NOTICE OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

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Executive Summary

Federal Agency Name

OAR National Sea Grant College Program (SG)

Funding Opportunity Title

FY2024 Sea Grant Contaminants of Emerging Concern

Announcement Type

Competitive

Funding Opportunity Number

NOAA-OAR-SG-2024-25936

Assistance Listing Number(s)

11.417

Dates

Deadline: May 2, 2024

Period of Performance: Projects should have a start date no earlier than September 1, 2024 and an end date of no later than August 31, 2027.

Funding Opportunity Description

The National Sea Grant College Program was enacted by the U.S. Congress in 1966 (amended in 2020, Public Law 116-221) to support leveraged federal and state partnerships that harness the intellectual capacity of the nation's universities and research institutions to solve problems and generate opportunities in coastal communities.

NOAA's National Sea Grant Office (NSGO) anticipates approximately $1,000,000 of federal funds will be available to support 1-5 projects that address Contaminants of Emerging Concern (CECs) across a shared geography, biogeography or watershed. Each application may request between $200,000 and $600,000 in federal funds per project and may be for up to three years.

Applications require the standard 50% non-federal match for Sea Grant projects. This will be a stand-alone (i.e., non-omnibus) award.

Applicants are encouraged to pursue diverse partnerships, including with state agencies and academic institutions, to develop projects that research and monitor CECs that may cause ecological or human health impacts, including PFAS, in coastal and estuarine waters. If the region has received funding from the past CEC competitions, applicants are encouraged to demonstrate how this proposal will build off of those prior collaborative efforts and selected CEC projects.

Projects must have a research focus and can include appropriate associated supporting costs and activities (e.g. administration, extension, research/project synthesis). Applicants can propose future competed research competitions to select projects that meet the scope below, and/or applicants can propose program led research projects. Proposed work should:

- Focus on species of ecological importance, particularly those with strong socio-economic and/or human health dimensions (e.g., subsistence, recreational, or commercial shellfish and/or finfish);
- Focus on the prevalence, transportation, and biogeochemical transformations of CECs across a watershed or ecosystem, especially those with pathways that involve drinking water and/or wastewater;
- Consider the *in-situ* multi-stressor and/or interactive effects of CECs that organisms likely experience in their natural environments; and/or
- Perform short-term monitoring assessments to help steer more focused, long-term monitoring initiatives.

All projects must take place within the United States or territories or their respective waterways.

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

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

This document sets out requirements for submitting to NOAA-OAR-SG-2024-25936.

Full Text of Announcement

I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Program Objective

NOAA provides funding to Sea Grant institutions to increase the understanding, assessment, development, management, utilization, and conservation of the Nation’s ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes resources by providing assistance to promote a strong educational base, responsive research and training activities, broad and prompt dissemination of knowledge and techniques, and multidisciplinary approaches to environmental problems, in accordance with 33 USC 1121(b).

The objectives of this funding opportunity are supported by insights from Sea Grant's national scoping campaign; reports that address alignment between CEC research gaps and governmental mandates (ACWA and ASDWA 2019; NSTC 2021); and Congressional direction.

B. Program Priorities

Contaminants of emerging concern (CECs) are increasingly detected in surface water and groundwater, posing risks to the Nation's drinking waters and aquatic life. This broad class of chemicals and materials is characterized by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for their perceived, potential, or demonstrated threat to human health and/or the environment, but are often excluded from monitoring programs and suffer from a lack of published health and/or water quality standards (EPA 2008). CECs include, but are not limited to: pharmaceuticals, personal care or household cleaning products, industrial chemicals (e.g., per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFASs)), lawn care and agricultural products, and microfibers.

In recognition of Sea Grant's capabilities and place-based engagement in coastal and Great Lakes environments, in FY 2021, 2022, and 2023, Congress directed Sea Grant to partner with state agencies and academic institutions to research and monitor contaminants of emerging concern that may cause ecological or human health impacts, including PFAS, in coastal and estuarine waters. At the direction of Congress using FY21 appropriations and additional Sea Grant investment, Sea Grant performed a nation-wide scoping campaign to identify how the National Sea Grant College Program's expertise in CECs can be most effectively leveraged with an initial regional research competition. In FY 2022 and 2023, Congress provided an additional $1 million to expand Sea Grant's effort towards mitigating the impacts of CECs. We anticipate approximately $1,000,000 of federal funds again this fiscal year to continue support for Sea Grant and partners to address CECs.

The selected project(s) will be expected to integrate the three objectives below. If the region has received funding from the past CEC competitions, applicants are encouraged to demonstrate how this proposal will build off of those prior collaborative efforts and selected CEC projects.

1. Projects must have a research focus and can include appropriate associated supporting costs and activities (e.g. administration, extension, research/project synthesis). Applicants can propose future competed research competitions to select projects that meet the scope below, and/or applicants can propose program led research projects. Proposed work should:
    - Focus on species of ecological importance, particularly those with strong socio-economic and/or human health dimensions (e.g., subsistence, recreational, or commercial shellfish and/or finfish);
    - Focus on the prevalence, transportation, and biogeochemical transformations of CEC's across a watershed or ecosystem, especially those with pathways that involve drinking water and/or wastewater;
    - Consider the *in-situ* multi-stressor and/or interactive effects of CECs that organisms likely experience in their natural environments;
    - Perform short-term monitoring assessments to help steer more focused, long-term monitoring initiatives.
2. Partner with state agencies, so that projects are:
    - Tailored to outcomes that lead to enhanced management (regulatory and/or non-regulatory) of CECs;
    - Tailored to the most appropriate discipline(s) whether it be a specific or blend of: natural, social, behavioral, or economic sciences, as well as policy and/or legal analysis;

    - Complement existing research initiatives, such as those described in "Appendix A: Federal and State Research Activities and Programs," within the *Update to the Plan for Addressing Critical Research Gaps Related to Emerging Contaminants in Drinking Water* (NSTC 2022). The plan includes initiatives with a scope that is more expansive than just drinking water.
3. Collaborate and engage with underserved communities, for the purpose of:
    - Community engagement and outreach, so that project scoping, information generation, and dissemination have clear throughlines for the application of research.
    - Ensuring that appropriate priority is assigned to mitigating exposure risks in underserved communities, due to current and legacy industrial pollution that impact various designated uses (e.g., recreation, fish consumption), as well as aging wastewater and stormwater infrastructure.

Applicants should not be dissuaded from pursuing the priority needs of its community members, however, given the three main drivers of scope for the research component, the following areas of research may be better suited to address through other Sea Grant funding mechanisms or by other federal funding sources:

- Individual chemical constituent studies (e.g., risk, screening, toxicity).
- Marine debris (including microplastic), due to Sea Grant's investment from Provision 8 of NOAA's Operations, Research, and Facilities appropriation in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA).

Proposed future competed research in response to this funding opportunity must adhere to the National Sea Grant College Program's National Competition Policy to ensure compliance with federal review processes as well as a robust and efficient review process.

Future competed research funding will result in a specific award condition (SAC) on the cooperative agreement and will require that selected projects undergo environmental compliance review before funding can be spent on those projects. The recipient program will need to submit a revision request to satisfy that specific award condition which will need to be approved by NOAA's Grants Management Division before funding can be expended.

C. Program Authority

Statutory authority for this program is provided under the National Sea Grant College Program Act of 1966, as amended (33 USC 1121 et seq.).

II. Award Information

A. Funding Availability

Subject to the availability of funding, this announcement describes how eligible applicants should apply for the FY24 Contaminants of Emerging Concern Funding Opportunity. The National Sea Grant Office (NSGO) anticipates approximately $1,000,000 in FY2024 federal funds will be available to individual Sea Grant programs in order to support projects that address the priorities listed in I.B. above.

Each application may request between $200,000 and $600,000 in federal funds and the project period may be up to three years. Applications require the standard 50% non-federal match for Sea Grant projects.

There is no guarantee that funds will be available to make awards, or that any application will be selected for funding. If an applicant incurs any costs prior to receiving an award agreement signed by an authorized NOAA official, it does so at its own risk of not being selected or of these costs not being included in a subsequent award. NOAA and DOC will not be responsible for any incurred project costs if a project fails to receive full funding.

The NSGO may choose to fund projects from this competition with future funding allocations.

B. Project/Award Period
The anticipated start date is September 1, 2024, with projects to be completed by August 31, 2027.

C. Type of Funding Instrument
The funding instrument is a cooperative agreement to a Sea Grant program. A cooperative agreement is used when substantial involvement of the federal government during performance of the proposed work is anticipated. The nature of the substantial involvement includes significant collaboration, participation, and/or intervention in the management of the project by NOAA. Some examples of substantial involvement by NOAA include, but are not limited to, required NOAA approval before certain projects can be initiated in grant out-years, the ability of NOAA to halt an activity immediately if detailed performance specifications are not met; NOAA specifying direction or redirection of scope of work due to the interrelationships with other projects; and NOAA involvement in mid-cycle programmatic evaluation and planning processes.

III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applicants
The following entities are eligible to submit to this opportunity:

Sea Grant College Programs, Sea Grant Institutional Programs, and Sea Grant Coherent Area Programs. For the entirety of this document, these entities are collectively referred to as “Sea Grant Programs”.

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. Additionally, we advise that all carefully read ‘Additional Application Package Forms’ within the ‘Full Proposal Required Elements’ section below.

The National Sea Grant College Program champions diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) by recruiting, retaining, and preparing a diverse workforce, and proactively engaging and serving the diverse populations of coastal communities. Sea Grant is committed to building inclusive research, extension, communication, and education programs that serve people with unique backgrounds, circumstances, needs, perspectives, and ways of thinking. We encourage Sea Grant program applications to reflect diverse participation with regards to age, race, ethnicities, national origins, gender identities, sexual orientations, disabilities, cultures, religions, citizenship types, marital statuses, education levels, job classifications, veteran status types, income, and socioeconomic status.

B. Cost Share or Matching Requirement
Non-federal matching funds equal to at least 50 percent of the federal funding request must be provided unless a waiver justified by statute is granted, such as the waiver for insular areas granted by the Department of Commerce pursuant to 48 U.S.C.1469a. If you believe your application may qualify for a waiver, please contact the National Sea Grant Office before submission to discuss it. The cumulative match at the end of each year of the grant must not fall below 50 percent of the cumulative federal request up to that point. In-kind contributions directly supporting this application may count towards this matching requirement.

IV. Application and Submission Information

A. Address to Request Application Package

Application packages are available online and can be downloaded from www.grants.gov under opportunity NOAA-OAR-SG-2024-25936. If an eligible applicant does not have access to the internet, please contact the Agency Contacts listed in Section VII for submission instructions.

B. Content and Form of Application

This section provides an overview of these required proposal elements (and where to locate them). Applications must adhere to the provisions under "Required Elements" below. Failure to adhere to these provisions may result in a delay in award processing or rejection of the application, based on the extent of the noncompliance.

The submitting Sea Grant program must redact all Personally Identifiable Information (PII) in the application materials prior to final submission to grants.gov. PII that must be redacted from the application includes, but is not limited to, social security number, date of birth, student identification number (from transcripts) or other information which if lost, compromised, or disclosed without authorization, could result in harm, embarrassment, inconvenience, or unfairness to an individual.

IMPORTANT NOTE: This proposal package will be using a different set of forms than Sea Grant programs have completed in the past. Instead of the "SF424 NOAA Standard Non-Construction Application Package" of forms, this application will include the "SF424 NOAA Research & Related (R&R) Forms Package." **While many of the forms may be familiar, please pay special attention to the headings and instructions in this section.**

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 filenames may only be 50 characters or less (including spaces).
- Keep attachment file size to 100 MB or less.
- eRA won't accept any pages larger than the U.S. standard letter paper size (8.5" x 11").

We strongly recommend that applicants attempt to submit their full proposals at least a few days prior to the due date in case these or other issues impact your submission, as they are not reasons we can extend the deadline. If you have issues during the submission process, please contact theeRA Service Desk.

Required Elements:

Applications must include the following elements. Failure to adhere to these provisions may result in a delay in award processing or rejection of the application, based on the extent of the noncompliance.

1. **Research & Related Senior/Key Person Profile Form (Grants.gov, OMB Control No. 4040-0001)**

This form must be completed and include a profile for the Principal Investigator and any co-PI(s). CVs and RELEVANT Current and Pending Support for each person's profile will also be attached to this form. The first listed PD/PI on the application must include their eRA Commons ID in the "Credential, e.g., agency login" field of form. Failure to register in eRA Commons and to include a valid PD/PI Commons ID in the Applicant Identifier field will prevent the successful submission of an electronic application.

Additional personnel included on the form do not need to include this information, however eRA will create a warning recommending those personnel also have valid eRA Commons IDs. Again - it is not required that those additional personnel include valid eRA Commons IDs regardless of the warnings created by the eRA system.

2. Research and Related Budget Form

The Research and Related Budget is a single form that will need to be completed covering the entire award by budget period following the instructions from Grants.gov. At the end of the Research and Related Budget form, "Section L" provides space for one attachment titled, "Budget Justification." The budget narrative for the project must be attached there. The budget narrative should explain the budget items by object class category (both federal and non-federal/match) in sufficient detail to enable review of the appropriateness of the funding requested. Additional budget narrative guidance can be found at: NOAA Grants Management Division's Budget Narrative Guidance.

3. Research & Related Other Project Information Form (Grants.gov, OMB Control No. 4040-0001)

This form must be completed for the application, and should also be used to attach the Project Abstract, the Project Narrative, Bibliography & References Cited (if applicable), and any other relevant forms or information as applicable. See form-specific instructions available on Grants.gov for additional instructions as needed.

a. Project Summary/Abstract Attachment

Using 4,000 characters or less, the Project Abstract should provide an overview of the application. Ensure the Project Abstract succinctly describes the project in plain language that the public can understand and use without the full proposal. It should be a self-contained description of the application and should contain a general statement of objectives and methods to be employed. It should be informative to other persons working in the same or related fields and understandable to a technically literate lay reader. Do not include personally identifiable, sensitive or proprietary/confidential information. This project abstract information (as submitted) will be made available on public websites and/or databases including USAspending.gov.

Project Abstract Elements:

- Use the following format:
  - Purpose:
  - Activities to be performed:
  - Expected Outcomes:
  - Intended Beneficiaries:
  - Subrecipient Activities:
- Keep it short. In most cases, each element above should be a couple of sentences to a paragraph in length.
- DO NOT repeat the Proposal Title. The Proposal Title is always presented with the Project Description, so including it in the abstract is not necessary.

- Include a high quality description that includes specificity regarding the purpose of the project. Characteristics of strong abstracts include a plain language description of the purpose for the project (which may include specific performance goals, indicators, milestones, or expected outcomes of the project), activities to be performed, deliverables and expected outcomes, intended beneficiary or recipient.
- Keep it simple. Do not use abbreviations, acronyms, technical terminology, or agency-specific terms. The intended audience is Congress and the general public, not specific interested parties and/or federal employees. The education level of the reader should be assumed to be the fifth grade of elementary school. Even those who are highly educated will appreciate a simply written document when they have hundreds of projects to review in one sitting.

b. Project Narrative Attachment

The total number of pages in the project description should not exceed ten (10) pages (excluding the cover page, any letters of support, or any current and pending support). Excess pages will not be included in the review. Applicants do not need to use the entire 10-page maximum. Depending on the proposed activities, a shorter description may suffice. Any works cited, CVs, letters of support, and current and pending support sections included do not contribute to the suggested page limit.

Project Narrative Elements:

- Cover page (does not count towards page limit)
    - Project title and names, titles, affiliations, and contact information (email and phone) of co-PIs.
    - Budget overview - Total cost of requested funding by partner.
    - Project Abstract
- Project introduction/justification
    - Explain the specific problem(s) this project seeks to address and justify its importance.
- Project objectives
    - Provide a list of clearly defined objectives. For each objective, provide a concise statement explaining how it is aligned with the goals and priorities of this funding opportunity.
- Project details
    - Provide an explanation of the methods you will use to address your project objectives. Explicitly explain how this project leverages the expertise of both researchers and stakeholders.
- Anticipated outcomes and deliverables
    - What are the expected outcomes and results related to the creation of data products, tools, technologies, and management practices?
- Outreach and technology transfer plan
    - Provide a strategy that details how end users, beyond those who actively participate in the proposed work, will learn about the project’s outcomes.
- Project timeline
    - Please provide a timeline for accomplishing the proposed work, which covers the entire duration of the project. Include approximate dates for key milestones related to the proposed work, including the accomplishment of anticipated outcomes and release of deliverables.

- Applicants submitting proposals that involve the use of human test subjects should state so clearly in their application. These proposed research activities require approval of the applicant's Institutional Review Board (IRB) before such research can proceed. Applicants are responsible for obtaining IRB approval from their institution and providing that documentation to NOAA once the approval is obtained and prior to any NOAA-funded human subject testing. Proposals intending to use human test subjects should specify clearly in the timeline approximately when IRB approval will be obtained and when the testing is expected to occur.
- Diversity statement
    - NSGO recognizes it has a particular and unique opportunity to support NOAA's commitment to diversity and inclusion by taking an intentional step that encourages applicants to consider diversity and inclusion as part of their scientific projects. This action has the potential to make an impact on not only the diversity and inclusion in science at NOAA, but also in the equity of services provided by NOAA. In this section, describe how the proposed activity incorporates the input of underrepresented groups (e.g., race/ethnicity, gender identities, sexual orientation, disability, geography, etc.) and how they benefit from its outcomes. Applicants are encouraged to review the resources and best practices compiled by NSGO related to diversity, equity, and inclusion in the Resources for Applicants & Reviewers section found here: https://seagrant.noaa.gov/funding/.
- Letters of support (if included, does not count towards page limit)
    - All letters of support should be included here. Required in the instance that a Sea Grant program is applying on behalf of a partnership of multiple Sea Grant programs; otherwise, recommended but optional.
- Current and pending support (if included, does not count towards page limit)
    - Describe any current or pending sources of support if applicable.

c. *Bibliography & References Cited Attachment (if applicable)*

If applicable, provide a bibliography of any references cited in the Project Narrative. Each reference must include the names of all authors (in the same sequence in which they appear in the publication), the article and journal title, book title, volume number, page numbers, and year of publication. Include only bibliographic citations. Applicants should be especially careful to follow scholarly practices in providing citations for source materials relied upon when preparing any section of the application.

d. Other Attachments

Abbreviated Environmental Compliance Questionnaire (OMB Control No. 0648-0538)

A separate NEPA Questionnaire or NEPA Statement must be completed/filled out for each individual project in the application.

NEPA Questionnaire

A separate NEPA Questionnaire must be completed for each relevant individual project in the application, following the details below. The Questionnaire can be found in the Resources for Applicants & Reviewers section found here: https://seagrant.noaa.gov/funding/. Applicants must ensure that the Questionnaire is completed in full and includes detailed information regarding project location, methodology, and permits. Copies of all permits required for project activities should be included with application materials. If a permit is pending or planned, please provide this information. Guidance on how to complete the Questionnaire and example Questionnaires for different types of projects can be found in the Resources for Applicants & Reviewers section found here: https://seagrant.noaa.gov/funding/.

The NEPA Questionnaire is required for ALL research projects (those whose project ID starts with "R/") even if the project is fully lab-based or relies on social science. The NEPA Questionnaire is also required for any project that meets the following criteria:

- Environmental permits, authorizations or waivers
- Biological take and/or release
- Environmental sampling
- Hazardous or toxic substances and waste
- Permanent or temporary environmental effects
- Endangered or threatened species and/or protected areas
- Known or unknown risks to human health or the environment
- Controversial environmental subject matter

NEPA Statement

Projects or actions that fall into the below categories do not need a questionnaire. If a program believes that a project in the application meets one of the exceptions, the program should include the following NEPA Statement directly after the relevant project narrative. Please use the following format for the NEPA Statement:

"This project's activities are exclusively comprised of [choose applicable activities from the bulleted list below] and therefore no NEPA Questionnaire is being submitted, as allowed by NSGO guidance].

NOAA has final responsibility to determine whether a project or action requires environmental compliance review. If NOAA determines that a project or action needs an environmental review, the NEPA Statement is not sufficient, staff may request a NEPA Questionnaire be completed instead.

Some examples of projects that can use the NEPA Statement are:

- Program management (i.e., any projects be assigned the "M/" project ID)
    - Program Development projects (these projects may need to undergo environmental compliance review when the program identifies project activities; please work with your federal program officer during implementation of these projects).

- Placeholder projects (e.g., "Future Competed Projects"; these projects will have a Special Award Condition on the grant and undergo environmental compliance review when the program submits an award action request to satisfy that special award condition)
- Workshops or conferences that do not involve the above list of actions in the previous section
- Communication activities that do not involve the above list of actions in the previous section
- Fellowships where the Sea Grant Program does not have discretion over the fellow's externally funded research
- Hiring actions
- Purely administrative actions (e.g., purchase of office supplies)

4. Additional Application Package Forms

In addition to the forms required above, standard federal forms and assurances are required and can be found with the application package on Grants.gov. These include:

*a. **SF-424 R&R Form** (Grants.gov, OMB Control No. 4040-0001)*

This form, titled "Application for Federal Assistance," must identify the entire funding period, as well as the federal funding amount being requested by the applicant and any non-federal matching fund amount. The form must be completed with the institution's accurate EIN and DUNS and point of contact, and signed by the institution's authorized representative or designee. Total federal and non-federal amounts listed in the SF-424 R&R, the Cumulative Budget of the Research and Related Budget form, and budget narrative must be the same.

Applicants will be required to enter their organization's Congressional District in the SF424 R&R form. For tips on finding and entering your Congressional District correctly, please review the information found here: https://grantsgovprod.wordpress.com/2017/06/21/how-to-find-your-congressional-district-for-the-sf-424-form/

*b. **SF-424B Assurances** (Grants.gov, OMB Control No. 4040-0007)*

The form, titled "Assurances – Non-Construction Programs," must be completed and signed by the institution's authorized representative or designee.

*c. **CD-511** (Grants.gov, US DOC)*

The form, titled "Certification Regarding Lobbying," must be completed and signed by the institution's authorized representative or designee.

*d. **SF-LLL** (Grants.gov, OMB Control No. 0348-0046) - optional form, include if appropriate*

This form, titled "Disclosure of Lobbying Activities," is an optional form and should be included if appropriate. If included, it must be completed and signed by the institution's authorized representative or designee.

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 must be submitted and successfully received by Grants.gov and eRA by 11:59 p.m. Eastern time on Thursday, May 2, 2024.

Please note: validation or rejection of an application by Grants.gov and eRA may take up to two business days after submission. Eligible Sea Grant programs should consider this process in developing their submission timeline. For eligible applications submitted through Grants.gov, a date and time receipt indication is included and will be the basis of determining timeliness.

E. Intergovernmental Review

Applications under the National Sea Grant College Program are not subject to Executive Order 12372, “Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs.”

F. Funding Restrictions

The Sea Grant Act at 33 USC 1124(d)(2) states:

“No payment under any grant or contract under this section may be applied to:

(A) the purchase or rental of any land; or

(B) the purchase, rental, construction, preservation, or repair of any building, dock, or vessel; except that payment under any such grant or contract may be applied to the short-term rental of buildings or facilities for meetings which are in direct support of any Sea Grant Program or project and may, if approved by the Secretary, be applied to the purchase, rental, construction, preservation, or repair of non-self-propelled habitats, buoys, platforms, and other similar devices or structures, or to the rental of any research vessel which is used in direct support of activities under any Sea Grant Program or project.”

G. Other Submission Requirements

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

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

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

After 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. This email will either confirm a successful submission to eRA or list errors and warnings associated with the application. Errors must be addressed, the application resubmitted via Grants.gov, and an email received by the listed PI indicating a successful submission to eRA for an application to be successfully received by NOAA.

V. Application Review Information

Evaluation Criteria

1. Importance/relevance and applicability of proposed projects to the program goals	**Maximum Points:** 25
This criterion ascertains whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and/or relevance to NOAA, federal, regional, state, or local activities. For this opportunity, this criterion includes addressing the primary objectives of the funding opportunity, and the degree to which the proposal connects to societal needs. The point scale is as follows: the application is unclear and does not adequately address the expectations outlined above (0-6 points); the application adequately addresses expectations outlined above (7-15 points); the application exceeds expectations outlined above (16-25 points).	

2. Technical/scientific merit	**Maximum Points:** 25
This criterion assesses whether the approach is technically sound and/or innovative, if the methods are appropriate, and whether there are clear project goals and objectives. For this opportunity, this criterion includes assessing the degree to which the goals, objectives, and deliverables are clearly stated and described; the methods are novel or creative; the technical approach is clearly explained; the technical approach efficiently and effectively transfers knowledge; and the proposal explains the technical approach to be taken that will advance previously-funded science to a point that it is translatable into natural resource management actions. The point scale is as follows: the application is unclear and does not adequately address the expectations outlined above (0-6 points); the application adequately addresses expectations outlined above (7-15 points); the application exceeds expectations outlined above (16-25 points).	

3. Overall qualifications of applicants	**Maximum Points:** 15
This criterion ascertains whether the applicant possesses the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project. For this opportunity, this criterion includes demonstration of the appropriate experience, qualifications and skill for successful completion of the project; the capacity necessary to complete the work; and demonstrated collaboration and partnerships relevant to previously funded activities, if the region has received funding from the past CEC competitions. The point scale is as follows: the qualifications are unclear and do not adequately address the expectations outlined above (0-5 points); the qualifications adequately address expectations outlined above (6-10 points); the qualifications exceed expectations outlined above (11-15 points).	

4. Project costs	Maximum Points: 10
This criterion evaluates the budget to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time frame. The point scale is as follows: the proposal is unclear and does not adequately address the expectations outlined above (0-3 points); the proposal adequately addresses expectations outlined above (4-6 points); the proposal exceeds expectations outlined above (7-10 points).	

5. Outreach and education	Maximum Points: 25
This criterion assesses whether the project provides a focused and effective education and outreach strategy regarding NOAA's mission to protect the Nation's natural resources. For this opportunity, this describes the degree to which the outcomes of the proposed work, specifically the knowledge and products that are responsive to U.S. coastal and Great Lakes stakeholders, will be shared beyond the project team (i.e. to other coastal stakeholders). This also includes identifying a strategy to work with beneficiaries, end-users, and other interested community members throughout the entire duration of the proposed work. The point scale is as follows: the application is unclear and does not adequately address the expectations outlined above (0-6 points); the application adequately addresses expectations outlined above (7-15 points); the application exceeds expectations outlined above (16-25 points).	

Review and Selection Process

Once a full proposal application has been received by NOAA, an initial administrative review is conducted to determine compliance with requirements and completeness of the application. Applications that are missing required elements listed in Section IV. B. above, or applications coming from ineligible applicants may be rejected without further review.

Applications that pass the administrative review will be reviewed by three independent reviewers drawn from experts in a range of disciplines that are relevant to the applications. Each proposal will receive at least three written reviews from the reviewers assessing its merits with regard to the evaluation criteria. These reviews will be averaged to produce a rank order. The selecting official shall recommend awarding in the rank order unless the application is justified to be selected out of rank order based upon any of the selection factors provided in Section V.C. The selecting official shall make final recommendations for awards to the Grants Officer who is authorized to obligate the funds and execute the award.

The program manager, NEPA staff lead, or grants specialist may contact the applicants to discuss questions about the merit or administrative correctness of the application and may delay approval of the application, or impose conditions on the award preventing funding or execution of certain activities, until all questions are satisfactorily answered.

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.

Consequently, awards may not necessarily be made to the highest-scored applications. Investigators may be asked to answer questions; and/or modify objectives, work plans, and/or budgets (including overall funding level) to address the issues raised by the reviewers, the competition manager, the Selecting Official, or the Grants Officer before an award is made. Subsequent administrative processing will be in accordance with current NOAA grants procedures.

Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

Subject to the availability of funds, projects are expected to start September 1, 2024.

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 oblige NOAA to award any specific project or to obligate any available funds.

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

DATA SHARING PLAN.1. Environmental data and information collected or created under NOAA grants or cooperative agreements must be made discoverable by and accessible to the general public, in a timely fashion (typically within two years), free of charge or at no more than the cost of reproduction, unless an exemption is granted by the NOAA Program. Data should be available in at least one machine-readable format, preferably a widely-used or open-standard format, and should also be accompanied by machine-readable documentation (metadata), preferably based on widely used or international standards. 2. Proposals submitted in response to this Announcement must include a Data Management Plan of up to two pages describing how these requirements will be satisfied. The Data Management Plan should be aligned with the Data Management Guidance provided by NOAA in the Announcement. The contents of the Data Management Plan (or absence thereof), and past performance regarding such plans, will be considered as part of proposal review. A typical plan should include descriptions of the types of environmental data and information expected to be created during the course of the project; the tentative date by which data will be shared; the standards to be used for data/metadata format and content; methods for providing data access; approximate total volume of data to be collected; and prior experience in making such data accessible. The costs of data preparation, accessibility, or archiving may be included in the proposal budget unless otherwise stated in the Guidance. Accepted submission of data to the NOAA National Centers for Environmental Information (NCEI) is one way to satisfy data sharing requirements; however, NCEI is not obligated to accept all submissions and may charge a fee, particularly for large or unusual datasets. 3. NOAA may, at its own discretion, make publicly visible the Data Management Plan from funded proposals, or use information from the Data Management Plan to produce a formal metadata record and include that metadata in a Catalog to indicate the pending availability of new data. 4. Proposal submitters are hereby advised that the final pre-publication manuscripts of scholarly articles produced entirely or primarily with NOAA funding will be required to be submitted to NOAA Institutional Repository after acceptance, and no later than upon publication. Such manuscripts shall be made publicly available by NOAA one year after publication by the journal.

More information can be found on NOAA’s Data Management Procedures at: https://nosc.noaa.gov/EDMC/documents/Data_Sharing_Directive_v3.0_remediated.pdf and at NAO 212-15 Management of Environmental Data and Information:

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

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

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

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

SCIENCE INTEGRITY. 1. Maintaining Integrity. The non-Federal entity shall maintain the scientific integrity of research performed pursuant to this grant or financial assistance award including the prevention, detection, and remediation of any allegations regarding the violation of scientific integrity or scientific and research misconduct, and the conduct of inquiries, investigations, and adjudications of allegations of violations of scientific integrity or scientific and research misconduct. All the requirements of this provision flow down to subrecipients. 2. Peer Review. The peer review of the results of scientific activities under a NOAA grant, financial assistance award or cooperative agreement shall be accomplished to ensure consistency with NOAA standards on quality, relevance, scientific integrity, reproducibility, transparency, and performance. NOAA will ensure that peer review of "influential scientific information" or "highly influential scientific assessments" is conducted in accordance with the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Final Information Quality Bulletin for Peer Review and NOAA policies on peer review, such as the Information Quality Guidelines. 3. In performing or presenting the results of scientific activities under the NOAA grant, financial assistance award, or cooperative agreement and in responding to allegations regarding the violation of scientific integrity or scientific and research misconduct, the non-Federal entity and all subrecipients shall comply with the provisions herein and NOAA Administrative Order (NAO) 202-735D, Scientific Integrity, and its Procedural Handbook, including any amendments thereto. That Order can be found 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.

Indirect Cost Rate - If an applicant does not have a current 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 (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. Do not include participant support costs when determining the indirect cost base. Additionally, applicants should be aware that most indirect cost rate agreements require that participant support costs be excluded from the MTDC base when calculating indirect costs. Applicants should reference their official agreements. The NOAA contact for indirect or facilities and administrative costs is: Michele Mazzocchetti, Grants Officer, NOAA Grants Management Division, michele.mazzocchetti@noaa.gov.

C. Reporting

In accordance with 2 CFR 200.328-9 and the terms and conditions of the award, financial reports are to be submitted semi-annually and performance (technical) reports are to be submitted 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

The National Sea Grant Office mailing address is:
NOAA Sea Grant
1315 East-West Highway
Silver Spring, MD 20910

sg.grants@noaa.gov

VIII. Other Information

Demographics Information

NOAA will not provide collected demographics information to reviewers for any purpose, including evaluation, and will not consider demographics information during selection. Applicants must submit documentation by either including a statement within the application, or via email to sg.grants@noaa.gov, that they have responded to the new requirement to provide the following information for all named collaborators on the proposal. (2022, OMB approved for PRA under DOC generic clearance information collections, 0690-0030 and 0690-0035).
Note: Applicants may use their own method of collecting this information. The NSGO has also developed an online form as an optional method for collection. Submission to this form would count as fulfillment of this requirement.

1. Do you or your organization identify with any of the following groups that the federal government, in Executive Order 13985, has identified as underserved? List all that apply.

a) Black
b) Latino
c) Indigenous and/or Native American
d) Asian American
e) Pacific Islander
f) Other person of color
g) Members of religious minorities
h) Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) persons
i) Persons with disabilities
j) Persons who live in rural areas
k) Persons otherwise adversely affected by persistent poverty or inequality
l) No, I do not identify with any of these groups

Sea Grant 90-2 Project Summary Form

Once applications have been recommended for funding, applicants must submit a Sea Grant 90-2 Project Summary Form (for each project within the application) through the 90-2 Webform portal . This is due within 30 calendar days after the applicant has been notified via email that their application has been recommended for award. A detailed step-by-step guide for completing the web-based 90-2 Form is available on the Sea Grant Implementation page. Once the project is approved and funded, that information will be publicly available and searchable on the National Sea Grant College Program public website.

National Sea Grant Planning Implementation and Evaluation Reporting (PIER)

Recipients are required to use the National Sea Grant Planning Implementation and Evaluation Reporting (PIER) project database to communicate with the National Sea Grant Office on activities relating to this award. This includes tracking progress and impacts, in addition to performance metrics.

Section 508 Compliance

All public-facing products produced with funding from the award(s)/project(s) must ensure compliance with Section 508 of the Americans with Disabilities Act. The grant application and final report of all funded grants are public documents, except for privileged information or material that is personal, proprietary or otherwise exempt from disclosure under law. Appropriate labeling in the application will aid identification of what may be specifically exempt. 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 2 C.F.R. § 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.