

NOTICE OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

Table of Contents

NOTICE OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY.....	1
Executive Summary	1
Full Text of Announcement	2
I. Funding Opportunity Description.....	2
II. Award Information	6
III. Eligibility Information.....	9
IV. Application and Submission Information	10
V. Application Review Information.....	20
VI. Award Administration Information.....	23
VII. Agency Contacts.....	29
VIII. Other Information	29

Executive Summary

Federal Agency Name

NOS National Center for Coastal Ocean Science (NCCOS)

Funding Opportunity Title

2025 Regional Ecosystem Research (RER) Program: Understanding Species' Habitat Usage and Connectivity in and around Marine Protected Areas

Announcement Type

Competitive

Funding Opportunity Number

NOAA-NOS-NCCOS-2025-28604

Assistance Listing Number(s)

11.478

Dates

The deadline for receipt of a full proposal is 11:59 p.m., Eastern Time on January 23, 2025. The full proposal should be submitted electronically through Grants.gov (<http://www.grants.gov>). **After the application is validated by Grants.gov, please send an email to nccos.grant.awards@noaa.gov to notify us of your submission.**

Funding Opportunity Description

The purpose of this document is to advise the public that NOAA/NOS/National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science (NCCOS)/Competitive Research Program (CRP) [formerly Center for Sponsored Coastal Ocean Research (CSCOR)/Coastal Ocean Program (COP)], in partnership with NOAA's Office of National Marine Sanctuaries and National Marine Protected Areas Center, is soliciting proposals under the Regional Ecosystem Research Program for projects to understand species' habitat usage and connectivity in and around marine protected areas. This information will be used to improve the ability of resource managers to address habitat connectivity, species' habitat affinities, and spatial and temporal usage of habitats in management plans for marine protected areas. Funding is contingent upon the availability of Fiscal Year 2025 Federal appropriations. If funds become available for this program, two projects are expected to be supported for up to three to four years in duration, with an approximate annual budget for each project up to \$500,000, not to exceed \$2,000,000 per project.

An informational webinar on this solicitation will be offered on October 22, 2024 from 3 to 4 p.m. Eastern Time. Information regarding this Announcement, including the webinar and additional background information, is available on the NCCOS Regional Ecosystem Research Program page (<https://coastalscience.noaa.gov/crp/regional-ecosystem-research/>).

NOAA is committed to making equity central to its mission. This supports a vision in which the nation's people, economy, and ecosystems are thriving and supported by NOAA's equitable and actionable weather, water, and climate research and services. NOAA encourages applicants and awardees to support the principles of equity in science and service delivery when writing their proposals and performing their work. By promoting equity NOAA seeks to improve the creativity, productivity, and the vitality of its research community.

Electronic Access: Proposals should be submitted through Grants.gov, <http://www.grants.gov>. Sign up to receive any potential amendments to this Announcement via <http://www.grants.gov>.

Full Text of Announcement

I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Program Objective

The Competitive Research Program (CRP), part of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science (NCCOS), supports the development of actionable information and tools that improve how the nation protects, manages, and conserves ocean and coastal ecosystems. NCCOS/CRP funds regional-scale and targeted research through a competitive, peer-reviewed process to address our Nation's most pressing issues and needs, including harmful algal blooms and hypoxia (as authorized under the Harmful Algal Bloom and Hypoxia Research and Control Act), coastal resilience, sea-level rise, ocean acidification, mesophotic coral ecosystem characterization, and effective ecosystem-based management.

Research supported by NCCOS/CRP seeks to produce actionable information and user-driven products that will enable resource managers to implement and assess management and policy strategies, as well as increase scientific understanding on issues threatening ecosystems and communities. To accomplish this, NCCOS/CRP emphasizes a collaborative research process that involves resource managers, planners, policymakers, and impacted communities as research project partners or advisors. To ensure useful results, NCCOS/CRP requires articulation of outcomes that benefit management in proposals, and recipients must report progress toward achieving outcome-based goals annually (see Section IV.B.3.d.(2)).

The Regional Ecosystem Research (RER) Program was established to provide resource managers with actionable information, tools, and capabilities to improve their ability to protect, conserve, and restore the Nation's ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes ecosystems. The RER Program identifies key regional research needs that are limiting the ability of resource managers to address one or more issues from a regional ecosystem perspective.

B. Program Priorities

NCCOS/CRP, in partnership with NOAA's Office of National Marine Sanctuaries and National Marine Protected Areas Center, is soliciting proposals under the RER Program to understand species' habitat usage and connectivity in and around marine protected areas (MPAs). This information will be used to improve the ability of resource managers to address habitat connectivity, species' habitat affinities, and spatial and temporal usage of habitats in MPA management plans. This research supports national and global commitments to effectively conserve 30% of marine and coastal areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem functions and services, by 2030.

Connectivity can be broadly defined as the exchange of materials (e.g., nutrients and pollutants), organisms, and genes within and across geographic space, and can be divided into three categories: (1) genetic connectivity that concerns the exchange of genetic material, (2) demographic or ecological connectivity, which is the exchange of individual propagules, juveniles, and adults, and (3) oceanographic connectivity, which includes flow of materials and circulation patterns and variability that underpins many of these exchanges. This Announcement primarily addresses demographic or ecological connectivity; however, projects may also address genetic and oceanographic connectivity, as appropriate.

Protected areas as defined by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature are “A clearly defined geographical space, recognised, dedicated and managed, through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long-term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values.” For the purposes of this Announcement, other effective area-based conservation measures, or OECMs, are also eligible as a research focus. An OECM as defined by the Convention on Biological Diversity is “a geographically defined area other than a protected area, which is governed and managed in ways that achieve positive and sustained long-term outcomes for the in situ conservation of biodiversity with associated ecosystem functions and services and where applicable, cultural, spiritual, socioeconomic, and other locally relevant values.”

MPAs have been used as one of the main tools to protect significant natural and cultural resources within the marine environment for the benefit of present and future generations. While the use of MPAs and MPA networks as resource management tools has grown significantly in recent decades, there is still substantial scientific investigation needed to improve our understanding of habitat connectivity, species’ habitat affinities, and spatial and temporal usage of habitats, as well as the extent to which surrounding areas benefit from MPAs (e.g., post-recruitment spillover, larval dispersal, and protection of spawning aggregation sites). For an MPA or MPA network to meet its intended purpose, it is imperative that it encompass the habitat requirements for key species, taking into account the species’ home range, site fidelity, and ontogenetic patterns of habitat use. Lack of this type of knowledge is a major impediment to the protection and management of marine resources for sustainable fishing, maintenance of biodiversity and ecosystem services, recovery of endangered species, restoration of ecosystems, economic stability in coastal communities, habitat conservation, and other management goals in the face of natural disasters, climate change, habitat degradation, and other ecosystem threats.

To increase the resistance and resilience of MPAs to climate and other anthropogenic impacts, this Announcement solicits proposals focused on characterizing the movement of organisms within and between habitats and geographies, and understanding the relationship between species’ use of habitats, physical processes, biological and cultural resources, and MPA boundaries.

Proposed projects must address species of management relevance to an MPA or MPA network in the waters under the jurisdiction of the U.S. (including U.S. territories and the Great Lakes). The inclusion of sites in and around sites across the National Marine Sanctuary System (including Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument) is encouraged, but not required. The relevance of the proposed project to ongoing management actions (e.g., restoration or zoning efforts) and their ability to address priority conservation and management questions, as well as significant information gaps and research needs should be prioritized. The goal is to provide resource managers with actionable information that can be addressed more readily in MPA management plans and resource protection measures. Each proposal must address research priorities (a), (b), and (c) below; while not required, they may also address priority (d).

Using management relevant species (i.e., commercial, recreational, keystone, foundational, and/or ecologically important species) as exemplars or models in the selected MPA or MPA network,

- a. Characterize temporal and spatial connectivity (between locations) of species to document the reliance of species with differing requirements on essential habitats, physical processes, connectivity corridors, and environmental conditions.
- b. Determine the extent to which MPA boundaries or networks are sufficient to encompass these essential habitats, processes, and environmental conditions.

c. Identify, characterize, and assess climate induced and other anthropogenic pressures influencing organismal connectivity and/or movement, site fidelity, habitat utilization, and behavior in and around MPAs.

d. (optional) Document processes and mechanisms by which an MPA benefits populations and communities in areas outside its boundaries (e.g., post-recruitment spillover, larval dispersal, and protection of spawning aggregation sites or other critical areas).

Note: applicants addressing priorities (a) through (d), or just (a), (b), and (c) only will be evaluated using the same criteria. There is no added benefit to applications in the evaluation process if they address all four priorities.

Both Indigenous knowledge and local knowledge can be excellent sources of historic and current information on such matters as critical spawning and nursery locations, life cycle phenology, physiographic affinities, and the movement of resources, as well as the drivers of resource change. We encourage the inclusion of this type of information in applications, as appropriate.

In November 2022, the White House Council on Environmental Quality and the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy jointly issued "Guidance for Federal Departments and Agencies on Indigenous Knowledge," which instructed agencies to apply Indigenous Knowledge in decision-making, research, and policies. NOAA has also developed "Guidance and Best Practices for Engaging and Including Indigenous Knowledge in Decision Making." Accordingly, we encourage applicants to consider, as appropriate, the inclusion of Indigenous knowledge, including through co-production with Indigenous Peoples. Indigenous knowledge may be valuable in identifying and understanding culturally important areas and species.

Another source of information relevant to these priorities may be the local knowledge of people and communities (e.g., fishing communities) that have operated and adapted over decades to centuries of continuous dependence on local resources. They have a wealth of experience, tested by time, and we encourage applicants to consider inclusion of this type of knowledge as appropriate.

Expected Outputs:

(1) Characterization and visualization of organismal movement and/or connectivity across time (e.g., daily, monthly, and seasonally).

(2) Habitat usage and requirements of selected species.

(3) Identification of environmental and anthropogenic pressures influencing organismal connectivity and/or movement and resource utilization, and characterization of the scope and scale of those influences.

(4) Recommendations for how to design zoning programs with targeted spatial and temporal considerations to achieve management goals (e.g., protection, restoration, and/or sustainable use).

(5) Documented knowledge of the species' reliance on essential habitats, physical processes, and environmental conditions.

(6) (Optional) Identification of benefits, if any, to areas outside the MPA(s).

Expected Outcomes:

The intended outcome of this research is to address resource questions of MPA managers and provide resource managers and other end users with the scientific information and tools necessary to improve the relevance and effectiveness of MPAs and MPA networks in protecting critical processes affecting connectivity. Results from this research will also be of wide interest to scientists and managers applying findings from population connectivity studies to support MPA planning and management. Management end users of these research results include federal, state, territorial, and/or tribal authorities, the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries, the National Marine Protected Areas Center, National Marine Fisheries Service, U.S. Regional Fishery Management Councils, and any other organization or agency with a management role in MPAs or in areas affected by them.

Application of research results for use by resource managers, policy-makers, and other end users is a central objective of NCCOS/CRP. Proposals should clearly articulate outcome-based management goals of the project (more information can be found at <https://coastalscience.noaa.gov/about/fundingopportunities/outputs-and-outcomes/>) and a continuous engagement process with relevant end users. Engagement efforts with MPA managers and other end users may include, but are not limited to, consultation during proposal preparation, annual meetings, workshops, training sessions on how to apply information or tools, and inclusion on coordination calls. At a minimum, the Lead Principal Investigator (PI) must establish a management transition advisory group (MTAG) composed of resource managers and other prospective end users of the research project outputs. The purpose of the MTAG is to ensure that effective collaboration between the project PI(s) and end users occurs and research results are transferred to the end users. To facilitate a collaborative scientific approach with end users, the Lead PI shall hold at least one meeting per year with project PIs and their MTAG. The purpose of the annual meeting will be to present results of the research to date and to interact with the MTAG to ensure that collaboration between the PIs and the MTAG is maximized and that research results are optimized for utility by end users. The end users can then help facilitate the transfer and use of information derived from this work for management applications, including sustainable fisheries management, habitat conservation and protection, and protection of listed threatened or endangered species. Applicants should include all costs associated with the annual meetings and MTAG engagement (except for end user travel costs for federal employees) in their proposal.

Once a proposal is selected for funding, the PIs will be expected to work with the NCCOS/CRP Program Manager and MPA staff to develop outreach and education materials (e.g., materials for websites, handouts, and social media; incorporating research into the classroom; and highlighting research findings/discoveries as they emerge). The NCCOS/CRP Program Manager will work closely with the Lead PI to ensure that the appropriate management representatives (as end users of the program outputs) are engaged as advisors to the project.

C. Program Authority

33 U.S.C. §883 et seq.; Public Law 102-567, §201(c), Coastal Ocean Program.

II. Award Information

A. Funding Availability

Funding is contingent upon availability of Federal appropriations. If funds become available, two projects are expected to be supported for up to three to four years, with an approximate annual budget for each project up to \$500,000, not to exceed \$2,000,000 per project.

B. Project/Award Period

Full applications may cover a project/award period up to four years, but shorter-term project proposals are encouraged. Projects funded under this Announcement will have a September 1, 2025, start date. The start date should always begin on the first day of the month and the end date should always end on the last day of any given month when making a projection for the award start and end dates.

Awards may be funded incrementally, generally on an annual basis, but once awarded, those awards will not compete for funding in subsequent years. Once approved, full applications are not required for the continuation out years. While applicants are not required to divide Federal assistance project activities into annual increments based on appropriations law, this approach may be constructive given the possibility that funding may not be available in subsequent years.

Funding for each year's activity is contingent upon the availability of appropriations, satisfactory performance, and is at the sole discretion of the agency.

During the implementation phase of research projects funded under this Announcement, regardless of the funding mechanism used, NCCOS/CRP Program Managers will analyze financial statements and progress reports for each continuing award, and will have dialogue with the PIs and Signing Officials of the recipient institutions to discuss research progress and expected timelines for the remaining award period. If NOAA experiences budget fluctuations in future fiscal years, the amount of funding provided in any given fiscal year will be determined on a project-specific basis by the remaining tasks to be completed, the overall pace of the research and the length of time remaining on the award and/or across the board reductions or increases based on the overall funds available.

C. Type of Funding Instrument

In an effort to maximize the use of limited resources, applications from non-Federal and Federal applicants (including NOAA) will be evaluated in the same competition, with different funding instruments applicable to the type of applicant.

Non-Federal Applicants. The funding instrument for non-Federal applicants is expected to be a cooperative agreement. A cooperative agreement is used when substantial Federal government involvement is anticipated. This means that the recipient can expect substantial agency collaboration, participation, or intervention in project performance. Substantial involvement exists when: responsibility for the management, control, direction, or performance of the project is shared by the assisting agency and the recipient; or the assisting agency has the right to intervene (including interruption or modification) in the conduct or performance of project activities. "Substantial involvement" will be coordinated and communicated by NCCOS/CRP Program Managers, and can include collaboration and participation by NOAA (but see section III.A.5-6), as well as NCCOS/CRP Program Manager involvement in PI meetings, setting up management advisory groups, development of management transition plans, and communication of project results.

NOAA Cooperative Institutes. If the non-Federal applicant is at an institution that has a NOAA Cooperative Institute (CI), <https://ci.noaa.gov/>, it is allowed to submit applications that reference the CI by attaching a cover letter to the application stating its desire to have the application associated with the CI. This letter should specify the name of the CI, the CI cooperative agreement number, and the NOAA-approved research theme and task that applies to the proposal. The application will use the Facilities & Administrative (F&A, or indirect cost) rate associated with the main CI agreement. If the application is selected for funding, NOAA will notify the university that a separate award will be issued with its own award number. However, the award will include two Special Award Conditions (SACs): (1) the existing University/NOAA Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) would be incorporated by reference into the terms of the competitive award, and (2) any performance report(s) for the competitive project must follow the timetable of the funding program and be submitted directly to the funding program. Report(s) will be copied to the CI's administrator when due, to be attached to the main cooperative agreement progress report as an appendix. This will allow the CI to coordinate all the projects submitted through the CI, since the terms of these awards will specify that this is a CI project via the MOA.

Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit. If the non-Federal applicant is at an institution that has a NOAA approved Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit (CESU), <http://www.cesu.psu.edu/>, and meets the criteria described below for using that status, they may include a cover letter with their application stating their desire to have the application associated with that CESU. This letter should specify the name of the CESU. Of the 17 CESUs across the nation, NOAA is a member of 10: North and West Alaska, California, Hawaii-Pacific Islands, South Florida-Caribbean, Gulf Coast, Piedmont-South Atlantic Coast, Chesapeake Watershed, North Atlantic Coast, Pacific Northwest, and Great Plains.

The following criteria must be met for NOAA to use the established partnerships with CESUs:

1. The proposed project must fit within the objectives of the National CESU Network Program, which are to provide research, technical assistance, and education to Federal land management, environmental, and research agencies and their partners in biological, physical, social, cultural, or engineering disciplines needed to address natural and cultural resource management issues at multiple scales and in an ecosystem context.

2. The proposed project must fit the intent of the CESU's existing cooperative and joint agreement, which means (a) the research partnership will carry out or stimulate an activity (e.g., data, products, or services) for a public purpose, and (b) NOAA will be significantly involved in the work.

Federal Applicants. The intra- and inter-agency transfers of funds are not Federal assistance (grants or cooperative agreements), and the policies described in this Announcement applicable to Federal assistance awards do not apply to Federal entities receiving intra- and inter-agency transfers of funds. In the agreements implemented in these situations, NOAA will be substantially involved in the projects in a manner similar to the cooperative agreements with non-federal parties. Contact the NCCOS Grants Administrator for more information (refer to Section VII).

1. *NOAA Federal Applicants.* The funding instrument for a selected application from an eligible NOAA Federal applicant will be an intra-agency transfer of funds.

2. *Federal Applicants (except NOAA)*. The funding instrument for a selected application from a non-NOAA Federal applicant will be through an inter-agency transfer of funds, provided legal authority exists for the Federal applicant to receive funds from another agency. Non-NOAA Federal applicants that intend to be the lead institution should contact the NCCOS Grants Administrator (refer to Section VII) to discuss how to structure budgets and prepare required documentation.

III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants for Federal financial assistance in this competition are U.S. institutions of higher education, non-profits, state and local governments, tribal government entities, U.S. Territories, U.S. Affiliated Pacific Islands institutions, and for-profit organizations.

Department of Commerce (DOC)/NOAA supports cultural and gender diversity and encourages women and minority individuals and groups to submit applications to its programs. In addition, DOC/NOAA is strongly committed to broadening the participation of Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Hispanic-serving institutions, Tribal colleges and universities, Alaskan Native and Native Hawaiian institutions, Asian American and Native Pacific Islander-serving institutions, and institutions that work in underserved areas. DOC/NOAA encourages applications involving any of the above institutions to apply.

Please note that:

1. PIs must be employees of an eligible entity listed above; and applications must be submitted through that entity. Non-Federal researchers should comply with their institutional requirements for application submission.

2. Non-Federal researchers affiliated with NOAA-University Cooperative Institutes will be funded through cooperative agreements.

3. Foreign researchers must apply as subawards or contracts through an eligible U.S. entity.

4. Federal applicants are eligible to submit applications for intra- or inter-agency funds transfers through this competition. Non-NOAA Federal applicants will be required to submit certifications or documentation showing that they have specific legal authority to accept funds for this type of research.

5. An eligible U.S. entity may propose Federal agency researchers as funded or unfunded collaborators. If Federal agency researchers are proposed as funded collaborators, the applicant should present the collaborator's funding request in the application in the same way documentation is provided for a subrecipient for purposes of project evaluation, even though intra- or inter-agency funding transfers will generally be used if the project is selected.

6. NCCOS researchers may apply through an eligible U.S. entity as funded or unfunded collaborators, but cannot be the lead PI on the application. NOAA Federal salaries will not be paid.

B. Cost Share or Matching Requirement

None.

C. Other Criteria that Affect Eligibility

Each application must substantially comply with the 14 elements listed under Section IV.B.2.c Content and Form of Application: Required Elements (a)-(n), or it will be returned to sender without further consideration. A checklist with the required and requested application elements can be found in Section VIII.

IV. Application and Submission Information

A. Address to Request Application Package

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

B. Content and Form of Application

1. Example Application

A sample application package and other guidance can be found under “Information for Applicants” located on the NCCOS website at:

<https://coastalscience.noaa.gov/about/funding-opportunities/application-forms/>.

2. Collaborative Proposals

If more than one institution is collaborating in a project awarded funds, the lead institution will be the only institution to directly receive funds from NOAA and will be responsible for distributing funds to the partner institutions except for Federal agency partners. Federal agencies will be funded with either intra- or inter-agency agreements initiated by NCCOS. Only one full proposal per project must be submitted via Grants.gov. Collaborating institutions expected to receive funds must be budgeted as subawards or contracts in the submitted proposal and provide the lead institution with their documents for submission by the lead. Unfunded collaborators may also participate.

3. Required Elements

Each application must substantially comply with the following 14 elements (a-n) to be forwarded for merit review. The Summary Title Page, Abstract, Project Description, References, Biographical Sketch, and Budget Narrative must be single spaced in 12-point font with one-inch margins. **The Collaborators List must use an Excel spreadsheet and be submitted by email to nccos.grant.awards@noaa.gov.** The 14 elements are as follows:

a. **Standard Form 424.** The applicant must submit the Standard Form, SF-424, “Application for Federal Assistance,” to indicate the total amount of funding proposed for the whole project period.

b. **Summary Title Page.** One-page maximum. The Summary Title Page identifies the project's title and the PI's name, affiliation, complete address, phone, and email information. The requested funding amounts for each fiscal year should be included on the Summary Title Page. If this proposal is a resubmission from a previous NCCOS competition, indicate that information on the Summary Title Page.

c. ***One-page Abstract/Project Summary.*** The Project Summary (Abstract) should appear on a separate single page, headed with the proposal title, institution(s), investigator(s), total proposed cost, and budget period. It should be written in the third person. The Abstract should include an introduction of the problem, project objectives and a brief summary of work to be completed. The summary Abstract allows the respondents to summarize key points in their own words. Abstracts of applications that receive funding may be posted on program-related websites.

d. ***Project Description.*** The description of the work proposed must include four narrative sections: the Proposed Research, its Application to Management, a Data Management Plan, and an Equitable Science and Service Delivery Plan. The proposal shall not exceed more than: 20 pages for the description of the Proposed Research and Application to Management; two pages for the Data Management Plan; and one page for the Equitable Science and Service Delivery Plan. These four sections must include the information as described below.

(1) ***Proposed Research***

The Proposed Research narrative section should be thorough and explicitly indicate its relevance to the program goals and scientific priorities by:

(a) Identifying the topic that is being addressed by the proposal;

(b) Describing the proposed scientific objectives and research activities in relation to the present state of knowledge in the field and, if appropriate, in relation to previous and current work by the proposing PI(s);

(c) Discussing how the proposed project lends value to the program goals; and

(d) Identifying the function of each PI. The Lead PI will be responsible for communicating with the NCCOS/CRP Program Manager on all pertinent verbal or written information.

Note: If the proposal is a resubmission from a previous competition, any concerns identified with the Project Description in the previous review process and provided to the applicant(s) should be addressed in the resubmitted proposal.

(2) ***Application to Management***

The Applications to Management Narrative should establish the connection to relevant resource management needs by explicitly identifying the end user group(s) including evidence of the linkage between the scientific questions and management needs. The format and role of the MTAG (see Section I.B) should be included in this section. The narrative should provide the management justification for the research by:

(a) Articulating the coordination with one or more end users.

(b) Discussing the expected significance of the project to management priorities and needs. Specific management targets, with proposed outputs and outcomes, should describe how this project will improve management capabilities. Outputs are defined as products (e.g., publications and models) or activities that lead to outcomes (i.e., changes in management knowledge or action). Definitions and examples of outputs and outcomes can be accessed at <https://coastalscience.noaa.gov/about/funding-opportunities/outputs-and-outcomes/>. The timeline for achieving outputs should be included in the Milestone Chart (below).

(c) Describing specific activities, such as workshops or development of outreach materials, that will enhance information transfer from project scientists to relevant management entities, other end-users, or the public.

(d) Describing the structure, size, and activities of the MTAG, particularly by including a plan for how the MTAG will engage with project PIs. Members of the MTAG should be named, when possible. Letters may be included, but are not required, to indicate that they have agreed to serve on the MTAG; these letters do not count against the page limits.

(3) *Data Management Plan*

NOAA requires that grant-produced data be made publicly available, preferably with open data licenses. Proposals must provide a detailed Data Management Plan that describes how metadata and data collected as part of the project will be openly disseminated to the broader community, and plans for longer term archiving of these data. PIs that propose to collaborate with data centers or networks, except the National Center for Environmental Information (NCEI), are advised to obtain letters of commitment that affirm the collaboration. Where possible, all PIs are strongly encouraged to use existing data centers and data portals to archive and disseminate their data. Costs associated with use of data centers, or data archiving, should be included in the application budget. Proposed Data Management Plans should reflect archiving Option A, B, and/or C as stated below. Note: non-digital data (e.g., laboratory notebooks, preliminary analyses, drafts of scientific papers, plans for future research, peer review reports, communications with colleagues, or physical objects, such as laboratory specimens) are not required to be made publicly accessible.

Option A: For the majority of oceanographic and ecological data, except non-digital data as described above, funding recipients are expected to submit data to the NOAA/NCEI for long-term preservation, which will provide public access, archiving, discovery metadata meeting NOAA standards and formats, and a Digital Object Identifier (DOI).

Option B: For any other data not appropriate for submission to NOAA/NCEI, funding recipients are expected to submit data to an appropriate long-term data facility (e.g., National Institutes of Health's GenBank for genomics data) that preserves data, properly manages archived data to assure their quality, mints DOIs, and makes archived data and related information available to users in a timely and efficient manner. Funding recipients should submit discovery metadata meeting NOAA standards and formats documenting these non-NOAA data archives to the Program Manager (see Section VII for contact information).

Option C: For limited-release data that are limited by law, regulation, policy, security requirements, commercial or international agreements, or valid technical considerations, funding recipients may request permission not to make data publicly accessible from the Program Manager.

For additional information regarding Data Management Plans, see <https://coastalscience.noaa.gov/about/funding-opportunities/data-management-plan>. For questions regarding data management and implementing this guidance: refer to Section VII for the contact information for the NCCOS Data Coordinator.

(4) *Equitable Science and Service Delivery Plan*

NOAA is committed to equity in research, science, and service delivery and encourages program applicants to consider the principles that enhance the representation and application of their scientific projects. This includes considering the unique mixture of attributes an individual brings to a project team or workplace; ensuring the consistent and systematic fair, just, and impartial treatment of all individuals, including individuals who belong to underserved communities that have been denied such treatment; and providing an environment which is respectful, collaborative, supportive, and allows for equal access.

In this section, applicants should describe how the proposed project and project team will accomplish the following actions to support equitable science and service delivery:

(1) Create an inclusive and accessible environment that broadens the participation of underrepresented groups; and

(2) Advance awareness, accessibility, and overall societal impacts of the proposed science for relevant users of all disciplines and backgrounds, including those that have been historically underserved, as applicable.

Examples could include, but are not limited to, partnering with underserved communities to ensure relevant science, services and tools reach decision-makers; pairing research science with socioeconomic and or environmental justice data; co-producing knowledge and products with decision-makers; partnering with minority serving institutions or programs that promote diversity in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM); having a diverse project team and MTAG across several factors (e.g., sectors, age, career stage, gender, ethnicity, ability, lived experience, problem solving styles, geography, etc.); encouraging diverse perspectives from project team members and partners; and or fostering an inclusive environment that empowers, engages and values the unique attributes of all team members.

e. **References cited.** Reference information is required. Each reference should include the names of all authors in the same sequence they appear in the publication, the article title, the journal or book title, volume number, page numbers, and year of publication. While there is no established page limitation, this section should include bibliographic citations only and should not be used to provide parenthetical information outside of the Project Description.

f. **Milestone chart.** Provide timelines of major tasks covering the duration of the proposed project.

g. **Biographical sketch.** All PIs and co-PIs must provide summaries of up to two pages that include the following:

(1) A listing of professional and academic credentials and mailing address; and

(2) A list of up to five publications most closely related to the proposed project and five other significant publications.

h. **Current and Pending Support.** Describe all current and pending Federal financial/funding support for all PIs and co-PIs. Continuing grants must also be included. A current and pending support form is available on the NCCOS website for your use: <https://coastalscience.noaa.gov/about/application-forms>. You should respond to this element whether or not you have any current and/or pending support by indicating “not applicable.”

i. **Permits.** A list of all known applicable permits that will be required to perform the proposed work. You should respond to this requirement element whether or not permits are required. It is the applicant's responsibility to obtain all necessary Federal, state, and local government, tribal, and/or private landowner permits and approvals where necessary for the proposed work to be conducted. In addition, applicants are strongly encouraged to engage tribal interests at the earliest stage of scoping or planning activities and familiarize themselves with the NOAA Tribal Consultation Handbook 2023 (https://www.noaa.gov/sites/default/files/2023-07/NOAA_Tribal_Consultation_Handbook_2023_FINAL.pdf).

j. **Standard Form (SF) 424A.** All applicants are required to provide a SF-424A Budget Form that identifies the budget for each fiscal year of the proposal. Place each fiscal year in separate columns in Section B of page one on the SF- 424A by filling in the fiscal years 1-4 in Section A Budget Summary - Grant Program Function or Activity column. (Note that this revised SF-424A Section B format is a NOAA requirement that is not reflected in the Instructions for the SF-424A). If the project is 5 years in length, then a separate SF-424A should be submitted for the 5th year. Place the totals of years 1-4 in the first column and Year 5 in the next column. The budget figures must correspond with the descriptions contained in the Budget Narrative.

Each subaward should provide a SF-424A listing each year of funding being requested. The lead institution should list the total subaward costs under line item 6.h. Other category and contractor costs under line item 6.f. Contractual category on the SF-424A. Signed approval from the institution of each identified subaward and contractor should be provided.

All ship costs belong in the "h: other" category and are not subject to indirect costs.

k. **Budget Narrative.** In order to allow reviewers to fully evaluate the appropriateness of costs, all applications must include a detailed budget narrative to support all proposed budget categories for each fiscal year. For additional budget guidance <https://coastalscience.noaa.gov/about/funding-opportunities/requirements/>.

Personnel costs should be broken out by named PI, total annual salary, number of months, and percentage of time requested per year per PI. Support for each PI should be commensurate with their stated involvement in the project's goals and objectives. Any unnamed personnel (graduate students, post-doctoral researchers, technicians) should be identified by their job title, and their personnel costs explained similar to PI personnel costs. The contribution of any personnel to the project goals should be explained.

Travel costs should be broken out by number of people traveling, destination and purpose of travel, and projected costs per person (i.e., hotel rate, meals and incidentals, and transportation). Note: Conference registration fees belong in the "h. other" category in the SF424A and budget justification.

Equipment costs should describe the equipment to be purchased, and its contribution to the achievement of the project goals.

Any ship time needs must be clearly identified in the proposed budget. The applicant is responsible for requesting ship time through appropriate channels and for meeting all requirements to ensure the availability of requested ship time. If any NOAA personnel will be present during ship operations, vessel safety clearances must be obtained through the NOAA Office of Marine and Aviation Operations (OMAO) in advance of the cruise. Required information and procedures are detailed in a Charter Vessel Acquisition and Safety NOAA Administrative Order which can be accessed via the OMAO website at <https://www.oma.noaa.gov/learn/headquarters/safety-environmental-compliance>.

If more than one institution is collaborating in a project recommended for funding, the lead institution will be the only institution to directly receive funds from NOAA unless a Federal agency is a funded collaborator. Federal agencies may be funded directly by NOAA. The lead institution is responsible for sending funds to the other subaward institutions. A separate SF-424A and budget narrative is required for each subaward (including Federal collaborators receiving funds) and must be provided to the lead institution for submission. Signed approval from each identified subaward institution is required. For acquisition contracts, the purpose and cost or price must be fully justified and the contract must fully comply with 2 C.F.R. 200.317-.327.

Applications are encouraged to include the costs of project-level data management, including: coordinating, organizing, documenting, formatting, or otherwise preparing datasets for submission to NOAA or non-NOAA data facilities; establishing and maintaining data access tools and services and related metadata; and managing non-digital data that are not required to be made publicly accessible, including laboratory notebooks, preliminary analyses, drafts of scientific papers, plans for future research, peer review reports, communications with colleagues, or physical objects, such as laboratory specimens.

An applicant requesting funds for indirect costs in its proposal budget that has a current Federally approved rate should submit documentation of the indirect cost rate agreement as an attachment to its application submission. An applicant without a Federally approved rate should refer to Section IV.F. of this Announcement regarding options.

I. **CD-511**. Certification Regarding Lobbying. Lead institutions can submit these forms through the Grants.gov CD-511 document placeholder without a hard signature because electronic signatures are allowed on documents from the submitting institution.

m. **Standard Form (SF) 424B**. Assurances - Non-Construction Programs. Lead institutions can submit these forms through the Grants.gov SF-424B document placeholder without a hard signature because electronic signatures are allowed on documents from the submitting institutions.

n. **List of Collaborators**. The List of Collaborators **must use an Excel spreadsheet and be submitted by email to nccos.grant.awards@noaa.gov**. Do not submit it with your application through Grants.gov as this will cause an error when the application is transferred to NOAA's grant system, eRA.

Provide one list that includes all (U.S. and Foreign) collaborators, advisors, and advisees for each investigator (PI, co-PIs, post-docs, and subawardees), complete with corresponding institutions. This list must include the names of each PI and co-PI. Submit only one, combined and alphabetized list per application in an Excel spreadsheet using First Name, Last Name and Institution for the column headings. Collaborators are individuals who have participated in a project or publication within the last 48 months with any investigator. Collaborators also include those persons with which the investigators may have ongoing collaboration negotiations. Advisees and Advisors do not have a time limit. Advisees are persons with whom the individual investigator has had an association as thesis or dissertation advisor or postdoctoral sponsor. Advisors include an individual's own graduate and postgraduate advisors. Unfunded participants in the proposed study should also be listed (but not their collaborators). This information is critical for identifying potential conflicts of interest and avoiding bias in the selection of reviewers.

4. Application Format and Assembly

An application should be submitted electronically through Grants.gov (<http://www.grants.gov>). If use of Grants.gov is not feasible, contact the NCCOS Grants Administrator (see section VII for contact information). If you experience submission problems, send an email to support@grants.gov and call the Grants.gov help desk (800-518-4726). The NCCOS/CRP Program Manager for this Announcement will use programmatic discretion in accepting applications due to documented electronic submission problems. Note: If more than one submission of an application is performed, the last application submitted before the due date and time will be the official version.

In addition to the 14 required elements (a-n), applicants may provide the following:

1) A list of potential peer reviewers.

2) Letters from unfunded collaborators, verifying their contribution to the project. These letters do not count against the page limit for the Project Description.

These elements can be uploaded into the Optional Form box under Other Attachments in Grants.gov.

Applications containing known subawards must provide an SF-424A, Budget Narrative, and Current and Pending Support for each subaward. Signed approval from the institution of each subaward and contractor should be provided. We also request submission of the indirect rate agreement for subawards, if applicable. Applicants may provide additional information similar to that requested in this section for an acquisition contract if it may help NOAA assure compliance of the contract with 2 C.F.R. 200.317-.327.

Permits, biographical sketches and lists of collaborators should be supplied to the lead institution in order for them to be combined within the lead application information. It is the applicant's responsibility to obtain all necessary Federal, state, and local government, tribal, and/or private landowners permits and approvals where necessary for the proposed work to be conducted. In addition, applicants are strongly encouraged to engage tribal interests at the earliest stage of scoping or planning activities and familiarize themselves with the NOAA Tribal Consultation Handbook 2023 (https://www.noaa.gov/sites/default/files/2023-07/NOAA_Tribal_Consultation_Handbook_2023_FINAL.pdf).

Applicants are expected to design their proposals so that they minimize potential adverse impacts on the environment. If applicable, documentation of requests or approvals of environmental permits should be received by the NCCOS/CRP Program Manager prior to funding. Applications will be reviewed to ensure that they have sufficient environmental documentation to allow program staff to determine whether the proposal is categorically excluded from further National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis, or whether an Environmental Assessment is necessary in conformance with requirements of NEPA. For those applications needing an Environmental Assessment, affected applicants will be informed after the peer-review stage, and will be requested to assist in the preparation of a draft assessment (prior to award). Failure to apply for and/or obtain Federal, state, and local government, tribal, and/or private landowners permits, approvals, letters of agreement, or failure to provide environmental analysis where necessary (e.g., NEPA Environmental Assessment) may delay the award of funds if a project is selected for funding. In some cases, if additional permits and approvals are required after an application is awarded, funds may be withheld by the NOAA Grants Officer under a Special Award Condition requiring the recipient to submit required permits and approvals.

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.

Applicants to be recommended for funding will be required to answer relevant questions from the "Environmental Compliance Questionnaire for NOAA Federal Financial Assistance Applicants:" <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1WVoZ-HPMIBu8Web6ITxAJImG2tepoTEb/view?usp=sharing>. The NCCOS/CRP Program Manager will determine which questions are relevant to each specific proposal. Answers must be provided before the application can be submitted for final funding approval.

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

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

Each applicant (unless the applicant is an individual or Federal awarding agency that is excepted from those requirements under 2 CFR 25.110(b) or (c), or has an exception approved by the Federal awarding agency under 2 CFR 25.110(d)) is required to: (i) Be registered in SAM before submitting its application; (ii) Provide a valid unique entity identifier (UEI) in its application; and (iii) 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.

D. Submission Dates and Times

Full applications must be received and validated by Grants.gov by 11:59 pm Eastern Time on January 23, 2025. Applications received by Grants.gov after the deadline will be rejected and returned to the sender without further consideration.

Important: All applicants should be aware that adequate time must be factored into applicant schedules for delivery of the application. See Section IV.G for further instructions on eRA timing and process. Applicants are advised that volume on Grants.gov is currently extremely heavy, and if use of Grants.gov is not feasible, contact the NCCOS Grants Administrator (see Section VII for contact information) as soon as possible and no later than a week before the due date to assess whether alternative arrangements can be made. After the application is validated by Grants.gov, please send an email to nccos.grant.awards@noaa.gov to notify us of your submission.

E. Intergovernmental Review

Applications under this program are not subject to Executive Order 12372, "Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs." It has been determined that this notice is not significant for purposes of Executive Order 12866. Pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 553(a) (2), an opportunity for public notice and comment is not required for this notice relating to grants, benefits and contracts. Because this notice is exempt from the notice and comment provisions of the Administrative Procedure Act, a Regulatory Flexibility Analysis is not required, and none has been prepared. It has been determined that this notice does not contain policies with Federalism implications as that term is defined in Executive Order 13132.

F. Funding Restrictions

Indirect Costs: Any non-Federal entity that does not have a current negotiated (including provisional) rate with a Federal agency may choose to use the de minimis indirect cost rate of 15% of Modified Total Direct Cost as allowable under 2 C.F.R. §200.414 or negotiate a rate with DOC. The negotiation and approval of such a new rate is subject to the procedures required by NOAA and the DOC Standard Terms and Conditions, Section B.06. The NOAA contact for indirect or facilities and administrative costs is: Jennifer Jackson, Grants Officer, NOAA Grants Management Division, 1325 East West Highway, 9th Floor, Silver Spring, Maryland 20910, jennifer.jackson@noaa.gov.

NCCOS/CRP will not fund start-up or operational costs for private business ventures and neither fees nor profits will be considered as allowable costs. Ship costs may not be included in indirect cost calculations unless specified within the indirect cost rate agreement of the institution. NCCOS/CRP will not pay for ship overhead expenses otherwise. If indirect costs are applied, an approved indirect cost agreement or budget revision will be required before an application can be recommended for funding.

G. Other Submission Requirements

Applications previously submitted to NCCOS/CRP Notice of Funding Opportunities and not recommended for funding must be revised to address any reviewer or panel concerns before resubmission. Resubmitted applications that have not been revised to address identified concerns may be returned without review.

Applicant organizations must complete and maintain three registrations to be eligible to apply for or receive an award. These registrations include SAM.gov, Grants.gov, and eRA Commons. All registrations must be completed prior to the application being submitted. The complete registration process for all three systems can take 4 to 6 weeks, so applicants should begin this activity as soon as possible. If an eligible applicant does not have access to the internet, please contact the Agency Contacts listed in Section VII for submission instructions.

Prior to registering with eRA Commons, applicant organizations must first obtain a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) from SAM.gov, if needed (refer to Section IV. Applications and Submission Information, Section C). Organizations can register with eRA Commons in tandem with completing their full SAM and Grants.gov registrations; however, all registrations must be in place by time of application submission. eRA Commons requires organizations to identify at least one Signing Official (SO) and at least one Program Director/Principal Investigator (PD/PI) account in order to submit an application.

The first PD/PI listed on the application must include their eRA Commons ID in the "Credential, e.g., agency login" Applicant Identifier field of the SF424 form. Failure to register in the Commons and to include a valid PD/PI Commons ID in the Applicant Identifier field will prevent the successful submission of an electronic application.

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

H. Address for Submitting Proposals

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

V. Application Review Information

1. Importance/relevance and applicability of proposed projects to the program goals	Maximum Points: 30
<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 25 points: Does the research address the priorities stated in Section I.B of this Announcement? Are the expected research products clearly identified, including how they will be used to achieve management outcomes? For 5 points: Does the proposal provide an acceptable “Equitable Science and Service Delivery Plan” (as described in Section IV.B.3.d.(4))?</p>	
2. Technical/scientific merit	Maximum Points: 30
<p>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.</p> <p>For 25 points: The proposed work should have focused objectives and a complete and technically sound strategy for project design, methodologies, data management, data analysis, and development of products and outcomes in support of the objectives. For 5 points: Does the proposal include an acceptable Data Management Plan (as described in Section IV.B.3.d.(3)) that includes details on the types of environmental data and information expected and how and when the data will be shared?</p>	
3. Overall qualifications of applicants	Maximum Points: 10
<p>This criterion ascertains whether the applicant possesses the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project.</p> <p>This includes the capability of the investigator and collaborators to complete the proposed work as evidenced by past research accomplishments, previous cooperative work, the sharing of findings, data, and other research products.</p>	
4. Project costs	Maximum Points: 10
<p>This criterion evaluates the budget to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time frame.</p> <p>Are costs reasonable? Are there any unexplained costs?</p>	
5. Outreach and Education	Maximum Points: 20
<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>The applicant must include plans for communicating and disseminating the results of research in ways that are appropriate to inform the relevant management entities that will use the results of the proposed work, including specific products, outcomes, and timing of the proposed work that will be used in achieving this goal. For the purposes of this review, the applicant must demonstrate how they will interact with end users to ensure that collaboration is maximized between PIs and end users and that the research results are optimized for utility by end users.</p>	

Evaluation Criteria

Review and Selection Process

Once an application has been received by NOAA, an initial administrative review is conducted to determine compliance with requirements and completeness of the application. Ineligible, incomplete, and/or non-responsive applications may be eliminated from further review. NOAA, in its sole discretion, may continue the review process for applications with non-substantive issues that can easily be rectified or cured. All applications that pass this initial review will be evaluated and scored individually by independent peer mail review and/or by independent peer panel review.

Both Federal and non-Federal experts may be used in this process. The peer mail reviewers will be several individuals with expertise in the subjects addressed by particular applications. Each mail reviewer will see only certain individual applications within their area of expertise, and score them individually on a scale of one to five, where scores represent respectively: Excellent (5), Very Good (4), Good (3), Fair (2), Poor (1). Both whole and $\frac{1}{2}$ scores will be acceptable. Reviewers will consider the relative weighting of each of the evaluation criteria in providing an overall proposal score.

The peer panel will be composed of several individuals, with each individual having expertise in a separate area, so that the panel, as a whole, covers a range of relevant scientific expertise. The panel will have access to all mail reviews of proposals and will use the mail reviews in discussion and evaluation of the proposals. The peer panel shall rate the proposals using the evaluation criteria and scoring method provided above (and used by the mail reviewers). Individual peer panel reviewers will consider the relative weighting of the evaluation criteria in providing their individual score. The individual peer panelists' scores shall be combined, using one or more methods, to obtain a numerical ranking of the proposals. If a full review (mail and panel) is conducted, only the panel scores shall be used to rank each proposal. If any non-Federal reviewer is used, no consensus advice is used and no consensus advice will be given by the independent peer mail review or the review panel.

The NCCOS/CRP Program Managers will neither vote or score applications as part of the independent peer review panel nor participate in discussion of the merits of the applications other than to ask/answer questions. Those applications receiving an average panel score of "Fair" or "Poor" will not be given further consideration, and applicants will be notified of non-selection.

For the applications scored by the reviewers as either "Excellent," "Very Good," or "Good," the NCCOS/CRP Program Manager will (a) create a ranking of the applications to be recommended for funding using the average panel scores; (b) recommend the total duration of funding for each application; and (c) recommend the amount of funds available subject to the availability of fiscal year funds. Recommendations for funding are forwarded from the NCCOS/CRP Program Manager to the NCCOS/CRP Director for development of the final recommendation to the Selecting Official, the Director of NCCOS or designee, for the final funding recommendation decision. Recommendations will be made using the rank order generated by the peer-review process unless justification is provided to select a proposal out of rank order. Justification must be based on one or more of the selection factors listed below in Section V.C.

NOAA reserves the right to negotiate the budget with the applicants that have been selected to receive awards, which may include requesting that the applicant remove certain costs, combine budgets into a single application, add/subtract expertise, or change the lead or subaward institution. Additionally, NOAA may request that the applicant modify objectives or work plans and provide supplemental information required by the agency prior to award. NOAA may select some, all, or none of the applications, or part(s) of any particular application, and may request that applicants combine projects. In addition, applications rated by the panel as either "Excellent," "Very Good," or "Good" that are not funded in the current fiscal period, may be considered for funding in another fiscal period without having to repeat the competitive review process.

The Selecting Official will make recommendations to the NOAA Grants Management Division, and the final approval of selected applications and issuance of awards will be by the NOAA Grants Officer. The award decisions of the NOAA Grants Officer are final.

The NOAA Grants Officer will review financial and grants administration aspects of a proposed award, including conducting an assessment of the risk posed by the applicant in accordance with 2 C.F.R. 200.206. In addition to reviewing repositories of government-wide eligibility, qualifications or financial integrity information, the risk assessment conducted by NOAA may consider items such as the financial stability of an applicant, quality of the applicant's management systems, an applicant's history of performance, previous audit reports and audit findings concerning the applicant and the applicant's ability to effectively implement statutory, regulatory, or other requirements imposed on non-Federal entities. See also "Review of Risk" in Section VI.B of this Announcement.

Applicants should be in compliance with the terms of any existing NOAA grants or cooperative agreements and otherwise eligible to receive Federal awards, or make arrangements satisfactory to the NOAA Grants Officer, to be considered for funding under this competition. All reports due should be received and any concerns raised by the agency should be timely addressed 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.

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

Selection Factors

The Selecting Official shall award in the rank order unless the proposal is justified to be selected out of rank order based on one or more of the following factors:

1. Availability of funding.
2. Balance/distribution of funds:
 - a. geographically
 - b. by type of institution
 - c. by type of partners
 - d. by research priority
 - e. by project types
3. Duplication of other projects funded or considered for funding by NOAA/Federal agencies.

4. Program priorities and policy factors.
5. Applicant's prior award performance.
6. Partnerships with/Participation of targeted groups.
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 Grants Officer.

Awards may also be modified for selected projects depending on budget availability or according to the selection factors listed above.

Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

Subject to the availability of funds, review of the applications will begin upon receipt. Applicants may be notified of award or declination by September 2025, and applicants should use a start date of September 1, 2025.

VI. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notices

The Notice of Award (NoA) is the official grant award document notifying the recipient that an award has been made. The NoA is issued by the NOAA Grants Officer electronically through NOAA's electronic grants management system, eRA.

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

PRE-AWARD COSTS. Per 2 CFR 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 CFR 200.460). In no event will NOAA or the Department of Commerce be 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 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>

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).

If an applicant has not previously established an indirect cost rate with a Federal agency they may choose to negotiate a rate with the Department of Commerce or use the de minimis indirect cost rate of 15% of MTDC (as allowable under 2 C.F.R. §200.414). The negotiation and approval of a rate is subject to the procedures required by NOAA and the Department of Commerce Standard Terms and Conditions. The NOAA contact for indirect or facilities and administrative costs is: Jennifer Jackson, Grants Officer, NOAA Grants Management Division, 1325 East West Highway, 9th Floor, Silver Spring, MD 20910, or jennifer.jackson@noaa.gov.

C. Reporting

In accordance with 2 CFR 200.328-9 and the terms and conditions of the award, financial reports are to be submitted semi-annually and performance (technical) reports are to be submitted annually. 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.fsrc.gov/> on all subawards over \$30,000. Refer to 2 CFR Part 170.

VII. Agency Contacts

Technical Program Information: Kimberly Puglise, RER Program Manager,
kimberly.puglise@noaa.gov.

Grants Administration Information: NCCOS Grants Administrator,
nccos.grant.awards@noaa.gov.

Data Management Information: Lauren Jackson, NCCOS Scientific Data Coordinator,
nccos.data@noaa.gov.

Indirect or Facilities and Administrative Costs Information: Jennifer Jackson Grants Officer,
NOAA Grants Management Division; jennifer.jackson@noaa.gov.

VIII. Other Information

A. Checklist for Required and Requested Documents:

1. SF-424
2. Summary Title Page
3. Abstract/Project Summary
4. Project Description
5. References
6. Milestone Chart
7. Biographical Sketch (for each PI and co-PI)
8. Current and Pending Support (for each PI and co-PI)
9. Permits (if none, say so)
10. SF-424A (One for the lead institution and each subaward/subcontract)
11. Budget Narrative (One for the lead institution and each subaward/subcontract).
12. CD-511
13. SF-424B
14. Alphabetized Collaborator List (**ONE Excel spreadsheet for all PIs emailed to nccos.grant.awards@noaa.gov**)

B. Additional Documentation (if applicable):

1. Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (for each institution requesting funding)
2. Signed Approval from subaward/subcontractor institutes
3. Disclosure of Lobbying Activities Form (SF-LLL)
4. A list of potential peer reviewers.
5. Letters from unfunded collaborators, verifying their contribution to the project.