

NOTICE OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

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Executive Summary

Federal Agency Name

Fisheries Southeast Region Program Office (SE)

Funding Opportunity Title

FY 25 MARFIN

Announcement Type

Competitive

Funding Opportunity Number

NOAA-NMFS-SE-2025-28271

Assistance Listing Number(s)

11.433

Dates

Full proposals must be received by 11:59 pm Eastern Time on December 31, 2024

NOTE: We strongly encourage all prospective applicants to begin required registrations as early as possible. Completing the required registrations can take six weeks or longer. Submission due dates will not be extended because of registration delays. Submissions received after the due date will be considered late and will not be accepted.

Applicant organizations and individuals must register for three different Federal systems prior to submitting an application through Grants.gov (SAM.gov, eRA Commons, and Grants.gov).

Applicant organizations and individuals must first register with SAM.gov and obtain a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI). After you obtain your UEI, you can complete your Grants.gov and eRA Commons registrations concurrently. See Section IV(G) for detailed instructions on registration requirements. If you do not have access to the internet, please contact the Agency Contacts listed in this NOFO for submission instructions.

Funding Opportunity Description

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), Southeast Region, is seeking proposals under the Marine Fisheries Initiative Program (MARFIN), for research and development projects that optimize the use of fisheries in the Gulf of Mexico, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and off the South Atlantic states of North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida, involving the U.S. fishing industry (recreational and commercial), including fishery biology, resources assessment, socio-economic assessment, management and conservation, selected harvesting methods, and fish handling and processing. This program addresses NOAA's mission goal "Healthy Oceans."

Full Text of Announcement

I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Program Objective

The Marine Fisheries Initiative (MARFIN) is a competitive Federal assistance program that funds projects seeking to optimize research and development benefits from U.S. marine fishery resources through cooperative efforts involving the best research and management talents to accomplish priority activities. Projects funded under MARFIN provide answers for fishery needs covered by NOAA Fisheries Strategic Plan, available from NOAA Fisheries, particularly those goals relating to: rebuilding overfished marine fisheries, maintaining currently productive fisheries, and integrating conservation of protected species and fisheries management. Funding priorities for MARFIN are formulated from recommendations received from non-scientific and technical experts and from NOAA Fisheries research and operations officials.

With the long-term planning capabilities available through the Southeast Data, Assessment, and Review (SEDAR) process, the priorities are selected to coordinate assessment needs with this solicitation.

B. Program Priorities

1. Economics and Human Dimensions

- a. Estimate seafood demand models for commercially important species managed in the Southeast Region, including but not limited to yellowtail snapper, vermilion snapper (South Atlantic only), groupers (South Atlantic only), golden and blueline tilefish (Gulf and South Atlantic), black sea bass (South Atlantic only), king mackerel, Spanish mackerel, dolphinfish (Atlantic), wahoo (Atlantic), golden crab, and spiny lobster. The primary purpose of these models is to estimate potential changes in prices because of regulatory actions (e.g., changes in annual commercial harvest limits) or other events that would be expected to cause a change in the domestic landings of that species.
- b. In the Gulf of Mexico region, estimate the net economic benefits of a range of alternative allocations to the private angler, for-hire and commercial sectors, inclusive of all value generated up to the end user/consumer, in at least one fishery where at least one sector is managed under catch shares and at least one species where no sector is managed under catch shares. Research should include estimating the loss of net economic benefits when a portion of the allocation is left unharvested.
- c. In the South Atlantic Region, estimate the net economic benefits of a range of alternative allocations to the private angler, for-hire and commercial sectors, inclusive of all value generated up to the end user/consumer for key species with allocations. Research should include estimating the loss of net economic benefits when a portion of the allocation is left unharvested.
- d. Evaluate the realized or potential economic and social effects of alternative catch share programs (e.g., catch shares, harvest tags, days at sea, etc.) in the private recreational sector in fisheries (marine or inland) where they have been implemented or in fisheries where this sector has its own allocation (e.g., Gulf Red Snapper).
- e. Develop a simulation model to forecast the expected change in commercial fishing behavior (e.g., effort) and profits to changes in, for example but not limited to, the stock size, regulations, and economic factors (costs and fish prices). Apply the model to one fishery (or component thereof) managed with catch shares and one fishery not managed with catch shares.
- f. Conduct a survey and develop a simulation model to forecast the expected change in for-hire (charter vessel and headboat) angler demand, effort, and profits in response to, for example but not limited to, changes in recreational regulations. Apply the model to one or more commonly targeted species in the Gulf of Mexico or South Atlantic.
- g. Develop economic impact models (e.g., input-output models) for Puerto Rico or the U.S. Virgin Islands that can be used to assess accurately the economic impacts of the commercial fisheries and changes to those impacts due to regulatory changes and other factors.

- h. Undertake interview work and archival research to better define and thoroughly identify both place-based and non-place-based underserved communities in the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic and examine historical factors/processes that have led to status as underserved. Use summary results to develop and refine principles and processes for defining, measuring, and assessing equity in Southeast fisheries in consultation with key staff members at SERO, SEFSC, and the regional fishery management councils.
- i. Research the importance of diversification of operations in federally managed fisheries (where diversification refers to involvement in multiple commercial fisheries, use of dual charter/commercial permits, and involvement in both state and federal fisheries).
- j. Examine barriers and inequities experienced by women involved in or seeking involvement in domestic marine fisheries, and identify potential means for mitigating such challenges and for monitoring mitigation outcomes.
- k. Undertake primary and secondary source research to identify, describe, and analyze "subsistence" or consumption-oriented use of federal fishery resources and related dimensions of fishing-oriented communities in each sub-region (Gulf of Mexico, South Atlantic, and US Caribbean) of the Southeast.

2. Ecosystems

- a. Link inshore coastal habitats to offshore fisheries production so habitat protection and restoration could be incorporated into stock assessments. Provide scientific support to demonstrate how NOAA's habitat program is adding value to the fishing economy.
- b. Evaluate how dredging affects federally-managed fish species' use of shallow sand bottom areas as nursery, spawning and foraging habitat. Evaluate effects of dredging on the use of ebb/flood shoals as nursery, spawning, and foraging habitat.
- c. Develop habitat utilization assessments for priority federally-managed fish stocks in the Southeast Region that will help us better understand and demonstrate the benefits of habitat conservation to fisheries and protected species.
- d. Evaluate the use of nearshore hardbottom, tidal freshwater, oligohaline wetland, and coastal inlet habitats by NOAA trust resources in the Southeast Region.
- e. Study the factors contributing to listed corals' susceptibility to disease and corals' resiliency to climate stressors to support efforts to improve resistance to disease and adaptation to climate impacts.
- f. Identify the science needed to better integrate and inform EFH consultation processes for managed fisheries:
 - 1) Improve the understanding of shore-side factors, such as land use run-off, coastal development, etc., on the marine ecosystem and associated fisheries resources.
 - 2) Define and develop an inshore-offshore decision support tool to help effectively habitat managers evaluate the impacts of management decisions affecting onshore habitats on the productivity of offshore fish populations.
 - 3) Investigate the value of artificial reefs and Gulf oil rigs as fish habitat for reef fishes as well as their potential as habitats to enhance stock building efforts.
- g. Obtain and provide georeferenced data to support development of a Caribbean Fishery Ecosystem Plan; exemplary datasets include but are not limited to turbidity, ocean color (chlorophyll), sea surface temperature and others that may be available to a limited audience.
- h. Study the factors impacting coral recruitment, particularly grazing, to inform management measures to facilitate recruitment.
- i. Collect fisherman's local ecological knowledge to develop innovative strategies for adapting to and mitigating negative effects of environmental change in the Southeast region.

3. Fisheries

- a. Conduct comprehensive fishery-independent monitoring and sampling in the South Atlantic, Gulf of Mexico, or U.S. Caribbean to support quantitative assessments, track changes in fish size and abundance through time, assess status and trends of reef fish species, and reconcile difference between catch per unit effort indices and fishery-dependent age composition used for stock assessments. Indices should cover a broad seasonal/spatial scale and age structure and incorporate climate-related impacts and trends.
- b. Create reliable annual bycatch estimates of marine mammals, threatened and endangered species, and other bycatch in managed fisheries by enhancing existing observer and survey programs and applying new technologies, including working with the Marine Recreational Information Program and Southeast For-hire Integrated Electronic Reporting program to test and validate the use of electronic reporting methodologies for this purpose; priority fisheries include shrimp (including assessing compliance with turtle excluder device requirements), South Atlantic snapper-grouper, other Southeast Region recreational hook-and-line fisheries, and fisheries under take reduction teams.

- c. Obtain better estimates of the natural and release mortality in commercial and recreational reef fish fisheries and evaluate the effects of devices and methods to improve survival of released fish.
- d. Develop pilot studies and methods for enhancing data collection to test alternative management strategies for the recreational sector, such as harvest tags, days-at-sea, regional state-by-state management, and catch share programs.
- e. Continue to invest in maintaining and improving both fishery-dependent (including sample processing) and fishery-independent data from the Marine Recreational Information Program, Marine Resources Monitoring Assessment and Prediction program, Southeast Area Monitoring and Assessment Program, Southeast Fishery-Independent Survey, video surveys in the Gulf and South Atlantic, National Coral Reef Monitoring Program, targeted demographic surveys for threatened corals in the Florida Keys and Puerto Rico, and surveys for threatened corals in the U.S. Virgin Islands.
- f. Develop and validate three-dimensional larval dispersal/connectivity models and conduct associated genetic studies for identifying and predicting spatial patterns of recruitment of reef fishes, queen conch, and spiny lobster in the Gulf of Mexico, South Atlantic, and U.S. Caribbean.
- g. Conduct research on age, growth, and reproduction of reef fish in anticipation of upcoming stock assessments, with emphasis on data-poor species.
- h. Conduct density dependence studies using a habitat context to examine the potential effects of habitat on catchability and selectivity.
- i. Conduct research (e.g., otolith analysis, tagging, etc.) to better describe stock structure and mixing rates of stocks.

Table 1. Data and Research Needs by Stock - Please note this table is not inclusive or prioritized.

South Atlantic

- Black Sea Bass – Climate change impacts on species distribution
 - Blueline Tilefish - Abundance indices, fecundity, recruitment, discard mortality rates and effects of best fishing practices
 - Cobia - Stock identification, abundance indices, tagging, recruitment
 - Dolphin - Age information, assessment approach, recruitment
 - Gag – Abundance index for age-0 fish, discard mortality rates, and effects of best fishing practices
 - Gray Snapper - Stock ID, discard mortality, age validation, recruitment
 - Gray Triggerfish – Recruitment, abundance index for age-0 fish
 - Greater Amberjack - Age validation, discard mortality rates, abundance indices, recruitment, role of Sargassum in life history
 - Red Grouper – Recruitment, discard mortality rates and effects of best fishing practices
 - Red Porgy – temporal trends in growth, sex at age, and female maturity at age, potential factors contributing to low recruitment, investigate whether males establish and maintain territories as part of spawning behavior
 - Red Snapper - Discard mortality rates, private recreational discards, recruitment, hot spots of abundance
 - Scamp - Age and growth, age validation, recruitment, discard mortality rate and effects of best fishing practices
 - Snowy Grouper – Abundance indices, stock ID, recruitment, discard mortality rates and effects of best fishing practices
 - Spanish Mackerel - Stock ID, recruitment
 - Tilefish - Abundance indices, particularly for juveniles, recruitment
 - Vermilion Snapper - Growth models with age-0 fish, recruitment
- Gulf of Mexico
- Cobia - Recruitment measures, discard mortality, stock structure
 - Gag - Continuous red tide effect analysis, sex ratio, recruitment, reproduction
 - Gray Snapper - Recruitment measures, age and growth, Stock ID
 - Gray Triggerfish - Age composition and validation, recruitment, gear selectivity
 - Greater Amberjack - Age composition and validation, recruitment
 - Red Snapper - Discard mortality rates, effect of devices to reduce barotrauma, stock structure
 - Scamp - Recruitment measures, age and growth, Stock ID
 - Spanish Mackerel - Recruitment measures
 - Tilefish - Recruitment measures, age and growth, Stock ID
 - Vermilion Snapper - Recruitment measures
 - Yellowedge Grouper - Age and length composition samples, recruitment, discard mortality
 - Gulf and South Atlantic Black Grouper - Recruitment

Goliath Grouper - Non-catch based assessment methods, age and length composition data, recruitment, reproduction, discard mortality rates, gear selectivity

Hogfish - Recruitment, stock ID, gear selectivity, discard mortality King Mackerel - Discard mortality, recruitment, Mexican data

Mutton Snapper - FI indices, recruitment, discard mortality, climate change impacts on species distribution

Spiny Lobster - Age composition, recruitment, relationship between the reproductive cycle characteristics in Florida and in the Caribbean, with postlarval recruitment in Florida Yellowtail Snapper - Stock ID, recruitment

U.S. Caribbean

Queen conch - Stock ID; Life history information; larval distribution and recruitment; incorporation of ecosystem information; environmental parameters including effects of climate change; biomass, abundance, and spatial distribution; changes in fishing effort; recreational catch and effort data

Spiny Lobster - Stock ID; Life history information; larval distribution and recruitment; incorporation of ecosystem information; environmental parameters including effects of climate change; biomass, abundance, and spatial distribution; changes in fishing effort; recreational catch and effort data

Queen Triggerfish - Stock ID; Life history information; larval distribution and recruitment; incorporation of ecosystem information; environmental parameters including effects of climate change; biomass, abundance, and spatial distribution; changes in fishing effort; recreational catch and effort data

Red hind - Stock ID; Life history information; larval distribution and recruitment; information on spawning aggregation areas (SPAG); recreational catch and effort data; environmental parameters including effects of climate change

Queen Snapper - Stock ID; Life history information; larval distribution and recruitment; incorporation of ecosystem information; environmental parameters including effects of climate change; changes in fishing effort; recreational catch and effort data

Silk Snapper - Stock ID; Life history information; larval distribution and recruitment; incorporation of ecosystem information; environmental parameters including effects of climate change; changes in fishing effort; recreational catch and effort data

Yellowfin grouper - Stock ID; Life history information; larval distribution and recruitment; information on SPAG areas; environmental parameters including effects of climate change; recreational catch and effort data

Yellowtail Snapper - Stock ID; Life history information; larval distribution and recruitment; environmental parameters including effects of climate change; recreational catch and effort data

Mutton Snapper - Stock ID; Life history information; larval distribution and recruitment; information on SPAG areas; environmental parameters including effects of climate change; recreational catch and effort data

Lane Snapper - Stock ID; Life history information; larval distribution and recruitment; recreational catch and effort data

Hogfish - Stock ID; Life history information; larval distribution and recruitment; environmental parameters including effects of climate change; recreational catch and effort data

Redtail Parrotfish - Stock ID; Life history information; larval distribution and recruitment; incorporation of ecosystem information; environmental parameters including effects of climate change; biomass, abundance, and spatial distribution; recreational catch and effort data

Stoptlight Parrotfish - Stock ID; Life history information; larval distribution and recruitment; incorporation of ecosystem information; environmental parameters including effects of climate change; biomass, abundance, and spatial distribution; recreational catch and effort data

Dolphin - Stock ID; Life history information; larval distribution and recruitment; incorporation of ecosystem information (including Sargassum influxes); environmental parameters including effects of climate change; recreational catch and effort data

Wahoo - Stock ID; Life history information; larval distribution and recruitment; incorporation of ecosystem information (including Sargassum influxes); environmental

C. Program Authority

Authority for the Marine Fisheries Initiative Program is provided by 16 U.S.C 753a and 16 U.S.C. 742d.

II. Award Information

A. Funding Availability

Actual funding available for this program is contingent upon the availability of FY 2025 Congressional appropriations. Publication of this notice does not obligate NOAA to award any specific project or to obligate any available funds. The number of awards made as a result of this solicitation will depend on the number of eligible applications received, the amount of funds requested for each project, the merit and ranking of the proposals, and the amount of funds made available to the MARFIN program.

B. Project/Award Period

The period of award may be from one to three years. The requested award start date must begin on the first day of the month and end on the last day of the month. The earliest start date for projects will be September 1, 2025, dependent upon availability of Federal funding as provided by Congress, acceptable completion of all NOAA/applicant negotiations including National Environmental Policy Act analysis and permit requirements, and the provision of other supporting documentation as requested. Applicants selected to receive funding may be asked to modify the project start date.

C. Type of Funding Instrument

The funding instrument will be a basic grant.

III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants may be institutions of higher education, nonprofit organizations, individuals, and state, local, and Indian tribal governments. Federal agencies or institutions are not eligible. For-profit organizations are ineligible. Foreign governments, organizations under the jurisdiction of foreign governments, and international organizations are excluded for purposes of this solicitation since the objective of the MARFIN program is to optimize research and development benefits from U.S. marine fishery resources.

Applicant organizations and individuals must register for three different Federal systems prior to submitting an application through Grants.gov (SAM.gov, eRA Commons, and Grants.gov).

NOTE: We strongly encourage all prospective applicants to begin required registrations as early as possible. Completing the required registrations can take six weeks or longer. Submission due dates will not be extended because of registration delays. Submissions received after the due date will be considered late and will not be accepted.

Registration Requirements: Applicant organizations and individuals must first register with SAM.gov and obtain a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI). After you obtain your UEI, you can complete your Grants.gov and eRA Commons registrations concurrently.

See Section IV(G) for detailed instructions on required registrations. If you do not have access to the internet, please contact the Agency Contact listed in this NOFO for submission instructions

B. Cost Share or Matching Requirement

There is no cost-sharing requirement.

C. Other Criteria that Affect Eligibility

NA

IV. Application and Submission Information

A. Address to Request Application Package

Applications and all required forms must be submitted through www.grants.gov. Please refer to Section G. for submission requirements.

The standard application package is available at <https://www.Grants.gov>. If an applicant has problems with Grants.gov, contact the Grants.gov Customer Support at 1-800-518-4726 or support@Grants.gov. If you do not have internet access, or if Grants.gov is inaccessible, you can obtain an application package by contacting Kelly Donnelly, Federal Program Officer, NOAA/NMFS/SERO, 263 13th Avenue S., St. Petersburg, FL 33701, Phone: (727) 551-5731, e-mail: kelly.donnelly@noaa.gov.

B. Content and Form of Application

1. Format Requirements:

A complete standard NOAA grant application package is required in accordance with the guidelines in this document. Applications that are not complete on the closing date of this announcement will not be reviewed. Your application must contain all required documents and forms; if these forms are not signed via the www.Grants.gov application process, they MUST be signed in ink. Paper applications without inked signatures on their forms will be considered incomplete and will not be reviewed. The Authorized Representative MUST sign and date these forms in the space reserved for electronic signature. Signatures (electronic or ink) must match the name printed in the "Authorized Representative" section of the SF-424 Block 21. Another Authorized Representative may not sign on behalf of the individual noted in Block 21. An incomplete application or one that does not follow the format requirements will not be reviewed and will be withdrawn from the competition.

All application materials should be submitted in Adobe PDF or a common word processing format, and when printed out should meet all format requirements. All pages must be no less than single-spaced printed or typed, in at least 12-point font, and printable on 8.5-inch x 11-inch paper, with 1-inch margins. If these requirements are not followed, the proposal will be withdrawn without consideration.

2. Content Requirements:

Each application must include (listed below are minimum requirements that must be included in the proposal submission. If any of these are not included the proposal will not be considered and will be withdrawn from the competition):

A. Federal Application forms, which are available on Grants.gov, including:

- SF-424 - Application for Federal Assistance - The Application for Federal Assistance (SF- 424) must be signed by the authorized representative identified in GEMS/eRA.
 - Electronic signatures submitted through Grants.gov satisfy this requirement. If the person submitting the application is not the AOR listed in Block 21 of the SF-424, then hardcopies of ink signatures of the AOR must be included.
- SF-424A - Budget Information, Non-Construction Programs SF-424B - Assurances, Non- Construction Programs
- CD-511 - Certifications Regarding Lobbying (CD-511)
- SF-LLL - Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (if applicable)

B. Project Synopsis (2-page maximum):

It is critical that the project synopsis accurately describes the project being proposed and conveys all essential elements of the activities. It is imperative that potential applicants tie their proposals to one of the program priorities listed in Section I.B of the Notice of Funding Opportunity. The synopsis must include:

- Applicant Information: Applicant organization, and name, title, and contact information of the Principal Investigator.
- Project Information: Project title, location, requested project period (start and end dates), Federal funding requested, and identification of the MARFIN priority that most closely reflects the objectives of your proposal. If more than one priority is addressed by the proposal, one priority must be identified as the primary. The primary priority will determine the type of subject matter expert used to evaluate your proposal.
- Partners: partners and their organizations. Identification and contact information of co- Principal Investigators.
- Abstract: A clear description of proposed activities, including the species/resources to be addressed. It is critical the abstract accurately describes the project being proposed and conveys all essential elements of the project for public dissemination.

C. Project Narrative (15-page maximum)

The project narrative comprises the research plan for the project. The narrative must be detailed enough for reviewers to make a clear connection between the proposed activities and the proposed benefits. The major part of the narrative should be devoted to a description and justification for the project, including details of the methods to be used. It should include a timeline for major activities, and should indicate who will be responsible for which activities. There should be no ambiguity about who will perform particular parts of the project, and the time at which these activities take place. The Project Narrative may not exceed 15 pages. Any tables and visual materials, including charts, graphs, maps, photographs and other pictorial presentations that you submit to document the project and the problem/opportunity you seek to address are included in the 15-page limit. The Project Synopsis, required federal forms, the Budget Narrative and Supporting Documentation (described in this NOFO) do not count towards the 15-page Project Narrative limit.

The project narrative should closely follow the evaluation criteria outlined in this solicitation (See Section V.A. Evaluation Criteria) for the application to receive a consistent review against competing applications. The narrative should demonstrate your knowledge of, and convey the need for, the project and show how your proposal builds upon any past and current work in the subject area, as well as relevant work in related fields. The narrative should highlight any relationship to fishery management plans, or other fishery-related strategic planning or management documents, and if the project will yield environmentally compatible socioeconomic benefits.

The Project Narrative should include:

1. Project goals and objectives – Identify the one specific MARFIN priority (described in Section I. B. Program Priorities) to which the proposed project responds. The primary priority will determine the subject matter expert used to evaluate your proposal. Identify the problem/opportunity you intend to address and describe its significance to the fisheries resource and fishing community. Objectives should be simple and understandable; as specific and quantitative as possible; clear as to the “what and when,” but should avoid the “how and why”; and attainable within the time, money and human resources available. Projects should be accomplishment oriented and identify specific performance measurements.
2. Project impacts – Describe the anticipated impacts of the project on the fisheries resource and the fishing community in terms of increased product yield, or other measurable benefits. Identify the benefits that will be achieved as a result of this effort, to both the recipient, the industry and the public as a whole. Describe how you/your organization (or others) will monitor progress and measure the project’s impacts.
3. Evaluation of Project – Specify the criteria and procedures that you will use to monitor and evaluate the relative success or failure of a project in achieving its objectives.
4. Need for governmental financial assistance – Explain why you need NOAA financial assistance for the proposed work, and why other funding sources, if applicable, cannot fund all of the proposed work. List all other sources of funding you have or are seeking for the project.
5. Federal, state, and local government activities and permits – It is your responsibility to obtain all necessary Federal, state, and local government permits and approvals where necessary for the proposed work to be conducted. You must note whether or not permits are required. If no permits are required, this section must indicate “no permits are required.” If permits are required, provide a list of all applicable permits that will be required to perform the proposed work and an indication of the status of any permits needed (e.g., not yet applied, permit application submitted/pending/ permit granted, etc.) or a statement indicating that no permits are necessary.
6. Statement of Work
 - What is the project design? What specific work, activities, procedures, statistical design, or analytical methods will you undertake? Describe methodologies or technical plans for activities the project. You should provide sufficiently detailed information on the proposed activities and potential environmental effects so that NOAA can analyze the impacts of the project as required under the National Environmental Policy Act (see Section VI. B.). The NEPA questionnaire is a federal form and does not count towards application page limitations.
 - Who will be responsible for carrying out the various activities? Provide information about the specific responsibilities of other personnel funded through the proposal, including the technical and administrative points of contact, as appropriate.

- What are the project milestones? Display timelines for major tasks, target milestones for important immediate and final products, and key project outcomes. This includes identifying all consultation and permitting requirements and their status (e.g., not applied for, pending, secured). Describe the timeline in increments (e.g., month 1, month 2) rather than by specific dates. Identify the individual(s) responsible for the various activities.

7. Project Management - Describe how the project will be organized and managed. Describe how the necessary experience, facilities, and administrative resources are in place to successfully meet the responsibilities associated with managing a federal financial assistance award. Proposals should demonstrate the applicant organization's knowledge and experience in delivering the project requested in this application.

8. Participation by groups or persons other than the applicant - Describe how any entities other than the applicant will participate in the project, and the nature (sub-award, subcontract, volunteer, etc.) of their participation.

D. Budget Narrative (10-page maximum)

Each application must include clear and concise budget information, both on the required federal forms and as described here. To evaluate the appropriateness of proposed costs, a budget narrative must explain and justify all costs by object class category, as listed on the SF-424A, Section B., Cost Categories. Provide detailed narrative descriptions of all costs, and explain each calculation for all budget categories. Please include a budget table to clarify the cost breakdown. All proposed costs must be reasonable, allowable, allocable, and necessary to the supported activity. Guidance may be found at <https://www.noaa.gov/organization/acquisition-grants/frequently-asked-questions>.

All funds must be estimated to the nearest dollar, do not submit budgets containing cents. For multi-year award applications, indicate and describe separate funding amounts for each year in the detailed justification, budget table, and in Section B of the SF-424A Budget Information form. You must submit a copy of a current negotiated indirect cost rate agreement with a federal agency, if such an agreement exists.

The Budget Narrative must include the following, as applicable:

1. Personnel costs, including salary and wages, should be broken out by named Principal Investigator (PI) and number of months requested per year, per PI, as a percentage of their normal salary rate. Support for each PI should be commensurate with their stated involvement. Any unnamed personnel (graduate students, post-doctoral researchers, technicians) should be identified by their job title, monthly or hourly rate, and amount of effort per year. Cost for graduate students must comply with 2 CFR §200.466 Scholarships and student aid costs, and must be reasonable compensation for the work performed. Fringe benefits should be listed separately from salary and wages. Funds for salaries and fringe benefits may be requested only for those personnel who are directly involved in implementing the proposed project and whose salaries and fringe benefits are directly related to specific products or outcomes of the proposed project.
2. Travel costs should be broken out by number of people traveling, destination, purpose of travel, and projected costs per person. Travel costs include transport costs, lodging, per diem for all travelers, which are to be described in the budget narrative. If details for a particular trip are unknown, explain how the estimate was determined. To qualify for support, attendance at meetings or conferences must enhance the investigator's capability to perform the research or disseminate its results. Domestic travel is to be justified separately from foreign travel, since the latter may require additional clearances. You must adhere to the provisions of the "Fly America Act."
3. Equipment is non-expendable, tangible personal property with a unit cost of \$10,000 or more, and a useful life of more than one year. Items that do not meet the equipment definition must be included under supplies. List each piece of equipment separately and reference the type/model to be purchased and its contribution to the achievement of the project goals. General use equipment must be used 100% for the proposed project if charged directly to the award; if the equipment will be used for multiple projects, only a portion of the expense that is commensurate with the actual use of the equipment during the project may be requested.
4. Supplies should be itemized to the level of detail known or may be based on established historical costs. Whenever possible, you should include the quantity/number of units and cost per unit to justify expenses listed in the supplies category.
5. Each contract should be itemized and explained in the budget narrative and table. Contract budgets should follow standard budget categories that appear in the SF-424A. For each contract include a budget and explanation of the products or services to be obtained. You must indicate the basis for selection of the contractor.

6. Other costs should be listed by type of material or nature of expense (e.g., sub-award) and should be broken down by quantity/number of units and cost per unit, if applicable.
7. The budget may include an amount for indirect costs if the applicant has an approved indirect cost rate agreement with the Federal government. Indirect costs are costs for basic operational functions that are incurred for a common purpose, and cannot be identified specially with a particular project. A copy of the current, approved negotiated indirect cost rate agreement must be included with the application, if applicable.

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 up to 15% of Modified Total Direct Costs (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, jennifer.jackson@noaa.gov.

E. Supporting Documentation (15-page maximum)

In addition to the required 2-page résumé or curriculum vitae of the PI and any key partners, this section should include references, agreements, contracts and permits (budget contracts and agreement are included in the budget narrative), and /or other information relevant to the proposal not included in the Project Narrative.

All supporting documentation must be combined and uploaded as a single document not exceeding 15 pages. Supporting documents (described above) will not be accepted as separate stand-alone attachments.

Letters of support or collaboration are allowable only from individuals or entities with direct involvement in the project and should outline the specifics of the collaborative effort. Letters of support from those who do not have direct involvement in the project will not be accepted during the review process. It is recommended, but not required, that each application should also include the NOAA NEPA questionnaire (<https://www.nepa.noaa.gov/docs/NOAA-Grants-Questionnaire-final.pdf>), Questions 1-37. If the application results in an award, this will be required (the NEPA questionnaire does not count against the page maximum).

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.

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

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

Applications may be submitted by <https://www.Grants.gov>, postmarked, or provided to a delivery service by 11:59 PM Eastern Daylight Time (EDT) on December 31, 2024.

Use of [Grants.gov](https://www.Grants.gov) is preferred. If [Grants.gov](https://www.Grants.gov) cannot be used, use of U.S. mail or another delivery service must be documented with a receipt; private metered postmarks are not acceptable. Applications received more than five (5) business days following the closing date will not be accepted. No facsimile or electronic mail applications will be accepted.

Please note: Validation or rejection of your application by [Grants.gov](https://www.Grants.gov) may take up to two (2) business days after submission. Please consider this process in developing your submission timeline. Applications not adhering to postmark or submission deadlines will be rejected and returned to the sender without further consideration.

E. Intergovernmental Review

Applications submitted by state and local governments are subject to the provisions of Executive Order (E.O.) 12372, Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs. Any applicant submitting an application for funding is required to complete item 19 on SF-424 regarding clearance by the State Single Point of Contact (SPOC) established as a result of EO 12372. Names and address of SPOCs are listed in the Office of Management and Budget's home page at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants/spoc.htm>.

F. Funding Restrictions

Construction is not an allowable activity under this program. Therefore, applications will not be accepted for construction projects.

The MARFIN Program will not consider expenses associated with fees, fund-raising activities, travel for activities not directly related to project implementation, travel or salaries for Federal employees, or profit as allowable costs in the proposed budget. NOAA funds may not be used to support ongoing efforts to comply with legal requirements, including permit conditions, mitigation and settlement agreements.

The total costs of a project consist of all allowable costs incurred in accomplishing project activities during the project period. Applicants will not be reimbursed for time expended or costs incurred in developing a project or in preparing an application, or in any discussions or negotiations with the agency prior to the award.

Funding beyond the first year will be dependent upon satisfactory performance and the continued availability of funds. The total amounts awarded shall not exceed \$175,000 for a one-year project, \$350,000 for a two-year project, and \$525,000 for a three-year project. Each funding year cannot exceed \$175,000. Applications should be submitted with those limits in mind.

G. Other Submission Requirements

NOTE: We strongly encourage all prospective applicants to begin required registrations as early as possible. Completing the required registrations can take six weeks or longer. Submission due dates will not be extended because of registration delays. Submissions received after the due date will be considered late and will not be accepted.

Applicant organizations and individuals must register for three different Federal systems prior to submitting an application through Grants.gov (SAM.gov, eRA Commons, and Grants.gov). See below for more detailed information on each required registration process.

1. System for Award Management (SAM.gov)

SAM.gov registration is required to do business with the U.S. government. After registering with SAM.gov, you will receive a 12-character Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) that you will use throughout the application process.

We recommend allowing at least three weeks for initial SAM.gov registrations and at least two weeks for SAM.gov registration renewals. Additional information on SAM.gov registration is available here:

<https://sam.gov/content/entity-registration>

You must update your SAM.gov registration any time your entity's information changes. You must also renew and revalidate your entity's SAM.gov registration at least every 12 months from the date you last certified to and submitted the registration. The renewal process may take up to two weeks. Your SAM.gov account's primary point of contact will receive an email message alerting them to the renewal requirement at 60 days, 30 days, and 15 days prior to expiration. If you do not renew your registration by the deadline, it will expire.

2. eRA Commons

After completing your SAM.gov registration and receiving your Unique Entity Identifier (UEI), you must register with eRA Commons and create several required user accounts. NOAA uses eRA Commons to process grant applications and manage grant awards.

NOTE: eRA Commons requires applicants to create one ORGANIZATIONAL PROFILE and two USER ACCOUNTS before submitting an application. These requirements are described in detail below.

We recommend allowing at least three weeks for eRA Commons registration. This process can be completed concurrently with your Grants.gov registration. Additional information on the eRA Commons registration process is available here: <https://www.commerce.gov/ocio/programs/gems/applicant-and-grantee-training>

After creating an overall account for your "institution", which may be for your organization or yourself as an individual, eRA Commons requires you to set up at least two user accounts: one Signing Official (SO) account and one Program Director/Principal Investigator (PD/PI) account.

- The Signing Official (SO) user account must be assigned to an individual with signature authority to legally bind the organization in grants administration matters. The SO will receive 4-5 emails throughout the registration process.

- The Program Director/Principal Investigator (PD/PI) account must be assigned to an individual with primary responsibility for the project(s) described in the grant application. The eRA Commons User ID for the PD/PI must also be listed on the SF-424 form for item 4 (Applicant Identifier).

Your SO and PD/PI user accounts must be active before you submit an application. Both accounts can be assigned to the same individual if appropriate.

3. Grants.Gov

After completing your SAM.gov registration and receiving your Unique Entity Identifier (UEI), you must complete a one-time registration process with Grants.gov. Grants.gov is a government-wide portal used to solicit and accept grant applications.

We recommend allowing at least two weeks for Grants.gov registration. This process can be completed concurrently with your eRA Commons registration. Additional information on the Grants.gov registration process is available here: <https://www.grants.gov/applicants/applicant-registration>.

Submission Validation

The Grants.gov and eRA Commons validation processes for a submitted application can take up to two business days after submission. Only validated applications are sent to NOAA to review. To ensure successful submission of an application, we strongly recommend that you submit a final and complete application at least two business days prior to the submission deadline.

Grants.gov and eRA Commons will not accept submissions if the applicant has not been authorized or if credentials are incorrect. Submissions may also be rejected if:

- The Project Director/Principal Investigator (PD/PI)'s account username within eRA Commons is not provided on the SF-424 form for item 4 (Applicant Identifier).
- The Universal Entity Identifier (UEI) from SAM.gov is not provided on the SF-424 form for item 8.c (UEI).
- The Congressional District is not entered in the correct format on the SF-424 form for item 16 (Congressional Districts). The correct format is: [State Abbreviation]-[three digit district number]. For example, Virginia's 1st Congressional District would be listed as VA-001.
- PDF files are not flattened. To flatten a fillable PDF, you can use the "Print to PDF" function from any web browser or PDF reader application.
- File sizes exceed 100 MB.
- Page sizes are greater than 8.5x11.
- File names exceed 50 characters (including spaces).
- File names include special characters.
-

After you submit your application, you will receive an automatic acknowledgment of receipt that contains a Grants.gov tracking number. This notification indicates receipt by Grants.gov only, not receipt by NOAA. Applications submitted through Grants.gov will be accompanied by FOUR automated responses (1-Grants.gov Submission Receipt; 2-Grants.gov Submission Validation Receipt for Application; 3-Grants.gov Grantor Agency Retrieval Receipt for Application; 4-Grants.gov Agency Tracking Number Assignment for Application).

In addition to the Grants.gov automated notification messages, you may receive automated email notifications of any errors or warnings identified by eRA Commons. You must resolve all eRA Commons errors prior to the application due date in order for the application to be processed.

Once an electronic application is accepted in eRA Commons, you will receive an additional automated notification that the completed application was received and that an application number will be assigned.

You should save and print the proof of submission messages from both Grants.gov and eRA Commons. If you do not receive an acceptance message from both Grants.gov and eRA Commons, you should follow up with the agency contact listed in VII to confirm NOAA's receipt of the complete submission.

H. Address for Submitting Proposals

Applications should be submitted to www.grants.gov. If the applicant is unable to submit electronically, paper applications will be accepted. Paper applications must be submitted with completed, signed, inked signatures, with original forms in hard copy and an electronic copy of the entire application on a thumb drive, including scanned signed forms. The Authorized Representative **MUST** sign and date forms SF-424, SF-424B, and CD-511. Signatures (electronic or ink) must match the name printed in the "Authorized Representative" section of the SF-424 Block 21. Paper applications must be postmarked or provided to a delivery service and documented with a receipt (private metered postmarks are not acceptable) and sent to Kelly Donnelly, Federal Program Officer, NOAA/NMFS/SERO, 263 13th Avenue S., St. Petersburg, FL 33701, Phone: (727) 551-5731, e-mail: kelly.donnelly@noaa.gov.

V. Application Review Information

| | |
|---|---------------------------|
| 1. Importance/relevance and applicability of proposed projects to the program goals | Maximum Points: 35 |
| <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>Does the proposal describe its relevance to a MARFIN Program Priority, and how information gathered will contribute to NOAA's mission to enhance the understanding of the fishery resource and contribute to the body of information on which management decisions are made? Does this study address an important problem, providing a clear definition of the problem, issue or research need? Is this the best method to obtain the needed data?</p> <p>Marginally Adequately Frequently Highly Most Highly 0-----10-----15-----25-----30-----35</p> | |
| 2. Technical/scientific merit | Maximum Points: 10 |
| <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>Proposals should provide a clear definition of the approach to be used, including descriptions of field work, theoretical studies, and laboratory analysis to support the proposed research. Are the conceptual framework, design, methods, and analyses adequately developed, well integrated, and appropriate to the aims of the project? Are the objectives in the proposal clearly defined and focused, realistic and attainable within the proposed project period? Is there sufficient description of the project's environmental impact, such as detailed information on the activities to be conducted, locations, sites, species and habitat to be affected, and any environmental concerns that may exist? Does the applicant acknowledge potential problem areas and consider ways to resolve the issues or implement alternative tactics? Does the project develop new methodologies or technologies? Is sufficient detail provided in the proposal about the methods proposed for monitoring and evaluating the success of the project, and are they appropriate?</p> <p>Marginally Adequately Frequently Highly Most Highly 0-----10-----15-----25-----30-----35-----40</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>Does the applicant have the expertise to conduct the scope and scale of the proposed work, as indicated by the qualifications and past experience of the project leaders and partners, if necessary to complete the work, that show adequate experience in successfully completing similar projects? Does the applicant describe the facilities, equipment and/or administrative resources available to support and successfully manage the work and award responsibilities? If consultants and contractors are conducting the critical activities under the award, is the primary applicant's involvement necessary?</p> <p>Marginally Frequently Most Highly 0-----5-----10</p> | |
| 4. Project costs | Maximum Points: 0 |
| <p>This criterion evaluates the budget to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time frame.</p> <p>Is the proposed budget sufficiently detailed, with appropriate breakdown and justification of costs by object class and funding year? Is the proposed budget cost-effective and realistic based on the applicant's stated objectives, and time frame?</p> | |

| | | |
|--|------------|--------------------------|
| Marginally | Frequently | Most Highly |
| 0----- | 5----- | 10 |
| 5. Data Management Plan | | Maximum Points: 5 |
| This criterion assesses whether the Data Management Plan, if required, ensures that the data collected and/or created will be made available to general users in a timely manner free of charge, or at minimal cost. | | |
| Marginally Adequately | Frequently | Highly Most Highly |
| 0----- | 1----- | 2----- |
| | | 3----- |
| | | 4----- |
| | | 5 |

Evaluation Criteria

Technical reviewers will assign scores to applications ranging from 0-100 (whole numbers only) points based on the following five evaluation criteria. The maximum score for each criterion is indicated in parentheses. Each criterion also includes the factors the reviewers will consider to determine how well an application meets the criterion. We encourage applicants to make explicit connections to the evaluation criterion and factors in their applications. Written comments are required to justify provided scores in each section of the review. Applications that best address these criteria will be most competitive. Score ranges are identified for each evaluation criterion. Top range scores indicate the application fully addressed the criterion, a score of 0 indicates the criterion was not addressed. Scales are provided to serve as general guides.

Review and Selection Process

Initial Screening – The FPO will conduct an initial administrative review on each application to determine compliance with application requirements and completeness of application materials. Applications determined to be ineligible, incomplete, or non-responsive will not be considered and will be withdrawn. Applications will be screened to ensure they were received by the deadline date (see Section IV. D. Submission Dates and Times); the applicant is eligible to apply; the proposed project addresses one of the program priorities; and include a project synopsis with an abstract and summary of potential benefits, a project description, a budget, and supporting documentation as outlined in Section IV.B, Content and Form of Application. We do not have to screen applications before the submission deadline to identify deficiencies that would cause your application to be rejected so that you would have an opportunity to correct them. However, should we do so and provide you information about deficiencies, or should you independently decide it is desirable to do so, you may correct any deficiencies in your application before the deadline. After the deadline, the application must remain as submitted; no changes can be made to it. If your application does not conform to the requirements listed above, and the deadline for submission has passed, the application will not be considered and will be withdrawn.

Technical Review – Applications determined to be responsive to this solicitation will be evaluated for their technical merit by three or more appropriate Federal, private or public sector experts with subject matter experience. Their evaluations will be based solely on the information included in the application, based on the criteria described in Section V.A. Evaluation Criteria. Each reviewer will independently evaluate each project and provide an individual score and comments to corroborate that score. No consensus advice will be given. Reviewers will be required to certify they do not have a conflict of interest concerning the application(s) they review. NOAA will protect technical reviewer identity to the maximum extent permitted by law. After the technical review, the individual scores will be averaged to determine the final technical score for each application. Applications will be ranked in descending order by their final technical scores.

The number of applications sent on to the MARFIN Panel review will be determined by the following set of criteria: If we receive between 1 and 25 eligible applications, then the top 10 applications (including those tied for tenth) will be forwarded to the MARFIN Panel for further review. If we receive 26-50 eligible applications, then the top 15 applications (including those tied for fifteenth) will be sent to the Panel for review. If we receive over 51 eligible applications, then the top 20 applications (including those tied for twentieth) will be sent to the Panel for review. Those applications that are not in the top category (based on the number of eligible applications received) will be eliminated from further review.

MARFIN Panel Review – Those applications ranking high enough based on the scenarios listed above will be presented to the MARFIN Panel, a group of non-NOAA fishery experts. Each member of the panel individually considers the following Panel Evaluation Criteria: 1) Are the needs of the Agency, as described under the Program Priorities, addressed in each proposal; 2) Does the project benefit the fishing industry; and 3) Does the project address issues that are important to regional fisheries management (referred to collectively as the Panel Evaluation Criteria). Needs of the agency follow the information identified in the Magnuson-Stevens Act, Title III, Sections 301 and 404.

Each member of the panel will independently assign a numerical rating on GEMS/eRA between 1 and 5 for each application according to the following scale, and provide comments to support their score (fractions of whole numbers will not be accepted):

1. - Application did not address the Panel Evaluation Criteria as outlined in the NOFO.
2. - Application marginally addressed the Panel Evaluation Criteria as outlined in the NOFO.
3. - Application adequately addressed the Panel Evaluation Criteria as outlined in the NOFO.
 1. - Application frequently addressed the Panel Evaluation Criteria as outlined in the NOFO.
4. - Application fully addressed the Panel Evaluation Criteria as outlined in the NOFO.

The panel will give no consensus advice. The Program Manager ranks the proposals in the order of average panel score. In the event that there are two or more projects tied in the panel's ranking, all tied projects will be given equal consideration by the Selecting Official based on the Selection Factors, regardless of the tied projects' peer review score.

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.

Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

Subject to the availability of funds, successful applications are usually recommended for funding within 365 days from the date of publication of this notice. Applicants should consider this selection and processing time in developing requested start dates for their applications. The earliest start date of awards will be September 1, 2025, dependent upon availability of Federal funding, acceptable completion of all NOAA/applicant negotiations including NEPA analysis and permit requirements, and all provisions of other supporting documentation as requested.

The exact amount of funds awarded, the final scope of activities, and the project duration, are determined in pre-award negotiations between the applicant, the NOAA Grants Office, and the NOAA Fisheries Program Office. Recipients must not initiate projects until an approved award is received from the NOAA Grants Office.

VI. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notices

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 obligate 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

Buy America Preference. Recipients of an award of Federal financial assistance from the Department of Commerce (Department) for a program for infrastructure are hereby notified that none of the funds provided under this award may be used for an infrastructure project 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 that meets or exceeds this standard has been established under applicable law or regulation for determining the minimum amount of domestic content of the manufactured product; and
3. all construction materials are manufactured in the United States – this means that all manufacturing processes for the construction material occurred in the United States. The construction materials standards are listed below.

Incorporation into an infrastructure project. 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.

Categorization of articles, materials, and supplies. An article, material, or supply should only be classified into one of the following categories: (i) Iron or steel products; (ii) Manufactured products; (iii) Construction materials; or (iv) Section 70917(c) materials. An article, material, or supply should not be considered to fall into multiple categories. In some cases, an article, material, or supply may not fall under any of the categories listed in this paragraph. The classification of an article, material, or supply as falling into one of the categories listed in this paragraph must be made based on its status at the time it is brought to the work site for incorporation into an infrastructure project. In general, the work site is the location of the infrastructure project at which the iron, steel, manufactured products, and construction materials will be incorporated.

Application of the Buy America Preference by category. An article, material, or supply incorporated into an infrastructure project must meet the Buy America Preference for only the single category in which it is classified.

Determining the cost of components for manufactured products. In determining whether the cost of components for manufactured products is greater than 55 percent of the total cost of all components, use the following instructions:

- a. For components purchased by the manufacturer, the acquisition cost, including transportation costs to the place of incorporation into the manufactured product (whether or not such costs are paid to a domestic firm), and any applicable duty (whether or not a duty-free entry certificate is issued); or
- b. For components manufactured by the manufacturer, all costs associated with the manufacture of the component, including transportation costs as described in paragraph (a), plus allocable overhead costs, but excluding profit. Cost of components does not include any costs associated with the manufacture of the manufactured product.

Construction material standards. The Buy America Preference applies to the following construction materials incorporated into infrastructure projects. Each construction material is followed by a standard for the material to be considered “produced in the United States.” Except as specifically provided, only a single standard should be applied to a single construction material.

1. Non-ferrous metals. All manufacturing processes, from initial smelting or melting through final shaping, coating, and assembly, occurred in the United States.
2. Plastic and polymer-based products. All manufacturing processes, from initial combination of constituent plastic or polymer-based inputs, or, where applicable, constituent composite materials, until the item is in its final form, occurred in the United States.
3. Glass. All manufacturing processes, from initial batching and melting of raw materials through annealing, cooling, and cutting, occurred in the United States.
4. Fiber optic cable (including drop cable). All manufacturing processes, from the initial ribboning (if applicable), through buffering, fiber stranding and jacketing, occurred in the United States. All manufacturing processes also include the standards for glass and optical fiber, but not for non-ferrous metals, plastic and polymer-based products, or any others.
5. Optical fiber. All manufacturing processes, from the initial preform fabrication stage through the completion of the draw, occurred in the United States.
6. Lumber. All manufacturing processes, from initial debarking through treatment and planing, occurred in the United States.
7. Drywall. All manufacturing processes, from initial blending of mined or synthetic gypsum plaster and additives through cutting and drying of sandwiched panels, occurred in the United States.
8. Engineered wood. All manufacturing processes from the initial combination of constituent materials until the wood product is in its final form, occurred in the United States.

Waivers

When necessary, recipients may apply for, and the Department may grant, a waiver from these requirements. To help federal agencies and recipients meet BABA requirements, the U.S. Department of Commerce, National Institute for Standards and Technology (NIST), Hollings Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) National Network™ provides a service to connect stakeholders, including recipients, to U.S. manufacturers that have relevant production capabilities and capacities to help fulfill current market and supply chain needs. Recipients considering a BABA nonavailability waiver are strongly encouraged to contact the NIST/MEP for assistance with supplier scouting services prior to seeking a BABA nonavailability waiver. Further information on the NIST/MEP supplier scouting services is available at: <https://nist.gov/mep/supply-chain/supplier-scouting>.

When the Department has made a determination that one of the following exceptions applies, the awarding official may waive the application of the Buy America Preference in any case in which the Department determines that:

1. applying the Buy America Preference would be inconsistent with the public interest (public interest waiver);
2. 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 (nonavailability waiver); or
3. 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 (unreasonable cost waiver).

A request to waive the application of the Buy America Preference must be in writing. The Department 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 on the Department's Build America, Buy America website found at <https://www.commerce.gov/oam/build-america-buy-america>.

Definitions

“**Buy America Preference**” means the “domestic content procurement preference” set forth in section 70914 of the Build America, Buy America Act, which requires the head of each Federal agency to ensure that none of the funds made available for a Federal award for an infrastructure project may be obligated unless all of the iron, steel, manufactured products, and construction materials incorporated into the project are produced in the United States. “**Construction materials**” means articles, materials, or supplies that consist of only one of the items listed in paragraph (1) of this definition, except as provided in paragraph (2) of this definition. To the extent one of the items listed in paragraph (1) contains as inputs other items listed in paragraph (1), it is nonetheless a construction material.

(This section is continued in Section VIII Other Information)

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 semi-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.fsrs.gov/> on all subawards over \$30,000. Refer to 2 CFR Part 170.

VII. Agency Contacts

For questions regarding the application process, you may contact: Kelly Donnelly, Grants Management Branch, (727) 551-5731, or kelly.donnelly@noaa.gov.

VIII. Other Information

(Continuation from Section VI Award Administration Information)

Definitions continued:

1. The listed items are:

- i. Non-ferrous metals;
- ii. Plastic and polymer-based products (including polyvinylchloride, composite building materials, and polymers used in fiber optic cables);
- iii. Glass (including optic glass);
- iv. Fiber optic cable (including drop cable);
- v. Optical fiber;
- vi. Lumber;
- vii. Engineered wood; and
- viii. Drywall.

2. Minor additions of articles, materials, supplies, or binding agents to a construction material do not change the categorization of the construction material.

“Infrastructure” means public infrastructure projects in the United States, which includes, at a minimum, the structures, facilities, and equipment for 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; and structures, facilities, and equipment that generate, transport, and distribute energy including electric vehicle (EV) charging.

“Infrastructure project” means any activity related to the construction, alteration, maintenance, or repair of infrastructure in the United States regardless of whether infrastructure is the primary purpose of the project. See also paragraphs (c) and (d) of 2 CFR 184.4.

“Iron or steel products” means articles, materials, or supplies that consist wholly or predominantly of iron or steel or a combination of both.

“Manufactured products” means:

1. Articles, materials, or supplies that have been:

- i. Processed into a specific form and shape; or
- ii. Combined with other articles, materials, or supplies to create a product with different properties than the individual articles, materials, or supplies.

2. If an item is classified as an iron or steel product, a construction material, or a Section 70917(c) material under 2 CFR 184.4(e) and the definitions set forth in 2 CFR 184.3, then it is not a manufactured product. However, an article, material, or supply classified as a manufactured product under 2 CFR 184.4(e) and paragraph (1) of this definition may include components that are construction materials, iron or steel products, or Section 70917(c) materials.

“Predominantly of iron or steel or a combination of both” means that the cost of the iron and steel content exceeds 50 percent of the total cost of all its components. The cost of iron and steel is the cost of the iron or steel mill products (such as bar, billet, slab, wire, plate, or sheet), castings, or forgings utilized in the manufacture of the product and a good faith estimate of the cost of iron or steel components.

“Section 70917(c) materials” means cement and cementitious materials; aggregates such as stone, sand, or gravel; or aggregate binding agents or additives. See Section 70917(c) of the Build America, Buy America Act.

IMPLEMENTATION OF DOMESTIC SOURCING REQUIREMENT

Prior to initiation of any construction that may arise in this award, the Recipient is required to inform the NOAA Grants Officer and the Federal Program Officer whether it is using iron, steel, manufactured products, or construction materials as described in the Specific Award Condition in this award on Required Use of American Iron, Steel, Manufactured Products, and Construction Materials. In addition, the Recipient is required to inform the NOAA Grants Officer and the Federal Program Officer whether those materials are produced or manufactured in the United States, or alternatively, it is requesting one or more waivers, as described in the award condition. The Recipient is required to coordinate with NOAA regarding its compliance with this Term.