NOTICE OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

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Executive Summary

Federal Agency Name

OAR Office of Ocean Exploration and Research (OER)

Funding Opportunity Title

Ocean Exploration Fiscal Year 2025 Funding Opportunity

Announcement Type

Competitive

Funding Opportunity Number

NOAA-OAR-OER-2025-25557

Assistance Listing Number(s)

11.011

Dates

Applicants are required to submit a complete, maximum two-page pre-proposal to be allowed to submit a full proposal. Pre-proposals must be received by 4:59 p.m. EDT on May 30, 2024. Full proposals must be received by 11:59 p.m. EDT on October 3, 2024. Pre-proposals and full proposals received after the above deadlines will be disqualified. An informational webinar will be held shortly after this funding opportunity is announced. Details will be available on the NOAA Ocean Exploration website at https://oceanexplorer.noaa.gov/about/funding-opps/welcome.html. A recording will be posted to this page after the event.

Funding Opportunity Description

NOAA Ocean Exploration is soliciting proposals for ocean exploration-related projects under two themes: Ocean Exploration and Maritime Heritage. By supporting exploration (i.e., examining unknown or poorly understood areas of the seafloor, sub-bottom, or water column through initial assessments of the physical, chemical, geological, biological, archaeological, or other characteristics), NOAA Ocean Exploration seeks to advance our basic understanding of the unknown ocean.

All proposed projects must support priorities in the NOAA Ocean Exploration Strategic Plan (https://oceanexplorer.noaa.gov/about/what-we-do/media/noaa-oe-strategic-plan_fy23-fy27.pdf) and should also consider the Strategic Priorities for Ocean Exploration and Characterization of the United States Exclusive Economic Zone (https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/NOMEC_OEC_Priorities_Report.pdf). Proposed projects are not restricted to waters under U.S. jurisdiction, but proposals should address how projects will provide national benefit.

For Fiscal Year 2025 (FY25) funding, NOAA Ocean Exploration is soliciting proposals focused on one of the following two themes:

OCEAN EXPLORATION: Ocean Exploration proposals should support exploration of unknown or poorly known ocean areas, processes, or resources in waters deeper than 200 meters or in tropical mesophotic environments. Projects can entail conducting ocean exploration (e.g., mapping and characterizing ocean habitats, combining seismic and acoustic methods), advancing ocean exploration through the use or development of novel technologies (e.g., autonomous systems, nondestructive sensors, artificial intelligence/machine learning), and/or analysis of ocean exploration datasets or samples that already exist and are publicly accessible. NOAA Ocean Exploration is particularly interested in projects that explore the physical, chemical, and biological environments and processes in the deep oceanic water column and projects that will improve genetic libraries for species-level environmental DNA (eDNA) analysis of deep-sea species. All proposals must demonstrate how the proposed project relates to at least one of the exploration variables identified by NOAA Ocean Exploration (https://oceanexplorer.noaa.gov/data/publications/exploration-variables.html).

MARITIME HERITAGE: Maritime Heritage proposals should address the exploration for significant maritime heritage resources that improve our understanding of the past and inform decisions about management and preservation. Maritime heritage projects can be conducted at any water depth. NOAA Ocean Exploration is particularly interested in proposals that target conflict archaeology, incorporate Indigenous knowledge, or perform wide-area searches in areas poorly mapped for maritime heritage. NOAA Ocean Exploration welcomes the use of innovative technology and/or methods for quantitative assessment of targets to improve archaeological site identification and documentation.

Informational documents about this funding opportunity are on the NOAA Ocean Exploration website at https://oceanexplorer.noaa.gov/about/funding-opps/welcome.html.

All links were valid as of the date of the publication of this notice. If updated links are needed, email oer.nofo2025@noaa.gov.

The following lists are provided to aid preparation of pre-proposals and full proposals. Pre-Proposals (due May 30, 2024, at 4:59 p.m. ET)

- NOAA Ocean Exploration notice of funding opportunity cover sheet
- Pre-proposal narrative, maximum two pages
- Demographic information (optional)

All applicants should submit proposals to oer.nofo2025@noaa.gov.

Full Proposals (due October 3, 2024, at 11:59 p.m. ET)

- Updated NOAA Ocean Exploration notice of funding opportunity cover sheet
- Executive summary, maximum one page
- Project narrative, maximum 15 pages
- Data and information sharing plan, maximum two pages
- Outreach and education plan, maximum one page
- Statement of diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA), maximum one page
- Previous significant results for each principal and co-principal investigator
- Summary of current funding support for each principal and co-principal investigator
- Curriculum vitae, maximum two pages for each principal and co-principal investigator
- Budget justification and budget tables
- Negotiated indirect cost rate agreement (if applicable)
- National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) questionnaire
- Letters of support (if applicable) from:
    - The applicable state historic preservation office (SHPO; if the proposed project is in state waters)
    - The tribal historic preservation office (THPO; if the proposed project is on federally recognized tribal lands)
    - Indigenous communities identified as collaborating or cooperating with the proposed project
    - Other supporters (optional, e.g., ship time operators)
- Details about coordination with the National Oceanographic Partnership Program (NOPP), maximum one page (only applicable if the lead principal investigator is a federal employee)
- Forms (for nonfederal applicants only):
    - Application for Federal Assistance (SF-424)
    - Budget Information for Non-Construction Programs (SF-424A)
    - Assurances for Non-Construction Programs (SF-424B)
    - Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (SF-LLL)
    - Certification Regarding Lobbying (CD511)
- Suggested reviewers (optional)

Nonfederal applicants must submit all documents required for a full proposal individually through Grants.gov.

Federal applicants must email full proposals to oer.nofo2025@noaa.gov.

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

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

Full Text of Announcement

I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Program Objective

The world’s ocean remains largely unexplored, leaving significant gaps in the basic environmental intelligence needed to manage and protect ocean resources, forecast future environmental changes, and facilitate sustainable economic development of the ocean.

Through this program, NOAA Ocean Exploration seeks to fund interdisciplinary and innovative ocean exploration-related projects that support its priorities. NOAA Ocean Exploration is dedicated to exploring the unknown ocean and the Great Lakes, unlocking its potential through scientific discovery, technological advancements, and data delivery. By working closely with partners across public, private, and academic sectors, through this program as well as others, NOAA Ocean Exploration is filling gaps in our basic understanding of the marine environment. This allows us, collectively, to protect ocean health, sustainably manage our marine resources, accelerate our national economy, better understand our changing environment, and enhance appreciation of the importance of the ocean in our everyday lives.

Successful proposals:

- Directly support NOAA Ocean Exploration priorities,
- Typically, involve multiple partners,
- Are interdisciplinary and innovative in their approach,
- Leverage other programs and organizations with compatible objectives,
- Employ advanced technology platforms and sensors to conduct or further ocean exploration,
- Produce information that will be valuable to state and federal marine resource managers,
- Consider environmental impacts in the project planning and demonstrate the applicant’s ability to acquire all necessary permits*,

- Explain how the applicant will make data and results publicly available to advance scientific knowledge and inform environmental management decisions*, and
- Explain how the applicant will engage the public and address diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA), including how they will ensure a safe and inclusive work environment.

**Applicants must be willing to adhere to an open data policy that ensures that all environmental data and information collected or created with program support will be promptly made publicly available after undergoing quality control. In addition, proposals must comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and all other federal laws regarding environmental protection (e.g., Endangered Species Act, Marine Mammal Protection Act, and National Marine Sanctuaries Act).*

NOAA values the advancement of scientific knowledge and activities that contribute to the achievement of societally relevant outcomes. Such outcomes include, but are not limited to full participation of women, persons with disabilities, and underrepresented and marginalized groups in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM); increased public scientific literacy and public engagement with science and technology; improved well-being of individuals in society; development of a diverse, globally competitive STEM workforce; a safe, inclusive, and equitable work environment; increased partnerships between academia, industry, and others; improved national security; increased economic competitiveness of the United States; and enhanced infrastructure for research and education.

NOAA is committed to providing a workplace free from sexual assault and sexual harassment. Applicants must agree to comply with NOAA's policies regarding sexual assault and sexual harassment (SASH) as outlined in NOAA Administrative Order (NAO) 202-1106 (https://www.noaa.gov/organization/administration/nao-202-1106-noaa-sexual-assault-and-sexual-harassment-prevention-and).

Useful program web pages to help with proposal preparation:

- NOAA Ocean Exploration Federal Funding Opportunity Past Recipients (https://oceanexplorer.noaa.gov/about/funding-opps/ffo-recipients.html): This web page provides information about projects funded by this program in previous years.
- Notice of Federal Funding Opportunity (https://oceanexplorer.noaa.gov/about/funding-opps/welcome.html): This page provides links to program information on and resources, including frequently asked questions, the required cover sheet for pre-proposals and full proposals, and information about the date and time of an informational webinar, and a recording of the webinar, when available.

B. Program Priorities

NOAA Ocean Exploration is soliciting proposals for ocean exploration-related projects under two themes: Ocean Exploration and Maritime Heritage. By supporting exploration (i.e., examining unknown or poorly understood areas of the seafloor, sub-bottom, or water column through initial assessments of the physical, chemical, geological, biological, archaeological, or other characteristics), NOAA Ocean Exploration seeks to advance our basic understanding of the unknown ocean. All proposed projects must support priorities in the NOAA Ocean Exploration Strategic Plan

(https://oceanexplorer.noaa.gov/about/what-we-do/media/noaa-oe-strategic-plan_fy23-fy27.pdf) and should also consider the Strategic Priorities for Ocean Exploration and Characterization of the United States Exclusive Economic Zone (https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/NOMEC_OEC_Priorities_Report.pdf). Proposed projects are not restricted to waters under U.S. jurisdiction, but proposals should address how projects will provide national benefit.

For Fiscal Year 2025 (FY25) funding, NOAA Ocean Exploration is soliciting proposals focused on one of the following two themes:

OCEAN EXPLORATION: Ocean Exploration proposals should support exploration of unknown or poorly known ocean areas, processes, or resources in waters deeper than 200 meters or in tropical mesophotic environments. Projects can entail conducting ocean exploration (e.g., mapping and characterizing ocean habitats, combining seismic and acoustic methods), advancing ocean exploration through the use or development of novel technologies (e.g., autonomous systems, nondestructive sensors, artificial intelligence/machine learning), and/or analysis of ocean exploration datasets or samples that already exist and are publicly accessible. NOAA Ocean Exploration is particularly interested in projects that explore the physical, chemical, and biological environments and processes in the deep oceanic water column and projects that will improve genetic libraries for species-level environmental DNA (eDNA) analysis of deep-sea species. All proposals must demonstrate how the proposed project relates to at least one of the exploration variables identified by NOAA Ocean Exploration (https://oceanexplorer.noaa.gov/data/publications/exploration-variables.html).

MARITIME HERITAGE: Maritime Heritage proposals should address the exploration for significant maritime heritage resources that improve our understanding of the past and inform decisions about management and preservation. Maritime heritage projects can be conducted at any water depth. NOAA Ocean Exploration is particularly interested in proposals that target conflict archeology, incorporate Indigenous knowledge, or perform wide-area searches in areas poorly mapped for maritime heritage. NOAA Ocean Exploration welcomes the use of innovative technology and/or methods for quantitative assessment of targets to improve archaeological site identification and documentation.

NOAA Ocean Exploration encourages applicants to partner with academia, government agencies, philanthropic organizations, private-sector companies, and Indigenous communities to enhance or expand the scope of their proposals. Such partnerships could be with organizations such as Schmidt Ocean Institute or OceanX for ship time or other ocean data collection platforms (e.g., remotely operated vehicles, autonomous underwater vehicles).

C. Program Authority

33 USC 3403(a)

II. Award Information

A. Funding Availability

NOAA Ocean Exploration anticipates approximately $3,000,000 will be available to fund proposed projects under this notice. With these funds, NOAA Ocean Exploration anticipates being able to support four to eight awards with budgets ranging from $50,000 to a maximum of $1,000,000 (including direct and indirect costs) to be spent over one or two years:

- Funding requests under the Ocean Exploration theme can range from $50,000 to a maximum of $1,000,000. Proposals under this theme for less than $50,000 or more than $1,000,000 will be disqualified.
- Funding requests under the Maritime Heritage theme funding requests can range from $50,000 to a maximum of $750,000. Proposals under this theme for less than $50,000 or more than $750,000 will be disqualified.

The amount available for this funding opportunity will be subject to the final FY25 appropriation/allocation for NOAA Ocean Exploration. Publication of this notice does not obligate NOAA to fund any specific project or use all or any part of available funds. There is no guarantee that sufficient funds will be available to initiate or continue exploration activities where NOAA Ocean Exploration has recommended funding. NOAA Ocean Exploration will determine the amount of recommended funding for a proposed project during pre-award negotiations with the applicant. The NOAA Ocean Exploration selecting official may defer some select FY25 proposals for consideration for funding in a subsequent fiscal year.

B. Project/Award Period

NOAA Ocean Exploration will accept proposals for projects that are one or two years in duration. The anticipated award start date is on or near September 1, 2025.

C. Type of Funding Instrument

Awards to nonfederal grant recipients will be made through a grant or cooperative agreement under the terms of this notice. Projects funded through cooperative agreements will have substantial involvement by the federal government, including, but not limited to, direction or redirection of the scope of work due to interrelationships with other projects or stipulation that the awardee must meet or adhere to specific procedural requirements before subsequent stages of a project may begin.

Projects led by NOAA staff will be funded through an intra-agency transfer of funds. Proposals led by non-NOAA federal agency staff may be funded through an inter-agency agreement if their agency has the statutory authority to accept funding from another Federal agency for this type of work and if they agree to receive and spend FY25 funding for proposed projects.

III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants are U.S.-based institutions of higher education; nonprofit organizations; U.S. state, tribal, territory, and local governments; for-profit organizations; and federal agencies that possess the statutory authority to accept funding for this type of work. While individuals representing non-U.S.-based organizations cannot submit proposals, they can collaborate on projects with eligible U.S.-based organizations as sub-awardees.

Applicants from institutions that are part of the Ocean Exploration Cooperative Institute (OECI), which are the University of Rhode Island, Ocean Exploration Trust, Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, the University of New Hampshire, and the University of Southern Mississippi, are not eligible to apply as these institutions have an annual opportunity to apply for NOAA Ocean Exploration funding via the OECI. Personnel from the above-listed OECI institutions may still collaborate with an eligible U.S.-based applicant on a proposal as a subawardee, but not as a principal (lead) or co-principal investigator.

Before proposals from federal agencies other than NOAA can be funded, applicants must affirm that their agency has legal authority to receive funds from another federal agency for this type of work in excess of their appropriation. Because this notice is not proposing to procure goods or services from applicants, the Economy Act (31 U.S.C. section 1535) does not provide this authority.

Applicants from authorized federal agencies and NOAA must be able and agree to take FY25 funding for proposed projects (both one- and two-year projects) and allocate those funds in FY25 (i.e., between October 1, 2024, and September 30, 2025).

To be eligible to apply or receive an award, applicant organizations must complete and maintain three registrations; SAM.gov, Grants.gov, and eRA Commons. For each, the complete registration process can take 4 to 6 weeks, so applicants must begin this activity as soon as possible and well before the proposal due date. For more information on how to meet these registration and application submission requirements without errors, we advise all to carefully review relevant Applicant and Grantee Training modules: https://www.commerce.gov/ocio/programs/gems/applicant-and-grantee-training.

B. Cost Share or Matching Requirement

Proposals from nonfederal applicants do not require cost sharing, matching funds, in- kind contributions, or contribution of no-cost ship time. Individuals who intend to leverage ship time contributions from other sources, such as federal, state, philanthropic (e.g., Schmidt Ocean Institute or OceanX), or private organizations are encouraged to apply through this announcement to further support their work.

Federal applicants must coordinate their proposed projects with the National Oceanographic Partnership Program (NOPP) Interagency Working Group (IWG) as described in Section III.C.1.

C. Other Criteria that Affect Eligibility

1. Potential Partners

NOAA Ocean Exploration participates in the National Oceanographic Partnership Program (NOPP) (https://nopp.org/) to facilitate partnerships among federal agencies, academia, industry, and nongovernmental organizations to advance ocean science research and education. NOPP agencies coordinate through the NOPP IWG under the Subcommittee on Ocean Science and Technology in support of the White House’s Ocean Policy Committee.

Projects proposed by federal applicants must meet NOPP partnership criteria. A NOPP project must include at least two federal agencies (one of which can be NOAA) and include substantial partner contributions from at least two of the following sectors: academia, private sector (including nongovernmental organizations), and government (including federal, tribal, state, territory, and local). For NOAA applicants, a non-NOAA federal partner is required. Federal applicants must describe in their full proposal in one page or less (that does not count toward the proposal page total) how they will address NOPP partnership criteria and the anticipated partner contributions.

For the purpose of this notice, federal applicants (lead principal investigator only), including NOAA applicants, must comply with NOPP partnership criteria. For more information email oer.nofo2025@noaa.gov.

2. Permits and Approvals

Applicants are responsible for obtaining all international, federal, state, and local government permits and approvals necessary for the proposed project. Applicants are expected to design their projects to minimize potential adverse environmental impacts. If applicable, documentation of requests for, or approvals of, cultural resource or environmental permits must be included as part of the full proposal. Such clearances include, but are not limited to, the following:

a. National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA): Applicants must complete an Environmental Compliance Questionnaire for National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Notice of Federal Funding Opportunity Applicants for each proposal to ensure there is sufficient information about the proposed project to allow NOAA Ocean Exploration to analyze the proposed project's potential environmental impacts pursuant to NEPA (See Sections IV.B.3.l and VI.B for more details). This questionnaire is available on the NOAA Ocean Exploration website at https://oceanexplorer.noaa.gov/about/funding-opps/media/NOAA-Grants-Questionnaire-final.pdf.

b. National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA):

- Applicants who propose work in U.S. state waters must consult with the appropriate state historic preservation office (SHPO) before submitting the full proposal and provide a letter of project support from SHPO staff.
- Applicants who propose work on federally recognized tribal lands (https://www.bia.gov/bia/ois/tribal-leaders-directory/) must include a letter of support from the appropriate tribal historic preservation office (THPO).
- Applicants who propose working with an Indigenous community must include a letter of support from each community mentioned in the full proposal.
- If SHPO, THPO, or Indigenous communities have not responded to requests for these letters by the full proposal submission deadline, applicants can include copies of their correspondence (as .pdf files) showing dates and times of communications.

c. UNESCO Convention for the Protection of Underwater Cultural Heritage: If samples will be collected during any projects proposed under the Maritime Heritage theme, applicants must adhere to federal and state laws and make accommodations for conservation and curating as described in the rules in the annex to the UNESCO Convention (https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000126065).

IV. Application and Submission Information

A. Address to Request Application Package

Information about how to apply for federal grants is available on Grants.gov at https://www.grants.gov/applicants/grant-applications/how-to-apply-for-grants (see Section IV.G.2). Applicants without internet access can contact NOAA Ocean Exploration's grant program manager, Adrienne Copeland, by phone at (202) 603-6844 or mail to NOAA Ocean Exploration, ATTN: NOAA Ocean Exploration NOFO 2025, SSMC3-Room 2313, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910, to obtain an application package and guidance on how to submit pre-proposals and full proposals.

B. Content and Form of Application

1. Format requirements (applies to both pre-proposals and full proposals)

- Proposals must be formatted to print on 8.5" x 11" paper with 1-inch margins in 12-point font.
- The principal investigator's last name must be included in the bottom right-hand corner of each page. All digital files should be named with the principal investigator's last name and a descriptor indicating the file content, e.g., "Jones Cover Sheet 2025."
- The title must be no longer than 15 words/100 characters.

2. Pre-Proposal Required Content

A pre-proposal is a prerequisite to submitting a full proposal. A pre-proposal should identify the proposed project's priorities and objectives and describe how they relate to NOAA Ocean Exploration's mission and priorities as described in Sections I.A and I.B.

Complete, two-page pre-proposals are required for funding consideration. No more than two pages will be evaluated. Incomplete pre-proposals will not be considered. All information (excluding demographic information) must be included in the NOAA Ocean Exploration notice of funding opportunity cover sheet and the allowed two pages as described below.

All pre-proposals must include:

a. Completed NOAA Ocean Exploration Notice of Funding Opportunity Cover Sheet: All applicable sections must be completed in full, including project title; priority theme addressed; principal investigator and collaborator contact information; outside support; dates of anticipated field operations and any operational constraints, especially with regard to field operations; vessel and ancillary platform information; budget estimate; and anticipated outputs (e.g., potential discoveries, knowledge and impact, published papers, reports, meetings, and/or outreach and education materials). The cover sheet and instructions on how to fill it out are available on the NOAA Ocean Exploration website at https://oceanexplorer.noaa.gov/about/funding-opps/welcome.html.

b. Pre-Proposal Narrative, not to exceed two pages: This narrative should include the anticipated funding request, any figures that support the proposal, and references and should:

- Describe how the proposed project is relevant to NOAA Ocean Exploration's mission and priorities. Proposals must describe the project's intrinsic value, how it is exploratory rather than research based, and its expected scientific impact.
- Describe the scientific and technical merit of the proposed project. Proposals must include project goals and objectives and describe how the project is innovative and interdisciplinary, its exploration value and potential impact, and its logistical feasibility.
- Include the qualifications and competencies of the applicant(s).

- Include a statement that any required platforms (ship and/or other data collection platforms), if applicable to the proposed project, are available when needed and that the applicant's organization has the administrative means to arrange and pay for them.

Applicants and collaborators named on proposals are encouraged to provide demographic information through the online NOAA Ocean Exploration Notice of Funding Opportunity Demographics Collection Form (https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSd4Xav6rvPzEGEpH3RG5A-DBlnERq6AADzCh84cN6lH7enT0g/viewform?usp=sf_link) (OMB approval control numbers 0690-0080 and 0690-0035). Applicants are asked to only fill out the form for themselves and to have collaborators named in proposals fill out and submit their own forms if they are interested in sharing their information with NOAA Ocean Exploration. Submission of demographic information is voluntary and has no impact on an award. NOAA will not provide collected demographic information to reviewers for any purpose and will not consider demographic information during selection.

Pre-proposals must be submitted by email to oer.nofo2025@noaa.gov (see Section IV.A for guidance for mail submission). Pre-proposals received after the deadline of 4:59 p.m. EDT on May 30, 2024, will be disqualified.

3. Full Proposal Required Content

Applicants should use September 1, 2025, when referring to the project award date in the proposal and on the Office of Management and Budget standard forms.

Full proposals must include all the documents described below in the order listed, where applicable. Proposals that do not comply with these requirements will be disqualified. For applicants using Grants.gov to submit their proposals, each document must be uploaded as a separate file.

a. Updated NOAA Ocean Exploration Notice of Funding Opportunity Cover Sheet: This is the same form that is to be submitted with the pre-proposal (see Section IV.B.2.a). It must be updated for the full proposal and all applicable sections must be completed in full.

b. Executive Summary, not to exceed one page: This summary should be written in language that can convey to nonexperts the key elements of the project and how it will advance ocean exploration priorities and should describe the essential elements of the proposed project and include:

- The project title (no more than 15 words/100 characters);
- A list of the investigators who will significantly contribute to the project, including their names, contact information, and affiliations;
- The compelling objectives, benefits, and rationale of the project; and
- A funding request for each year of the project and the total funding requested.

c. Project Narrative, not to exceed 15 pages: This narrative should include all text (minimum 12-point font) and any tables and visual materials (e.g., charts, graphs, maps, photographs) that support the proposed work. Pages beyond the 15-page limit will be removed from the proposal before it is reviewed. The 15-page limit does not include the executive summary; data and information sharing plan; outreach and education plan; statement of diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility; literature cited; current and pending support; curriculum vitae; budget justification and tables; letters of support (e.g., from state historic preservation office (SHPO), tribal historic preservation office (THPO), or Indigenous community members); required forms (e.g., OMB forms, NEPA questionnaire); National Oceanographic Partnership Program (NOPP) information (for federal applicants); and suggested reviewers. A project narrative must include the following:

- Relevance to NOAA Ocean Exploration's mission and priorities as described in Sections I.A and I.B.
- Scientific, technical, historical, cultural, or socioeconomic importance and merit.
- Goals and objectives and the proposed methodology.
- Anticipated contributions of participating personnel.
- Description of any complementary funding.
- Dates of field operations and any operational constraints.
- Statement that any required platforms (ship and/or other data collection platforms), if applicable, are available when needed and that the applicant's organization has the administrative means to arrange and pay for them.
- Anticipated outputs (e.g., potential discoveries, knowledge and impact, published papers, reports, meetings, and outreach and education material).
- Value to NOAA and the nation and how it will benefit our understanding of the ocean, the science community, and society.
- Assessment of feasibility and mitigation measures.
- Partnership information, if applicable. If principal investigators are federal applicants, a separate page should be provided instead that addresses how National Oceanographic Partnership Program (NOPP) requirements will be met (see Section IV.B.3.p).

d. Data and Information Sharing Plan (DISP), not to exceed two pages: The goal of a data and information sharing plan (DISP) is to ensure all parties involved have common expectations and coordinate plan execution to ensure proper documentation, accessibility, and preservation for future data use. A DISP should describe how data and information sharing requirements (see Section VI.B) will be met. Guidance and resources for developing a DISP to satisfy these requirements along with an example of a DISP are available on NOAA Ocean Exploration's website at https://oceanexplorer.noaa.gov/about/funding-opps/welcome.html. DISPs for proposed projects will be considered during proposal review along with past DISP-related performance. A DISP must include:

- Principal and co-principal investigator's ORCID IDs (https://orcid.org/).
- Descriptions of all the types of environmental data, information, and products expected to be collected or created during the project (with instruments if applicable), including those that may lead to publication.
- Expected open-access, machine-readable data formats for all data types.
- Expected metadata standard to be used (ISO 19139) and/or additional data descriptors that will be compiled to accompany archived data.

- Anticipated archive location(s) for each data type. At a minimum, grant recipients are expected to submit all applicable raw data to NOAA's National Centers for Environmental Information (NCEI), which will provide public access, discoverability, and permanent archiving; however, NCEI is not obligated to accept all submissions and may charge a fee, particularly for large or unusual datasets.
- Method(s) to be used for providing data access for data archived outside of NCEI (if applicable).
- Tentative date by which data will be shared. Data accessibility must occur no later than publication of a peer-reviewed article based on the data, or two years after the data are collected and verified, or two years after the original end date of the grant (not including any extensions or follow-on funding), whichever is soonest, unless a delay has been authorized by NOAA Ocean Exploration.
- Approximate total volume of data to be collected or produced (volume of each data type with totals preferred).
- Prior experience making environmental data accessible and discoverable (preferably with links to access the data).
- Acknowledgment that documents and pre-publication scholarly manuscripts will be submitted to the NOAA Central Library's Institutional Repository (and that manuscripts submitted to closed-access journals will be made Section 508 compliant).

Note: The costs of data preparation, accessibility, and archiving as well as those associated with publications should be considered in the proposal budget.

e. Outreach and Education Plan, not to exceed one page: This plan must describe how the proposed project incorporates outreach and education. Applicants should consider and demonstrate if/how the project will promote teaching, training, and learning; enhance scientific understanding through broad dissemination; and/or enhance participation of underrepresented groups in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields. Where possible, this plan should also include goals and metrics for assessing and evaluating outreach and education activities. See Section VIII.A for more information on outreach and education expectations for funded projects.

f. Statement of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA), not to exceed one page: This statement must describe how the proposed project seeks to broaden the participation of underrepresented groups (e.g., race, color, sex, national origin, age, religion, socioeconomic status, disability, geographic location, sexual orientation, gender identity, etc.) and remove barriers in ocean exploration-related activities. The statement should also summarize where and how the project will integrate DEIA, as defined in the White House Strategic Plan to Advance Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility (https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Strategic-Plan-to-Advance-Diversity-Equity-Inclusion-and-Accessibility-in-the-Federal-Workforce-11.23.21.pdf); considerations regarding team composition, team management, leadership and decision making, focus areas, and partnerships; and how the outcomes of these considerations are reflected in the project. Where possible, this statement should also include goals and metrics for assessing and adjusting DEIA efforts. Applicants are encouraged to demonstrate how the project will reflect and advance DEIA rather than simply stating the organization supports DEIA. This program provides NOAA Ocean Exploration an opportunity to support NOAA's commitment to DEIA by requiring applicants to consider DEIA in project development. This has the potential to make an impact on DEIA in science at NOAA and beyond.

g. Previous Significant Results: This document must provide a concise summary of previous significant results and achievements from any prior or ongoing NOAA Ocean Exploration funding to the principal investigator and/or co-principal investigators. This summary should include publications and outputs and describe related data and information sharing and outreach and education experiences. If applicants have not previously received funding from NOAA Ocean Exploration, the previous significant results document should specify that applicants have not been awarded previous funding by NOAA Ocean Exploration.

h. Summary of Current Funding Support: This summary must provide information about a principal investigator's and co-principal investigator's current and pending federal support for ongoing projects and outstanding proposals, including potential subsequent funding in the case of continuing awards. The proposed project and all other projects or activities that use federal assistance to fund the principal investigator or other senior project personnel's time should be included. The relationship between the proposed project and these other projects should be described, and the number of person-months per year to be devoted to the projects must be clearly stated.

i. Curriculum Vitae, not to exceed two pages each: Curriculum vitae must be included for each principal and co-principal investigator(s) and should include a list of relevant recent publications.

j. Budget Justification and Budget Tables: This budget information must adhere to the guidance and templates provided in the NOAA Grants Management Division's Budget Narrative Guidance available at https://www.noaa.gov/sites/default/files/atoms/files/gmd_budget_narrative_guidance_-_05-24-2017_final.pdf and the formatting requirements in Section IV.B.1. All expenses must be rounded to the nearest dollar and identified and listed in separate tables for the years in which they will be incurred. The budget must include, and justify, sufficient resources to analyze, interpret, publish, and archive data (including archiving costs associated with NOAA's National Centers for Environmental Information (NCEI) in accordance with the applicant's data and information sharing plan) and results of the proposed project. Applicants must describe the scope of work and budget for each year of support being sought (not to exceed two years) and provide a summary budget table for the entire award period. The summary budget table must reflect the object classes contained in the SF-424A form, which is the Grants.gov official budget form included as part of the application package. The table must reflect the computations and basis used in the development of costs and justifications for salary and travel (travel must be itemized to include destination, airfare, per diem, lodging, and ground travel), contracts for analyses and/or cataloging, publications, rentals, supplies, equipment, subawards to other parties for services, and nonstandard items, including ship time and data collection platforms (e.g., remotely operated vehicles, autonomous underwater vehicles) that require NOAA Ocean Exploration funding. The summary budget table must also show how costs for ship time and data collection platforms were developed and whether agreement has been reached for their use. Cost sharing and/or in-kind contributions must be clearly identified and given a value. For the purpose of this funding opportunity, costs for ship time and/or other ocean data collection platforms (e.g., remotely operated vehicles, autonomous underwater vehicles) are considered rental costs and therefore are not included in the modified total direct cost (MTDC). The exception is for organizations with a federal negotiated indirect cost rate agreement that covers these charges.

k. Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (if applicable): A copy of the indirect cost rate agreement from the applicant's organization that was used to calculate indirect costs must be included as a separate document if the applicant has an indirect cost rate agreement. If the agreement is being renegotiated, the status of the indirect cost rate application should be indicated in an attached letter. See Section VI.B for more indirect cost rate information.

l. Completed National Environmental Policy Act Questionnaire: Applicants are required to submit answers to questions 1 through 19 and 51 through 57 of the Environmental Compliance Questionnaire for National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Notice of Federal Funding Opportunity Applicants (https://oceanexplorer.noaa.gov/about/funding-opps/media/NOAA-Grants-Questionnaire-final.pdf). See Section VI.B for more NEPA information.

m. Letter of Support from the State Historic Preservation Office (if applicable): If the proposed project occurs in state waters, a letter of support from the appropriate state historic preservation office (SHPO); refer to https://ncshpo.org/directory/ to find SHPO contact information) is required (see Section III.C.2.b).

n. Letter of Support from the Tribal Historic Preservation Office (if applicable): If the proposed project occurs on federally recognized tribal lands, a letter of support from the relevant tribal historic preservation office (THPO) is required (see Section III.C.2.b). Applicants should refer to the Tribal Leaders Directory (https://www.bia.gov/bia/ois/tribal-leaders-directory/) to determine if their project occurs on federally recognized tribal lands.

o. Letter of Support From the Indigenous Community (if applicable): If the proposed project mentions cooperation or collaboration with an Indigenous community by name, a letter of support from that community is required (see Section III.C.2.b).

p. National Oceanographic Partnership Program (NOPP) information, not to exceed one page (if applicable): This only applies if the lead principal investigator is a federal employee. This information should be submitted as a separate page addressing how the proposed project will meet the NOPP partnership requirements described in Section III.C.1.

q. Forms: Nonfederal applicants must complete and submit the following Office of Management and Budget forms, which are available as part of the application package on Grants.gov. (Federal applicants are not required to submit these forms with their proposals.)

- Application for Federal Assistance (SF-424).
- Budget Information for Non-Construction Programs (SF-424A): When applying for a multiyear award, nonfederal applicants must submit a line item budget, with each year being a separate column, in Section B and a corresponding budget narrative for each of the anticipated funding periods (years).
- Assurances for Non-Construction Programs (SF-424B).
- Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (SF-LLL): This is to be filled out by the lead principal investigator's organization.
- Certification Regarding Lobbying (CD511): This is to be filled out by the lead principal investigator's organization.

Full proposals may also include the following optional items:

a. Additional Letters of Support: A letter of support from a ship operator is an example of the kind of letter that would benefit an applicant.
b. List of Suggested Reviewers, up to five: Applicants interested in including such a list should provide the names, email addresses, and phone numbers for potential peer reviewers that do not have conflicts of interest. Applicants may also provide the names of individuals they would like excluded from the review process along with justification for the request.

No appendices are permitted.

Note: Prior to submission, carefully review the PDF Guidelines for submission found here: https://grants.nih.gov/grants/how-to-apply-application-guide/format-and-write/format-attachments.htm. Recent applicants have encountered rejected applications for formatting issues, especially:

- *All attachments must be in PDF form.*
- *Do not use "bundling" or "portfolio" features to combine PDFs into a single document. Everything must be visible in the PDF.*
- *Descriptive file names may only be 50 characters or less (including spaces).*
- *Keep attachment file size to 100 MB or less.*
- *eRA does not accept any pages larger than the U.S. standard letter paper size (8.5" x 11").*

Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit their full proposals early (at least a few days prior to the due date) in case these or other issues impact submission. If you have issues during the submission process, please contact the eRA Service Desk.

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:

- Be registered in the System for Award Management (SAM) (https://www.sam.gov/SAM/) before submitting their full proposal;
- Provide a valid unique entity ID (UEI) generated by SAM.gov with their full proposal (see Section IV.G.2); and
- Continue to maintain an active SAM registration with current information at all times during which they have an active federal award or full proposal under consideration by NOAA Ocean Exploration.

NOAA may not make a federal award to an applicant until the applicant has complied with all the applicable UEI and SAM requirements.

After submission to Grants.gov, the PI listed on the application will receive an email notification from the eRA email address (era-notify@mail.nih.gov) confirming a successful submission or listing errors associated with the application. The application must be resubmitted via Grants.gov after resolving any errors for an application to be successfully received by NOAA.

D. Submission Dates and Times

Pre-proposals and full proposals received after their respective deadlines will be disqualified.

1. Pre-Proposals

Pre-proposals must be received by 4:59 p.m. EDT on May 30, 2024. A complete pre-proposal is a prerequisite for submission of a full proposal.

2. Full Proposals

Full proposals must be received by 11:59 p.m. EDT on October 3, 2025.

Applicants without internet access who must submit a hard copy of their pre-proposal and full proposal by mail or delivery service should allow sufficient time for delivery to NOAA Ocean Exploration by the deadline. Pre-proposals and full proposals received after their respective cutoff dates and times will not be considered.

E. Intergovernmental Review

Proposals received in response to this notice are subject to Executive Order 12372 Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs. Applicants must contact their state's single point of contact (SPOC) to find out about and comply with the state's process under this executive order. The names and addresses of SPOCs can be found on the Office of Management and Budget's website at https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/SPOC-4-13- 20.pdf.

F. Funding Restrictions

For the purpose of this funding opportunity, costs for ship time and/or other ocean data collection platforms (e.g., remotely operated vehicles, autonomous underwater vehicles) are considered rental costs and therefore are not included in modified total direct cost (MTDC). The exception is for applicants from organizations with a federal negotiated indirect cost rate agreement that covers these charges.

NOAA Ocean Exploration will not provide funding to hire and/or fund the salaries and associated overhead costs of any permanent federal or state government employee. In addition, NOAA Ocean Exploration will not pay facilities and administrative (F&A or "overhead") fees to federal and state agencies for subawards (e.g., for personnel time, ship time, or other ocean data collection platform support). Awardees from federal and state agencies may use award funding to cover travel, equipment, supplies, and contractual personnel costs associated with the proposed work.

Funding for ship time on NOAA Ship Okeanos Explorer is not available through this notice.

To receive funding through this program, federal applicants serving as lead principal investigators must coordinate their proposed projects with the National Oceanographic Partnership Program (NOPP, see Section III.C.1).

G. Other Submission Requirements

Applicants without internet access should see Section IV.A for mailing information.

1. Pre-Proposals

Applicants must submit pre-proposals by email to oer.nofo2025@noaa.gov, preferably as an Adobe .pdf file. Applicants should put their last name in the subject heading along with the words “ocean exploration pre-proposal” (e.g., “Jones ocean exploration pre-proposal”).

2. Full Proposals

- Nonfederal applicants should submit their full proposals through Grants.gov (https://grants.gov/), which will record the official date and time of receipt (see below).
- Federal applicants should email their proposals to oer.nofo2025@noaa.gov (federal applicants cannot submit their proposals through Grants.gov). The official date and time for the receipt of such proposals is the time-stamp on the email when it is received by NOAA Ocean Exploration with the completed full proposal attached. Applicants should allow sufficient time for email transmission; email transmissions may experience delays.

To submit an application through Grants.gov, applicants must register for a Grants.gov user ID and password. This process can take between three and five business days, or up to four weeks if not completed correctly. To avoid delays, applicants are strongly encouraged to register early, log in, review the application instructions, and apply as soon as possible before the deadline. Information about the Grants.gov registration process for organizations is on eRA Commons (https://public.era.nih.gov/commonsplus/public/login.era?TARGET=https%3A%2F%2Fpublic.era.nih.gov%3A443%2Fcommonsplus).

An applicant that is already registered with Grants.gov does not need to re-register; however, all applicants must keep their Grants.gov password and SAM (see Section IV.C.) registration up to date, or their applications will not be accepted by Grants.gov.

The following steps are recommended if an issue with Grants.gov (technical problems or glitches with the website) may hinder submission before the deadline:

- Print any error message received.
- Call the Grants.gov Contact Center at (800) 518-4726 for immediate assistance and get the case number for future communications.
- Contact NOAA Ocean Exploration at (202) 603-6844 or oer.nofo2025@noaa.gov prior to the deadline.

In the event of a confirmed Grants.gov systems issue, NOAA Ocean Exploration reserves the right to accept proposals in an alternate format prior to the deadline. Problems with the computer system or equipment of an applicant’s organization are not considered system issues. Similarly, an applicant’s failure to complete the required registration, submit their proposal via a registered authorized organization representative (AOR), or read email messages from Grants.gov are also not considered system issues.

V. Application Review Information

Evaluation Criteria

1. Pre-Proposal Evaluation Criteria

NOAA Ocean Exploration will use the following criteria for internal review to determine whether to encourage or discourage submission of full proposals:

- Relevance to NOAA Ocean Exploration's missions and priorities;
- Scientific and technical merit;
- Qualifications and competencies of the applicants, including past performance on NOAA Ocean Exploration awards; and
- Costs for specific items as well as the overall project cost including value of cost sharing and/or in-kind contributions, including strength of National Oceanographic Partnership Program (NOPP) partnership for federal applicants.

2. Full Proposal Evaluation Criteria

NOAA Ocean Exploration will conduct mail and panel peer reviews to evaluate full proposals. Full proposals will be evaluated and rated individually by no fewer than three independent peer mail reviewers and a peer-review panel with collective expertise in the relevant disciplines. All peer reviewers will be required to sign confidentiality and nondisclosure agreements. The reviewers will be asked to determine and analyze the strengths, weaknesses, deficiencies, and risks associated with each proposal.

Reviewers will use the following criteria and corresponding weight values to evaluate full proposals:

a. Importance/Relevance and Applicability of Proposed Project to NOAA Ocean Exploration's Mission and Priorities (30%): This criterion assesses whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed project and/or relevance to NOAA, federal, regional, state, tribal, or local activities. Reviewers will evaluate the extent to which 1) the project is germane to NOAA Ocean Exploration's mission and priorities and provides national benefit, 2) the project is exploration focused (focused on the potential for making discoveries) versus research focused (hypothesis testing), and 3) the anticipated results could have significant impact in the future.

b. Scientific and Technical Merit (30%): This criterion assesses whether the approach is technically sound and/or innovative, if the methods are appropriate, and whether there are clear goals and objectives. Reviewers will evaluate the extent to which 1) the proposed approach is scientifically and technically feasible, 2) the project is innovative, 3) the proposal includes clear goals and objectives, 4) the methods are commensurate with the goals and objectives, 5) the project is interdisciplinary, and 6) the plans for documentation, archiving, and sharing of data, multimedia, and sample collections are adequately described.

c. Overall Qualifications of Applicants (15%): This criterion assesses whether the applicant(s) possesses the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the proposed project. Reviewers will evaluate 1) the qualifications of the applicant(s), including if they have the proper expertise to accomplish the project and 2) the strength, breadth, and depth of any proposed project partnerships. If the applicant has previously received NOAA Ocean Exploration funding, reviewers will also evaluate their award performance (e.g., timely publication of results and sharing of data). An applicant's qualifications, independent of the applicant's career stage, will be considered under this criterion.

d. Project Costs (15%): This criterion assesses the proposed budget to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the proposed project needs and timeframe.

e. Outreach and Education and Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (10%): This criterion assesses whether the proposed project provides a focused and effective outreach and education strategy in line with NOAA's mission to protect the nation's natural resources and if it will provide an opportunity to broaden

the participation of underrepresented groups (e.g., gender, ethnicity, disability, geographic, etc.). Reviewers will determine the extent to which 1) the outreach and education plan is innovative and likely to be effective, 2) the project will provide opportunities to broaden participation of underrepresented groups, 3) the project will provide opportunities for early career researchers and students, and 4) the project budget includes funding to support the outreach and education plan that will target diverse future generations of explorers.

Review and Selection Process

Once NOAA Ocean Exploration receives a full proposal, staff will conduct an initial administrative review to determine compliance with requirements and completeness of the proposal. If a proposal is compliant and complete, it will be subjected to the peer review process that consists of an external mail review and a peer-review panel.

Both federal and nonfederal experts may be invited to participate in the external mail reviews and/or on a peer-review panel. Evaluations and scores from the external mail review will be provided to the peer-review panelists for their consideration. Peer review panelists will rate each full proposal using the evaluation criteria and percentage weights provided above and will provide summary comments. They will not be asked to reach consensus on individual proposals or to rank proposals.

The NOAA Ocean Exploration selecting official, in consultation with NOAA Ocean Exploration scientific and technical staff, will make the final decisions based on scores and comments from the external mail reviewer and the peer-review panelists.

Selection Factors

The NOAA Ocean Exploration selecting official will recommend proposals for funding in rank order unless there is justification for moving a proposal up or down in the ranking. Such justification could be based on one or more of the following factors:

- Availability of funding
- Balance/distribution of funds
    - Geographically
    - By type of organizations
    - By type of partners
    - By exploration priorities
    - By project theme and/or focus
- Duplication of other projects funded or considered for funding by NOAA or another federal agency
- Program priorities and policy factors described in Sections I.A and B, including, but not limited to, logistical feasibility and scientific discipline
- Applicant’s prior award performance, including data and information sharing
- Strength of partnerships and/or inclusion of, and participation by, diverse groups
- Adequacy of information necessary for a NOAA Ocean Exploration agency official to make a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) determination and draft necessary documentation to advance funding recommendations to the grants officer

Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

1. Pre-Proposals

Following review, applicants will receive an email on or about July 6, 2024, encouraging or discouraging submission of a full proposal. Even if NOAA Ocean Exploration discourages an applicant from submitting a full proposal, the decision of whether or not to submit a full proposal is left to the applicant. Applicants who do not receive an email by August 13, 2024, should contact NOAA Ocean Exploration at (202) 603-6844 or oer.nofo2025@noaa.gov as soon as possible.

2. Full Proposals

NOAA Ocean Exploration intends to notify all applicants of the results of the peer review of their proposal as well as NOAA Ocean Exploration's final recommendation to award or decline funding their proposal by email approximately 180 days after receipt of their full proposal. Applicants should factor in this time when proposing starting dates for exploration activities. Project/award start dates are expected to be on or around September 1, 2025. Progress of the peer-review process and timing of budget allocation to NOAA Ocean Exploration could affect this timeline.

VI. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notices

1. Notification of Award

Successful nonfederal applicants will receive notification that their proposals have been funded from the NOAA Grants Management Division. Successful federal applicants will be notified by the NOAA Ocean Exploration selecting official. Unsuccessful applicants will be notified by the NOAA Ocean Exploration selecting official that their proposal was not recommended for funding.

- Nonfederal applicants should not begin project activities in the expectation of grant funding. Activities should not begin until a notice of award document is received from the NOAA Grants Management Division. Any spending prior to an official notice of award will be at the awardee's risk.
- 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 (per 2 CFR 200.458). 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.
- Proposals submitted in response to this notice are not considered awards until the grants officer has signed the grant or cooperative agreement. Only grants officers can bind the government to the expenditure of funds. The grants officer's digital signature constitutes an obligation of funds by the federal government and formal approval of the award.

2. Modification to Applications

NOAA Ocean Exploration may ask applicants whose proposals are recommended for funding to modify objectives, work plans, data information and sharing plans, or budgets prior to final approval of an award. The exact amount of funds to be awarded, the final scope of activities, the project duration, and specific NOAA substantial involvement in each project will be determined in pre-award negotiations between the applicant and NOAA Ocean Exploration.

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

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

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

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE PRE-AWARD NOTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS FOR GRANTS AND COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS. The Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements contained in the Federal Register notice of December 30, 2014 (79 FR 78390) are applicable to this solicitation and may be accessed online at http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2014-12-30/pdf/2014-30297.pdf.

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

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

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

NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT (NEPA). NOAA must analyze the potential environmental impacts, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), for applicant projects or proposals which are seeking NOAA federal funding opportunities. Detailed information on NOAA compliance with NEPA can be found at the following NOAA NEPA website: http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/, including our NOAA Administrative Order 216-6 for NEPA, http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/NAO216_6.pdf, and the Council on Environmental Quality implementation regulations, http://energy.gov/sites/prod/files/NEPA-40CFR1500_1508.pdf. Consequently, as part of an applicant's package, and under their description of their program activities, applicants are required to provide detailed information on the activities to be conducted, locations, sites, species and habitat to be affected, possible construction activities, and any environmental concerns that may exist (e.g., the use and disposal of hazardous or toxic chemicals, introduction of non- indigenous species, impacts to endangered and threatened species, aquaculture projects, and impacts to coral reef systems). In addition to providing specific information that will serve as the basis for any required impact analyses, applicants may also be requested to assist NOAA in drafting an environmental assessment, if NOAA determines an assessment is required. Applicants will also be required to cooperate with NOAA in identifying feasible measures to reduce or avoid any identified adverse environmental impacts of their proposal. Failure to do so shall be grounds for not selecting an application. In some cases if additional information is required after an application is selected, funds can be withheld by the Grants Officer under a special award condition requiring the recipient to submit additional environmental compliance information sufficient to enable NOAA to make an assessment on any impacts that a project may have on the environment.

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

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

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 athttp://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.

NATIONAL HISTORIC PRESERVATION ACT (NHPA). Should a proposal be selected for funding; the principal investigators and a NOAA Ocean Exploration agency official will work to identify additional potential consulting parties under NHPA Section 106 36 CFR Part 800 compliance (https://www.achp.gov/sites/default/files/regulations/2017-02/regs-rev04.pdf) that will inform a final determination of effect made by the NOAA Ocean Exploration agency official. If the NOAA Ocean Exploration agency official determines that the project does have potential to create adverse effects on historic or traditional properties, a formal Section 106 consultation will be required to be completed before fieldwork begins. If a formal consultation is required, NOAA will serve as the lead agency, and the project team may be required to provide input.

CODE OF CONDUCT. Awardees may be asked to provide a signed code of conduct describing how the proposed project will ensure a safe, inclusive, and equitable work environment for all individuals working on the project. If an awardee’s organization already has a code of conduct, they may provide a copy of the organization’s code of conduct to meet this requirement.

INDIRECT COST RATE. 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 10% of modified total direct cost (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 Michele Mazzocchetti, Grants Management Specialist, NOAA Grants Management Division, 1325 East West Highway, SSMC2 11th Floor, Silver Spring, MD 20910, or michele.mazzocchetti@noaa.gov.

DATA AND INFORMATION SHARING. NOAA requires NOAA Ocean Exploration as a grant-issuing program to consider, in advance, how to ensure public accessibility and long-term preservation of NOAA-funded data, to provide guidance for applicants to use in developing a plan for data and information access, and to track and enforce conditions imposed on grant recipients as directed by:

- NOAA Public Access to Research Results (PARR) policy (https://repository.library.noaa.gov/view/noaa/10169), NOAA’s response to the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy memorandum Increasing Access to the Results of Federally Funded Scientific Research (https://repository.library.noaa.gov/view/noaa/13809)
- NOAA Environmental Data Management Committee (EDMC) Procedural Directives (https://nosc.noaa.gov/EDMC/PD.all.php)

- The Data and Publication Sharing Directive for NOAA Grants, Cooperative Agreements, and Contracts (https://nosc.noaa.gov/EDMC/documents/Data_Sharing_Directive_v3.0.pdf)

The policy and directives above mandate the following:

- Environmental data and information collected or created under NOAA grants or cooperative agreements must be made discoverable by and accessible to the public in a timely fashion (typically within two years) and free of charge or at a cost no greater than the cost of reproduction, unless an exemption is granted by
- NOAA Ocean Exploration. All data should be available in at least one machine-readable format, preferably a widely used or open-standard format, and should be accompanied by machine-readable documentation (metadata), preferably based on widely used or international standards (ISO) that include quality control (QC) procedures.
- At a minimum, awardees are expected to submit all applicable raw data to NOAA's National Centers for Environmental Information (NCEI), which will provide public access, discoverability, and long-term archiving. However, NCEI is not obligated to accept all submissions and may charge a fee, particularly for large or unusual datasets. If NCEI does not accept an awardee's data, the awardee must provide direct links to the data to NOAA Ocean Exploration. Applicants should acknowledge this requirement in the DISP.
- Data should be discoverable and accessible except where limited by law, regulation, policy (e.g., those applicable to personally identifiable information, protected critical infrastructure information, or proprietary trade information), or security requirements (https://www.noaa.gov/administration/administrative-issuances). If sensitive data (e.g., maritime heritage coordinates) may be collected or produced, special data protection protocols or strategies may be required and intent to limit public accessibility should be described in the DISP.
- Applicants must include a data and information sharing plan (DISP) as part of their proposal describing how data requirements will be satisfied (see the guidance in Section IV.B.3.d.).
- NOAA Ocean Exploration may, at its own discretion, make an awardee's DISP publicly available or use information from a DISP to produce a formal metadata record and include that metadata in a catalog to indicate the pending availability of new data.
- Publications produced via funding under this notice should cite NOAA Ocean Exploration and the grant number as the funding source.
- Final pre-publication manuscripts of scholarly articles (or their DOIs if open access) produced entirely or primarily with NOAA Ocean Exploration funding are required to be submitted to the NOAA Institutional Repository after acceptance and no later than the date of publication. Closed-journal manuscripts will be made publicly available by the NOAA Institutional Repository after an embargo period previously arranged with the journal. Pre-publication manuscripts for articles in closed-access journals must be compliant with Section 508 (https://Section508.gov), an amendment to the United States Workforce Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

C. Reporting

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

The Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act, 31 U.S.C. 6101 note, includes a requirement for awardees of applicable Federal grants to report information about first-tier subawards and executive compensation under Federal assistance awards. All awardees of applicable grants and cooperative agreements are required to report to the FFATA Subaward Reporting System (FSRS) available at https://www.fsrs.gov/ on all subawards over $30,000. Refer to 2 CFR Part 170.

All final reports may be made available to the public, so they must be compliant with Section 508, an amendment to the United States Workforce Rehabilitation Act of 1973. This federal law requires federal agencies to make their electronic and information technology (such as publications, presentations, software, and websites) accessible to people with disabilities. This also applies to electronic and information technology developed using federal funds.

Grants, cooperative agreements, and intra-agency or interagency agreements have the same reporting requirements. A member of NOAA Ocean Exploration's staff will serve as a point of contact for each award and will work with awardees to facilitate reporting requirements as well as data (see Section VI.B).

- Awardees must submit an expedition/fieldwork plan to NOAA Ocean Exploration prior to the start of an expedition/fieldwork in time to meet ship/platform requirements, but no later than 60 days prior to the beginning of the expedition/fieldwork. This requirement will be waived for projects with no field component. NOAA Ocean Exploration will provide guidance to help awardees prepare expedition/fieldwork plans that will describe the type of information that should be included in them. NOAA Ocean Exploration may make an expedition/fieldwork plan publicly available along with the final expedition/fieldwork report (see below) and any datasets produced under the award no later than two years after completion of the expedition/fieldwork. All reports must be compliant with Section 508, an amendment to the United States Workforce Rehabilitation Act of 1973.
- Within 60 days of the completion of an expedition/fieldwork, awardees must submit a final expedition/fieldwork report to NOAA Ocean Exploration. This requirement will be waived for projects with no field component. NOAA Ocean Exploration will provide guidance to help awardees prepare expedition/fieldwork reports that will describe the type of information that should be included in them. NOAA Ocean Exploration will make the final expedition/fieldwork report publicly available along with the expedition/fieldwork plan (see above) and any datasets produced under the award no later than two years after completion of the expedition/fieldwork. All reports must be compliant with Section 508, an amendment to the United States Workforce Rehabilitation Act of 1973.
- Within 60 days of completion of an expedition/fieldwork (or annually if the work is multiyear), awardees must provide the following to NOAA Ocean Exploration:
    - An updated collection-level metadata record that identifies completed collections and includes digital object identifiers (DOIs) (if assigned)
    - A data inventory identifying data types collected, data release dates, and/or documents with specific proposed exceptions to the open data access policy (e.g., data that may have homeland/national security, maritime heritage, or protected resources value in accordance with NAO 212-151 (https://www.corporateservices.noaa.gov/ames/administrative_orders/chapter_212/212-15.pdf)
    - Expedition/fieldwork location data (e.g., equipment deployment locations, sample collection locations, and ship navigation track or area of operations for public GIS display)

- Awardees must submit progress reports semiannually (twice a year) and cover six-month periods that begin with the start date of the project. Progress reports are to be submitted electronically to NOAA Ocean Exploration through eRA Commons no later than 30 days after each six-month project period. Progress reports should detail award-related activities that occurred during the reporting period that correspond with the goals and objectives from the original proposal's project narrative and should provide specific, project-related information, including a summary budget table of expenses for that period. A final report is due no later than 120 days after the expiration date of an award.

For continuing observations, data inventories should be submitted periodically if there is a significant change in location, type, or frequency of such observations.

VII. Agency Contacts

For more information and for applicants without internet, contact NOAA Ocean Exploration at (202) 603-6844 or oer.nofo2025@noaa.gov. Email inquiries should include the principal investigator's name in the subject heading. Inquiries can also be mailed to NOAA Ocean Exploration's grant program manager, Adrienne Copeland, at NOAA Ocean Exploration, ATTN: NOAA Ocean Exploration NOFO 2025, 1315 East-West Highway, SSMC3-Room 2313, Silver Spring, MD 20910.

VIII. Other Information

A. Outreach and Education

To further outreach and education efforts, NOAA Ocean Exploration staff members and/or NOAA designees will be assigned to help plan and execute NOAA Ocean Exploration outreach and education activities associated with a funded award. In some cases, these individuals may join an at-sea science team and serve as a NOAA Ocean Exploration representative, expedition coordinator, data manager, and/or communications coordinator.

- Awardees and collaborators are strongly encouraged to work with NOAA Ocean Exploration to further their projects' outreach and education objectives. NOAA Ocean Exploration's website (https://oceanexplorer.noaa.gov/) is the principal vehicle for documenting all projects supported by NOAA Ocean Exploration. NOAA Ocean Exploration will assess and provide support for outreach and/or education activities in collaboration with the applicant, as warranted. Web content may include accompanying education materials. Awardees and other project participants may be asked to contribute to NOAA Ocean Exploration's outreach and education activities in support of their project, such as through project-specific or evergreen (e.g., related but not specific to the project) content for the website (see below), contributions to lesson plans, accommodation of a teacher/educator-at-sea, participation in a media event or press conference to describe the expedition and its findings, or at-sea media participation.

- A member of the NOAA Ocean Exploration Communications Team will work with the awardee and other participants to discuss how the project will be featured on the NOAA Ocean Exploration website. In some instances where a berth is available on a project vessel, NOAA Ocean Exploration may consider identifying a communications coordinator to participate from sea. Communications coordinators are typically NOAA Ocean Exploration federal employees or contractors, and costs of their participation will be covered by NOAA Ocean Exploration.

B. Proprietary or Privileged Information

Patentable ideas, trade secrets, and privileged or confidential commercial or financial information, disclosure of which may harm the applicant, should be included in proposals only when such information is necessary to convey an understanding of the proposed project.

Such information should be clearly marked in the proposal or included as a separate statement accompanying the proposal (not as part of the project narrative) and should be appropriately labeled with a legend (e.g., “The following is [proprietary or confidential] information that [name of proposing organization] requests not be released to persons outside the federal government, except for purposes of review and evaluation.”). While NOAA will make every effort to prevent unauthorized access to such material, the agency is not responsible or in any way liable for the release of such material.

C. Release of Grantee Proposal Information

Proposals for funded awards will be available to the public on request, except for privileged information or material that is personal, proprietary, or otherwise exempt from disclosure under law. Appropriate labeling in proposals aids identification of what may be specifically exempt. Such information will be withheld from public disclosure to the extent permitted by law, including the Freedom of Information Act. Without assuming any liability for inadvertent disclosure, NOAA will seek to limit disclosure of such information to its employees and to outside reviewers only when necessary for review of a proposal’s merit or as otherwise authorized by law

Portions of proposals resulting in awards that contain descriptions of inventions in which either the government or the awardee owns a right, title, or interest (including a nonexclusive license) will not normally be made available to the public until a reasonable time has been allowed for filing patent applications. NOAA will notify the awardee of receipt of requests for copies of funded proposals so the awardee may advise NOAA of such inventions as well as other confidential, commercial, or proprietary information in the proposal.