and was able to facilitate additional help from within the region and from the west coast. This was not something the responding organization was not doing or thought of it was something we could take off their plate and give them time to dedicate to other areas. One of the most commonly heard comments after our deployments is I now know I should have call for help sooner.

Project Management

The project will be organized and managed by the Principal Investigator (PI), Robert A. DiGiovanni Jr., Executive Director and Senior Biologist at the RFMRP who will dedicate 5% of his time to this operation. Kimberly F. Durham, the Co-Investigator, will provide an equal amount of time for assisting project management. Allison Challiet DePerte will provide 5 % of her time in support for the financial portion of this proposal. All aspects of reporting on the technical oversight and implementation of the work plan as outlined in the statement of work will be the responsibility of the PI. All other members of the GARSN are cooperators (Letters of Support, Supporting Documentation), as the development and implementation of this team will be dependent upon these groups.

Accounting for this project will follow generally accepted accounting principles in the United States (U.S. GAAP). The RFMRP uses QuickBooks™ as its accounting program and is on a cash basis for the reporting of transactions. The RFMRP also has an independent accounting audit performed each year when it files its tax return

by the accounting firm of George Rehn, CPA. The accounting period for the RFMRP is from January through December. The PI will serve as the business point of contact responsible for overseeing the financial accounting systems utilized by the RFMRP. The RFMRP office administrator and assistants will be managing the financial accounting for the project.

Project Description

Team Objectives

The primary principal of START is to not add work to the organization requesting help. We accomplish this by having clearly defined objectives prior to deployment; establishing the type of resources needed and meeting those needs to the best of our ability. It is important at this time to clarify the meaning of “independently functioning” Specially Trained Animal Response Team. The independent nature of the team is that if a resource, from single individual to full Incident Management Team, is needed, it will deploy without putting any additional pressure on the already stressed organization. This means that START is prepared to make its own travel and lodging arrangements, coordinate resources and supply needed to support its function of assisting the receiving organization. The intent of the statement “independently functionally” is to mean providing assistance without giving additional work to the organization needing help. The objective is to be the help you needed when you are too busy or overwhelmed to sit down and figure out what you need. Once deployed, they can be managed in two distinct, predetermined ways. They can report directly to the organization and be folded into their daily operations, assuming whatever role the organization needs filled. They can also deploy based on a previously established set of objectives. These objectives will be developed by communications with the organization requesting support, and would be agreed upon prior to deployment. The team is NOT going to “self-deploy” or work without a request for support from NOAA or the network organization. Team members can come in and take up the tasks the individual was doing at the organization, allowing them time to organize the event or simply take a break. The team can also come in and organize the event as the individual continues to perform the task they are specially trained for or have the most institutional knowledge about.

The projects and teams overall objective is to have a standing “on call” Incident Management Team (IMT) year round without taxing the resources of the network. Through this management team we intend to have a

situational awareness of the resources and training needs of the network. By identifying the needs and resources of the network and forging a training path, the network will be better prepared for natural disasters and oil spill response along, with unusual mortality events.

Team Selection

Team members will be selected for START from the stranding network. The parent organization will put forth team member names and qualification to START at STARTinfo@riverheadfoundation.org. In addition to this process headquarters and regional stranding coordinators can submit individuals which they think will benefit from the training. The commitment by the parent organization is to cover the staff time (Salary) during early training and training deployments. START will cover travel and course costs during training if they agree to team commitment requirements. The parent organization agrees to commit the requested hours for each phase of participation; 120 hours for single resource / response, 200 hours for IMT trainee positions and 100 hours donated for designated IMT members for training, and up to an additional 200 hours per year for exercise and workshop preparation (Appendix 5.0). The latter can be reimbursed by this proposal.

Team members can also be selected to train with START based as being subject matter experts. To have a balance team and be able to respond to the network needs, we will seek individuals who can work with large scale media events, high profile events, mass stranding events, out of habitat events, necropsy experience, response experience, disentanglement experience, oil spill response and wild capture experience in areas related to the stranding network.

Team Deployment Criteria

START is not intended to self-deploy and therefore will only provide support if requested. The initial request will be sent to STARThelp@riverheadfoundation.org, which will notify the Incident Commander (IC) or Operation Section Chief (OSC) on call. This request could be informal, formal from the network or formal for the region or headquarters. An informal request involves a network member reaching out to START to discuss the event. This is more of a “hey this is what we have and these are our objectives. Do you have any suggestions or thoughts which may help?” Regardless of the request origination, the question tree in Appendix 6.0 will be asked. The formal process occurs when a network member or regional coordinator contacts the IC or OSC. They run through the question as outlined in Appendix 6.0 and make sure the regional coordinators are in the loop. After

consultation with the regional coordinator, coordinators or headquarters a decision on deployment would be made and if START funds from this grant will be used. The IC or OSC will determine the level of response based on resources in consultation with the regionals coordinators, headquarters and requesting organization. It is assumed that if the request for help originates from NOAA, START funds will be used to support the deployment.

Project Timeline

START Milestones	
Month 1	Contact new team members and identify availability for training dates , deploy as requested
	Conduct tabletop scenario for new members
	Develop training schedule for new and current members
Month 2	Start discussions with network members on ICS training needs at their facilities
Month 3-6	Conduct tabletop scenario training for all members, develop on call schedule plan
	Mass stranding training workshop for members
	Continue work on task books through training drills, start developing website for data sharing
	All members have current 24 Hr HAZWOPPER, First Aid, blood borne pathogen training
Month 6 - 8	START operational; Meeting to work live whale logistics scenario if no deployment has occurred
Month 8	Questionnaires to be distributed after any activation of team with post-event comments
Month 9-10	40-hour HAZWOPER training refresher course for team members
	Meet to discuss changes/upgrades to protocols, START activation events, etc.
Month 11	Questionnaires to be distributed after any activation of team with post-event comments
	All comments from questionnaires to be completed as part of final report for this grant
Month 12	Final report compiled; Ask for extension if response funds are still available

Project Impacts

This project has the ability to provide logistical support to local networks while collecting the additional B and C data needed by NMFS within the Northeast Region. As we continue to encounter more pinnipeds and cetaceans throughout the region, the potential for interactions not previously seen is increasing. Through the development of the “START”, organizations will be better prepared for catastrophic events such as Hurricane Katrina, Super Storm Sandy or the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. High-level training for hazardous events and ICS will allow members of the network to provide the much-needed assistance in these situations. As evidenced by events of the past year, there have been multiple instances where a trained team was needed to assist organizations when either a catastrophic event or a stranding event occurred. START will be an invaluable asset for future events.

Mass strandings and Unusual Stranding Events (USE) by nature generate a great deal of publicity for the responding organization, and for the network as a whole. This interest in stranding programs brings an additional burden during a time where the course of events itself is stressful. Through development of a best-practices guideline for USE, network participants will have a greater knowledge to better handle these situations.

Need for Federal Assistance

In 2006, NMFS published the *Interim Policies and Best Practices, Marine Mammal Stranding Response, Rehabilitation, and Release: Standards for Rehabilitation Facilities* (Whaley and Gage) to move the network toward collecting more consistent data. The fundamental problem is the associated costs of maintaining and upgrading facility operations coupled with increased strandings. Without additional support of programs such as the “START”, organizations, such as the RFMRP, will be extremely pressed to provide additional B and C data during times of Unusual Stranding Events (USE) or Unusual Mortality Events (UME). Funding of this program will show NMFS support toward building a national stranding program while taking into account organizational and local issues.

Federal, State, and Local Government Programs and Activities

The only existing state agency, which is directly affected by this proposed project, is the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation.

Participation by Persons or Groups Other than the Applicant

As this proposal calls upon the support of stranding network members from the around the country, all of those participants are cooperators. Those organizations who are currently on START include; International Fund for Animals Welfare (IFAW), Pacific Marine Mammal Center (PMMC), Mystic Aquarium, National Aquarium , New England Aquarium, and the Virginia Aquarium Marine Science Center.

Data Sharing

Dissemination of lessons learned through this project, along with training materials, will be made available to the stranding network through a dedicated website that will be created during the project. Progress of the team, details on current deployments, and membership recruitment information will be displayed on this site. Suggestions for training courses and training materials will also be available. IAP templates created through the drills will be shared on the site as well, so other organizations may utilize them in their events. Other stranding network participants will be kept informed of the “START” progress at regional conferences, and will receive data in the form of a technical memorandum and final report for this project.