

**U.S. Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**Financial Assistance  
Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)**



NOFO Title	NPS Cooperative Ecosystems Studies Units (CESU) Master Cooperative Agreements
NOFO Number:	P23AS00132
Announcement Type:	Initial General Announcement
CFDA Number:	15.945

Issue Date:	12/22/2022	
Application Due Date:	12/31/2027	Time: 5pm EST

*Note: Per 2 CFR 1402.204 (f) Bureaus and offices must consider the timeliness of the application submission. Applications that are submitted beyond the announced deadline date must be removed from the review process.*

This announcement remains open until December 31, 2027. Proposals are reviewed and evaluated as they are received and may be submitted at any time. The submission process for proposals is discussed in section D Application and Submission Information of this announcement.

**Agency Contact Information:**

Questions and concerns should be directed to the program points of contact contained in section G. Federal Awarding Agency Contacts of this announcement.

## Table of Contents

Section A: Program Description .....	3
Definitions.....	5
Section B: Federal Award Information.....	7
Section C: Eligibility Information .....	9
1. Eligible Applicants .....	9
2. Cost Sharing or Matching.....	9
Section D: Application and Submission Information .....	10
1. Address to Request Application Package.....	10
2. Contents and Form of Application Submission.....	10
3. Unique Entity Identifier and System for Award Management (SAM) .....	14
4. Submission Dates and Times .....	15
5. Intergovernmental Review .....	15
6. Funding Restrictions.....	15
7. Other Submission Requirements .....	15
Section E: Application Review Information .....	17
1. Criteria.....	17
2. Review and Selection Process.....	18
3. CFR – Regulatory Information .....	19
5. Anticipated Announcement and Federal Award Dates .....	20
Section F: Federal Award Administration Information .....	20
1. Federal Award Notices.....	20
2. Administrative and National Policy Requirements.....	20
3. Reporting.....	21
Section G: Federal Awarding Agency Contacts .....	22
Section H: Other Information: .....	23

## **Section A: Program Description**

### **Legislative Authority:**

**a. 54 U.S.C. § 100703 - Agreements with Educational Institutions to Study National Park System Resources and Non-Park Service Resources:** The NPS is authorized and directed to enter into cooperative agreements with colleges and universities in partnership with other Federal and State agencies, to establish cooperative study units to conduct multi-disciplinary research and develop integrated information products on the resources of the National Park System or the larger region of which parks are a part.

**b. 54 U.S.C. § 101702(b) – Cooperative Research and Training Programs:**

The NPS is authorized to enter into cooperative agreements with public or private educational institutions, States, and their political subdivisions, for the purpose of developing adequate, coordinated, cooperative research and training activities concerning the resources of the NPS.

**c. 54 U.S.C. § 101702(a) – Agreements for the Transfer of Appropriated Funds to Carry out NPS Programs:** The NPS is authorized to enter into cooperative agreements that involve the transfer of National Park Service appropriated funds to State, local and tribal governments, other public entities, educational institutions, and private nonprofit organizations for the public purpose of carrying out National Park Service programs.

**d. 54 U.S.C. § 101702(d)(1) – Cooperative Agreements for National Park Natural Resource Protection:** The NPS is authorized to enter into cooperative agreements with State, local, or tribal governments, other Federal agencies, other public entities, educational institutions, private nonprofit organizations, or participating private landowners for the purpose of protecting natural resources of units of the National Park System through collaborative efforts on land inside and outside of National Park System units.

**e. 54 U.S.C. § 200103(g)(1) - Outdoor Recreation of Programs, Research and Education:** The NPS is authorized to sponsor, engage in, and assist in research relating to outdoor recreation, directly or by contract or cooperative agreements, and make payments for such purposes without regard to the limitations of section 3324(a) and (b) of title 31 concerning advances of funds when he considers such action in the public interest, (2) undertake studies and assemble information concerning outdoor recreation, directly or by contract or cooperative agreement, and disseminate such information without regard to the provisions of section 3204 of title 39, and (3) cooperate with educational institutions and others in order to assist in establishing education programs and activities and to encourage public use and benefits from outdoor recreation.

### **Assistance Listing (formerly CFDA) Number:**

15.945, Cooperative Research and Training Programs

**Federal Regulations:** 2 C.F.R. § 200, 2 C.F.R. § 1402

**Program Background, Objectives and Goals:**

The National Park Service (NPS) are seeking applications for Master Cooperative Agreements from CESU network participants in the following CESU network regions:

- North and West Alaska
- Californian
- Chesapeake Watershed
- Colorado Plateau
- Desert Southwest
- Great Basin
- Great Lakes Northern Forest
- Great Plains
- Great Rivers
- Gulf Coast
- Hawaii/Pacific Islands
- North Atlantic Coast
- Pacific Northwest
- Piedmont-South Atlantic Coast
- Rocky Mountains
- South Florida Caribbean
- Southern Appalachian

Cooperative agreements to CESU network participants residing in CESU network regions other than those listed above will be pursued separate from this notice of funding opportunity; however, those CESU network participants may still apply for a Master Cooperative Agreement under this announcement. Application instructions are found in Section D. Application and Submission Information.

Applications will be reviewed and evaluated as they are received and may be submitted at any time up until the closing date of this announcement.

The Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Units network is a national consortium of Federal agencies, tribes, academic institutions, state and local governments, nongovernmental conservation organizations, and other partners working together to support informed public trust resource stewardship. The CESU network includes [390 non-Federal partners and 15 Federal Agencies](#) in [seventeen \(17\) CESUs](#) representing biogeographic regions encompassing all 50 states and U.S. territories. The CESU network is well positioned as a platform to support research, technical assistance, education and capacity building that is responsive to long-standing and contemporary science and resource management priorities.

The seventeen (17) CESUs bring together scientists, resource managers, students, and other conservation professionals, drawing upon expertise from across the biological, physical, social, cultural, and engineering disciplines (from Anthropology to Zoology) to conduct collaborative and interdisciplinary applied projects that address natural and cultural heritage resource issues at multiple scales and in an ecosystem context. Each CESU is structured as a working collaborative with participation from numerous Federal and non-Federal institutional partners. CESUs are based at host universities and focused on a

particular biogeographic region of the country.

The NPS is required under “Research Mandate” 54 USC 100702 to ensure the management of NPS units are “enhanced by the availability and utilization of a broad program of the highest quality science and information.” To help answer this mandate, the NPS works cooperatively with approved CESU cooperators. Annually the NPS obligates between \$30M and \$40M in CESU cooperative agreements agency wide. Individual projects are up to five (5) years in duration with an average of approximately \$60,000 per agreement.

The NPS plans to create Master Cooperative Agreements with CESU partners to carry out the CFDA program 15.945, Cooperative Research and Training Programs – Resources of the National Park System. The NPS is announcing the intent to solicit proposals from organizations within the CESU network. The objectives of the CESU program are:

- a. Provide usable knowledge to support informed decision making.
- b. Ensure the independence and objectivity of research.
- c. Create and maintain effective partnerships among the Federal agencies and universities to share resources and expertise.
- d. Take full advantage of university resources while benefiting faculty and students.
- e. Encourage professional development of current and future Federal scientists, resource managers, and environmental leaders.
- f. Manage Federal resources effectively.

## **Definitions**

### **1. Cooperative Agreement:**

A legal instrument of financial assistance between a Federal awarding agency or pass-through entity and a non-Federal entity that, consistent with 31 U.S.C. 6302-6305:

(a) Is used to enter into a relationship the principal purpose of which is to transfer anything of value from the Federal awarding agency or pass-through entity to the non-Federal entity to carry out a public purpose authorized by a law of the United States (see 31 U.S.C. 6101(3)); and not to acquire property or services for the Federal Government or pass-through entity's direct benefit or use; (b) Is distinguished from a grant in that it provides for substantial involvement between the Federal awarding agency or pass-through entity and the non-Federal entity in carrying out the activity contemplated by the Federal award (2 CFR 200.24).

A cooperative agreement may be entered into to accomplish various projects or tasks anticipated and initiated over a span of up to five (5) years unless otherwise indicated. Such a cooperative agreement should establish the general scope of the agreement, as well as its essential elements and the estimated funding. Either a bilateral modification or a task agreement may then be issued to authorize specific project commencement and funding. A bilateral modification or a task agreement is not always required as a cooperative agreement may stand on its own without task agreements and can contain the specific scope of work and related funding.

## **2. Master Cooperative Agreement:**

A Master Cooperative Agreement is used to enter into a relationship with a non-Federal entity in which the primary purpose is to establish a relationship with the non-Federal to carry out broad public purpose objectives when more than one project is anticipated. This type of cooperative agreement will include a detailed description of all types of work that could be done under the agreement as well as citation to the legal authority(s) that authorize the agreement. The Master Cooperative Agreement also establishes the overarching terms and conditions and the general level of substantial involvement.

A Master Cooperative Agreement is not a funded legal instrument. Funding is provided through specific task agreements which reference and are subject to the terms and conditions of the Master Cooperative Agreement. See task agreement definition below for additional information.

## **3. Public Purpose of Support or Stimulation:**

Public purpose is government assistance for which the principal purpose is to promote the general welfare, security, prosperity, or public convenience as authorized by a Federal law. Public purpose is required for all financial assistance awards. A financial assistance award must principally fulfill a public purpose of support or stimulation, which is different than a procurement contract which is designed to directly benefit the NPS.

## **4. Substantial Involvement:**

Substantial Involvement is significant NPS participation during the performance of a cooperative or task agreement. Substantial involvement is a required component of a cooperative agreement and task agreement. Some examples of substantial involvement include: NPS involvement in program management decisions; NPS collaboration in the accomplishment of the activity; or NPS operational involvement or participation during the project. NPS funding and monitoring/administering the financial assistance agreement alone does not constitute substantial involvement. The nature of the Federal involvement will be identified within the resulting Master Cooperative Agreement.

## **5. Task Agreement**

Once a Master Cooperative Agreement is established, specific projects with funding are provided through subsequent task agreements which are issued under the applicable legal authority documented within the Master Cooperative Agreement. A task agreement will authorize performance, establish timetables, identify key personnel, and obligate funds for a project that falls within the scope of an established Master Cooperative Agreement. Task agreements incorporate by reference the Master Cooperative Agreements thereby not repeating the terms and conditions contained in the Master Cooperative Agreement. The task agreement will cite the specific legal authority(s) contained in the Master Cooperative Agreement that authorizes that specific task agreement project. Task agreements may contain applicable “as-needed” terms and conditions or specific conditions that are not otherwise specified within the Master Cooperative Agreement.

## **Section B: Federal Award Information**

### **Estimated Total Funding: (\$0)**

The awards selected under this announcement are \$0 Master Cooperative Agreements. Subsequent funded Task Agreements will be determined once final fiscal year appropriations have been made for subject Task Agreement.

### **Expected Award Amount: (\$0)**

Based on prior year data, the NPS anticipates awarding between \$40M and \$50M annually in financial assistance to CESU network participants across all the CESU regions. Funding provided under this NOFO will be provided through the issuance of subsequent task agreements based on individual program goals and funding made available through annual appropriations. The amount of funding provided through individual task agreements will vary depending on the scope of individual project objectives, but past CESU projects have typically averaged approximately \$50,000-\$70,000 per task agreement.

### **Anticipated Award Date:**

Master Cooperative Agreements will typically be selected for award within 90 days of proposal submittal. Master Cooperative Agreements are not effective until fully executed with a signature from the NPS Financial Assistance Awarding Officer. Master Cooperative Agreements do not allow for individual projects to begin. Projects shall not start until a NPS Financial Assistance Awarding Officer signs a funded task agreement.

### **Anticipated Term of the Agreement:**

Agreement terms for funded projects can range between one and five years, depending on the negotiated project statement of work. Agreements are not effective until fully executed with signature from the NPS Financial Assistance Awarding Officer.

Master Cooperative Agreements may have a period of performance up to five (5) years, if selected. Task agreements awarded under the Master Cooperative Agreements may have a period of performance up to five (5) years, depending on the negotiated project statement of work for the specific task agreement. Should the task agreement require continuation of funding over that duration, continuation funding (funding for the second and subsequent budget periods) is contingent on: (1) availability of funds appropriated by Congress and future year budget authority; (2) progress towards meeting the objectives of the approved proposal; (3) submission of required reports; and (4) compliance with the terms and conditions of the award.

### **Estimated Number of Agreements to be Awarded: 75**

Each activity or project under this agreement will be treated individually, with more detail through project statements, project plans and budgets developed cooperatively between the NPS and the non-Federal entity.

### **Funding Instrument Type:**

This Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) allows for the award of Master Cooperative Agreements by NPS Financial Assistance Awarding Officers service wide. The NPS shall award non-funded agency wide Master Cooperative Agreements from this NOFO under CFDA 15.945, Cooperative Research and Training Programs. The Master Cooperative Agreements awarded

under this notice of funding opportunity announcement will be used to award future task agreements for the NPS. Master Cooperative Agreements are not funded, but the awarded Master Cooperative Agreements will allow for the NPS to fund subsequent task agreements bureau wide.

Non-Federal entities that are awarded a CESU Master Cooperative Agreement are not guaranteed funding under task agreements. Funded CESU task agreements will be issued under the awarded Master Cooperative Agreements based on program need and the availability of fiscal appropriations. The number of awards made under this announcement will depend on the number of meritorious applications.

**The receipt of a Master Cooperative Agreement under this announcement is not a requirement to obtain funding through the CESU network, nor is it a guarantee of funding for future projects. Separate cooperative agreements with CESU partners may still be pursued by the NPS apart from this notice of funding opportunity. The award of a Master Cooperative Agreement does not preclude the NPS from soliciting for additional CESU projects through separate competed or single source financial assistance agreements.**

NPS substantial involvement will vary for individual projects and will be defined within subsequent task agreements. Substantial involvement may include, but is not limited to, the following:

- NPS staff assistance in selecting projects, providing orientation to park resources, overseeing assignments, teaching new skills, distributing tools and equipment and providing technical assistance and safety training.
- NPS staff providing cultural/environmental programs to team members including park tours, educational programs, talks on the history of the park, and other similar programs in a variety of media; and coordination among other NPS units in the area to provide joint educational programs and field trips to NPS and other related sites.
- NPS staff providing the programmatic structure of a project, providing special interpretive programs, and/or providing educational elements of the project such as trade skill development and leadership development.
- NPS staff working together with the non-Federal entity to jointly organize and deliver seminars, workshops, and types of training programs for the purpose of promoting historic preservation to non-Government entities, States, Tribes, and local governments and the general public.
- NPS staff providing the services of a Program Coordinator to serve as liaison to the non-Federal entity for the work under this agreement. This includes consulting and working



specifically with the entity's program coordinator and team leaders on recruiting, interviewing, and recommending appropriate candidates.

**Other Information:** Applications for renewal or supplementation of existing projects are eligible to compete with applications for new Federal awards.

## **Section C: Eligibility Information**

### **1. Eligible Applicants**

All applicants must be a partner of the CESU network prior to being considered for an award of a Master Cooperative Agreement under this announcement. Information on how to join the CESU network can be found at: [www.cesu.org](http://www.cesu.org).

Federal law mandates that all entities applying for Federal financial assistance must have a current registration in the System for Award Management (SAM) including a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number. A Federal award may not be made to an applicant until the applicant has complied with all applicable unique entity identifier and SAM requirements. Additionally, if an applicant has not fully complied with the requirements by the time NPS is ready to make the award, NPS 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.

### **2. Cost Sharing or Matching**

Cost sharing or matching, under Federal research proposals is not required or expected and will not be used as a factor during the merit review of applications or proposals for research. Any cost share offered is voluntary and will not be used as a factor during the merit review of applications or proposals.

### **Excluded Parties:**

NPS conducts a review of the SAM.gov Exclusions database for all applicant entities and their key project personnel prior to award. The NPS cannot award funds to entities or their key project personnel identified in the SAM.gov Exclusions database as ineligible, prohibited/restricted or otherwise excluded from receiving Federal contracts, certain subcontracts, and certain Federal assistance and benefits, as their ineligibility condition applies to this Federal program.

### **Foreign Entities or Projects:**

This program does not provide funding to foreign entities or for projects conducted outside the United States.

## **Section D: Application and Submission Information**

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

A complete application package is described in this Section D. Application and Submission Information. The application package contains both mandatory standard forms (SF) and various optional templates that may be used to satisfy other stated application requirements. The application package can also be accessed and downloaded from the Related Documents tab on the Synopsis page of this announcement in Grants.gov. Access forms here: [Grant Forms | GRANTS.GOV](#).

### **2. Contents and Form of Application Submission**

You must complete the mandatory standard forms and any applicable optional forms, in accordance with the instructions below, as required by this NOFO. Do not include any proprietary or personally identifiable information. **A complete application must be limited to 25MB file size per email submission and include:**

Mandatory Requirements:

- Standard Form 424 (SF 424) - Application for Federal Assistance. Complete this form as much as possible with all applicable information.
- Standard Form 424B - Assurances  
This form must be signed and submitted with your application.
- Project Narrative - Proposal Submission Format  
The proposal is a narrative description that should specifically address each of the review criteria (see Section E). The proposal text must be no longer than 10 pages, no smaller than font size 11, and have 1-inch margins. The 10-page limit includes all text, figures, references, (Forms SF-424, SF-424B, SF-LLL, are not counted as part of the page limit). Additionally, only information that is pertinent to the proposal should be included.  
NOTE: The applicant is permitted to substitute their organization's original CESU proposal narrative used for acceptance into the CESU network in lieu of the required proposal narrative under this NOFO.

The Project Narrative should identify the following:

#### **(1) Organization and Mission**

- i. Description of the institution/organization, its mission, and the primary focus of collaborative activities in accordance to cooperative research and training.
- ii. Description or list of the primary programs, departments, or other institutional divisions of relevance to cooperative research and training. Include website addresses for further information, as appropriate.

- iii. Summary of the organization business management department to include number of dedicated staff currently allocated to administer grants/cooperative agreements/contracts, pre and post grant/agreement personnel, accounting, internal controls.

## **(2) Personnel and Resources**

- i. A list and brief description of the staff or faculty with expertise in disciplines and subject areas of relevance to cooperative research and training (do not attach resumes).
- ii. Description or list of facilities, equipment, centers, or institutes that would provide support for research, technical assistance, or educational activities.

## **(3) Past Performance**

Description or list of past research, technical assistance, and educational services supported through Federal financial assistance awards.

## **(4) Formatting Requirements (not applicable if submitting original CESU proposal narrative for acceptance into the CESU network):**

The proposal narrative shall be in one of these file extensions: .pdf, .docx, or .doc. The proposal text must be no smaller than font size 10, have 1-inch margins and be single spaced. Proposal narrative shall be a maximum of 10 pages in length (excluding required SF forms).

## **C. Additional Instructions:**

- (1) The proposal should clearly state the goal is to obtain a Master Cooperative Agreement with the National Park Service.
- (2) In accordance with the CESU network base joint venture agreements, a 17.5% indirect cost rate shall be used for resulting financial assistance agreements. Task agreement proposed budgets shall apply the 17.5% indirect cost rate using the same base identified in the non-Federal entity's Federally negotiated indirect cost rate agreement.
- (3) If selected for a Master Cooperative Agreement, NPS reserves the right to request additional or clarifying information for any reason deemed necessary, for the duration of the Master Cooperative Agreement, including, but not limited to:
  - Financial capability;
  - Evaluation of risk;
  - Name and phone number of the Designated Responsible Employee for complying with national policies prohibiting discrimination (See 43 C.F.R. § 17);
  - Travel Regulations;
  - Procurement Regulations.
- (4) If an applicant is selected for a Master Cooperative Agreement, additional required forms, to include an SF-424a and certification regarding lobbying (SF-LLL), may be requested on a per

project basis prior to the issuance of subsequent task agreements. In addition, individual projects funded through a task agreement must be reviewed to ensure there is not an overlap or duplication of funding. This review may require the applicant to provide a statement indicating whether or not there is an overlap of funding being received between the proposed individual project and any other active or anticipated projects in terms of activities, costs, or time commitment of key personnel.

(5) As required in Title 2 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 200, Subpart F, Audit Requirements, a non-Federal entity that expends \$750,000 or more during the non-Federal entity's fiscal year in Federal awards must have a single or program specific-specific audit conducted for that year in accordance with the procedures 2 CFR 200, subpart F.

#### Optional Requirements:

- **Conflict of Interest Disclosure**

Per the Financial Assistance Interior Regulation (FAIR), 2 CFR §1402.112, applicants must state in their application if any actual or potential conflict of interest exists at the time of submission.

*Applicability.*

- This section intends to ensure that non-Federal entities and their employees take appropriate steps to avoid conflicts of interest in their responsibilities under or with respect to Federal financial assistance agreements.
- In the procurement of supplies, equipment, construction, and services by recipients and by sub recipients, the conflict of interest provisions in 2 CFR §200.318 apply.

*Notification.*

- Non-Federal entities, including applicants for financial assistance awards, must disclose in writing any conflict of interest to the DOI awarding agency or pass-through entity in accordance with 2 CFR §200.112.
- Recipients must establish internal controls that include, at a minimum, procedures to identify, disclose, and mitigate or eliminate identified conflicts of interest. The recipient is responsible for notifying the Financial Assistance Officer in writing of any conflicts of interest that may arise during the life of the award, including those that have been reported by sub recipients.

*Restrictions on lobbying.* Non-Federal entities are strictly prohibited from using funds under a grant or cooperative agreement for lobbying activities and must provide the required certifications and disclosures pursuant to 43 CFR §18 and 31 USC §1352.

*Review procedures.* The Financial Assistance Officer will examine each conflict-of-interest disclosure on the basis of its particular facts and the nature of the proposed grant or cooperative agreement and will determine whether a significant potential conflict exists and, if it does, develop an appropriate means for resolving it.

*Enforcement.* Failure to resolve conflicts of interest in a manner that satisfies the government may be cause for termination of the award. Failure to make required disclosures may result in any of the remedies described in 2 CFR §200.339, Remedies for noncompliance, including suspension or debarment (see also 2 CFR §180).

- **Uniform Audit Reporting Statement**

U.S. states, local governments, federally recognized Indian tribes, institutions of higher education, and non-profit organizations expending \$750,000 USD or more in Federal award funds in the applicant's fiscal year must submit a Single Audit report for that year through the [Federal Audit Clearinghouse's Internet Data Entry System](#), in accordance with 2 CFR 200 subpart F. U.S. state, local government, federally recognized Indian tribes, institutions of higher education, and non-profit applicants must state if your organization was or was not required to submit a Single Audit report for the most recently closed fiscal year. If your organization was required to submit a Single Audit report for the most recently closed fiscal year, provide the EIN associated with that report and state if it is available through the [Federal Audit Clearinghouse website](#).

- **Certification Regarding Lobbying**

Applicants requesting more than \$100,000 in Federal funding must certify to the statements in 43 CFR Part 18, [Appendix A-Certification Regarding Lobbying](#). If this application requests more than \$100,000 in Federal funds, the Authorized Official's signature on the appropriate SF-424, Application for Federal Assistance form also represents the entity's certification of the statements in 43 CFR Part 18, Appendix A.

- **Disclosure of Lobbying Activities**

Applicants and recipients must not use any federally appropriated funds (annually appropriated or continuing appropriations) or matching funds under a Federal award to pay any person for lobbying in connection with the award. Lobbying is influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any U.S. agency, a Member of the U.S. Congress, an officer or employee of the U.S. Congress, or an employee of a Member of the U.S. Congress connection with the award. Applicants and recipients must complete and submit the SF-LLL, "[Disclosure of Lobbying Activities](#)" form if the Federal share of the proposal or award is more than \$100,000 and the applicant or recipient has made or has agreed to make any payment using non-appropriated funds for lobbying in connection with the application or award. The SF-LLL form is available with this Funding Opportunity on Grants.gov. See 43 CFR, Subpart 18.100 and 31 USC 1352 for more information on when additional submission of this form is required.

- **Overlap or Duplication of Effort Statement**

If the project proposed in this application is funded through another Federal financial assistance award, in part or in whole, the applicant must provide a statement detailing the potential funding overlap in regard to activities, costs, or time commitment of key personnel. Provide a copy of any overlapping or duplicative proposal submitted to any other potential funding entity and identify when that proposal was submitted or copy of Federal financial assistance award covering activities covered under this proposal. The statement and the description of overlap or duplication, when applicable, may be provided within the proposal or as a separate attachment to the application. Any overlap or duplication of funding between the proposed project and other active or anticipated projects may impact selection and/or funding amount. If no such overlap or duplication exists, state, "There are no overlaps or duplication between this application and any of our other Federal applications or funded projects".

If selected for award, NPS reserves the right to request additional or clarifying information for any reason deemed necessary, including, but not limited to:

- (a) Other budget information
- (b) Financial capability
- (c) Evaluation of risk
- (d) Name and phone number of the Designated Responsible Employee for complying with national policies prohibiting discrimination (See 43 C.F.R. § 17)

### **3. Unique Entity Identifier and System for Award Management (SAM)**

This requirement does not apply to individuals applying for funds as an individual (i.e., unrelated to any business or nonprofit organization you may own, operate, or work within), or any entity with an exception to bypass SAM.gov registration with prior approval from the funding bureau or office in accordance with bureau or office policy. All other applicants are required to register in SAM.gov prior to submitting a Federal award application and obtain a [Unique Entity Identifier \(UEI\)](#) which will replace Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number from Dun & Bradstreet in April 2022. A Federal award may not be made to an applicant that has not completed the SAM.gov registration. If an applicant selected for funding has not completed their SAM.gov registration by the time the program is ready to make an award, the program may determine the applicant is not qualified to receive an award. Applicants registering in SAM.gov prior to April 2022 may still be required to obtain a DUNS number prior to completing the registration process within SAM.gov. Federal award recipients must also continue to maintain an active SAM.gov registration with current information through the life of their Federal award(s). See the “Submission Requirements” section of this document below for more information on SAM.gov registration. **There is no cost to register with Dun & Bradstreet or SAM.gov.** There are third-party vendors who will charge a fee in exchange for registering entities with Dun & Bradstreet and SAM.gov; **please be aware you can register and request help for free.**

#### **Obtain a DUNS Number**

In April 2022, the Federal Government will stop requiring DUNS numbers. At that point, entities doing business with the government will use the Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) created in SAM.gov in place of a DUNS number. A UEI will be assigned to entities upon registering with SAM.

If an entity is applying for federal financial assistance prior to April 2022, a DUNS number may still be required as part of the SAM registration process. A DUNS Number can be requested through the Dun & Bradstreet website. The official website address is <http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform>. For technical difficulties, go to [www.dnb.com/govtduns](http://www.dnb.com/govtduns). The Grants.gov “Obtain a DUNS Number” webpage also provides detailed instructions. Once assigned a DUNS number, your organization must maintain up-to-date information with Dun & Bradstreet. Applicants must enter their DUNS number in the “Organizational DUNS” field on the SF-424, Application for Federal Assistance form (version 3).

### **Register with the System for Award Management (SAM)**

Applicants can register on the [SAM.gov](https://sam.gov) website. The “Help” tab on the website contains User Guides and other information to assist you with registration. The Grants.gov “[Register with SAM](#)” page also provides detailed instructions. Applicants can contact the supporting Federal Service Desk for help registering in SAM. Once registered in SAM, entities must renew and revalidate their SAM registration at least once every 12 months from the date previously registered. Entities are strongly encouraged to revalidate their registration as often as needed to ensure their information is up to date and reflects changes that may have been made to the entity’s IRS information. If applicable, foreign entities who want to receive payment directly to a U.S. bank account must enter and maintain valid, current banking information in SAM.

### **4. Submission Dates and Times**

Applicants are held responsible for their proposals being submitted to the National Park Service. Applications must be received by December 31, 2027, 5pm ET. **File size must be limited to 25MB per email submission.** Applicants are encouraged to submit the application well before the deadline. Note: Per 2 CFR 1402.204 (f) Bureaus and offices must consider the timeliness of the application submission. Applications that are submitted beyond the announced deadline date must be removed from the review process.

Application preparation time may take several weeks, so please start the application process as soon as possible. If it is determined that a proposal was not considered due to lateness, the applicant will be notified during the selection process.

### **5. Intergovernmental Review**

This funding opportunity is not subject to Executive Order (EO) 12372 “Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs.” Applicants subject to EO 12372 must contact their State’s Single Point of Contact (SPOC) to find out about and comply with the State’s process. The names and addresses of the SPOC’s are listed in the OMB’s home page at:

[http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants\\_spoc/](http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants_spoc/)

### **6. Funding Restrictions**

Master Cooperative Agreements are not funded. Master Cooperative Agreements must be awarded prior to funding task agreements. Any applicable funding restrictions will be identified on subsequent task agreements. Pre award funding through this NOFO shall not be allowed without an awarded Master Cooperative Agreement. Costs incurred by the applicant prior to the start date of the period of performance of a signed Task Agreement under a valid Master Cooperative Agreement are only allowable with written approval by a Financial Assistance Awarding Officer.

### **7. Other Submission Requirements**

Applications to this announcement must be submitted by e-mail to the applicable contacts below based upon the CESU network region in which you reside. Only one application needs to be submitted, and separate applications are not required for consideration across other regions. **File size must be limited to 25MB per email submission.**

<u>CESU Network Name</u>	<u>E-mail for Application Submission</u>
Chesapeake Watershed	chwa_cesu@nps.gov
Colorado Plateau, Desert Southwest, Rocky Mountain	nofo-imr@nps.gov
North and West Alaska	akr_fa@nps.gov
Great Lakes Northern Forest, Great Rivers, and Great Plains	mwr_fa@nps.gov
North Atlantic Coast	nofo-ner@nps.gov
Gulf Coast, Southern Appalachian, Piedmont-South Atlantic Coast, Southern Florida-Caribbean	ser_cesu_program@nps.gov
Pacific Northwest, Great Basin, Hawaii/Pacific Islands, Californian	pwr_agreements@nps.gov

In addition to e-mail, applications may also be submitted through Grants.gov. Please note that due to system limitations, Financial Assistance Awarding Officers do not receive a notification when an application is submitted through Grants.gov. For this reason, applicants must notify the applicable contact above if an application is submitted through the grants.gov system to ensure it is received.

Applications submitted by other means, or not received by December 31, 2027, will not be considered.

If a CESU network participant is a member of a CESU network region that is not listed above, but still wishes to submit an application for a Master Cooperative Agreement under this announcement, they may do so by contacting one of the NPS regional points of contacts listed in Section G of this NOFO. Applications from other CESU network regions shall be submitted directly to one of the points of contact listed above.

**A Master Cooperative Agreement under this announcement is not a requirement to obtain funding through the CESU network, nor is it a guarantee of funding for future projects. Separate cooperative agreements with CESU partners may still be pursued by the National Park Service apart from this notice of funding opportunity. The award of a Master Cooperative Agreement does not preclude the NPS from soliciting for additional CESU projects through separate competed or single source financial assistance agreements. Additional future funding opportunities are anticipated.**

If you need additional help, the GrantSolutions help desk is available for assistance on all GrantSolutions products and services. Hours of Operation: Monday through Friday 8 a.m. – 6 p.m. ET (closed on Federal holidays). Phone Number: 1.866.577.0771 or 202.401.5282. Email: [foasupport@grantsolutions.gov](mailto:foasupport@grantsolutions.gov)



If the applicant has other questions with submitting their application, please contact the applicable regional contact listed within Section G. Federal Awarding Agency Contacts. of this NOFO. For general policy questions regarding this NOFO please contact: [financial\\_assistance\\_policy@nps.gov](mailto:financial_assistance_policy@nps.gov)

## 8. Application Checklist

- ☐ SAM/UEI active registration (see requirement in Section C. Eligibility Requirements.)
- ☐ SF 424, Application for Federal Assistance: A complete, signed and dated SF 424
- ☐ SF 424B, Assurances form: Signed and dated SF 424B
- ☐ Project Narrative (can substitute CESU Network Partner Proposal)

**Failure to provide complete information may cause delays, postponement, or rejection of the application.**

START THIS PROCESS EARLY DON'T DELAY!

## Section E: Application Review Information

### 1. Criteria

NPS will evaluate and consider only those applications that separately address each of the merit review criteria in the project Narrative application requirement. Each applicant is required to provide a detailed project narrative, in accordance with section D.2. Contents and Form of Application Submission, of the following criteria elements. It is HIGHLY recommended that the project narrative has sections labeled by criterion.

Proposals submitted under this NOFO are evaluated through a merit review process and will be first reviewed for the following initial screening factors by the Financial Assistance Awarding Officer:

- The applicant is eligible for award based on the criteria identified in Section C.1. Eligible Applicants.
- The applicant has complied with all applicable unique entity identifier and SAM requirements (reference Section D.3. Unique Entity Identifier and System for Award Management (SAM)).
- All required documents and additional information have been provided (reference Section D.2. Contents and Form of Application Submission).

Following this initial screen, applications will be evaluated based on three equally weighted criteria:

Criterion 1	
Organization and Mission	
The degree to which the applicant adequately demonstrates valued and preferred:	
1) Description of the institution/organization, its mission, and the primary focus of collaborative activities in accordance with cooperative research and training.	

2) Primary programs, departments, or other institutional divisions of relevance to cooperative research and training. 3) Organizational business management to administer grants/cooperative agreements/contracts, pre and post grant/agreement personnel, accounting, internal controls.
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Criterion 2	
Criterion 2: Personnel and Resources	
The degree to which the applicant adequately demonstrates valued and preferred: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Staff or faculty with expertise in disciplines and subject areas of relevance to cooperative research and training.</li> <li>2) Facilities, equipment, centers, or institutes that would provide support for research, technical assistance, or educational activities.</li> </ol>	

Criterion 3	
Criterion 3: Past Performance	
The degree to which the applicant adequately demonstrates valued and preferred: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Past research, technical assistance, and educational services supported through financial assistance awards.</li> </ol>	

## 2. Review and Selection Process

NPS personnel, and in some cases independent reviewers, will review all proposals. All proposals for funding will be considered using the criteria outlined above. A summary of the review panel comments may be provided to the applicant if requested.

### A. Initial Review

Prior to conducting the comprehensive merit review, an initial review will be performed to determine whether: (1) the applicant is eligible for an award; (2) the information required by the NOFO has been submitted; (3) all mandatory requirements of the NOFO are satisfied; (4) the proposed project is responsive to the program objectives of the NOFO (program determination); and (5) the applicant is part of the CESU network. If an applicant fails to meet the requirements or objectives of the NOFO, or does not provide sufficient information for review, the applicant will be considered non-responsive and eliminated from further review.

### B. Comprehensive Merit Review

All applications that satisfactorily pass the initial review will go through a merit review process. The merit review panel will conduct the review based on the equally weighted criteria outlined section E. Application Review Information 1. Review Criteria. Each criterion will be reviewed and assigned a rating of “Exceptional”, “Satisfactory”, or “Unsatisfactory” based on whether it exceeds, meets, or does not meet the criteria. Proposals that meet or exceed the criteria with a strong confidence that future task agreement objectives will be met based on demonstrated qualifications, experience, and capabilities of the applicant may be selected to receive a Master Cooperative Agreement.

### **C. Program and Policy Factors:**

In addition to the criteria listed above, the following program and policy factors may also be considered when selecting:

**(1) Potential for Future Project Funding:** A determination may be made to not select an applicant for receipt of a Master Cooperative Agreement if the NPS regional offices participating in this NOFO (reference section G. Federal Awarding Agency Contacts) determine that there are no anticipated projects within their NPS region for which the applicant may qualify based on either the applicant's primary focus of collaborative activities, or their geographic location. If an application is found to otherwise meet or exceed the criteria of section E. Application Review Information 1. Review Criteria, the application will be held on file for the duration of this NOFO and may be considered for a Master Cooperative Agreement at a later date should projects become anticipated for which the applicant would qualify based on their primary focus and/or geographic location.

**(2) Program Support for Minority Institutions:** when applicable based on program policy, anticipated funding limitations, or other program restrictions, an applicant may be selected for a Master Cooperative Agreement based upon minority status or Native American tribal preference. If a minority institution is selected for a Master Cooperative Agreement based upon program support for minority institutions, but the application is rated as "unsatisfactory" in any of the merit review criteria of section E. Application Review Information 1. Review Criteria, the resulting Master Cooperative Agreement may be subject to additional specific conditions as defined 2 CFR 200.207.

### **D. Discussions and Award**

The Government may enter into discussions with a selected applicant for any reason deemed necessary, including, but not limited to: (1) only a portion of the application is selected for award; (2) the Government needs additional information to determine that the applicant is capable of complying with the requirements of DOI Financial Assistance Regulations, and/or (3) additional specific terms and conditions are required. Failure to satisfactorily resolve the issues identified by the Government may preclude award to the applicant.

### **3. CFR – Regulatory Information**

See the National Park Service's Award Terms and Conditions for the general administrative and national policy requirements applicable to Service awards. The Service will communicate any other program- or project-specific special terms and conditions to recipients in their notices of award.

### **4. Evaluation of Applicant Risk**

In accordance with 2 C.F.R. § 200.205, applications selected for funding will be subject to a pre-award risk assessment which may include a review of information contained within the applicant's proposal, past audits, Federal Awardee Performance and Integrity Information System (FAPIIS), and/or past performance on previous Federal financial assistance awards. Negative information that leads to an applicant being designated as "Medium Risk" or "High

Risk” may result in specific conditions, as identified in 2 C.F.R. § 200.207, being incorporated into the final award.

Prior to making a Federal award, any information about the applicant that is in the designated integrity and performance (currently FAPIIS) will be reviewed and considered (see 41 U.S.C. § 2313). Applicants may review and comment about any information about itself in FAPIIS. The Federal awarding agency will consider any comments by the applicant, in addition to the other information in the designated integrity and performance system, in making a judgment about the applicant's integrity, business ethics, and record of performance under Federal awards when completing the review of risk posed by applicants as described in 2 C.F.R. §200.205

## **5. Anticipated Announcement and Federal Award Dates**

Proposals will be evaluated on a rolling basis as applications are received. Notification of award selection and non-selection typically will occur within 90 days of application receipt. Master Cooperative Agreements will be negotiated and awarded on a case-by-case basis after selection notification.

## **Section F: Federal Award Administration Information**

### **1. Federal Award Notices**

NPS will notify applicants selected for award. A notice of selection is not an authorization to begin performance on an agreement. Once all clearances and reviews have been conducted, a master cooperative agreement will be executed. Master Cooperative Agreements do not obligate the government to fund any project or program with the applicant.

Organizations whose applications have not been selected will be advised as promptly as possible.

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

See the “DOI Standard Terms and Conditions” for the administrative and national policy requirements applicable to DOI awards.

### **3. Data Availability**

Per the Financial Assistance Interior Regulation (FAIR), 2 CFR §1402.315:

(a) All data, methodology, factual inputs, models, analyses, technical information, reports, conclusions, valuation products or other scientific assessments in any medium or form, including textual, numerical, graphic, cartographic, narrative, or audiovisual, resulting from a financial assistance agreement is available for use by the Department of the Interior, including being available in a manner that is sufficient for independent verification.

(b) The Federal Government has the right to:

(1) Obtain, reproduce, publish, or otherwise use the data, methodology, factual inputs, models, analyses, technical information, reports, conclusions, or other scientific assessments, produced under a Federal award; and

(2) Authorize others to receive, reproduce, publish, or otherwise use such data, methodology, factual inputs, models, analyses, technical information, reports, conclusions, or other scientific assessments, for Federal purposes, including to allow for meaningful third-party evaluation.

### 3. Reporting

- a) **Financial Reports:** All recipients must use the [SF-425, Federal Financial Report](#) form for financial reporting. At a minimum, all recipients must submit a **final** financial report. Final reports are due no later than 120 calendar days after the award period of performance end date or termination date. For awards with periods of performance longer than 12 months, recipients are required to submit **interim** financial reports on the frequency established in the Notice of Award. The only exception to the interim financial reporting requirement is if the recipient is required to use the SF 270/271 to request payment and requests payment at least once annually through the entire award period of performance. We will describe all financial reporting requirements in the Notice of Award.
- b) **Performance Reports:** Performance reports must contain a comparison of actual accomplishments with the established goals and objectives of the award; a description of reasons why established goals were not met, if appropriate; and any other pertinent information relevant to the project results. Final reports are due no later than 120 calendar days after the award period of performance end date or termination date. For awards with periods of performance longer than 12 months, recipients are required to submit **interim** financial reports on the frequency established in the Notice of Award.
- c) **Real Property Reports:** Recipients and subrecipients are required to submit status reports on the status of real property acquired under the award in which the Federal government retains an interest. The required frequency of these reports will depend on the anticipated length of the Federal interest period. The Bureau will include recipient-specific real property reporting requirements, including the required data elements, reporting frequency, and report due dates, in the Notice of Award when applicable.
- d) **Conflict of Interest Disclosures:** Recipients must notify the program immediately in writing of any conflict of interest that arise during the life of their Federal award, including those reported to them by any subrecipient under the award. Recipients must notify the program in writing if any employees, including subrecipient and contractor personnel, are related to, married to, or have a close personal relationship with any Federal employee in the Federal funding program or who otherwise may have been involved in the review and selection of the award. The term employee means any individual engaged in the performance of work pursuant to the Federal award. Recipients may not have a former Federal employee as a key project official, or in any other substantial role related to their award, whose participation put them out of compliance with the legal authorities addressing post-Government employment restrictions. See the [U.S. Office of Government Ethics website](#) for more information on these restrictions. The Service will examine each conflict-of-interest disclosure based on its particular facts and

the nature of the project and will determine if a significant potential conflict exists. If it does, the Service will work with the recipient to determine an appropriate resolution. Failure to disclose and resolve conflicts of interest in a manner that satisfies the Service may result in any of the remedies described in 2 CFR 200.339 Remedies for Noncompliance, including termination of the award.

- e) **Other Mandatory Disclosures:** The Non-Federal entity or applicant for a Federal award must disclose, in a timely manner, in writing to the Federal awarding agency or pass-through entity all violations of Federal criminal law involving fraud, bribery, or gratuity violations potentially affecting the Federal award. Non-Federal entities that receive a Federal award including the terms and conditions outlined in 2 CFR 200, Appendix XII—Award Term and Condition for Recipient Integrity and Performance Matters are required to report certain civil, criminal, or administrative proceedings to SAM. Failure to make required disclosures can result in any of the remedies described in 2 CFR 200.339 Remedies for Noncompliance, including suspension or debarment.

#### **4. Reporting Matters Related to Recipient Integrity and Performance:**

If the total value of your currently active grants, cooperative agreements, and procurement contracts from all Federal awarding agencies exceeds \$10,000,000 for any period of time during the period of performance of this Federal award, then you as the recipient during that period of time must maintain the currency of information reported to the System for Award Management (SAM) that is made available in the designated integrity and performance system (currently the Federal Awardee Performance and Integrity Information System (FAPIIS)) about civil, criminal, or administrative proceedings in accordance with Appendix XII to 2 C.F.R. 200.

#### **5. Significant Developments Reports:**

Events may occur between the scheduled performance reporting dates which have significant impact upon the supported activity. In such cases, recipients are required to notify the Bureau in writing as soon as the recipient becomes aware of any problems, delays, or adverse conditions that will materially impair the ability to meet the objective of the Federal award. This disclosure must include a statement of any corrective action(s) taken or contemplated, and any assistance needed to resolve the situation. The recipient should also notify the Service in writing of any favorable developments that enable meeting time schedules and objectives sooner or at less cost than anticipated or producing more or different beneficial results than originally planned.

### **Section G: Federal Awarding Agency Contacts**

The following NPS financial assistance regional offices are requesting applications for Master Cooperative Agreements under this NOFO. Questions pertaining to the application process, CESU network regions supported, or other NPS regional questions and concerns should be directed to the NPS financial assistance regional contacts as follows:

<b><u>CESU Network Name</u></b>	<b><u>Contact Information</u></b>
Chesapeake Watershed	Laquita Palmer, 202-619-7082, chwa_cesu@nps.gov

Colorado Plateau, Desert Southwest, Rocky Mountain	Todd Wilson, 303-358-8403, nofo-imr@nps.gov
North and West Alaska	Erica Cordeiro, 907-644-3315, akr_fa@nps.gov
Great Lakes Northern Forest, Great Rivers, and Great Plains	John Bechtold, 303-969-2492, mwr_fa@nps.gov
North Atlantic Coast	Keith Zotti, 215-380-4487, nofo-ner@nps.gov
Gulf Coast, Southern Appalachian, Piedmont-South Atlantic Coast, Southern Florida-Caribbean	Brain Straka, 865-436-1217, ser_cesu_program@nps.gov
Pacific Northwest, Great Basin, Hawaii/Pacific Islands, Californian	Will Nash, 415-680-5375, pwr_agreements@nps.gov

Other NPS financial assistance offices may pursue cooperative agreements to CESU network participants separate from this notice of funding opportunity through competed or single source financial assistance agreements. A Master Cooperative Agreement under this announcement is not a requirement to obtain funding through the CESU network, nor is it a guarantee of funding for future projects. Additional future funding opportunities are anticipated.

Questions specific to this NPS-wide Notice of Funding Opportunity may be directed to the NPS Financial Assistance Policy Office:

Name	Melissa Jacobi
Phone	303-495-0279
Email	financial_assistance_policy@nps.gov

### **Application System Technical Support:**

For Grants.gov technical registration and submission, downloading forms and application packages, contact Grants.gov Customer Support at 1-800-518-4726 or Support@grants.gov.

## **Section H: Other Information:**

### **Payments**

Domestic recipients are required to register in and receive payment through the U.S. Treasury's Automated Standard Application for Payments (ASAP), unless approved for a waiver by the Service program. Foreign recipients receiving funds to a final destination bank outside the U.S. are required to receive payment through the U.S. Treasury's International Treasury Services (ITS) System. Foreign recipients receiving funds to a final destination bank in the U.S. are required to enter and maintain current banking details in their SAM.gov entity profile and receive payment through the Automated Clearing House network by electronic funds transfer (EFT). The Bureau will include recipient-specific instructions on how to request payment, including identification of any additional information required and where to submit payment requests, as applicable, in all Notices of Award.