

NOTICE OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

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Executive Summary

Federal Agency Name

Fisheries Habitat Conservation Program Office (HCPO)

Funding Opportunity Title

FY 2024 Atlantic Salmon Habitat Restoration Partnership Grants

Announcement Type

Competitive

Funding Opportunity Number

NOAA-NMFS-HCPO-2024-25198

Assistance Listing Number(s)

11.463

Dates

Applications will be accepted and considered on a rolling basis as they are received annually. To assure consideration for funding in the current federal fiscal year, applications must be received by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on April 1, 2024. To assure consideration for funding in subsequent fiscal years, applications must be received by 11:59 p.m. on March 31, 2025, and March 31, 2026. Applications received after these deadlines may be processed and considered for funding in the current fiscal year or in the next fiscal year, subject to the availability of funds. Applications must be received by www.Grants.gov.

Funding Opportunity Description

The principal objective of the Atlantic Salmon Habitat Restoration Partnership Grants solicitation is to support the recovery of the Gulf of Maine Distinct Population Segment of Atlantic salmon. Proposals submitted under this solicitation will be evaluated based on alignment with program priorities, including: 1) consistency with priority habitat restoration actions identified in the 2019 “Recovery Plan for the Gulf of Maine Distinct Population Segment of Atlantic salmon (*Salmo salar*)” and the “Species in the Spotlight Priority Actions: 2021-2025” 5-year action plan for Atlantic salmon; 2) improvement of fish passage and connectivity between the Gulf of Maine and freshwater spawning and rearing habitats within designated Critical Habitat, in locations with river-specific stocks or within a river that hosts a wild or naturally reared run of Atlantic salmon; 3) incorporation of proven restoration techniques, focusing on removal of barriers as the highest priority. Proposals may include the following types of activities: feasibility studies; planning and assessments directly linked to restoration implementation; engineering design and permitting; on-the-ground implementation; pre- and post-removal implementation monitoring; stakeholder engagement, or a combination thereof.

Proposals selected through this solicitation may be funded through multi-year cooperative agreements. NOAA anticipates typical federal funding for awards will range from \$100,000 to \$700,000 over three years. NOAA will not accept proposals with a federal funding request of less than \$100,000 or more than \$1.5 million total over three years. NOAA anticipates up to \$700,000 will be available under this solicitation in FY24 to support the first year of selected projects. Funds will be administered by the Community-based Restoration Program within the NOAA Office of Habitat Conservation. Awards are dependent upon the amount of funds Congress makes available to NOAA in the FY24 - FY26 budgets.

Full Text of Announcement

I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Program Objective

The principal objective of the Atlantic Salmon Habitat Restoration Partnership Grants solicitation is to support the recovery of the Gulf of Maine Distinct Population Segment of Atlantic salmon. Proposals submitted under this solicitation will primarily be evaluated based on their ability to demonstrate how the proposed habitat restoration actions will contribute to the recovery of the Gulf of Maine Distinct Population Segment of Atlantic salmon, identified by NMFS as a “Species in the Spotlight” (<https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/species/atlantic-salmon-protected#spotlight>).

B. Program Priorities

The principal objective of the Atlantic Salmon Habitat Restoration Partnership Grants solicitation is to support the recovery of the Gulf of Maine Distinct Population Segment of Atlantic salmon, designated by NMFS as a Species in the Spotlight. Highest priority will be given to habitat restoration proposals that:

1. Propose activities that are consistent with priority habitat restoration actions identified in the 2019 “Recovery Plan for the Gulf of Maine Distinct Population Segment of Atlantic Salmon (*Salmo salar*)” [hereafter, 2019 Recovery Plan] and the “Species in the Spotlight Priority Actions: 2021-2025” 5-year action plan for Atlantic salmon. Applicants should describe how proposed actions contribute toward the goal of attaining 30,000 accessible and suitable habitat units within the three Salmon Habitat Recovery Units (SHRUs) in Maine. Proposed actions should address the biological criteria for downlisting and delisting outlined in the 2019 Recovery Plan, with a focus on criteria for accessible and suitable habitat and productivity. Priority actions may use tools such as the U.S. Geological Survey baseflow mapping (<https://usgs.maps.arcgis.com/home/item.html?id=eb8d1922d4984488a0c283933504fee6>) to indicate whether their proposed project is located in a reach with higher base flow quantities than other reaches in the region (additional information on this topic can be found in section IV.B.).
2. Improve fish passage and restore connectivity between the Gulf of Maine and freshwater spawning and rearing habitat within federally designated Critical Habitat for the Gulf of Maine Distinct Population Segment. Priority will be given to project sites that are located within rivers that have been designated as Critical Habitat for Atlantic salmon, located in habitat with features of climate resilience, and are located within rivers where a river-specific stock is present (i.e., the Sheepscot, Penobscot (including lower tributaries such as the Ducktrap), Narraguagus, Pleasant, Machias, East Machias, or Dennys Rivers) or that host a wild or naturally-reared run of Atlantic salmon (e.g., the Kennebec River).
3. Provide sustainable and lasting benefits for Atlantic salmon and the ecosystems on which they depend. Proposals that incorporate proven restoration techniques and focus on removal of barriers will receive highest priority. For example, dam removals will receive higher priority than installation of structures that require operations and maintenance, such as fish ladders. Barrier removals are identified as a priority in the 2019 Recovery Plan for Atlantic salmon.

C. Program Authority

The Secretary of Commerce is authorized under the following statutes to provide grants and cooperative agreements for habitat restoration and conservation: Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act, 16 U.S.C. 661, as amended by the Reorganization Plan No. 4 of 1970; Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Reauthorization Act of 2006, 16 U.S.C. 1891a; and Endangered Species Act, 16 U.S.C. 1535.

II. Award Information

A. Funding Availability

NOAA anticipates typical federal funding awards will range from \$100,000 to \$700,000 over three years. NOAA will not accept proposals with a federal funding request of less than \$100,000 or more than \$1.5 million over three years.

NOAA anticipates up to \$700,000 will be available under this solicitation in FY 2024. Dependent on the level of funding made available by Congress, NOAA anticipates an additional \$1.5 million may be available over the next two years (FY 2025 - FY 2026) to support selected awards, for a maximum of \$2.2 million awarded under this solicitation.

Funds will be administered by the Community-based Restoration Program within the NOAA Office of Habitat Conservation. The exact amount of funds that may be awarded will be determined in pre-award negotiations between the applicant and NOAA. Any funds provided to successful applicants for subsequent-year funding requests will be determined by progress towards stated milestones and availability of funding at the discretion of the NOAA Office of Habitat Conservation and the NOAA Grants Management Division (GMD).

NOAA or the Department of Commerce are not responsible for direct costs of application preparation if programs fail to receive funding or are canceled because of other agency priorities. Publication of this announcement does not oblige NOAA to award any specific project or to obligate any available funds. There is no guarantee that sufficient funds will be available to make awards for all top-ranked applications. The number of awards to be made as a result of this solicitation will depend on the number of eligible applications received, the amount of funds requested, the merit and ranking of the applications, and the amount of funds made available by Congress in FY24 and subsequent fiscal years.

B. Project/Award Period

NOAA anticipates that the period of performance for most awards will be for 3 years. Award periods may be extended, at the discretion of NOAA and based on project needs, up to the extent legally allowable. This is typically a maximum award length of five years. The earliest anticipated start date for awards will be October 1, 2024. Both federal and non-federal match pre-award costs will be considered during pre-award negotiations between the applicant and NOAA. Incurring pre-award costs before NOAA GMD offers a grant is at the applicant's own risk.

C. Type of Funding Instrument

Selected applications will be funded through cooperative agreements, as described in 2 C.F.R. Sec. 200.24, meaning that NOAA expects to be substantially involved in many aspects of the awards. Substantial involvement may include, but is not limited to, collaboration on the scope of work, providing assistance with technical aspects of the habitat restoration project, review and comment on design plans, and review of procurement materials to the extent authorized by 2 C.F.R. Sec. 200.325.

III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants are institutions of higher education, non-profits, commercial (for profit) organizations, and state, local and Native American tribal governments. Applicants must propose work within one or more Salmon Habitat Recovery Units (SHRUs) in the state of Maine. Physical and/or mailing addresses for applicant organizations are not required to be located within the SHRU boundaries. The SHRUs encompass the full range of the Gulf of Maine Distinct Population Segment of Atlantic salmon, including: 1) Merrymeeting Bay, which covers the Androscoggin and Kennebec, and extends east to include the Sheepscot, Pemaquid, Medomak, and St. George watersheds; 2) Penobscot Bay, which covers the entire Penobscot basin and extends west to and includes the Ducktrap watershed; and 3) Downeast Coastal, including all coastal watersheds from the Union River east to the Dennys River.

Applications from federal agencies or employees of federal agencies will not be considered. Federal agencies are strongly encouraged to work with states, non-governmental organizations, municipal and county governments, and others that are eligible to apply.

B. Cost Share or Matching Requirement

There is no statutory matching requirement for this funding. Though not required, applicants are strongly encouraged to combine NOAA federal funding with formal matching contributions or informal leverage from a broad range of sources in the public and private sectors. Non-federal match funds may be optionally included within the application to demonstrate stakeholder support for the proposed work. NOAA also desires cost sharing to encourage partnerships among government, community, industry, and academia. To this end, applicants should note that cost sharing is an element considered in the Evaluation Criteria under "Project Costs" (Section V.A.4).

Match is entered on federal forms, recorded on award documents, and becomes a legally binding component of the award. Leverage refers to all other funding support that contributes to completion of the project(s). Leverage can be either federal or non-federal in origin, and can include funds expended toward the project(s) either before or during the award period. Federal sources cannot be considered for formal matching funds, but can be described in the budget narrative to demonstrate additional leverage and collaboration. Formal match to NOAA funds can come from a variety of public and private sources and can include third party in-kind goods and services and volunteer labor. Applicants should refer to 2 C.F.R. § 200.306 for explanations of match funds, which must be used during the award period, generally.

Applicants whose proposals are selected for funding will be bound by the percentage of match reflected in the award document signed by NOAA's Grants Management Division, unless amended based on extenuating circumstances. NOAA is under no obligation to amend the matching contributions once agreed to by the recipient. Successful applicants should be prepared to carefully document matching contributions, including the overall number of volunteers and third party in-kind participation hours devoted to habitat restoration projects. Applicants are permitted to combine contributions from non-federal partners, as long as such contributions are not used to match any other federal funds and are available within the project period stated in the application. Letters of commitment for any secured resources that will be used as non-federal match for an award under this solicitation should be submitted as an attachment to the application (see Section IV.B).

C. Other Criteria that Affect Eligibility

Applications submitted through Grants.gov must be submitted by the due date and time provided in Section IV.D. Applications received after this deadline may be processed and considered for funding in the current fiscal year or in the next fiscal year, subject to the availability of funds. Paper applications received later than seven business days following the post-mark due date and time may be considered for funding in the next fiscal year. Submission time should be documented by the applicant by electronic submission to Grants.gov, a U.S. Postal Service postmark, or a delivery service receipt. Applicants should consider the possibility of unforeseen impacts from natural hazards that could affect internet access and use of Grants.gov on or before application due dates. Applicants should be aware that localized hazardous weather, monthly scheduled Grants.gov weekend maintenance, or other situations that impact the ability to submit application packages may not result in changes to the application deadline. Information regarding electronic submission through Grants.gov and regarding submitting paper applications is contained in Section IV.G. All applications MUST contain ALL required forms and proposals will be reviewed for eligibility, completeness, and responsiveness to this funding announcement. Failure to submit forms may result in disqualification from this competition. See Section IV.G for more details.

As mentioned above, NOAA will not accept proposals with a federal funding request of less than \$100,000 or more than \$1.5 million over the entire award.

The following information describes ineligible project proposal types and activities:

1. Activities that are required by a separate local, state, or federal consent decree, court order, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) exemption or license condition, statute, or regulation are not eligible. Applicants planning to combine grant or matching funds with mitigation should review the Compensatory Mitigation for Losses of Aquatic Resources Final Rule at 73 Fed. Reg. 19594 (April 10, 2008). NOAA plans to follow the approach adopted by some other federal agencies on Page 19636 that describes scenarios where mitigation credits may or may not be obtained in association with federal financial incentives.

2. Effectiveness monitoring and research are not eligible project types. The NOAA Office of Habitat Conservation values effectiveness monitoring and research, but funds are not included within this funding opportunity to support monitoring and research focused projects. Effectiveness monitoring is longer-term than implementation monitoring, and often requires detailed field investigations of multiple physical, biological, and geochemical processes. Implementation monitoring, as discussed in Section IV.B and V.A.2(c), is an eligible activity, as is the tracking of performance measures and metrics. To find out more about effectiveness monitoring and regional contacts with which to discuss ideas, visit <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/national/habitat-conservation/monitoring-and-evaluation-restoration-projects>. Proposals for effectiveness monitoring that do not qualify for other NOAA competitive funding may be eligible for NOAA's Broad Agency Announcement, posted on Grants.gov.

IV. Application and Submission Information

A. Address to Request Application Package

Complete application packages, including required federal forms and instructions, can be found on www.Grants.gov. If a prospective applicant is having difficulty downloading the application forms from www.Grants.gov, contact www.Grants.gov Customer Support at 1-800-518-4726 or support@Grants.gov. If an applicant does not have internet access, application materials may be requested from Amanda Cousart, the competition manager at amanda.cousart@noaa.gov.

B. Content and Form of Application

A complete, standard NOAA financial assistance application package should be submitted, as described below. Each proposal must include the following federal application forms. The Standard Form (SF)-424 family and form instructions are available in the Grants.gov application package, but may be downloaded from: <https://www.grants.gov/forms/forms-repository/sf-424-family>

- 1) Standard Form (SF)-424: Application for Federal Assistance.
- 2) SF-424A: Budget Information for Non-construction Programs. Selected applications will require an SF-424A for each funding year.
- 3) SF-424B: Assurances for Non-construction Programs
- 4) CD-511: Certification Regarding Lobbying
- 5) SF-LLL (if applicable): Disclosure of Lobbying Activities

In addition to the federal application forms, NOAA recommends the following components as part of a complete application package. Page limits assume an 11- or 12-point font and 1-inch margins. Components should be organized into a maximum of three flattened PDF files outlined below, with a maximum length of 75 combined pages. It is recommended that file sizes not exceed 100MB in order to preserve the applicant's formatting. Additional information on formatting attachments can be found here: <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/how-to-apply-application-guide/format-and-write/format-attachments.htm>

1. Project Summary, Project Narrative, and Data Management Plan (20 page limit)
2. Budget Narrative (10 page limit)
3. Supplemental Materials and Project Design (45 page limit)

Reviewers will only evaluate the first 75 pages of the submitted materials. The application should follow the organization of the evaluation criteria (see Section V.A) to receive a consistent review against competing applications. The information provided below may help to address the evaluation criteria.

1. Project Summary, Project Narrative, and Data Management Plan (20 page limit).

NOAA recommends the following components for the Project Summary (2 page limit).

- 1) Applicant Organization
- 2) Project Title

3) Brief Project Description, as follows:

a) Consistency with the 2019 Recovery Plan. Describe how the proposed actions will contribute to the recovery of Atlantic salmon, including the expected outcomes and measurable impacts of the project on the Gulf of Maine DPS of Atlantic salmon and the ecosystem on which it depends. Applicants should describe how proposed actions will contribute toward the goals of increasing salmon abundance, habitat productivity, and of attaining 30,000 accessible and suitable habitat units within the SHRU(s). Proposed actions should address the biological criteria for downlisting and delisting outlined in the 2019 Recovery Plan, with a focus on criteria for accessible and suitable habitat and productivity. Proposed activities will use tools such as the U.S. Geological Service baseflow mapping in Maine StreamStats.

b) Location of Project Sites. Include the geographic coordinates, SHRU(s), watershed, and the nearest town. If multiple sites are proposed, please include information for all sites. Outline whether the proposed site(s) is / are located within a river that has been designated as Critical Habitat for Atlantic salmon, is located in a habitat with features of climate resilience, whether that river hosts a wild or naturally reared run of Atlantic salmon, and whether a river-specific stock is present (i.e., does the project occur within the Sheepscot, Penobscot (including lower tributaries such as the Ducktrap), Narraguagus, Pleasant, Machias, East Machias, or Dennys Rivers).

c) Sustainability of Restoration Approach. Describe the proposed techniques and how the approach will result in sustainable and lasting benefits for the Gulf of Maine DPS of Atlantic salmon and the ecosystems on which they depend.

4) Timeline. Provide a timeline of all project activities. This includes all work to be supported with requested NOAA funds, and any non-federal formal matching contributions or informal leverage.

5) Permits and Approvals. Identify and list all consultations, permits, and regulatory approvals necessary for the proposed project(s) and their status (e.g., not applied for; pending; secured).

6) Landowner(s). Include name and address (if privately owned) or public agency contact for each proposed project.

7) Funding Request. Outline the total request for NOAA funds for each year of the project period. If non-federal matching contributions are proposed, include the status of the funds (e.g., not applied for; pending; secured). If other financial support beyond NOAA federal funds and non-federal match funds will be used to complete the proposed work, outline the sources and amount of these leveraged funds. If you have submitted (or plan to submit) your proposal to other relevant funding opportunities, please identify the funding source and/or title(s) of the competition(s), amount of funds requested, and approximate decision date(s) for anticipated award selection. If space is limited, provide a summary here and include a full description in the Supplemental Materials.

NOAA recommends the following components for the Project Narrative (16 page limit).

As mentioned above, the application should follow the organization of the Evaluation Criteria (see Section V.A) to receive a consistent review against competing applications. Provide sufficient background and contextual information for reviewers to independently assess the significance of the proposed project. See suggestions below for components to include to address the five Evaluation Criteria.

a) *Importance and Applicability.* Describe the extent to which the proposed actions align with the stated Program Objective (Section I.A) and Program Priorities (Section I.B). Highlight how the proposed actions are consistent with the 2019 Recovery Plan and the “Species in the Spotlight Priority Actions: 2021-2025” 5-year action plan. The proposal should describe the expected outcomes and measurable impacts, in relation to the goals of increasing abundance, habitat productivity, and the restoration of 30,000 accessible and suitable habitat units in each SHR. The narrative should outline whether projects are located within designated Critical Habitat for the Gulf of Maine Distinct Population Segment. Additionally, the proposal should indicate whether the project occurs in a river that hosts a wild or naturally reared run of Atlantic salmon, and whether that run is composed of a river-specific stock (i.e., whether the project occurs within the Sheepscot, Penobscot (including lower tributaries such as the Ducktrap), Narraguagus, Pleasant, Machias, East Machias, or Dennys Rivers). The proposal should succinctly describe the historic condition of the restoration site(s) and identify any other restoration efforts planned or completed within the watershed for the benefit of Atlantic salmon. Applicants should describe the quality of the habitat and features of the site that may confer resilience to future effects of climate change (for example, stream reaches with high baseflow in comparison to other streams in the region). Stream reaches with higher baseflow tend to have higher flow volumes during low flow periods and they also tend to have cooler water during the warm season and warmer water during the cold season. Projects within or providing access to stream reaches with higher baseflow may provide suitable habitat with more longevity considering future effects of climate changes (i.e. climate resiliency). Other site and/or watershed features that may affect climate resiliency could include proximity to lowhead dams that can elevate river temperatures (or the comparative absence), watershed riparian land cover that can affect stream temperature, etc. Furthermore, applicants should describe the proposed techniques and how the approach will result in sustainable and lasting benefits for Atlantic salmon (e.g. a river specific stock and/or naturally reared or wild population of salmon) and the ecosystem on which they depend.

b) *Technical/Scientific Merit.* Proposals should describe in detail the actions to be undertaken. If page limits are restrictive, focus the application on the technical aspects of the proposed actions and on those actions with highest priority funding needs. For each restoration site, applicants should clearly identify the project phase(s) proposed (e.g., feasibility study, engineering, implementation) and proposed restoration techniques. Proposals that include multiple restoration sites should fully describe the proposed restoration activity at each site within the project narrative section. For applicants proposing feasibility and design activities, a detailed scope of services or tasks should be included in the proposal. Applicants should describe the overall habitat restoration goals of the feasibility and design activities, a description of the quantity, quality and resiliency of the habitat, and how support for the proposed activity would catalyze subsequent on-the-ground restoration.

For proposals including fish passage techniques, please indicate whether there are other dams or obstructions upstream or downstream of the target barrier and whether the target barrier is a partial or complete barrier. Applicants should highlight any synergies with other fish passage improvement efforts in the watershed, including improvements at hydropower dams. Applicants proposing to install devices or movable control structures should submit a summary management plan that specifies the entity responsible for the operation and maintenance of the structure(s), and how they will be operated and maintained throughout the life of the structure(s) to ensure lasting habitat benefits.

The project narrative should include a timeline with key milestones identified and detail how the project(s) will be completed within the specified time period. This includes identifying all consultation and permitting requirements and their status (e.g. not applied for, pending, secured), as well as a commitment to quickly provide information needed by NOAA to analyze project impacts under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA, see Section VI.B.2) and the Endangered Species Act. For projects with NEPA documents completed or under development, please indicate the status and level of NEPA review (CE, EA, or EIS), lead Federal agency, contact information for the lead agency person, and where public copies of the document are available. Applications should identify annual/interim milestones that correspond to funding increments.

Applicants should include a Monitoring Plan for proposed activities. Proposals that include barrier removal techniques that meet the definition of “fish passage” must incorporate the monitoring parameters found in the NOAA Restoration Center Implementation Monitoring (Tier 1) Guidance, available at: <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/national/habitat-conservation/resources-noaa-restoration-center-applicants#restoration-monitoring-and-data-management>. All applications, regardless of proposed restoration approach, should include sufficient, cost-effective monitoring metrics that assess whether activities were carried out as designed. Plans should: 1) include parameters that evaluate short-term structural changes at the project site(s) (e.g. as-built surveys), and may also include a basic measure of effectiveness (e.g. presence/absence of target species); 2) propose pre-implementation data collection, when applicable; 3) include parameters with quantitative or clearly defined targets; and 4) include parameters with targets that can be evaluated within approximately one year post-implementation. Proposals requesting funding for pre-implementation activities, such as feasibility studies, planning, or design, should describe how pre-restoration monitoring meets the requirements listed above.

For applicants proposing non-barrier restoration projects as a means to improve freshwater productivity, applicants should provide substantive evidence (e.g. published studies or data from the region) that demonstrates the site is suitable for the restoration method proposed.

To protect the federal investment, the narrative should describe future management, beyond the award period, including mechanisms to protect, maintain, or sustain the restoration site(s) so the effects of the funded project(s) can benefit Atlantic salmon and the ecosystems on which they depend, into the future. Applicants should indicate landowner support, and also describe how the proposed restoration design, methodology, and techniques account for, or provide for, resilience to extreme weather events or adaptation to potential climate change impacts at the project site(s).

c) *Project Costs*. Applicants should follow the guidance under section 2. Budget Justification, as fully described below after the Data Management Plan guidance.

d) *Applicant Qualifications*. This section should fully describe the applicant’s ability to develop and/or manage habitat restoration projects. Applicants should include descriptions of: past relevant experience of the applicant organization, project staff and/or partners, including experience with habitat restoration design, construction, monitoring, and environmental compliance; the ability of the applicant to work with stakeholders; and the ability to effectively manage federal awards. Include brief resumes or curriculum vitae (CV) for up to three (3) key personnel, as described under the Supplemental Information section below.

e) *Outreach and Education*. The project narrative should demonstrate that the proposed actions have the support of a diverse set of stakeholders, and should include a brief, effective outreach strategy to encourage long-term stewardship for restored resources and to generate a community conservation ethic. Letters of support should be included in the Supplemental Information section.

NOAA recommends the following components for the Data Management Plan (2 page limit).

Proposals submitted in response to this announcement should include a Data Management Plan of up to two pages. NOAA provides the following Data Management Guidance for this program. The Data Management Plan should follow the Guidance for Data Management Plans at <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/national/habitat-conservation/resources-noaa-restoration-center-applicants#restoration-monitoring-and-data-management>. A typical plan should include descriptions of the types of environmental data and information expected to be created during the course of 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, 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. Final Data Management Plans may be developed in coordination with NOAA as part of NOAA's substantial involvement, as described in Section II.C. See also Section VI.B. of this Announcement. NOAA's Data and Publication Sharing Directive for NOAA Grants, Cooperative Agreements, and Contracts is available at <https://nosc.noaa.gov/EDMC/PD.DSP.php>.

2. Budget Narrative (10 page limit)

Reviewers will evaluate project costs by reviewing the budget narrative. Project costs should be divided into the following categories, also referred to as SF-424A Object Classes: Personnel, Fringe Benefits, Travel, Equipment, Supplies, Contractual, and Other. The sum of funds requested under these Object Classes should be recorded as Total Direct Costs. The costs required for organizational operation that cannot be easily associated with an individual project or program should be recorded as Indirect Costs. Organizations with a federally Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) should include a copy of the approved NICRA in section 3 (Supplemental Materials and Project Designs). Organizations without a NICRA may claim the 10% de minimis rate for calculating indirect charges on the Modified Total Direct Costs or may negotiate a rate, as outlined below (see 2 C.F.R. § 200.1 for definitions). Refer to Sections IV.F. and VI.B. of this announcement for more information about indirect costs. All Object Class costs in the budget narrative should equal those entered on the SF-424A. These totals should also be recorded on the SF-424A. NOAA staff will review budget information in recommended applications to determine if costs are allowable, allocable, reasonable, necessary, and realistic.

For projects with contractual components, applicants must follow procurement standards set forth in 2 C.F.R. § 200.317-200.327. If the proposal is considered for funding, NOAA Grants Management Division reviewers will be looking for information on the procurement methods used for each contract, as defined in 2 C.F.R. § 200.320. Applicants are encouraged to provide separate budgets for each contract, and they must provide budgets for each contract in excess of \$250,000, to determine whether proposed costs are reasonable, necessary, allowable, and allocable. For contracts that are not yet in place at the time of submitting the proposal, the budget narrative must include an explanation of how contractual costs were estimated and what procurement methods they will use to select contractors.

In addition to dividing the budget narrative into Object Classes, separating costs by milestone or purpose may be valuable to reviewers. Award costs should be divided into annual funding requests to show anticipated expenditure rates. If NOAA funding will be used to complete part of a broad-scale project, a budget overview for the entire project should be provided to demonstrate how the NOAA request relates to the overall project budget and how NOAA funds are needed for successful implementation.

If a project has been submitted for funding consideration elsewhere, applicants should include the amount requested or secured from other funding sources, and whether the funds are federal or non-federal in origin. Applicants should clearly indicate if funds are proposed as official, non-federal match, or if the funds are informal leverage. Applicants should refer to 2 C.F.R. § 200.306 for explanations of match funds, which must generally be used during the award period. Match is entered on federal forms, recorded on award documents, and becomes a legally binding component of the award. Leverage refers to all other funding support that contributes to completion of the project(s). Leverage can be either federal or non-federal in origin, and can include funds expended toward the project(s) either before or during the award period. The NOAA Restoration Center has provided guidance regarding the level of detail required to determine if costs are allowable, allocable, reasonable, necessary, and realistic in the “Supplemental Instructions” at:

<https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/national/habitat-conservation/resources-noaa-restoration-center-applicants>

3. Supplemental Materials and Project Designs (45 page limit)

All supplemental materials should be combined into a single PDF, including a cover page that lists all of the documents and associated page numbers. The cover page does not count toward the 45 page limit. The compiled PDF should be uploaded under the “Other Attachments Form” in Grants.gov.

- a) Site location map, such as a US Geological Survey topographic quadrangle map or aerial photo with site location(s) highlighted;
- b) Brief resumes or curriculum vitae (CV) for up to three (3) key personnel (maximum of 1 page per person) and any examples of projects similar in scope and nature that have been successfully completed by the project team;
- c) Letter documenting private landowner or public land manager support of the project(s) proposed for the owned site(s); and
- d) Other relevant supporting materials, such as: letters of support to document stakeholder support; federally Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreements; data management plan, (if applicable) Monitoring Plan; site photos, etc.
- e) If available, project designs and basis of design reports should be included in the application in order for reviewers to comprehensively assess the technical merit of the proposed restoration. Relevant sections of construction specifications, scopes of work for services, and cost estimates may also be provided. Please do not attach feasibility studies or watershed plans. The critical components of those documents should be summarized in the Project Narrative. Please remember that reviewers will only evaluate a maximum of 75 pages for each application package.

Proposals submitted in response to this Announcement must include a Data Management Plan (up to 2 pages). See Section VI.B., Administrative and National Policy Requirements, below for additional information on what the plan should contain.

Environmental Compliance Questionnaire for NOAA Federal Financial Assistance Applicants: This program does not use this questionnaire, except as described in Section VI.B.4.

C. Unique entity identifier and System for Award Management (SAM)

To enable the use of a universal identifier and to enhance the quality of information available to the public as required by the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act, 31 U.S.C. 6101 note, to the extent applicable, any proposal awarded in response to this announcement will be required to use the System for Award Management (SAM), which may be accessed online at [SAM.gov](https://sam.gov).

Each applicant, unless the applicant has an exception approved by the federal awarding agency under 2 C.F.R. § 25.110(d), is required to: (1) Be registered in SAM before submitting its application; (2) Provide a valid Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) in its application; and (3) Continue to maintain an active SAM registration with current information at all times during which it has an active federal award or an application or plan under consideration by a federal awarding agency. 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.

Applicants should allow a minimum of two weeks to complete the SAM registration; registration is required only once, but must be periodically renewed. On April 4, 2022, the federal government began using a new UEI number provided by SAM. The organization's Employer Identification Number (EIN) will be needed to receive a UEI, which is provided by SAM. If an entity is already registered in SAM.gov, the new UEI has already been assigned and is viewable in SAM.gov. This includes inactive registrations.

D. Submission Dates and Times

The application deadline is April 1, 2024 at 11:59 PM Eastern time. To assure consideration for funding in subsequent fiscal years, applications must be received by 11:59 p.m on March 31, 2025, and March 31, 2026. Applications received after these deadlines may be processed and considered for funding in the current fiscal year or in the next fiscal year, subject to the availability of funds.

E. Intergovernmental Review

Applications submitted by state and local governments are subject to the provisions of Executive Order 12372, "Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs." Any applicant submitting an application for funding is required to complete item 19 on SF-424 regarding clearance by the State Single Point of Contact (SPOC) established as a result of EO 12372. To find out about and comply with a State's process under EO 12372, contact the official listed in Section VII of this announcement for referral information. The information can also be reviewed at: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/SPOC-list-as-of-2023.pdf>

F. Funding Restrictions

Both federal and match pre-award costs incurred up to 90 days prior to the award start date may be requested and will be considered during pre-award negotiations between the applicant and NOAA. Incurring pre-award costs before the NOAA GMD provides an award document (previously via NOAA Grants Online and currently through eRA Commons on Form CD-450) is at the applicant's own risk. The earliest date for receipt of awards for this funding opportunity is anticipated to be October 1, 2024.

The budget may include indirect (facilities & administrative [F&A]) costs if the applicant has an established indirect cost rate with the federal government. As defined at 2 C.F.R. § 200.1, indirect (F&A) costs are incurred for a common or joint purpose benefiting more than one cost objective, and not readily assignable to the cost objectives specifically benefited, without effort disproportionate to the results achieved (e.g., lights, rent, water, and insurance). A copy of the current, approved negotiated indirect (F&A) cost agreement with the federal government should be included with the application. In addition, an eligible applicant under 2 C.F.R. § 200.414(f), may elect to charge a de minimis rate of 10% of modified total direct costs (MTDC). An applicant may also describe all costs as direct costs in the budget narrative, or establish a new rate through the Department of Commerce by contacting Michele Mazzocchetti, Grants Officer at NOAA Grants Management Division, 1325 East-West Highway, 9th Floor, Silver Spring, MD 20910, or at michele.mazzocchetti@noaa.gov. Applicants may elect to propose the reduction of part, or all, of allowable indirect costs as a component of cost sharing.

G. Other Submission Requirements

Applicants should submit applications electronically through www.Grants.gov. Users of Grants.gov will be able to create an online application workspace to submit the application. If an applicant has problems accessing the online workspace at Grants.gov, contact Grants.gov Customer Support at 1-800-518-4726 or support@Grants.gov. All applicants must be registered with eRA Commons and obtain both a Signing Official (SO) and a project director/principal investigator (PD/PI) account. Applicants should ensure that the PI's username is included in field 4 on the SF424 form. Additional information on the application processes related to the eRA system can be found on the website for this funding opportunity. Additional information is available at this location: <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/how-to-apply-application-guide/prepare-to-apply-and-register/systems-and-roles.htm>.

Applications must be submitted by the due date and time provided in Section IV.D. Late applications may be considered for funding in the current fiscal year and in subsequent fiscal years, if funding is available. We highly recommend that applicants do not wait until the application deadline to begin the application process through Grants.gov, as registration with SAM is required (Section IV.C.), and several steps are required to verify the staff allowed to submit applications in Grants.gov.

After electronic submission of the application, applicants will receive an automatic acknowledgment from Grants.gov that contains a Grants.gov tracking number. Applications submitted through Grants.gov will be accompanied by THREE automated responses (the first confirms receipt; the second validates that the submission is acceptable and timely; and the third confirms that the application has been forwarded to NOAA for further processing). If all notifications are not received, applicants should follow up with both the Grants.gov help desk and the NOAA Restoration Center to confirm NOAA receipt of the complete submission. After submitting the application package, applicants should download a copy of the submitted application for offline record-keeping and to verify the contents of the submission zip file. Grants.gov recommends downloading the submitted application via the Details tab of the workspace and verifying the contents of each file in the zip (<https://www.grants.gov/applicants/applicant-faqs.html>).

Submission time will be documented by electronic submission to Grants.gov, a U.S. Postal Service postmark, or a delivery service receipt for paper applications. Applications submitted via the U.S. Postal Service must have an official postmark; private metered postmarks are not acceptable. Applications received later than seven business days following the closing date may be considered for funding in the current fiscal year or future fiscal years, subject to the availability of funds.

H. Address for Submitting Proposals

Electronic applications are strongly encouraged; however, paper applications will also be considered. Paper applications should be sent to: NOAA Restoration Center, NOAA Fisheries (F/HC3), 1315 East West Highway, Rm. 14875, Silver Spring, MD 20910. ATTN: 2024 Atlantic Salmon Habitat Restoration Partnership Grants. All applications MUST contain ALL required forms. Failure to submit forms may result in disqualification from this competition. Applicants are responsible for tracking their own applications. Proposal application packages, including all letters of collaboration or support, shall be submitted together in one package. Please notify the contact official in Section VII of this announcement by email regarding any paper submissions by mail, and/or for any technical difficulties using Grants.gov.

V. Application Review Information

Evaluation Criteria

Reviewers will assign scores to applications ranging from 0 to 100 points based on the following five standard NOAA evaluation criteria and respective weights specified below. Applications that best address these criteria will be most competitive.

1. Importance/relevance and applicability of proposed projects to the program goals	Maximum Points: 40
<p>This criterion ascertains whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and/or relevance to NOAA, federal, regional, state, or local activities.</p> <p>For this competition, applications will be evaluated based on the following:</p>	

a) Consistency with Recovery Plan. How great is the potential of the proposed actions to restore or enhance habitat for the benefit of Atlantic salmon? Proposed actions should be consistent with priority habitat restoration actions identified in the 2019 Recovery Plan and supporting plans, including the “Species in the Spotlight Priority Actions: 2021-2025” 5-year action plan for Atlantic salmon, and the SHRU Work Plans. Applicants should describe how proposed actions address the biological criteria for downlisting and delisting outlined in the 2019 Recovery Plan, including 1) how the action will contribute to improve conditions to benefit species abundance, and the size of existing runs of wild spawned or naturally reared Atlantic salmon, 2) how the action will improve habitat productivity (i.e., suitability of habitat to produce salmon) and 3) how the action will improve distribution of the species through improvements in accessibility. For pre-implementation activities (e.g., feasibility, planning, engineering and design), what is the likelihood that the project will yield meaningful benefits for Atlantic salmon and the ecosystems on which they depend, once implemented? (20 points)

0 – no benefits to Atlantic salmon will result from the proposed work; 10 – meaningful benefits to Atlantic salmon are likely to result, with moderate progress toward meeting habitat and/or productivity delisting criteria described in the 2019 Recovery Plan; 20 – extraordinary benefits to Atlantic salmon are likely to result, with substantial progress toward meeting habitat and/or productivity delisting criteria described in the 2019 Recovery Plan.

(b) Location of Project Sites. Are the proposed actions located within designated Critical Habitat for the Gulf of Maine Distinct Population Segment? Are proposed actions located in or provide access to habitats with features that suggest resilience (e.g., streams with high base flows in comparison to other streams in the region)? Are proposed actions in a river that hosts a wild or naturally reared run of Atlantic salmon, and/or is that run comprised of a river-specific stock (i.e., does the project occur within the Sheepscot, Penobscot (including lower tributaries such as the Ducktrap), Narraguagus, Pleasant, Machias, East Machias, or Dennys Rivers)? (10 points)

0 – project site location(s) is / are located outside of designated Critical Habitat and/or does not contain a naturally reared or wild run of Atlantic salmon; 5 – project is located within designated critical habitat, but does not occur in a watershed that hosts a wild or naturally reared run of Atlantic salmon, and/or does not occur in a habitat with features of climate resilience; for multi-site proposals, some project site locations are within designated Critical Habitat, with some sites in a river that contains a run of naturally reared or wild salmon, or within in habitat that may have feature that indicate climate resilience; 10 – project site location(s) is / are entirely within or provide access to habitat that has features of climate resilience and are within designated Critical Habitat in rivers where a river specific stock is present or that host a wild or naturally-reared run of Atlantic salmon.

(c) Sustainability of Restoration Approach. How great is the potential of the restoration effort to be sustainable and provide lasting benefits for Atlantic salmon? Is there evidence that the applicant has chosen the most self-sustaining approach that accomplishes the proposed goals? (10 points)

0 – proposed actions will not provide lasting benefits for Atlantic salmon; 5 – proposed actions primarily focus on fishway installations or other project types that require operations and maintenance plans to ensure effectiveness and sustainability; 10 – proposed actions primarily focus on barrier removals that restore natural stream dynamics.

2. Technical/scientific merit

Maximum Points: 24

This criterion assesses whether the approach is technically sound and/or innovative, if the methods are appropriate, and whether there are clear project goals and objectives.

For this competition, applications will be evaluated based on the extent to which the applicant has described a realistic and thorough implementation plan that includes:

(a) Project Feasibility and Methodology. To what extent are the proposed actions feasible from a biological and engineering perspective, including whether the proposed methodology is technically sound, safe for the public, and provides for resilience to extreme weather events and adaptation to potential climate change impacts? (6 points)

0 – proposed methodology is not feasible; 3 – proposed methodology is potentially feasible, but lacks documentation to fully support the approach as being technically sound, safe for the public, and/or resilient to extreme weather events and climate change impacts; 6 – proposed methodology is feasible, and demonstrates a high likelihood to be technically sound, safe for the public, and resilient to extreme weather events and climate change impacts.

(b) Project Detail. To what extent does the proposal completely describe the proposed restoration actions, the current status of the activities (e.g. 60% design plans complete), permitting and environmental compliance status, and key milestones throughout the course of the project(s). A complete project description should include all relevant phases of the restoration from initial feasibility study through design, permitting, construction, performance monitoring, operation and/or maintenance. If the proposal is a feasibility and design proposal only, to what extent does the proposal explain the planned approach, or provide examples of other projects where the approach was successful? For projects with multiple sites, does the proposal include sufficient detail about the proposed work at each site to assess the merit of the planned activities? (6 points)

0 – proposal provides negligible detail regarding restoration actions, project status, and key milestones; 3 – proposal provides moderate detail regarding restoration actions, project status, and key milestones; 6 – proposal provides extraordinary detail regarding restoration actions, project status, and key milestones.

(c) Realistic Timeline. Based on the details provided, has the applicant proposed a realistic time-frame and interim milestones, and is it likely that the scope of the proposed project will be completed within the requested award period? (4 points)

0 – proposal provides negligible detail regarding timeliness, and is unlikely to be completed within the requested award period; 2 – proposal provides moderate detail regarding timelines, and the project is likely to be completed within the requested award period; 4 – proposal provides substantial detail regarding timelines, and the project is highly likely to be completed within the requested award period.

(d) Project Assessment. Does the proposal include a Monitoring Plan to measure near-term implementation success, following requirements outlined in Section IV.B? Proposals that include barrier removals for fish passage must outline parameters described in the NOAA Restoration Center Implementation Monitoring (Tier I) Guidance. (4 points)

0 – proposal does not include a Monitoring Plan to measure near-term implementation success; 2 – proposal includes a sufficient Monitoring Plan; 4 – proposal includes a well-described Monitoring Plan.

(e) Landowner Support. Is there substantiated landowner / land manager support and commitment to the project documented within the application, as evidenced by a support letter? (3 points)

0 – proposal does not provide documentation of landowner / land manager support; 2 – proposal provides documentation of landowner / land manager permission to implement the project; 3 – proposal provides documentation of landowner / land manager permission to implement the project, in addition to financial or in-kind support from the landowner / land manager for implementation.

(f) Data Management Plan. Has the proposal included a Data Management Plan, including descriptions of the types of environmental data and information created during the course of 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? If no data will be collected through the project, the applicant must clearly explain the rationale for the lack of data collection in order to receive full points. See pages 3 - 5 in the NOAA Restoration Center Implementation Monitoring (Tier 1) Guidance for a template and more information. (1 point)

0 – proposal does not provide a Data Management Plan; 1 – proposal provides a complete Data Management Plan.

3. Overall qualifications of applicants

Maximum Points: 10

his criterion ascertains whether the applicant possesses the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project.

For this competition, applications will be evaluated based on the following (as demonstrated by attached resumes, past project experience, and accomplishments of the key technical and financial staff):

(a) Restoration and Conservation Background. Does the applicant have the capacity and knowledge to conduct the scope and scale of the proposed work, as indicated by the qualifications and past experience of the project leaders and/or partners in designing, implementing, and effectively managing and overseeing projects? Does the applicant demonstrate an ability to collaborate with stakeholders and other partners? (4 points)

0 – proposal provides no documentation of experience in conducting the scope and scale of proposed work; 2 – proposal provides documentation of adequate capacity and knowledge to conduct the proposed work; 4 – proposal provides documentation of substantial capacity and expert knowledge to conduct the proposed work.

(b) Management Capacity. Does the applicant describe the necessary experience, facilities, equipment, and administrative resources available to successfully fulfill the responsibilities associated with managing a federal award? Does the applicant include a plan for coordination with NOAA to implement the project(s)? (6 points)

0 – proposal provides no description of experience or available resources to manage the award; 3 – proposal describes adequate experience and available resources to manage the award; 6 – proposal describes extensive experience with federal grants, and includes a plan for coordination with NOAA to implement the project(s).

4. Project costs

Maximum Points: 16

This criterion evaluates the budget to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time frame.

For this competition, applications will be evaluated on the following:

(a) Cost-benefit Comparison. Has the applicant demonstrated that a significant benefit will be generated at a reasonable cost, based on the applicant's stated objectives and time frame? If funds are requested for partial support of a larger project or for a project with multiple sites or phases, the proposal should include the full project budget and/or a budget for each site or project phase. (4 points)

0 – proposal does not provide a reasonable cost-benefit comparison; 2 – project is likely to be reasonably cost-effective for anticipated benefit; 4 – project is likely to be extraordinarily cost-effective for anticipated benefit.

(b) Budget Detail. Has the applicant demonstrated a realistic understanding of costs by providing a budget (broken down by SF-424A object classes) that provides sufficient detail and credible cost estimates and justifications for both federal and non-federal shares? Multi-year or multi-phase award requests should include annual/interim milestones that correspond to logical funding request increments. (4 points)

0 – proposal does not provide a realistic budget narrative; 2 – proposal provides an adequately detailed budget narrative with realistic cost estimates; 4 – proposal provides an extraordinarily detailed budget narrative with realistic cost estimates.

(c) Funding Priorities. Does the proposed budget direct the majority of funds, including funds for salaries, to implement the project (i.e., project development/feasibility, design, implementation, and/or monitoring), compared to the percentage used for general program support including administration? (4 points)

0 – proposed budget directs only a small amount of funds to support project development, design, implementation, or monitoring; 2 – proposed budget allocates a majority of direct federal funds to support project development, design, implementation, or monitoring; 4 – proposed budget allocates all direct federal funds to support project development, design, implementation, or monitoring.

(d) Cost-sharing and leveraging federal funds. To what extent will the applicant complement the federal investment through non-federal matching contributions and federal and/or non-federal leverage to support the proposed restoration actions? NOAA encourages cost-sharing to enhance partnerships with restoration practitioners and to better meet restoration goals. In order to receive full points, the applicant must provide documentation (e.g., letter[s] of support or commitment) of secured contributions that meet a 1:1 ratio of federal to non-federal matching funds. See 2 C.F.R. 200.306 for definitions and requirements for non-federal matching funds. Applicants should also describe any proposed match or leveraged support for the restoration actions that is not yet secured. (4 points)

<p>0 – proposal does not include any non-federal, secured match, unsecured match, or other leveraged support; 2 – proposal provides documentation of some secured, non-federal match that does not meet a 1:1 ratio of federal to non-federal funds, and/or includes proposed match or leverage that is not yet secured; 4 – proposal provides documentation of secured, non-federal match that meets a 1:1 ratio of federal to non-federal funds.</p>	
5. Outreach and Education	Maximum Points: 10
<p>This criterion assesses whether the project provides a focused and effective education and outreach strategy regarding NOAA's mission to protect the Nation's natural resources.</p> <p>(a) Stakeholder Engagement and Support. Does the proposed project(s) include a wide base of stakeholder and community support that demonstrates the restoration effort has been put forward by common agreement? To what degree does the project(s) have community support, as demonstrated by a diversity of partners such as relevant local organizations, adjacent landowners, state and local governments, and/or members of Congress? (8 points)</p> <p>0 – proposal does not demonstrate community support or common agreement; 4 – proposal demonstrates adequate community support through a diverse set of partners; 8 – proposal demonstrates extraordinary community support through a diverse set of partners.</p> <p>(b) Community Outreach. Does the proposal include an outreach strategy to disseminate information about restoration goals and results to a broad audience? The strategy may include, but is not limited to, opportunities for press visits, public involvement in project activities, and other outreach that supports partners and encourages support for restoration and environmental stewardship. (2 points)</p> <p>0 – proposal does not include an outreach strategy as it pertains to dissemination of information about project goals and results; 1 – proposal includes an adequate outreach strategy as it pertains to dissemination of information about project goals and results; 2 – proposal includes an extraordinary outreach strategy as it pertains to dissemination of information about project goals and results and has strong potential to encourage future habitat restoration and protection actions.</p>	

Review and Selection Process

All applications will be considered on a rolling basis as they are received annually. They will undergo an initial administrative screening to determine if they are responsive, eligible, and complete. NOAA, in its sole discretion, may continue the review process for applications with non-substantive issues that may be easily rectified or cured. If an application was submitted to [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) by the deadline, but the application was not validated by NOAA's eRA grants management system, the applicant should contact the competition manager, Amanda Cousart, immediately, or at least within one business day, for troubleshooting with the system, which is new for NOAA. Applications are screened to ensure that they are responsive to this announcement; the applicant is eligible to apply; and includes a project summary, project description, budget, and supporting documentation as outlined in Section IV.B Content and Form of Application.

Eligible applications will undergo a technical review and selection process to determine how well they meet the program priorities and evaluation criteria of this solicitation and the mission and goals of NOAA. Eligible applications will be evaluated by three or more merit reviewers as part of a technical review based on the Evaluation Criteria listed in Section V.A. After the technical review, a panel may meet to make final recommendations to the Selecting Official regarding which proposals best meet the program objectives and priorities (Sections I.A and I.B). The panel will be comprised of federal employees and may convene in person or by teleconference, video conference, or other electronic means to discuss applications.

If convened, the panel will be presented with the top applications, per the results of the technical review. Panelists will also receive the technical review scores and comments for each application. The panel will rate all top-ranked proposals on the following scale:

1 – Fair: application marginally addresses program priorities outlined in Section I.A and I.B and was moderately responsive to Evaluation Criteria;

2 – Good: application adequately addresses program priorities outlined in Section I.A and I.B and was strongly responsive to Evaluation Criteria;

3 – Excellent: application exceptionally addresses program priorities outlined in Sections I.A and I.B, and was highly responsive to Evaluation Criteria.

If a panel is held, the panel's list will be considered by the Selecting Official for recommending applications for funding. If a panel is not held, the technical review ranking will be considered by the Selecting Official for recommending applications for funding.

If an application is recommended for funding, staff from the NOAA will contact the applicant to negotiate a final application package. NOAA may select all, some, or none of the applications, or part of any application, ask applicants to work together or combine projects, defer applications to the future, or reallocate funds to different funding categories, to the extent authorized. In the event further funding becomes available after the initial selection, NOAA may select additional proposals without repeating the competitive process.

Applicants may be asked to modify objectives, work plans, or budgets, and provide supplemental information required by the agency prior to the award. NOAA may choose to award partial funding as part of a multi-year award. Once funds are awarded, recipients of multi-year awards will not need to compete for funding in subsequent years for the same award. NOAA expects, but is not obligated, to provide additional funding to multi-year awards in subsequent years. In this case, a budget narrative and SF-424A that identifies each separate year of requested funding will be required prior to an award offer. Applicants may be asked to modify objectives, work plans or budgets, and provide supplemental information required by the agency prior to the award. The exact amount of funds to be awarded, the final scope of activities, the project duration, and specific NOAA cooperative involvement with the activities of each project will be determined in pre-award negotiations among the applicant, the NOAA Grants Office, and NOAA program staff.

Adding funds to multi-year awards is contingent on the availability of funds and satisfactory performance, and is at the sole discretion of NOAA. The exact amount of funds to be awarded, the final scope of activities, the project duration, and specific NOAA cooperative involvement with the activities of each project will be determined in pre-award negotiations among the applicant, the NOAA Grants Management Division, and NOAA program staff. The NOAA Grants Officer makes the final approval decision and issues an award, as described in Section VI.A. and B. Unsuccessful applicants will be notified that their application was not among those recommended for funding. Unsuccessful applications submitted will be kept on file in accordance with NOAA records requirements and then destroyed.

Hence, awards may not necessarily be made to the highest-scored applications. Unsuccessful applicants will be notified that their application was not among those recommended for funding.

In addition, 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. NOAA is required to review and consider any information about the applicant that is in the designated integrity and performance system accessible through the System for Award Management. An applicant, at its option, may review information in the designated integrity and performance systems accessible through SAM and comment on any information about itself that a Federal awarding agency previously entered and is currently in the designated integrity and performance system accessible through SAM. NOAA 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 §200.206 Federal awarding agency review of risk posed by applicants.

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. 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 addressed in a timely fashion in order 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. The award decision of the Grants Officer is final.

Selection Factors

The Selecting Official will recommend applications for funding in rank order unless an application is justified to be selected out of rank order based upon one or more of the following selection factors:

1. Availability of funding;
2. Balance/distribution of funds: a) by geographic area, b) by type of institutions, c) by type of partners, d) by research/focus areas; or e) by project types;
3. Whether this project duplicates other projects funded or considered for funding by NOAA or other federal agencies;
4. Program priorities and policy factors set out in Sections I.A and I.B;
5. An applicant's prior award performance;
6. Partnerships and/or participation of targeted groups; and
7. Adequacy of information necessary for NOAA staff to make a NEPA determination and draft necessary documentation before recommendations for funding are made to the NOAA GMD.

Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

Applicants should anticipate that the earliest anticipated start date for awards will be October 1, 2024.

VI. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notices

PRE-AWARD COSTS. Per 2 C.F.R. § 200.458, NOAA authorizes award recipients to expend pre-award costs up to 90 days before the period of performance start date at the applicant's own risk without approval from NOAA, and in accordance with the applicant's internal policies and procedures. Such costs are allowable only to the extent that they would have been allowable if incurred after the date of the federal award. This does not include direct proposal costs (as defined at 2 C.F.R. § 200.460). NOAA or the Department of Commerce are not responsible for direct proposal preparation costs. Pre-award costs will be a portion of, not in addition to, the approved total budget of the award. Pre-award costs expended more than 90 days prior to the period of performance start date require approval from the Grants Officer. This does not change the period of performance start date.

GRANTS OFFICER SIGNATURE. Proposals submitted in response to this solicitation are not considered awards until the Grants Officer has signed the grant or cooperative agreement. Only Grants Officers can bind the Government to the expenditure of funds. The Grants Officer's digital signature constitutes an obligation of funds by the federal government and formal approval of the award.

LIMITATION OF LIABILITY. Funding for programs listed in this notice is contingent upon the availability of funds. Applicants are hereby given notice that funds may not have been appropriated yet for the programs listed in this notice. Publication of this announcement does not oblige NOAA to award any specific project or to obligate any available funds.

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

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>.

RESEARCH TERMS AND CONDITIONS. For awards designated on the CD-450 as Research, the Commerce Terms, and the Federal-wide Research Terms and Conditions (Research Terms) as implemented by the Department of Commerce, currently, at <https://www.nsf.gov/awards/managing/rtc.jsp>, both apply to the award. The Commerce Terms and the Research Terms are generally intended to harmonize with each other; however, where the Commerce Terms and the Research Terms differ in a Research award, the Research Terms prevail, unless otherwise indicated in a specific award condition.

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE PRE-AWARD NOTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS FOR GRANTS AND COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS.

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 <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2014-12-30/pdf/2014-30297.pdf>.

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE (DOC) TERMS AND CONDITIONS. Successful applicants who accept a NOAA award under this solicitation will be bound by the DOC Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions. This document will be provided in the award package in eRA at <http://www.ago.noaa.gov> and at <https://www.commerce.gov/oam/policy/financial-assistance-policy>.

BUREAU TERMS AND CONDITIONS. Successful applicants who accept an award under this solicitation will be bound by bureau-specific standard terms and conditions. These terms and conditions will be provided in the award package in NOAA's Grants Online system. For NOAA awards only, the Administrative Standard Award Conditions for National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Financial Assistance Awards U.S. Department of Commerce are applicable to this solicitation and may be accessed online at <https://www.noaa.gov/organization/acquisition-grants/financial-assistance>

HUMAN SUBJECTS RESEARCH. For research projects involving Human Subjects an Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval or an exemption determination will be required in accordance with DOC Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions Section G.05.i "Research Involving Human Subjects" found at <https://www.commerce.gov/oam/policy/financial-assistance-policy>.

NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT (NEPA). NOAA must analyze the potential environmental impacts, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), for applicant projects or proposals which are seeking NOAA federal funding opportunities. Detailed information on NOAA compliance with NEPA can be found at the following NOAA NEPA website: <http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/>, including our NOAA Administrative Order 216-6 for NEPA, http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/NAO216_6.pdf, and the Council on Environmental Quality implementation regulations, http://energy.gov/sites/prod/files/NEPA-40CFR1500_1508.pdf. Consequently, as part of an applicant's package, and under their description of their program activities, applicants are required 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. 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.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT. Department of Commerce regulations implementing the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), 5 U.S.C. Sec. 552, are found at 15 C.F.R. Part 4, Public Information. These regulations set forth rules for the Department regarding making requested materials, information, and records publicly available under the FOIA. Applications submitted in response to this Notice of Funding Opportunity may be subject to requests for release under the Act. In the event that an application contains information or data that the applicant deems to be confidential commercial information that should be exempt from disclosure under FOIA, that information should be identified, bracketed, and marked as Privileged, Confidential, Commercial or Financial Information. In accordance with 15 CFR § 4.9, the Department of Commerce will protect from disclosure confidential business information contained in financial assistance applications and other documentation provided by applicants to the extent permitted by law.

MINORITY SERVING INSTITUTIONS. The Department of Commerce/National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (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.

DATA SHARING PLAN.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 Data Management Plan should be aligned with the Data Management Guidance provided by NOAA in the Announcement. 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 course of 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, 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 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.

More information can be found on NOAA's Data Management Procedures at:

https://nosc.noaa.gov/EDMC/documents/Data_Sharing_Directive_v3.0_remediated.pdf and at NAO 212-15 Management of Environmental Data and Information:

<https://www.noaa.gov/organization/administration/nao-212-15-management-of-environmental-data-and-information>

NOAA SEXUAL ASSAULT AND SEXUAL HARASSMENT PREVENTION AND RESPONSE POLICY.

NOAA requires organizations receiving federal assistance to report findings of sexual harassment, or any other kind of harassment, regarding a Principal Investigator (PI), co-PI, or any other key personnel in the award.

NOAA expects all financial assistance recipients to establish and maintain clear and unambiguous standards of behavior to ensure harassment free workplaces wherever NOAA grant or cooperative agreement work is conducted, including notification pathways for all personnel, including students, on the awards. This expectation includes activities at all on- and offsite facilities and during conferences and workshops. All such settings should have accessible and evident means for reporting violations and recipients should exercise due diligence with timely investigations of allegations and corrective actions.

For more information, please visit: <https://www.noaa.gov/organization/acquisition-grants/noaa-workplace-harassment-training-for-contractors-and-financial>.

SCIENCE INTEGRITY. 1. Maintaining Integrity. The non-Federal entity shall maintain the scientific integrity of research performed pursuant to this grant or financial assistance award including the prevention, detection, and remediation of any allegations regarding the violation of scientific integrity or scientific and research misconduct, and the conduct of inquiries, investigations, and adjudications of allegations of violations of scientific integrity or scientific and research misconduct. All the requirements of this provision flow down to subrecipients. 2. Peer Review. The peer review of the results of scientific activities under a NOAA grant, financial assistance award or cooperative agreement shall be accomplished to ensure consistency with NOAA standards on quality, relevance, scientific integrity, reproducibility, transparency, and performance. NOAA will ensure that peer review of "influential scientific information" or "highly influential scientific assessments" is conducted in accordance with the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Final Information Quality Bulletin for Peer Review and NOAA policies on peer review, such as the Information Quality Guidelines. 3. In performing or presenting the results of scientific activities under the NOAA grant, financial assistance award, or cooperative agreement and in responding to allegations regarding the violation of scientific integrity or scientific and research misconduct, the non-Federal entity and all subrecipients shall comply with the provisions herein and NOAA Administrative Order (NAO) 202-735D, Scientific Integrity, and its Procedural Handbook, including any amendments thereto. That Order can be found at <http://nrc.noaa.gov/ScientificIntegrityCommons.aspx>. 4. Primary Responsibility. The non-Federal entity shall have the primary responsibility to prevent, detect, and investigate allegations of a violation of scientific integrity or scientific and research misconduct. Unless otherwise instructed by the grants officer, the non-Federal entity shall promptly conduct an initial inquiry into any allegation of such misconduct and may rely on its internal policies and procedures, as appropriate, to do so. 5. By executing this grant, financial assistance award, or cooperative agreement the non-Federal entity provides its assurance that it has established an administrative process for performing an inquiry, investigating, and reporting allegations of a violation of scientific integrity or scientific and research misconduct; and that it will comply with its own administrative process for performing an inquiry, investigation, and reporting of such misconduct. 6. The non-Federal entity shall insert this provision in all subawards at all tiers under this grant, financial assistance award, or cooperative agreement.

REVIEW OF RISK. After applications are proposed for funding by the Selecting Official, the Grants Office will perform administrative reviews, including an assessment of risk posed by the applicant under 2 C.F.R. 200.206. These may include assessments of the financial stability of an applicant and the quality of the applicant's management systems, history of performance, and the applicant's ability to effectively implement statutory, regulatory, or other requirements imposed on non-Federal entities. Special conditions that address any risks determined to exist may be applied. Applicants may submit comments about any information concerning organizational performance listed in the Responsibility/Qualification section of SAM.gov for consideration by the awarding agency.

REVIEWS AND EVALUATION. 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 §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.

REQUIRED USE OF AMERICAN IRON, STEEL, MANUFACTURED PRODUCTS, AND

CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS. If applicable, and pursuant to the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (“IIJA”), Pub.L. No. 117-58, which includes the Build American, Buy American (BABA) Act, Pub. L. No. 117-58, §§ 70901-52 and OMB M-22-11, recipients of an award of Federal financial assistance from the Department of Commerce (DOC) are hereby notified that none of the funds provided under this award may be used for a project for infrastructure unless: 1) all iron and steel used in the project are produced in the United States—this means all manufacturing processes, from the initial melting stage through the application of coatings, occurred in the United States; 2) all manufactured products used in the project are produced in the United States—this means the manufactured product was manufactured in the United States; and the cost of the components of the manufactured product that are mined, produced, or manufactured in the United States is greater than 55 percent of the total cost of all components of the manufactured product, unless another standard for determining the minimum amount of domestic content of the manufactured product has been established under applicable law or regulation; and 3) all construction materials¹ are manufactured in the United States—this means that all manufacturing processes for the construction material occurred in the United States. The Buy America preference only applies to articles, materials, and supplies that are consumed in, incorporated into, or affixed to an infrastructure project. As such, it does not apply to tools, equipment, and supplies, such as temporary scaffolding, brought to the construction site and removed at or before the completion of the infrastructure project. Nor does a Buy America preference apply to equipment and furnishings, such as movable chairs, desks, and portable computer equipment, that are used at or within the finished infrastructure project but are not an integral part of the structure or permanently affixed to the infrastructure project.

WAIVERS. When necessary, recipients may apply for, and DOC may grant, a waiver from these requirements. DOC will notify the recipient for information on the process for requesting a waiver from these requirements. 1) When DOC has made a determination that one of the following exceptions applies, the awarding official may waive the application of the domestic content procurement preference in any case in which DOC determines that: a. applying the domestic content procurement preference would be inconsistent with the public interest; b. the types of iron, steel, manufactured products, or construction materials are not produced in the United States in sufficient and reasonably available quantities or of a satisfactory quality; or c. the inclusion of iron, steel, manufactured products, or construction materials produced in the United States will increase the cost of the overall project by more than 25 percent. A request to waive the application of the domestic content procurement preference must be in writing. DOC will provide instructions on the format, contents, and supporting materials required for any waiver request. Waiver requests are subject to public comment periods of no less than 15 days and must be reviewed by the Made in America Office. There may be instances where an award qualifies, in whole or in part, for an existing waiver described at whitehouse.gov/omb/management/made-in-america.

DEFINITIONS. “Construction materials” includes an article, material, or supply—other than an item of primarily iron or steel; a manufactured product; cement and cementitious materials; aggregates such as stone, sand, or gravel; or aggregate binding agents or additives²—that is or consists primarily of: non-ferrous metals; plastic and polymer-based products (including polyvinylchloride, composite building materials, and polymers used in fiber optic cables); glass (including optic glass); lumber; or drywall. “Domestic content procurement preference” means all iron and steel used in the project are produced in the United States; the manufactured products used in the project are produced in the United States; or the construction materials used in the project are produced in the United States. “Infrastructure” includes, at a minimum, the structures, facilities, and equipment for, in the United States, roads, highways, and bridges; public transportation; dams, ports, harbors, and other maritime facilities; intercity passenger and freight railroads; freight and intermodal facilities; airports; water systems, including drinking water and wastewater systems; electrical transmission facilities and systems; utilities; broadband infrastructure; and buildings and real property. Infrastructure includes facilities that generate, transport, and distribute energy. “Project” means the construction, alteration, maintenance, or repair of infrastructure in the United States. -- 1 Excludes cement and cementitious materials, aggregates such as stone, sand, or gravel, or aggregate binding agents or additives. 2 IIJA, § 70917(c)(1).

C. Reporting

In accordance with 2 CFR 200.328-9 and the terms and conditions of the award, financial reports are to be submitted semiannually and performance (technical) reports are to be submitted semiannually. Reports are submitted electronically through eRA.

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 FFATA Subaward Reporting System (FSRS) available at <https://www.fsrs.gov/> on all subawards over \$30,000. Refer to 2 CFR Part 170.

Performance (technical) reports shall use the NOAA Restoration Center's progress report narrative format and form approved by OMB under control number 0648 0718, or a successor form. This form will be provided to awardees by the NOAA Federal Program Officer. In addition, award recipients proposing multiple site locations may be required to complete individual reports for each site, or provide a project/site list including status and expenditures.

Performance (technical) reports shall be due on the same fiscal year schedule as financial reports (Oct. 30 and April 30) covering April 1 - September 30 and October 1 - March 31, respectively. A comprehensive final report covering all activities during the award period is required and must be received by NOAA within 120 days after the end date of this award. Reports are submitted electronically through NOAA's electronic grants management system.

VII. Agency Contacts

Supplemental Guidance regarding application writing and FAQs about this Announcement can be found at <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/grant/atlantic-salmon-habitat-restoration-partnership-grants>. For further information contact Amanda Cousart at 301-337-9447, or by e-mail at amanda.cousart@noaa.gov. Prospective applicants are strongly encouraged to contact NOAA Restoration Center staff before submitting an application to discuss their NOAA project ideas with respect to technical merit and NOAA's objectives. NOAA will make every effort to respond to prospective applicants on a first come, first served basis. These discussions will not include review of draft proposals or site visits during the application period.

VIII. Other Information

Funds awarded cannot necessarily pay for all the costs that the recipient might incur in the course of carrying out an award. Generally, costs that are allowable include salaries, equipment and supplies, as long as these are "necessary and reasonable" specifically for the purpose of the award. Allowable costs are determined by reference to the OMB Uniform Guidance at 2 C.F.R. Part 200, codified by the Department of Commerce at 1327.101. All cost reimbursement sub-awards (e.g. subgrants, subcontracts) are subject to those federal cost principles applicable to the particular type of organization concerned.