

## **NOAA Inflation Reduction Act (IRA)**

### **Non-Competitive Request for Applications (RFA): NOAA-NOS-IOOS-2024-2008213 Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) Act, 2022**

#### **I. Funding Opportunity Description**

##### **A. Project Objective**

NOAA's mission is to understand and predict changes in climate, weather, ocean, and coasts, to share that knowledge and information with others, and to conserve and manage coastal marine ecosystems and resources. The Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) complements the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) to provide the largest direct investment to date in our Nation's coastal climate and economic resilience. Over 40% of the U.S. population lives in coastal counties, producing more than \$9.65 trillion in goods and services and employing 54.6 million people. Within the Climate Ready Coasts component of the IRA, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) will work with partners from multiple sectors in the U.S. coastal and Great Lakes states and territories to help address localized impacts of climate change. This work will also advance environmental justice by benefitting many communities, including frontline and underserved communities, through increased engagement in development and provision of valuable climate data and tools.

In response to the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 (IRA) (PL 117-169), the NOAA National Ocean Service (NOS) U.S. Integrated Ocean Observing System (IOOS<sup>®</sup>) Office is soliciting proposals for five-year projects supporting IRA implementation.

The U.S. IOOS is a regional-national-global partnership working to provide data, tools, and models to improve safety, support the economy, and protect our environment. Integrated ocean information from a broad range of sources is available to anyone at any time in near real time, as well as retrospectively. Easier and better access to this information improves our ability to understand and predict climate change and coastal events such as storms, wave heights, and sea level rise, delivering decision support to communities, businesses, and people, and advancing environmental justice.

The eleven U.S. IOOS Regional Associations (RA) are non-federal partners that provide observing coverage for the U.S. coastal zone, focusing on areas from the head of tide to the limits of the Exclusive Economic Zone. The IOOS RAs operate regional observing networks throughout the U.S., including the Pacific Islands and the Caribbean, and are trusted agents certified by NOAA, with long-established relationships with communities, businesses, academia, and other external partners. The RAs operate and maintain the infrastructure to collect and share the data coastal communities need to improve local and regional resilience.

NOAA will provide \$100 million to the eleven IOOS RAs, via non-competitive cooperative agreements to fund "Climate Ready Coasts" coastal resilience services. This investment will enable the RAs to address coastal community needs and priorities within their regional

footprints, and system-wide priorities for all regions. For example, building IOOS RA capacity for equitable service delivery so that successes developed in one RA can be replicated in other RAs, and increasing community science-based resilience observations such as low-cost water level stations and wave buoys. Funding will enable the IOOS RAs to improve their coastal ocean observing systems performance, reliability, coverage, and accuracy. The outcomes of this investment will improve program longevity, enhance capabilities across the system; improve equity of services within and across communities; advance environmental justice; and enable advancements to the IOOS ocean information network capacity to combine and organize regional data collection, management, and information services to users.

IRA funds will leverage the nation's investment in the establishment and maintenance of the U.S. IOOS national network of regional coastal observing systems and their core elements. The funding will support recapitalization of the system, including priority infrastructure and modernization, as well as the enhancement of partnerships between user communities and technical and scientific experts, the maintenance and operations of the equipment needed to collect data, improved methods for managing the data and expanding its distribution, outreach to communities, and development of tools and services to enable more informed decisions.

### **Definitions**

For the purposes of this opportunity, the following definitions are provided.

**Coastal resilience** is the ability of populations, ecosystems, and economies to prepare for, absorb, respond to, recover from, and successfully adapt to the impacts of natural and human-caused hazards, such as hurricanes and oil spills, and long-term environmental change, such as habitat loss and sea level rise.

**Environmental justice** means the just treatment and meaningful involvement of all people, regardless of race, color, national origin, Tribal affiliation, income, or disability, in agency decision-making and other Federal activities that affect human health and the environment.

**Equitable service delivery** is defined as the consistent and systematic fair, just, and impartial process of engaging with users, including individuals who belong to underserved communities that have been denied such treatment, to provide relevant and timely information. (adapted from E.O. 13985 and NOAA Office of Coastal Management)

**Equity** is the consistent and systematic fair, just, and impartial treatment of all individuals, including individuals who belong to underserved communities that have been denied such treatment, such as Black, Latino, and Indigenous and Native American persons, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders and other persons of color; members of religious minorities; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) persons;

persons with disabilities; persons who live in rural areas; and persons otherwise adversely affected by persistent poverty or inequality. (E.O. 13985)

**Frontline communities** are defined as those communities who are the most vulnerable to and will be the most adversely affected by climate change and inequitable actions because of systemic and historical socioeconomic disparities, environmental injustice, or other forms of injustice. (NOAA Climate Adaptation Partnerships Program)

**Overburdened communities** are defined as minority, low-income, tribal, or indigenous populations or geographic locations in the United States that potentially experience disproportionate environmental harms and risks. This disproportionality can be as a result of greater vulnerability to environmental hazards, lack of opportunity for public participation, or other factors. Increased vulnerability may be attributable to an accumulation of negative or lack of positive environmental, health, economic, or social conditions within these populations or places. The term describes situations where multiple factors, including both environmental and socio-economic stressors, may act cumulatively to affect health and the environment and contribute to persistent environmental health disparities. (EPA Environmental Justice 2020 Glossary)

**Underserved communities** are defined as populations sharing a particular characteristic, as well as geographic communities, that have been systematically denied a full opportunity to participate in aspects of economic, social, and civic life, as exemplified by the list in the preceding definition of “equity.” (E.O. 13985)

## **B. Project Priorities:**

IOOS seeks proposals with measurable outcomes that support and leverage NOAA’s long-term and sustained investment in the national network of regional coastal observing systems, along with recent investments through the BIL. Proposals should present finite projects that have lasting impacts and enhance partnerships that deliver services and products to a wide range of users. Proposals should recapitalize and modernize IOOS system components that support coastal resilience by strengthening the delivery of data and predictions to provide equitable services to address coastal resilience needs.

Applicants should be mindful of the follow guiding principles:

- Proposals should invest in recapitalization and modernization to strengthen regional systems and ensure they will continue to operate and provide critical coastal resilience benefits to their communities.
- Proposed projects should expand the reach of the regional coastal observing system and RA by establishing and deepening partnerships with users and communities, especially those historically marginalized and underserved, and by incorporating new disciplines and non-scientist end users.
- Proposals should leverage activities and investments made through other cooperative agreements with the IOOS Office.
- The funding for these projects is an investment intended to sustain and increase the impact of coastal, ocean, and Great Lakes observing systems and to increase the

resilience of coastal communities, economies, and/or ecosystems, particularly frontline and overburdened communities.

- As project proposals are developed, attention should be paid to the longer-term viability of new services and reach to new customers, including plans to maintain capabilities with core resources.

Applicants can submit proposals that cover up to five years of work. Each proposal should cover one of two Topic Areas. Applicants shall submit one proposal to Topic Area 1 and may submit one or more additional proposals to Topic Area 2. Topic Area 1 and Topic Area 2 will be awarded separately.

(1) Topic Area 1: To support and strengthen the regional systems to ensure their continued operations and longevity through investment in recapitalization, infrastructure, and modernization needs to support delivery of data and information services to address coastal resilience needs within the geographic range of each Regional Association.

(2) Topic Area 2: To support and strengthen pan-regional or national level outcomes, including among multiple Regional Associations, to ensure their continued operations and longevity through investment in recapitalization, infrastructure, modernization, and other priority needs to support delivery of data and information services to address coastal resilience needs.

**Topic Area 1. To support and strengthen individual Regional Association systems to ensure their continued operations and longevity through investment in recapitalization, infrastructure, and modernization needs to support delivery of data and information services to address coastal resilience needs within the geographic range of each Regional Association.**

In Topic Area 1, IOOS is requesting proposals describing activities that recapitalize and modernize the aging IOOS infrastructure and systems that support coastal resilience within individual Regional Association systems. These proposals will strengthen the delivery of data and predictions and technical assistance to provide equitable services that address coastal resilience needs by investing in the recapitalization and modernization of observing systems.

IOOS anticipates providing up to \$5 million to each applicant. Where appropriate, Topic Area 1 proposals should incorporate equitable service delivery to address data and information equity and accessibility goals within the region. Proposals should outline an inclusive outreach strategy that identifies ways in which the RA will communicate project outcomes to users, as well as connecting any new stakeholders and users to core resources. If the amount of funding requested totals less than \$55 million for Topic Area 1, NOAA may make excess Topic 1 funds available for activities in Topic Area 2.

**Topic Area 2: To support and strengthen pan-regional or national level outcomes, including among multiple Regional Associations, to ensure their continued operations and longevity through investment in recapitalization, infrastructure, modernization, and other priority needs to support delivery of data and information services to address coastal resilience needs.**

In Topic Area 2, IOOS is requesting proposals describing activities that advance projects addressing coastal resilience with outcomes that benefit users at the national and/or pan-regional scale, including among multiple Regional Associations. These proposals will strengthen the delivery of data and predictions to provide equitable services to address coastal resilience needs. Proposals may invest in the recapitalization and modernization of observing equipment, infrastructure, and other needs at regional, pan-regional, or national levels, including to address existing identified regional priorities, such as marine operations, coastal hazards, harmful algal blooms, offshore wind development, ecosystem change, marine heat waves, data management capacity, and modeling. For Topic Area 2 proposals, IOOS encourages RAs to work across boundaries, physical and organizational, when possible, finding efficiencies through shared knowledge and resources (including staff) on the development of activities. RAs are encouraged to use an integrated approach that leverages the strengths of each RA, builds partnerships, and improves approaches to delivering services across multiple regions or the national network of regional coastal observing systems. Proposals should outline the benefits; where appropriate, state the potential for scaling nationally; and outline an inclusive outreach strategy that identifies ways in which the RA will communicate project outcomes to users, as well as connecting new stakeholders and users to core resources.

IOOS is interested in proposals that address at least one of the following for Topic Area 2:

- 1) Improve, link and leverage regional capacity to address coastal resilience at the pan-regional and/or national scale through investment in recapitalization, infrastructure, modernization, and other priority needs to support delivery of data and information services to address coastal resilience needs. Proposals should demonstrate how project activities and investments will result in outcomes that improve the service delivery to identified user groups, including underserved, frontline, and overburdened communities. Proposals should identify multiple regional associations partnering on activities that provide benefits to coastal communities beyond individual regions, using the national network of regional coastal observing systems. Among the topics that could be addressed are:
  - a) Establishment of a National Network of Regional Water Level Observations to Support Coastal Resilience. The benefits of the proposed work will be to establish common practices to maximize the collective value of various water level observation efforts at local, regional, and national levels for coastal resilience and coastal flooding risk prediction applications.

- b) Coordination of regional data to inform and support ecosystem condition and assessment activities for place-based management (e.g., condition reports, integrated ecosystem assessments (IEA)); host and integrate web-enabled ecosystem tracking tools with an emphasis on building out SanctuaryWatch products for Sanctuaries and IEA; and contribute information directly into management programs supporting resource protection and climate resilience. The benefits of the proposed work will be to improve the collection, dissemination and use of actionable marine life and ecosystem data, information and services.
- c) Expansion of data management capacity to ingest observations collected in support of offshore wind projects. The outcomes of the proposed work will be to develop a unified data system at the larger scale required for ready access to offshore wind-relevant ocean observations by agencies, industries, researchers, and other users.
- d) Coordinated buildout and operations of the National Harmful Algal Bloom Observing Network (NHABON) via cross-regional initiatives to, for example, share equipment, develop data infrastructures, or determine data formats to support wider plankton data networks. The outcome of this work will be progress towards the national network described in the IOOS Association NHABON Strategy and the NHABON implementation plan being prepared for Congress.
- e) Improved ability to monitor and predict changes in essential ocean features and processes that impact tropical cyclone intensification, marine heat waves, ecosystem dynamics, etc. The outcome of this work will combine ocean observations with data assimilative models to create hindcasts and forecasts of ocean conditions. These products will enable the detection and response to the coastal climate signal and allow for the assessment of ecosystem impacts.
- f) Coordinated integration of long-term passive acoustic monitoring and acoustic telemetry within RA infrastructure, leveraging existing capacities for data collection and data management to support comparability of standard data products at national and international scales. Proposed work will result in the coordinated build out and operations of a nationally interoperable acoustic telemetry network.
- g) Establishing and maintaining national communities of practice that support coordinated sharing of resources, respond to challenges associated with existing and emerging technologies, and enhance workforce training and development. The benefits of the proposed work will improve the effectiveness and efficiency with which IOOS' national network of regional coastal observing systems deliver services to coastal communities.

- 2) Establish and/or expand service delivery and stakeholder engagement to communities that are disproportionately overburdened, underserved, economically distressed, and facing coastal and climate impacts, including indigenous groups and tribes. Examples of activities that could be proposed include the developing and cultivating new relationships; working with new partners to expand the type, number, and location of observing assets; addressing the role of IOOS in recognizing data sovereignty rights; and increasing data availability to meet community needs.

### **C. Program Authority**

The Secretary of Commerce is authorized under the following statutes to provide grants and cooperative agreements for the purposes described in this announcement, including Sections 40001 and 40004 of the Inflation Reduction Act (Public Law No: 117-169), and in Title 1, Sec. 12305 of the Coordinated Ocean Observation and Research Act (Public Law No: 116-271).

## **II. Award Information**

### **A. Funding Availability**

Topic Area 1: It is anticipated that approximately \$55,000,000 will be available, through non-competitive awards, to fund regionally focused proposals from each of the eleven IOOS RAs, for an expected project duration of up to five years.

Topic Area 2: It is anticipated that a total of approximately \$45,000,000 will be available, through non-competitive awards, to fund multi-region, national or pan-regional proposals from the IOOS RAs, with an expected project duration of up to five years. Once Topic Area 1 funds are distributed, NOAA may make any excess Topic Area 1 funds available for activities in Topic Area 2.

### **B. Project/Award Period**

The full proposal must cover an award period of no greater than 60 months, or five years.

### **C. Type of Funding Instrument**

Projects will be awarded as a non-competitive cooperative agreement. A cooperative agreement is a financial assistance vehicle that requires substantial involvement by the awarding agency. A cooperative agreement is similar to a grant, but used when substantial federal government involvement is anticipated.

### **III. Eligibility Information**

#### **A. Eligible Applicants**

Only Integrated Ocean Observing System Regional Associations (IOOS RAs) are eligible to apply.

#### **B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirements**

None.

#### **C. Other Criteria That Affect Eligibility**

None.

### **IV. Application and Submission Information**

#### **A. Address to Request Application Package**

Proposal materials are available at <http://www.grants.gov> as part of the electronic proposal package, which includes the federal forms. Please contact the IOOS Grants Administrator should you have an issue accessing the materials (see Section VII for contact information).

#### **B. Content and Form of Application**

Applicants should submit a proposal to Topic Area 1. Applicants may also submit a separate proposal to Topic Area 2.

Each application must include the following elements:

1. Standard Form (SF) 424
2. Title Page
3. Project Summary
4. Project Description and Milestone Schedule
5. Data Management Plan
6. References Cited
7. SF-424A
8. Budget Narrative
9. Resumes
10. Letters of Support
11. CD-511
12. SF-424B
13. SF-LLL (If applicable)



## 14. NEPA Questionnaire

The instructions for preparation of full proposals provided below are mandatory. Required content includes:

- 1) Standard Form (SF-424): All applicants requesting direct funding must submit the Standard Form, SF-424, "Application for Federal Assistance," to indicate the total amount of funding proposed for their institution for the whole project period. This form is to be the cover page for the original proposal and is the first required form in the Grants.gov proposal package. The form can be downloaded at <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/forms/sf-424-family.html>. For a NOAA and non-NOAA Federal partner, applications for Federal assistance (SF-424 and SF-424A) must show the total amount less what would go to the NOAA partner.
- 2) Title Page (single-spaced, 12-point font, 1-inch margins, one (1) page maximum): Include proposal title, complete contact information for the Principal Investigator and Financial Representative, duration of proposed project, and total funds requested. If funds are to be transferred to a NOAA or other Federal partner on the project, also state the amount to NOAA on the cover.
- 3) Project Summary (single-spaced, 12-point font, 1-inch margins, two (2) page maximum): Provide a summary of the proposed project. The summary should be prepared to be readable to a broad audience and contain the following sections:
  - a) Project Name/Title
  - b) Primary Contact (name, address, telephone, fax, e-mail)
  - c) Primary Recipient Institution
  - d) Other Investigators (name, affiliated institution or agency)
  - e) Brief Project Summary including objectives and intended benefits
  - g) Partners
- 4) Project Narrative and Milestone Schedule (single-spaced, 12-point font, 1-inch margins, 15 page maximum for Topic Area 1 proposals and 25 page maximum for Topic Area 2 proposals). Include the scope of work and expected outcomes and societal impacts. For the milestone schedule, display timelines for major tasks, target milestones for important intermediate and final products including deliverables and key project outcomes.
- 5) Data Management Plan (single-spaced, 12-point font, 1-inch margins, 2 page maximum): Proposals must provide a detailed Data Management Plan that describes how metadata and data collected as part of the project will be

disseminated to the broader community, and plans for longer term archiving of these data. The Data Management Plan should be guided by best practices in FAIR (findable, accessible, interoperable, reusable; <https://www.go-fair.org/fair-principles/>) and CARE (collective benefit, authority to control, responsibility, ethics; <https://www.gida-global.org/care>) principles. PIs that propose to collaborate with data centers or networks, except the National Center for Environmental Information, are advised to obtain letters of commitment that affirm the collaboration. Where possible, all PIs are strongly encouraged to use existing data centers and data portals to archive and disseminate their data. Costs associated with use of data centers, or data archiving, should be included in the application budget. See the section on the NOAA Data Reporting requirements in Section VI.B.

- 6) References Cited: Reference information is required. Each reference should include the names of all authors in the same sequence they appear in the publications, the article title, the journal or book title, volume number, page numbers, and year of publications. While there is no established page limitation, this section should include bibliographic citations only and should not be used to provide parenthetical information outside of the Project Description.
- 7) SF-424A Budget Form. All applicants are required to submit a SF-424A Budget Form, which identifies the budget for each fiscal year of the proposal. Place each fiscal year in separate columns in section B of page one on the SF-424A. NOTES: This revised SF-424A section B format is a NOAA requirement that is not reflected in the Instructions for the SF-424A. The budget figures must correspond with the description contained in the Budget Narrative. The form can be downloaded at <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/forms/sf-424-family.html>.

Each subaward should provide an SF-424A listing each year of funding being requested. List total subaward costs under line item 6.h. Other category and contractor costs under line item 6.f. Contractual category on the SF-424A.

- 8) Budget Narrative (single-spaced, 12-point font, 1-inch margins). All proposals must include a detailed budget narrative covering the proposed period of performance with a justification to support all proposed budget categories for each fiscal year. For additional information concerning each of the required budget categories and appropriate level of disclosure please see <https://cdn.ioos.noaa.gov/media/2017/12/Budget-Narrative-Guidance-Effective-Feb-2015.pdf>

For Topic Area 1, identify the tasks at a funded level of up to \$5,000,000.

For Topic Area 2, the budget should reflect the funding necessary to successfully complete the proposed tasks.

If more than one RA is collaborating on a proposal, one RA should be identified as the lead applicant, and will be the only RA to directly receive funds from NOAA. The lead RA is responsible for sending funds to their other subaward partners. A separate budget narrative is required for each subaward (including Federal collaborators) and must be provided to the lead RA for submission. Federal agencies may be funded directly by NOAA; however, the budget narrative should mention the collaboration and scope of work, but should exclude the funding from the total.

- 9) Resumes (single-spaced, 12-point font, 1-inch margins, three (3) pages maximum, per person): Provide resumes of the Principal Investigator for the project and other key personnel critical to the success of the project. Ensure that resumes address qualifications relevant to conducting the proposed work.
- 10) Letters of Support: Letters from unfunded collaborators, verifying their contribution to the project, or letters of support may also be included, but are not required.
- 11) CD-511: Certification Regarding Lobbying: Required only for the lead institution, which may submit this form through the Grants.gov CD511 document placeholder without a hard signature because electronic signatures are allowed on documents from the submitting institution. The form can be downloaded at <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/forms/sf-424-family.html>.
- 12) SF-424B: Assurances - Non-Construction Programs: Required only for the lead institution, which may submit this form through the Grants.gov SF-424B document placeholder without a hard signature because electronic signatures are allowed on documents from the submitting institutions. The form can be downloaded at <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/forms/sf-424-family.html>.
- 13) SF-LLL Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (if applicable): If lobbying activity is or has been secured to influence the outcome of a covered federal action, complete the SF-LLL standard lobbying disclosure form found at <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/forms/sf 424-family.html> and include it with your proposal package.
- 14) National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA): NEPA requires Federal agencies to complete an environmental analysis for all major Federal actions, including funding non-federal projects through Federal financial assistance awards where

Federal participation in the funded activity is expected to be significant. This Environmental Compliance Questionnaire for National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Notice of Federal Funding Opportunity Applicants (“Questionnaire”) is used by NOAA to collect information about proposed activities for NEPA and other environmental compliance requirements associated with the proposed project, such as Federal consultations under the Endangered Species Act.

Applicants to be recommended for funding will be required to answer relevant questions from the Questionnaire. The Federal Program Officer will determine which questions are relevant to each specific applicant, and request submission of the Questionnaire after the applicant has been notified that their proposal has been selected for funding.

Answers must be provided before the application can be submitted for final funding approval. For more details see:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1WVoZ-HPMIBu8Web6ITxAJImG2tepoTEb/view?usp=sharing>

Applicants should answer the NEPA questions to the best of their ability with as much detail as possible. Further analysis of NEPA considerations will be completed with applicants selected for funding during the negotiation process.

Some of the questions may overlap with material provided in other parts of the application. If appropriate, the applicant may copy the information from other parts of the application and paste it into the answers to the questionnaire. Many questions have a “yes” or “no” response. If the response is “no” the applicant does not need to elaborate on their answer. If the response is “yes” the question will have a second part asking the applicant to provide more information.

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: Public reporting burden for this collection of NEPA information is estimated to average 3 hours per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other suggestions for reducing this burden to NOAA NEPA Coordinator, NOAA Office of Program Planning and Integration, SSMC 3, Room 15700, 1315 East West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910. The information collection does not request any proprietary or confidential information. No confidentiality is provided.

Notwithstanding any other provisions of the law, no person is required to respond to, nor shall any person be subjected to a penalty for failure to comply with, a collection of information subject to the requirements of the Paperwork Reduction Act, unless that collection of information displays a currently valid OMB Control Number. The

valid OMB Control Number is 0648-0538, which expires on November 30, 2024.

### **C. Unique Entity Identifier and System for Award Management**

Any applicant awarded in response to this Announcement will be required to use the System for Award Management (SAM), which may be accessed online at <https://sam.gov/SAM/>. SAM enables the use of a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) and to build the quality of information available to the public as required by the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act, 31 U.S.C. 6106 Note, to the extent applicable.

Each applicant (unless the applicant is an individual or federal awarding agency that is excepted from those requirements under 2 CFR 25.110(b) or (c), or has an exception approved by the federal awarding agency under 2 CFR 25.110(d)) is required to: (i) be registered in SAM before submitting its proposal, which takes an average of 7-10 business days after entering all information into SAM and requires the applicant's Employer Identification Number; (ii) provide a valid UEI in its proposal; and (iii) continue to maintain an active SAM registration with current information at all times during which it has an active federal award or a proposal or plan under consideration by a federal awarding agency. SAM registration must be revalidated and renewed every 12 months. Applicants are advised to complete SAM registration or renewal well in advance of the full proposal deadline.

NOAA may not make a federal award to an applicant until the applicant has complied with all applicable unique entity identifier and SAM requirements and, if an applicant has not fully complied with the requirements by the time NOAA is ready to make a federal award, NOAA may determine that the applicant is not qualified to receive a federal award and use that determination as a basis for making a federal award to another applicant.

### **I. Submission Dates and Times**

Topic Area 1 proposals are due by 5:00 p.m., Eastern Time on March 5, 2024. Topic Area 2 proposals are due by 5:00 p.m., Eastern Time on March 5, 2024 in order for awards to be established by the end of Fiscal Year 2024. Proposals should be submitted electronically through Grants.gov (<http://www.grants.gov>). Separate submissions are required for Topic Area 1 and Topic Area 2.

Proposals should be no more than 15 pages long for Topic Area 1 and 25 pages long for Topic Area 2, excluding title page, budget information, resumes, and letters of support.

### **E. Intergovernmental Review**

Not applicable.

## **F. Funding Restrictions**

Indirect Costs: If an applicant has not previously established an indirect cost rate with a federal agency it may choose to use the de minimis indirect cost rate of 10% of Modified Total Direct Cost as allowable under 2 C.F.R. §200.414 or negotiate a rate with DOC. The negotiation and approval of such a new rate is subject to the procedures required by NOAA and the DOC Standard Terms and Conditions, Section B.06. The NOAA contact for indirect or facilities and administrative costs is: Raishan Adams, NOAA's Grants Management Division, [raishan.adams@noaa.gov](mailto:raishan.adams@noaa.gov).

## **G. Other Submission Requirements**

Applications submitted in response to this Announcement must be submitted through the Grants.gov website. The full funding Announcement for this program is available via the Grants.gov website: <http://www.grants.gov>. You will be able to access, download and submit electronic grant applications for NOAA Programs in this Announcement at <http://www.grants.gov>. NOAA strongly recommends that you do not wait until the application deadline date to begin the application process through Grants.gov.

Applicants must register with Grants.gov before any application materials can be submitted. To use Grants.gov, applicants must be registered in SAM (See section I.V.C), and periodic renewals are required.

Allow a minimum of five days to complete the SAM registration. (Note: Your organization's Employer Identification Number (EIN) will be needed on the application form). An organization's one-time registration process may take up to three weeks to complete. In addition, it may take two days until the applicant is notified as to whether NOAA received the application, so allow sufficient time to ensure applications are submitted before the closing date. For applicants previously registered in SAM, please note that SAM registration must be periodically renewed.

After electronic submission of the proposal through Grants.gov, the person submitting the proposal will receive up to three email messages from Grants.gov updating them on the progress of their proposal. In the first 24 to 48 hours after submission, the first email will confirm receipt of the proposal by the Grants.gov system, and the second will indicate that the proposal has either been successfully validated by the system before transmission to the grantor agency or has been rejected because of errors. Only validated proposals are sent to NOAA for review. After the proposal has been validated, this same person will receive a third email, generally within two days, when the proposal has been received and downloaded by NOAA.

## V. Application Review Information

### A. Evaluation Criteria Topic Area 1

1) **Importance/relevance and applicability of proposal (35 percent)**: This criterion ascertains the proposal's intrinsic value in the proposed work to U.S. IOOS priorities; responsiveness to this Request for Applications; and relevance to regional coastal community needs, NOAA, federal, regional, state, or local activities. Furthermore, this criterion considers the following:

- How will the proposed work strengthen and improve regional operations and ensure program longevity?
- How relevant is the proposed work to the Inflation Reduction Act and coastal resilience?
- How responsive and valuable are the proposed services and products to delivering positive regional impact toward the resilience of coastal communities, economies, and/or ecosystems, including in frontline, underserved, and overburdened communities?
- Does the proposed work substantively establish and/or deepen partnerships with a wide range of users, including those historically marginalized and underserved?

2) **Technical/scientific merit (30 percent)**: This criterion assesses whether the approach is technically sound and/or innovative, if the methods are appropriate, whether there are clear project goals and objectives, and whether the data sharing plan, if applicable, is appropriate for the proposed work. This criterion further considers the following:

- Does the proposal address the highest priority system recapitalization and modernization needs in the region?
- Does the proposal include an acceptable Data Management Plan that includes details on the types of environmental data and information expected and how and when the data will be shared, if applicable?
- Will the proposed work enhance equitable service delivery and data and information accessibility to reach new regional customers?
- Does the proposed work close gaps in the observing system to improve service delivery?
- Does the proposed work target technical and scientific areas of highest regional priority for climate resilience of coastal communities?

3) **Overall qualifications of applicants (15 percent)**: This criterion ascertains whether the applicant possesses the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project.

4) **Project costs (10 percent)**: This criterion evaluates the budget to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time frame. Additionally, this criterion considers the following:

- Does the proposed work leverage NOAA's long-term and sustained investment in the national network of regional coastal observing systems and recent investments through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL)?
- Does proposed recapitalization or modernization of observing equipment help to sustain work beyond the project duration?
- What is the value of the project budget considering the outcomes and impacts of the proposed finite project?
- What, if any, is the stated need for additional funding to sustain work beyond the project duration?
- How commensurate are the budgets of project partners with the work they would perform?

5) **Outreach and education (10 percent)**: This criterion assesses whether the project provides a focused and effective education and/or outreach strategy regarding the NOAA's mission to understand and protect the Nation's natural resources.

## Topic Area 2

1) **Importance/relevance and applicability of proposal (35 percent)**: This criterion ascertains the proposal's intrinsic value in the proposed work to U.S. IOOS priorities; responsiveness to this Request for Applications; and relevance to pan-regional/national coastal community needs, NOAA, federal, regional, state, or local activities. Furthermore, this criterion considers the following:

- How relevant is the proposed work to the Inflation Reduction Act and coastal resilience?
- What is the level of positive pan-regional, or national impact on the resilience of coastal communities, economies, and/or ecosystems, particularly in frontline and overburdened communities?
- Does the proposed work substantively establish and/or deepen partnerships with new communities, particularly frontline communities and those that are historically marginalized and underserved?
- How responsive and valuable are the proposed services and products to a wide range of users?

2) **Technical/scientific merit (30 percent)**: This criterion assesses whether the approach is technically sound and/or innovative, if the methods are appropriate, whether there are clear project goals and objectives, and whether the data sharing plan, if applicable, is appropriate for the proposed work. This criterion further considers the following:



- Does the proposal include an acceptable Data Management Plan that includes details on the types of environmental data and information expected and how and when the data will be shared, if applicable?
- Does the proposed work use new and integrated approaches to enhance service delivery to identified user groups and communities across the national network of regional coastal observing systems?
- What is the geographic scope of the proposed service delivery, and what potential does it have for scaling to the national level?
- Does the proposed work establish and/or expand service delivery and stakeholder engagement to communities that are disproportionately overburdened, underserved, economically distressed, and facing coastal and climate impacts?

3) **Overall qualifications of applicants (15 percent):** This criterion ascertains whether the applicant possesses the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project. This criterion also considers the following:

- Does the composition of the applicants demonstrate increased efficiency through collaboration, complementary expertise, shared knowledge, and cooperative resourcing?
- Are the strengths of the applicants and their RAs being leveraged well?

4) **Project costs (10 percent):** This criterion evaluates the budget to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time frame. Additionally, this criterion considers the following:

- Does the proposed work leverage NOAA's long-term and sustained investment in the national network of regional coastal observing systems and recent investments through the BIL?
- What is the value of the project budget considering the outcomes and impacts of the proposed finite project?
- What, if any, is the stated need for additional funding to sustain work beyond the project duration?
- How commensurate are the budgets of project partners with the work they would perform?

5) **Outreach and education (10 percent):** This criterion assesses whether the project provides a focused and effective education and/or outreach strategy regarding the NOAA's mission to understand and protect the Nation's natural resources.

## **B. Review and Selection Process**

The merit review for this non-competitive award consists of an objective merit review by at least three professionally and technically qualified reviewers. Both federal and non-federal experts may be used in this process. The Federal Program Officer is responsible for conducting the evaluation process described in this Announcement. The purpose of this review is to provide advice to the Selecting Official as to the technical soundness and merits of the application.

Each reviewer will score proposals individually on a scale of one to five, where scores represent respectively: Excellent (5), Very Good (4), Good (3), Fair (2), Poor (1). Both whole and ½ scores will be acceptable. The NOAA Grants Officer will review financial and grants administration aspects of a proposed award, including conducting an assessment of the risk posed by the applicant in accordance with 2 C.F.R. 200.206. In addition to reviewing repositories of government-wide eligibility, qualifications or financial integrity information, the risk assessment conducted by NOAA may consider items such as the financial stability of an applicant, quality of the applicant's management systems, an applicant's history of performance, previous audit reports and audit findings concerning the applicant and the applicant's ability to effectively implement statutory, regulatory, or other requirements

imposed on non-Federal entities. See also "Review of Risk" in Section A.7. of this Announcement.

Applicants should be in compliance with the terms of any existing NOAA grants or cooperative agreements and otherwise eligible to receive Federal awards or make arrangements satisfactory to the NOAA Grants Officer, to be considered for funding under this competition. All reports due should be received and any concerns raised by the agency should be timely addressed to receive a new award. Upon review of these factors, if appropriate, specific award conditions that respond to the degree of risk may be applied by the NOAA Grants Officer pursuant to 2 C.F.R. 200.208. In addition, NOAA reserves the right to reject an application in its entirety where information is uncovered that raises a significant risk with respect to the responsibility or suitability of an applicant. The final approval of selected applications and issuance of awards will be by the NOAA Grants Officer.

When a decision has been made (whether an award or declination), verbatim anonymous copies of reviews and summaries of review panel deliberations, if any, will be made available to the applicant, upon request. Declined applications will be held in IOOS for three years in accordance with current retention policies, and then destroyed.

## **VI. Award Administration Information**

The official notice of award is the Standard Form CD-450, Financial Assistance Award, issued by the NOAA Grants Officer electronically through NOAA's electronic grants management system, Grants Online. The authorizing document, the CD-450 award cover page with attachments, is provided to the appropriate business office of the recipient organization.

In addition, the award document provided by NOAA may contain Special Award Conditions unique to a proposed work that will be applied on a case-by-case basis. For example, the award may include conditions that limit the use of funds for activities that have outstanding environmental compliance requirements or stating other compliance requirements for the award as applicable. The applicant is strongly encouraged to review award documents carefully before accepting a federal award to ensure they are fully aware of the relevant terms that have been placed on the award.

Official notification of an award is provided by the Grants Management Division, not the U.S. IOOS Office. If one incurs any costs prior to receiving an award agreement from an authorized NOAA grant official, one would do so solely at one's own risk of these costs not being included under the award.

### **A. Administrative and National Policy Requirements**

#### **1. The Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements**

The Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements contained in the Federal Register Notice of December 30, 2014 (79 FR 78390), are applicable to this solicitation and may be accessed online at: <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2014-12-30/pdf/2014-30297.pdf>.

#### **2. Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements**

Through 2 C.F.R. § 1327.101, the Department of Commerce adopted Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards at 2 C.F.R. Part 200, which applies to awards in this program. Refer to <http://go.usa.gov/SBYh> and <http://go.usa.gov/SBg4>.

#### **3. Department of Commerce and NOAA Terms and Conditions**

The successful applicant who accepts a NOAA award under this solicitation will be bound by the Department of Commerce Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions. This document will be provided in the award package in NOAA's Grants

Online system. A current version of this document is available at [Department of Commerce Financial Assistance Standard Terms \(November 2020\)](#). In addition, [NOAA Financial Assistance Administrative Terms](#) will be applied. These terms may be updated prior to issuance of an award.

#### 4. Limitation of Liability

Funding for this Announcement has been appropriated by Congress. If an applicant incurs any costs prior to receiving an award agreement signed by an authorized NOAA official, one would do so solely at one's own risk of not receiving an award. Recipients and subrecipients are subject to all federal laws and agency policies, regulations, and procedures applicable to federal financial assistance awards.

#### 5. National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

If recommended for funding, applicants whose proposed projects may have an environmental impact will be asked to furnish sufficient information to assist NOAA in assessing the potential environmental consequences of supporting the project. NOAA must analyze the potential environmental impacts, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), for each project which seeks NOAA funding. Detailed information on NEPA can be found at the following NOAA NEPA website: <http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/>, including our NOAA Administrative order 216-6A for NEPA, [http://www.corporateservices.noaa.gov/ames/administrative\\_orders/chapter\\_216/216-6A.html](http://www.corporateservices.noaa.gov/ames/administrative_orders/chapter_216/216-6A.html) and the Council on Environmental Quality implementation regulations.

If needed by NOAA for NEPA assessment, applicants will be asked to provide detailed information on the activities to be conducted, locations, sites, species, and habitat to be affected, possible construction activities, and any environmental concerns that may exist (e.g., the use and disposal of hazardous or toxic chemicals, introduction of non-indigenous species, impacts to endangered and threatened species, aquaculture projects, and impacts to coral reef systems). In addition to providing specific information that will serve as the basis for any required impact analyses, applicants may also be requested to assist NOAA in drafting an environmental assessment if NOAA determines an assessment is required.

Applicants will also be required to cooperate with NOAA in identifying feasible measures to reduce or avoid any identified adverse environmental impacts of their proposal. The failure to do so shall be grounds for not selecting an application. In some cases, if additional information is required after an application is selected, funds can be withheld by the Grants Officer under a special award condition requiring the recipient to submit additional environmental compliance information sufficient to enable NOAA to

make an assessment on any impacts that a project may have on the environment.

## 6. Release of Application Information

Privileged or confidential commercial or financial information, patentable ideas, or trade secrets, disclosure of which may harm the applicant, should be included in the proposal only when such information is necessary to convey an understanding of the proposed work. If a proposal contains information or data that the applicant does not want disclosed prior to award for purposes other than the evaluation of the proposal, mark each page containing such information or data with the words "Privileged, Confidential, Commercial, or Financial Information - Limited Use" at the top of the page to assist NOAA in making disclosure determinations. A proposal that results in an award will be available to the public on request, except for privileged information or material that is personal, proprietary, or otherwise exempt from disclosure under law. Appropriate labeling in the proposal aids identification of what may be specifically exempt. Such information will be withheld from public disclosure to the extent permitted by law, including the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), 5 U.S.C. 552, and 15 C.F.R. Part 4, which sets forth rules for the Department of Commerce to make requested materials, information, and records publicly available under FOIA.

Without assuming any liability for inadvertent disclosure, NOAA will seek to limit disclosure of such information to its employees and contractors, and to outside reviewers when necessary for merit review of the proposal or as otherwise authorized by law. Portions of proposals resulting in awards that contain descriptions of inventions in which either the Government or the funding recipient owns a right, title, or interest (including a nonexclusive license) will not normally be made available to the public until a reasonable time has been allowed for filing patent applications. NOAA will notify the recipient of receipt of requests for copies of funded proposals so the recipient may advise NOAA of such inventions described, or other confidential, commercial, or proprietary information contained in the proposal.

NOAA may, at its own discretion, make publicly visible the data management plan from funded projects, or use information from the data management plan to produce a formal metadata record and include that metadata in a catalog to indicate the pending availability of new data.

The applicant acknowledges and understands that information and data contained in applications for financial assistance, as well as information and data contained in financial, performance and other reports submitted by applicants, may be used by the Department of Commerce in conducting reviews and evaluations of its financial assistance programs. For this purpose, applicant information and data may be accessed, reviewed, and evaluated by Department of Commerce employees, other Federal employees, and also by Federal agents and contractors, and/or by non-Federal personnel,

all of whom enter into appropriate conflict of interest and confidentiality agreements covering the use of such information. As may be provided in the terms and conditions of a specific financial assistance award, applicants are expected to support program reviews and evaluations by submitting required financial and performance information and data in an accurate and timely manner, and by cooperating with the Department of Commerce and external program evaluators. In accordance with 2 C.F.R. § 200.303(e), applicants are reminded that they must take reasonable measures to safeguard protected personally identifiable information and other confidential or sensitive personal or business information created or obtained in connection with a Department of Commerce financial assistance award.

## 7. Review of Risk

After the proposal is recommended for funding by the Selecting Official, the Grants Management Division will perform administrative reviews, including an assessment of risk posed by the applicant under 2 C.F.R. 200.206. In addition to reviewing repositories of government-wide eligibility, qualifications, or financial integrity information, the risk assessment conducted by NOAA may consider items such as the financial stability of an applicant, quality of the applicant's management systems, an applicant's history of performance, previous audit reports and audit findings, and the applicant's ability to effectively implement statutory, regulatory, or other requirements imposed on non-federal entities. Applicants may submit comments to the Federal Awardee Performance and Integrity Information System (FAPIIS) about any information included in the system about their organization for consideration by the awarding agency. Applicants should be in compliance with the terms of any existing NOAA grants or cooperative agreements and otherwise eligible to receive federal awards, or make arrangements satisfactory to the Grants Officer, to be considered for funding under this competition. All reports due should be received and any concerns raised by the agency should be timely addressed to receive a new award. Upon review of these factors, if appropriate, Specific Award Conditions that respond to the degree of risk may be applied by the NOAA Grants Officer pursuant to 2 C.F.R. 200.208. In addition, NOAA reserves the right to reject a proposal in its entirety if information is uncovered that raises a significant risk with respect to the responsibility or suitability of an applicant. The final approval of the proposal and issuance of the award will be by the NOAA Grants Officer.

## 8. Minority Serving Institutions

DOC/NOAA is strongly committed to increasing the participation of Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs), i.e., Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Hispanic-serving institutions, Tribal colleges and universities, Alaskan Native and Native Hawaiian institutions, and institutions that work in underserved communities.

## 9. Permits

It is the applicant's responsibility to obtain all permits and approvals from Federal, state, and local governments and private landowners where necessary for the proposed work to be conducted. If applicable, documentation of requests or approvals of environmental permits must be received by the NCCOS/CRP Program Manager prior to release of funding. Failure to apply for and obtain Federal, state, and local permits, approvals, or letters of agreement may delay the award of funds if a project is otherwise selected for funding. In some cases, if additional permits and approvals are required after an application is selected, funds may be withheld by the NOAA Grants Officer under a SAC requiring the recipient to submit required permits and approvals.

## 10. Scientific Integrity

IOOS adheres to the principles of scientific integrity. This policy can be found at <https://sciencecouncil.noaa.gov/Scientific-Integrity-Commons/SIC-Integrity-Policy>.

## 11. NOAA Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment Prevention and Response Policy Applicable to Financial Assistance Awards

If NOAA-operated, leased, or owned facilities are involved in any awards funded under this Request, such awards are subject to the NOAA Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment Prevention and Response Policy Applicable to Financial Assistance Awards Involving NOAA Operated Facilities (May 2018) found at:

<https://www.noaa.gov/organization/acquisition-grants/noaa-workplace-harassment-training-for-contractors-and-financial>.

12. Award applicants procure highly technical and scientific oceanographic research equipment and instrumentation for observational data collection. It is requested that applicants make every effort to pursue Build America, Buy America (BABA) - compliant procurement (BABA Section 70912, Part 5) whenever possible.

Equipment means tangible personal property (including information technology systems) having a useful life of more than one year and a per-unit acquisition cost which equals or exceeds the lesser of the capitalization level established by the non-Federal entity for financial statement purposes, or \$5,000.

The IOOS Office will make determinations if the BABA Act applies to each individual project. A statement will be added to each specific award file that BABA domestic sourcing requirements may or may not apply. Changes to these requirements may occur at any time, and recipients will be notified. Recipients are to notify the IOOS Office of

any changes in their project activities that may affect applicability of BABA requirements to the project.

## B. Reporting

All performance (*i.e.*, technical progress) reports shall be submitted electronically through NOAA's electronic Grants Online system unless the recipient does not have electronic access. In that case, performance (technical) reports are to be submitted to the federal program officer. All financial reports shall be submitted in the same manner.

The Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act, 31 U.S.C. 6101 Note, includes a requirement for awardees of applicable federal grants to report information about first-tier subawards and executive compensation under federal assistance awards. All awardees of applicable grants and cooperative agreements are required to report to the Federal Subaward Reporting System available at [www.FSRS.gov](http://www.FSRS.gov) on all subawards over \$25,000. See 2 C.F.R. Parts 25, 170.

### Data Reporting Requirement

1. Environmental data and information collected or created under NOAA grants or cooperative agreements must be made discoverable by and accessible to the general public, in a timely fashion (typically within two years), free of charge or at no more than the cost of reproduction, unless an exemption is granted by the NOAA Program. Data should be available in at least one machine-readable format, preferably a widely used or open-standard format and should also be accompanied by machine-readable documentation (metadata), preferably based on widely used or international standards.

2. Proposals submitted in response to this Announcement must include a Data Management Plan of up to two pages describing how these requirements will be satisfied. The contents of the Data Management Plan (or absence thereof), and past performance regarding such plans, will be considered as part of proposal review. A typical plan should include descriptions of the types of environmental data and information expected to be created during the project; the tentative date by which data will be shared; the standards to be used for data/metadata format and content; methods for providing data access; approximate total volume of data to be collected; and prior experience in making such data accessible. The costs of data preparation, accessibility, and/or archiving may be included in the proposal budget unless otherwise stated in the Guidance. Accepted submission of data to the NOAA National Centers for Environmental Information (NCEI) is one way to satisfy data sharing requirements; however, NCEI is not obligated to accept all submissions and may charge a fee, particularly for large or unusual datasets.



3. NOAA may, at its own discretion, make publicly visible the Data Management Plan from funded proposals, or use information from the Data Management Plan to produce a formal metadata record and include that metadata in a Catalog to indicate the pending availability of new data.

4. Proposal submitters are hereby advised that the final pre-publication manuscripts of scholarly articles produced entirely or primarily with NOAA funding will be required to be submitted to the NOAA Institutional Repository after acceptance, and no later than upon publication. Such manuscripts shall be made publicly available by NOAA one year after publication by the journal.

## VII. Agency Contacts

For questions regarding this announcement, contact: IOOS Grants via email at [ioos.grants@noaa.gov](mailto:ioos.grants@noaa.gov).

For information on establishing Indirect or Facilities and Administrative Costs, contact: Raishan Adams, NOAA Grants Management Division at [raishan.adams@noaa.gov](mailto:raishan.adams@noaa.gov).