CZM Projects of Special Merit Competition - FY2024

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NOTICE OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Federal Agency Name(s): National Ocean Service (NOS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Department of Commerce

Funding Opportunity Title: CZM Projects of Special Merit Competition - FY2024

Announcement Type: Initial

Funding Opportunity Number: NOAA-NOS-OCM-2024-2008186

Federal Assistance Listings Number: 11.419, Coastal Zone Management Administration Awards

Dates: Full proposals must be received and validated by Grants .gov on or before 11:59 p.m. U.S. Eastern Time on January 25, 2024 . At least one informational webinar with the NOAA program office will occur on dates to be determined, in October or early November 2023. Webinar information will be sent out via the CZM Program Managers' list-serve, or you may contact Kris.Wall@noaa.gov to obtain call-in information.

Funding Opportunity Description: The purpose of this document is to advise eligible applicants that NOAA is soliciting proposals for competitive funding under the Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA)'s Enhancement Program Projects of Special Merit, authorized under Section 309 of the CZMA (16 U.S.C. §1456b). The objective of Section 309 assistance is to encourage each State or Territory with a federally-approved coastal management program (CMP) to continually improve its program in specified areas of national importance. The intent of Projects of Special Merit (PSM) funding is to offer CMPs the opportunity to develop innovative projects that further their approved enhancement area strategies and focus on the following national enhancement area priorities: Coastal Hazards, Ocean and Great Lakes Resources, and Wetlands. In order to apply for this funding opportunity, CMPs must be approved by NOAA pursuant to the Coastal Zone Management Act (16 U.S.C. §1455) and have an approved 2021-2025 Section 309 Assessment and Strategy. Additionally, CMPs can only apply for priorities for which they have a corresponding approved strategy. Coastal Zone Management Program Regulations at 15 C.F.R. Part 923 apply to this Announcement, and program policies and procedures are further implemented through the provisions in this announcement.

FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Program Objective

The objective of Section 309 is to encourage States or Territories with federally-approved coastal management programs (CMPs) to continually improve their programs. The intent of Projects of Special Merit (PSM) funding is to offer CMPs the opportunity to develop innovative projects that further their approved enhancement area strategies and focus on national priorities. The Secretary of Commerce is authorized to make grants to a CMP for the development and submission of Federally approved program changes that support attainment of one or more enhancement area objectives established at 15 C.F.R. § 923.122.

PSM funds will be awarded on a competitive basis to CMPs. Proposed projects shall further the objectives of an approved enhancement area strategy but shall not be essential to meeting specific benchmarks in the strategy. PSM projects shall not be dependent on long-term levels of funding to succeed. Coastal Zone Management Program Regulations at 15 C.F.R. Part 923 apply to this Announcement, and program policies and procedures are further implemented through the provisions in this announcement.

This announcement will not award funding for construction projects. A construction project is defined as an award in which the major purpose of the project or program is construction.

B. Program Priorities

Proposals must focus on one or more of the following priority enhancement area objectives:
- Coastal Hazards: Preventing or significantly reducing threats to life and property by eliminating development and redevelopment in high-hazard areas, managing development in other hazard areas, and anticipating and managing the effects of potential sea-level rise and Great Lakes level change. Projects may support state, local, or regional coastal hazards initiatives that are prioritized within a CMP’s 2021-2025 Section 309 Assessment and Strategy.
- Ocean and Great Lakes Resources: Planning for the use of ocean and Great Lakes resources. Projects may support state, sub-regional, or regional planning initiatives that are prioritized within a CMP’s 2021-2025 Section 309 Assessment and Strategy.
- Wetlands: Protection, restoration, or enhancement of the existing coastal wetlands base, or creation of new coastal wetlands. Projects may support state, local, or regional wetlands

initiatives that are prioritized within a CMP's 2021-2025 Section 309 Assessment and Strategy.

The NOAA Office for Coastal Management (OCM) encourages applicants and awardees to advance the principles of equity and inclusion when developing and implementing their work. Supporting the principles of equity and inclusion in this funding competition means:

- paying particular attention to underserved communities and populations experiencing heightened vulnerabilities and disproportionate impacts relating to wetlands, ocean or Great Lakes resource management, and coastal hazards including climate change; and
- seeking engagement with, input from, and partnerships with communities, groups and individuals who have not historically been actively engaged in, or may be underrepresented in the work of state or territorial coastal management programs.

Promoting equity and inclusion through community engagement, co-development, and partnership improves creativity, productivity, and the vitality of the coastal management community that OCM supports.

In alignment with the 2018-2023 National CZM Strategic Plan, the Executive Order on Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities through the Federal Government, all applicants are asked to describe how their proposed project will advance equity and inclusion (see Section IV.B.4). Applicants are encouraged to advance equity and inclusion in coastal management through one or more of the above enhancement objectives (coastal hazards, ocean and Great Lakes resources, and wetlands). This can include work such as: meaningfully engaging with and supporting underserved and historically marginalized communities; broadening access to information (e.g. through translation of communications and products); analyzing and addressing the needs of underserved or vulnerable populations related to coastal hazards, ocean and Great Lakes resources, or wetlands; or advancing diversity, equity, justice, and inclusion policies and practices of coastal programs, in alignment with approved 309 strategies.

For this funding competition, the following definitions from the Executive Order on Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities through the Federal Government are being included:

- The term "equity" means the consistent and systematic fair, just, and impartial treatment of all individuals, including individuals who belong to underserved communities that have been denied such treatment, such as Black, Latino, and Indigenous and Native American persons, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders and other persons of color; members of religious minorities; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) persons; persons with disabilities; persons who live in rural areas; and persons otherwise adversely affected by persistent poverty or inequality.

- The term “underserved communities” refers to populations sharing a particular characteristic, as well as geographic communities, that have been systematically denied a full opportunity to participate in aspects of economic, social, and civic life, as exemplified by the list in the preceding definition of “equity.”

C. Program Authority

Statutory authority for this program is provided under Section 309 of the Coastal Zone Management Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. § 1456b).

II. Award Information

A. Funding Availability

Total anticipated funding for PSM is approximately $1.5 million or 15% of Section 309 funds for FY 2024. Funding is subject to the availability of FY 2024 appropriations, and so the allocation may vary depending on the total Section 309 funds available. It is estimated that approximately 5-10 proposals ranging from $50,000 to $250,000 will be selected. The maximum amount that may be requested for the federal share of a PSM is $250,000. Funds not allocated for PSM awards will be returned to the weighted formula allocation under Section 309.

The lead applicant on any proposal will be responsible for ensuring that allocated funds are used for the purposes of, and in a manner consistent with, this program, including any funds awarded to an eligible sub-awardee.

There is no guarantee that funds will be available for this federal funding opportunity or that any proposal will be selected for funding. If an applicant incurs any costs prior to receiving an award agreement signed by an authorized NOAA official, the applicant does so at their own risk of not being selected and these costs not being included in a subsequent award. Direct costs of proposal preparation shall not be included within the project application budget. In addition, NOAA and DOC will not be responsible for project costs if this program fails to receive funding. Recipients and subrecipients are subject to all federal laws and agency policies, regulations, and procedures applicable to federal financial assistance awards.

Proposals not funded in the current fiscal period, or if no proposal is selected for funding under this announcement in the current fiscal period, may be considered for funding in another fiscal period without NOAA repeating the competitive process outlined in this announcement. Funding in subsequent fiscal years encompassing the proposed period of

performance is subject to the availability of appropriations.

Funds may be used for any of the following allowable uses which support the attainment of a program change:
- Project personnel costs;
- Supplies;
- Overhead or indirect costs;
- Travel;
- Equipment (pursuant to relevant OMB guidance);
- Projects, studies and reports; and
- Pass-through or contractual costs including contracts, sub-awards, personal service contracts with individuals, memoranda of agreement/understanding, and other forms of pass-through funding for the purpose of carrying out the provisions of Section 309.

Funds may not be used for land acquisition or construction projects.

B. Project/Award Period

It is anticipated that projects funded under this announcement will have an award start date of October 1, 2024. The standard financial assistance award period for FY 2024-funded projects is 18 months. NOAA may extend an award up to an additional 18 months, for a maximum performance period of three years if circumstances warrant. In order to qualify for an extension, award recipients must be up-to-date on all progress and financial reports, demonstrate progress during the initial period of performance, and be able to demonstrate that additional time is likely to result in successful completion of the project.

C. Type of Funding Instrument

Projects will be funded as cooperative agreements. A cooperative agreement is used when substantial involvement of the federal government during performance of the proposed activity is anticipated. The recipient can expect substantial collaboration, participation, and/or intervention in the management of the project by NOAA. Some examples of substantial involvement by NOAA include the ability 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; NOAA collaborating with the recipient by working jointly with a recipient scientist or technician in carrying out the scope of work, by training recipient personnel, or detailing federal personnel to work on the project; and by NOAA limiting recipient discretion with respect to scope of work, organizational structure, staffing, mode of operations, and other management processes, coupled with close monitoring or operational involvement during performance.

III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applicants

Any coastal State or Territorial CMP that has been approved by NOAA pursuant to the Coastal Zone Management Act (16 U.S.C. § 1455) is eligible under this announcement if the requirements established at 15 C.F.R. § 923.121 are met. Specifically, applicants must have an approved Assessment and Strategy for the 2021-2025 assessment period that includes at least one strategy for one or more of the priority enhancement areas identified in Section I.B of this Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO). In addition to strategies that were originally approved as part of a State or Territory's Assessment and Strategy, approved strategies also include strategies that were added or substantially modified and approved by NOAA's Office for Coastal Management prior to the closing date of the competition. See 15 C.F.R. § 923.121 for all requirements.

The designated lead agency for implementing each approved CMP is eligible to submit projects for funding under this competition. For the purposes of this competition, the San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission is an eligible applicant. Eligible applicants may submit a proposal on behalf of State agency partners within the approved State CMP network, if applicable. Local governments and nonprofits may participate as partners on the proposed projects; however, projects should be focused upon enhancing the approved State CMP. Each applicant may submit no more than two applications for consideration under this competition.

NOAA employees are not permitted to assist in the preparation of applications. NOAA Office for Coastal Management staff are available to provide general information on programmatic questions such as those relating to the CMPs 309 Assessment and Strategy. For proposals that involve collaboration with current NOAA projects or staff, NOAA employees may provide a limited statement verifying the nature and extent of the collaboration and confirming prior coordination activities. Letters of support from NOAA employees are not allowable and will not be included among the application materials considered by merit reviewers.

Federal agencies and employees are not allowed to receive funds under this announcement, but may serve as collaborative project partners. In-kind services from federal agencies and employees cannot be considered as part of an applicant’s match on shared costs. If federal agencies are collaborators, applicants are expected to provide detail on the planned level of federal engagement in the application. Examples may include, but are not limited to, partnership services, serving in a review capacity, or participating in priority task teams, working groups, or leadership teams.

DOC/NOAA supports cultural and gender diversity and encourages women and minority individuals and groups to participate in proposals submitted to this program. In addition, DOC/NOAA is strongly committed to broadening the participation of historically black colleges and universities, Hispanic serving institutions, tribal colleges and universities, and institutions that work in underserved areas. While this program limits applicants to state and territorial CMPs, DOC/NOAA encourages applicants to include partners and contributors from any of the above groups or institutions.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement

Pursuant to 15 C.F.R. § 923.124 (a) (1), there are no match requirements under this competition.

C. Other Criteria that Affect Eligibility

As mentioned above, each applicant may submit no more than two applications for consideration under this competition.

IV. Application and Submission Information

A. Address to Request Application Package

The standard SF-424 application package is available online at http://www.grants.gov. If the electronic application is not accessible, applicants may request a paper application package from the competition manager: Kris Wall, NOAA Office for Coastal Management at kris.wall@noaa.gov or 541-843-0252.

During the competition period, eligible applicants (the designated lead agency for implementing each approved CMP) should submit any questions regarding the competition via email to the competition manager listed above. Questions received that are broadly applicable will be added to a FAQ documented located at https://coast.noaa.gov/czm/enhancement/ and will be periodically updated as needed, in order for all potential applicants to have access to the same level of information. All competition policy-related questions should be submitted to NOAA no later than two weeks prior to the application deadline in order to allow NOAA to respond in a timely manner for the information to be useful for all potential applicants developing proposals.

B. Content and Form of Application

Applicants should submit a complete standard NOAA financial assistance application package in accordance with the guidelines in this document. Applications that do not follow

the proposal application requirements stated in this announcement may not be considered for review.

All application materials should use a legible 11- or 12-point font with 1-inch margins on all sides. Electronic applications must be submitted as Adobe Acrobat (.PDF) whenever possible.
The complete application package should include the following forms and documents:

1. A project description (proposal) including the project workplan, as described in the application components section below, should be limited to no more than 10 pages, single spaced. A complete proposal should also include all of the items in the “Application Components” section below, but the title page and table of contents; the enhancement area, program change, project summary; the budget narrative; the budget justification; budget forms; and appendices will not count towards the 10-page limit for the project description. Project descriptions that exceed the 10-page limit will be shortened by removing pages at the end of the proposal narrative (see element 3 of the component section below) before it is forwarded to merit reviewers for evaluation. Pages removed from lengthy applications will not be reviewed or considered. Applications that are incomplete, unclear, or contain numerous typographical errors may not be understood effectively by reviewers, resulting in lower evaluation scores, so applicants are advised to review their application materials closely before they are submitted to the agency for consideration.

2. The following Federal forms from the SF-424 Form Family should be included in the application package, as applicable (no page limit with forms and related mandatory federal form information). Please note that these federal forms must be filled out online in a Grants.gov Workspace.:

i. Standard Form 424 (SF-424): Application for Federal Assistance (7/2003 version or newer). Applicants requesting Federal funding under this program must submit a copy of SF-424, 'Application for Federal Assistance'. If the applicant submits a hard copy of the final application, the SF-424 must be signed and dated by the organization's authorized representative and used as the cover page for the final application. An electronic signature and date stamp will automatically be included on SF-424 forms submitted via Grants.gov.

ii. Standard Form 424A (SF-424A): Budget Information for Non-construction Programs (includes a separate form for each year of funding and for each proposed sub-award. Applicants are required to submit a SF-424A Budget Form to summarize the budget for the proposed scope of work. The first column of Sections A and B shows the federal funds requested, while the second column of Sections A and B shows the non-federal matching

funds provided for the project. Total award funding is shown in the final column of Section B. Non-federal funding is broken out by source in Section C. Forecasted cash needs in Section D should be inclusive of all funding for multiyear projects. Federal and non-federal funds should be expended at a similar rate throughout the course of the project. Section E may be left blank. Section F summarizes the direct charges in line 21 and lists the indirect charges requested; please show the rate used in line 22. Multi-year awards will have out year funds shown in Section E. Please note that completion of the SF-424A form as described above represents NOAA's preference and may not be consistent with the instructions that accompany the SF-424A form. All budget figures should match the funding requested on the application cover sheet and correspond with the descriptions contained in the project and budget narratives. Each proposed sub-award of $25,000 or more should be accompanied by a separate SF-424A form to fully document the proposed subaward budget.

iii. Standard Form 424B (SF-424B): Assurances for Non-Construction Programs Applicants are required to submit a signed SF-424B, 'Assurances for Non-Construction Programs'.

iv. Form CD-511: Certification Regarding Lobbying Applicants are required to submit a Form CD-511, 'Certifications Regarding Lobbying.

v. Standard Form LLL (SF-LLL): Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (if applicable).

All other forms, NEPA information, and the Appendices can be uploaded within the application package under “Other Narrative” or “Other Forms”.

Application Components: All applications should contain the following required elements:

1. TITLE PAGE (PROPOSAL COVER SHEET)
a. Project title
b. Proposed project period (start and end dates)
c. Type of project (i.e., grant or cooperative agreement)
d. Recipient name (must match registered name in Sam.gov)
e. Recipient Unique Entity Identifier number (must match applicant information in SAM.Gov)
f. Principal and other investigators (names, organization, and contact information)
g. Financial representative (names, organization, and contact information)
h. Requested funding

2. ENHANCEMENT AREA, PROGRAM CHANGE, AND PROJECT SUMMARY

Enhancement Area - Identify the enhancement area under which you would like this proposal to be considered (list all that apply: Coastal Hazards, Ocean and Great Lakes Resources, and/or Wetlands). Please note that in order to apply for an enhancement area, you must have an approved strategy for that area.

Program Change - Identify the approved strategy that the proposed PSM will support (please use the exact title as approved in the Assessment and Strategy):

List the type(s) of program change that the supported strategy was approved in order to result in, or implement (list all that apply):

- A change to coastal zone boundaries; new or revised authorities, including statutes, regulations, enforceable policies, administrative decisions, executive orders, and memoranda of agreement/understanding;
- New or revised local coastal programs and implementing ordinances;
- New or revised coastal land acquisition, management, and restoration programs;
- New or revised Special Area Management Plans (SAMP) or plans for Areas of Particular Concern (APC), including enforceable policies and other necessary implementation mechanisms or criteria and procedures for designating and managing APCs; and,
- New or revised guidelines, procedures and policy documents that are formally adopted by a state or territory and provide specific interpretations of enforceable CMP program policies to applicants, local government and other agencies and will result in meaningful improvements in coastal resource management.

Project Summary - Provide a one to two paragraph summary of the project. In this section, please briefly summarize the project’s goals and objectives and describe how the project will lead to improved management of coastal resources.

3. PROJECT DESCRIPTION (10-page limit)

a) Provide a clear and concise description of the project that explains the relationship of the proposed project to the CMP's approved Assessment and Strategy and how the proposed project will further all or part of a program change that the CMP has identified in its Strategy.

b) Applications should provide sufficient detail to enable reviewers to evaluate the relevance and applicability of the proposed work to program priorities described in Section I.B of this announcement; to determine the technical/scientific merit of the proposed work;

to adequately review the qualifications of the applicants; and to assess whether the proposed scope of work raises any concerns with regard to federal policy considerations, such as those related to the National Environmental Policy Act, Endangered Species Act, Historic Preservation Act, and Marine Mammal Protection Act.

c) Goal and Objective(s). Describe in the narrative the specific project goals and objectives to be achieved. Describe how the project will further the goals and objectives of the approved 309 strategy. Explain how the project will benefit the coastal resource management community, the public, and/or specific coastal resources. The narrative should describe how the project is innovative, at either a state, regional, or national scale, particularly whether the project develops or implements new management tools or techniques that have the potential to advance the field of coastal management.

d) Background (Technical Need and Past Performance). Provide sufficient background information for NOAA and non-NOAA reviewers to independently assess the significance of the proposed project. Summarize the problem, gap, and technical needs to be addressed (as identified in the approved 309 Assessment), and the status of ongoing efforts and coordination to address the identified need or gap. Clearly describe how the proposed project will help address the identified technical need(s) and gap(s). Provide a brief description of the CMP's past performance and success in achieving the expected results of Section 309 strategies that are similar in size, scope, and relevance to the proposed project.

e) Equity and Inclusion Statement - The NOAA Office for Coastal Management (OCM) will support NOAA's commitment to equity and inclusion by encouraging program applicants to consider equity and inclusion in applications for the CZMA Projects of Special Merit. In this section, all applicants to this competition should include a statement that describes how the proposed project will:

- broaden and/or target the participation of vulnerable and/or underserved communities through meaningful involvement in the proposed project;
- develop and sustain mutually-beneficial partnerships, including the potential for co-development, with vulnerable and/or underserved communities; and
- seek to address vulnerabilities and disproportionate impacts relating to wetlands, coastal hazards and climate change, and ocean or Great Lakes resource management.

f) Public engagement and outcomes. Identify and describe potential stakeholders and end users (such as the public, local or tribal governments, targeted vulnerable and/or underserved communities, and/or other coastal management programs). Describe how the project will engage these stakeholders and other end users during the project itself. Describe an education and outreach strategy by which these stakeholders and users will be made aware

of, can benefit from, and can use project results.

g) Partnerships and networks. Identify and describe any professional or technical network(s) that will be leveraged or created. Describe how the partners will interact with the project, and how they will use the outcome or results of the project. Identify and describe what partners and/or key personnel from other agencies and institutions will be partnering on the project and how they will be connected, integrated and/or leveraged. Describe the relevant experience and expertise of the partners and/or networks that will be involved in the project. Applicants are encouraged to include letters of support and/or commitment from partner organizations or entities (especially any potentially vulnerable or underserved communities) that would be involved in and/or benefit from the proposed project.

h) Approach. Provide a work plan that: identifies specific tasks to be accomplished; explains the technical approach (including quality assurance) needed to accomplish the tasks; identifies the roles of partners and cooperators; and identifies potential obstacles to successful completion of the goals and objectives. Describe how the technical or professional network is involved in the project planning and design process. The work plan must clearly address data management requirements and the steps to be taken to achieve efficient and effective data access and data archive that are compliant with federal regulations (see Data Management requirements under Section IV.B.8). If no environmental data will be produced through the proposal, or if data is not publicly accessible due to law, regulation, policy (such as those applicable to personally identifiable information or protected critical infrastructure information or proprietary trade information) or by security requirements, then the application must include a clear explanation as to why no data management plan is being submitted.

i) Task Outcomes or Products. Identify and describe the anticipated project products or outcomes. Explain how they will benefit the coastal resource management community and describe performance measures that will be used to evaluate project success. The narrative should include information on dissemination of the findings/results to resource managers, local communities, and/or other stakeholders as appropriate. The project narrative also needs to include information on how the project will be evaluated for success. If the goal of the project is to build capacity, describe proposed plans to ensure the activities continue into the future. For the project's equity and inclusion efforts, describe the barrier being addressed, and include an evaluation plan or metrics for assessing success.

j) Transferability. Describe how results may be transferred to other state CMPs, with the goal of minimizing the amount of resources or level of effort that would be required to address a similar problem in another coastal state or territory.

4. PROJECT WORK PLAN (included in 10-page limit)
Provide a work plan that includes the major tasks or actions necessary for achieving the goals and outcomes of the proposed project. Briefly describe the capacity of the program to carry out the project, including through collaboration with partners. The work plan should also identify milestones, outcomes, and a schedule for their completion.
Example Work Plan Format (please duplicate outline as needed for multiple tasks):
Title:
Timeframe:
Description of Activities and Program Capacity:
Milestone(s) and Date of Completion:
Outcome(s) and Date of Completion:
List of Final Products:

7. BUDGET NARRATIVE AND JUSTIFICATION
In order to allow reviewers to evaluate the appropriateness of all costs, applications should include a detailed budget narrative and justification of costs broken out by individual task. The budget narrative submitted with the final application should match the dollar amounts included on all required forms and clearly link to the project narrative. Please explain each calculation and provide a narrative justification to explain expenditures for each budget category. The budget narrative should describe, by category of expenditure, the total funding needed to accomplish the objectives described in the project narrative for the entire award period. Please explain how categorical costs are derived in sufficient detail to enable reviewers to determine if costs are 'allowable and reasonable' according to the cost principles referenced in 2 CFR 200, Subpart E. Budget narrative categories should correspond to the standard object class categories listed in Section B of the SF-424A. For additional details, please review the budget guidance provided at:
https://coast.noaa.gov/data/coasthome/funding/_pdf/forms/budget-narrative-guidance-for-NOAA-grants.pdf.

Applicants should include detailed budget information regarding all known contracts and subawards, and indicate the basis for the cost and price estimates in the narrative. Applicants should describe activities to occur or products or services to be obtained and indicate the applicability or necessity of each to the project. Each subaward should include form SF-424A.
Detailed budget information includes:

i. Name of identified qualified sub recipient or contractor, affiliation, contact information, and method of selection. For “to be determined,” describe plans for selection. Information

must include the name and location (city, state, and Congressional district) of the entity receiving the funds and the location of the primary place of performance under the contract or subaward).

ii. Period of Performance. Include the dates for the performance period. If it involves a number of tasks, include the performance period for each task.

iii. Scope of Work. List and describe the specific activities or tasks to be performed.

iv. Criteria for Measuring Accountability: Include an itemized line item breakdown as well as total contract/award amount. If applicable, include any indirect costs paid under the contract/award and the indirect cost rate used.

v. Itemized Budget. Include categories used in program budget for subrecipients or cost-based contractors. If applicable, include any direct cost paid under the subaward or contract and the indirect cost rate used. Describe how the budget supports the involvement of project partners and participants (e.g., subawards and contracts for collaborations and services, participant support costs, payment for services rendered such as speaking fees at a conference, transportation, or travel support, to the extent authorized by 2 CFR 200, Subpart E).

vi. Fiscal Need. Describe the extent to which the state must rely solely on Federal funds to complete the proposed project under section 309 because State funds are not otherwise available.

Please note the following:
Funds for salaries and fringe benefits may be requested only for those personnel who are directly involved in implementing the proposed project and whose salaries and fringe benefits are directly related to specific products or outcomes of the proposed project. NOAA strongly encourages applicants to request reasonable amounts of funding for salaries and fringe benefits to ensure that the proposal is competitive.

All subawards and contracts must be made consistent with the requirements of 2 CFR 200.331-200.333 for subawards, and 200.317-200.327 for procurements.

For any equipment, a description of the item and associated costs or price is required, including a description of how it will be used in the project. Note that equipment is defined as tangible personal property (including information technology systems) having a useful life of more than one year and a per-unit acquisition cost which equals or exceeds the lesser of

the capitalization level established by the non-federal entity for financial statement purposes, or $5,000. See 2 CFR 200.1 Equipment and 2 CFR 200.313.

Non-federal applicants should identify if this information is known when submitting the grant application, who they plan to request that NOAA transfer equipment or property ownership titles to after the project ends. The decision on grant ownership requests will be made by the Grants Officer during the grant closeout process.

The cost or price, purpose, and method of selection for identified and planned acquisition contracts should be thoroughly justified in the Budget Narrative. Describe products or services to be obtained and indicate the applicability or necessity of each to the project. Procurements are subject to policies described in 2 CFR 200.317 - .327. For “to be determined,” describe plans for selection.

The budget narrative should also provide, to the extent possible, detailed information on travel, including costs, a description of anticipated travel, destinations, the number of travelers, and a justification of how the requested travel is directly relevant to the successful completion of the project. If actual trip details are unknown, applicants should state the basis for the proposed travel charges. Applicants should allocate travel funds for any coordination meetings at regional or national levels. If a foreign air carrier is anticipated to be used for any portion of travel, prior approval is required under the DOC Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions, Section G.05.d., https://www.commerce.gov/sites/default/files/2020-11/DOC%20Standard%20Terms%20and%20Conditions%20-%2012%20November%202020%20PDF_0.pdf, and therefore, such travel should be included in the proposal to avoid having to request prior approval after the project starts. Applicants may factor in travel costs for participation in an annual NOAA Grants Management Division (GMD) workshop for recipients.

Refer to item 6 in the Appendices Section below regarding treatment of Indirect Costs in the Budget Narrative.

8. APPENDICES

Appendices should be limited to materials that directly support the main body of the proposal (e.g. resumes, references, lists of relevant work products or reports, detailed methodologies, data sources, detailed budget narrative, letters of collaboration, letters of support, lists of data sources, and maps) and should not exceed a maximum of 40 pages. Applicants should number the pages in their proposal and any appendices.

As a standard practice, NOAA requires that resumes for Principal Investigators (PIs) of competitive awards be on file and maintained in the grants processing system used by the Department of Commerce, Grants Online. Recipients of any award (competitive or non-competitive) are required to designate PIs in Grants Online within 30 days of receiving award offers.

The following appendix documents should be included in the application package:

1. Letters of Collaboration. All supporting letters from partner organizations that are instrumental to the project should be included in the application package. Letters must clearly indicate the level of commitment and/or collaboration. Letters of collaboration do not need original signatures.

2. Resumes. Provide resumes of the Principal Investigator for the project and other key personnel critical to the success of the project. Ensure that resumes address qualifications relevant to conducting the proposed work. Please limit resumes to a maximum of two pages for each key investigator.

3. Data Management Plan.
The Data Management Plan should address the requirements in the following section of the Announcement. If no environmental data will be produced through the proposal, or if data is not publicly accessible due to law, regulation, policy (such as those applicable to personally identifiable information or protected critical infrastructure information or proprietary trade information) or by security requirements, then the application must include a clear explanation as to why no data management plan is being submitted.

1) 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), 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 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 contents of the Data Management Plan (or absence thereof), and past performance regarding such plans, will be considered as part of proposal review. There is an optional fillable form for data management and sharing plans at this link:

https://coast.noaa.gov/data/coasthome/funding/_pdf/forms/data-mgmt-sharing-plan-review-form.pdf. Otherwise, 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. Accepted submission of data to the NOAA National Centers for Environmental Information (NCEI) is one way to satisfy data management requirements; however, NCEI is not obligated to accept all submissions and may charge a fee, particularly for large or unusual datasets. The NOAA Program is not offering specific data management technical guidance. Proposals are to describe their proposed approach. Use of open-standard formats and methods is encouraged. For more information about data management in this program, contact the agency official listed in Section VII. of this funding announcement.

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.

5) NOAA's Administrative Order on the Management of Environmental Data Management and Information is available under: http://www.corporateservices.noaa.gov/ames/administrative_orders/chapter_212/212-15.html

6) Principal Investigators should indicate how and when they have made their data accessible and usable by the community in the past.

7) More information about the NOAA Data Management Policy is available on NOAA’s Environmental Data Management Committee website at: https://nosc.noaa.gov/EDMC/PD.all.php

8) Responsible NOAA Official for questions regarding this guidance and for verifying

accessibility of data produced by funding recipients:
Randy Warren
Data Manager
NOAA's Office for Coastal Management
randy.warren@noaa.gov

4. National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Environmental Compliance -- Under (NEPA), NOAA must analyze the potential environmental impacts of projects or proposals seeking funding from NOAA. See Section VI.B.4 of this announcement. The applicant is not required to fill out any of the questions in the NEPA questionnaire with their application, but is expected to follow the NEPA requirements in Section VI.B below.

After the application is submitted, NOAA may require additional information to fulfill NEPA and other compliance requirements. If NOAA determines that an environmental assessment is required, applicants may also be requested to assist in drafting the assessment. Applicants may also be required to cooperate with NOAA in identifying and implementing feasible measures to reduce or avoid any identified adverse environmental impacts of their proposal. The failure to do so shall be grounds for the denial of 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 specific 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.

The applicants selected for funding must complete questions 1 - 19 of the Environmental Compliance Questionnaire for National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Federal Financial Assistance Applicants accessible at https://www.nepa.noaa.gov/docs/NOAA-Grants-Questionnaire-final.pdf 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). Questions 20 - 53 are not required with the initial application because NOAA anticipates that most projects funded through this competition would not have impacts related to damage assessment and restoration or fisheries sampling and analysis.

Detailed information on NOAA compliance with NEPA can be found at the following NOAA NEPA websites: http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/ including NOAA Administrative Order 216-6 for NEPA,
https://www.corporateservices.noaa.gov/ames/administrative_orders/chapter_216/NAO_216

-6A.pdf and the Council on Environmental Quality implementation regulations under https://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?SID=30655823cf5f0dcb1c5ee59d01883b89&mc=true&tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title40/40chapterV.tpl

5. Permits and Approvals

It is the responsibility of the applicant to obtain all necessary federal, state, and local government permits and approvals for the proposed work. Applicants must provide a list of all known permits that will be required to perform the proposed work and an indication of the status of any permits needed (e.g., not yet applied, permit application submitted/pending, permit granted, etc.) or a statement indicating that no permits are necessary. Applicants should include this required element even if permits are not required.

Failure to apply for and/or obtain federal, state, and local permits, approvals, letters of agreement, or failure to provide environmental analyses where necessary (i.e., NEPA and environmental assessment) will delay or prevent the award of funds for projects that have been preliminarily selected for funding. For work proposed within National Marine Sanctuaries, National Parks, National Seashores, and other federally designated managed areas, it is the responsibility of the applicant to request and obtain any necessary permits or letters of agreement from the appropriate government agencies prior to commencement of an award. For applicants who propose to conduct research or monitoring activities that may affect any coral species that are listed under the Endangered Species Act, you will likely need an Endangered Species Act Section 10(a)(1)(A) permit.

6. Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (if applicable)

The proposed budget may include an amount for indirect or “Facilities and Administrative” costs if the applicant has an established indirect cost rate with the federal government. Indirect costs are essentially overhead costs for basic operational functions (e.g., utilities, rent, and insurance) that are incurred for common or joint objectives and, therefore, cannot be identified specifically within a particular project. See 2 CFR 200.1 and 200.412-415.
A copy of the current, approved negotiated indirect cost agreement with the federal Government should be included with the application package. If an award recipient does not have an indirect cost rate with any federal agency, the recipient may request to use the de minimis rate (10% of modified total direct costs) described at 2 CFR 200.414. Alternatively, the negotiation and approval of a new rate is subject to the procedures required by NOAA and the DOC. The U.S. Department of Commerce, Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions require that recipients within 90 days of the award start date, submit to the address listed below documentation (indirect cost proposal, cost allocation plan, etc.) necessary to perform the review.

Raishan Adams, Grants Officer
NOAA Grants Management Division
1325 East West Highway, 9th Floor
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910
Raishan.Adams@noaa.gov

Applicants are permitted to request indirect costs if their organization has an established Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement with a federal agency that covers the period of the award. Applicants requesting indirect costs should submit a copy of their current and signed indirect cost rate agreement with their application package.

Indirect-cost-rate-agreement documentation is not required for subawardees; however, indirect cost rates at the negotiated levels should be paid by the primary awardee. Under 2 CFR 200.414 “Indirect (F&A) Costs,” any applicant that has never received a negotiated indirect cost rate may elect to charge a de minimis rate of 10% of modified total direct costs which may be used indefinitely. Costs must be consistently charged as either indirect or direct costs, but may not be double charged or inconsistently charged as both pursuant to 2 CFR 200.403 “Factors affecting allowability of costs.” If chosen, this methodology once elected must be used consistently for all Federal awards until such time as a cooperator chooses to negotiate for a rate, which the non-federal entity may apply to do at any time. The negotiation and approval of a rate is subject to the procedures required by NOAA and the DOC Standard Terms and Conditions Section B.06.

In addition to the elements described above, applicants may upload additional supporting documentation, such as the resumes and qualifications of applicants, and letters of support or statements of collaboration, by using the 'Optional Form' box under 'Other Attachments' in Grants.gov during the application submission process.

C. Unique Entity Identifier and System for Award Management (SAM)

Applicants should: (1) Be registered in the federal System for Award Management (SAM.gov) before submitting an application; (2) provide a valid Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) on an application; and (3) continue to maintain an active SAM registration with current information at all times during which it has an active federal award or an application or plan under consideration by a federal awarding agency. NOAA may not make a federal award to an applicant until the applicant has complied with all applicable unique entity identifier and SAM requirements and, if an applicant has not fully complied with the requirements by the time NOAA is ready to make a federal award, NOAA may determine that the applicant is not qualified to receive a federal award and use that determination as a

basis for making a federal award to another applicant.

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

Applicants are strongly encouraged not to wait until the application deadline date to begin the application process through www.grants.gov.

D. Submission Dates and Times

Full proposals must be received by and validated by Grants.gov on or before 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time, on January 25, 2024.

Please note: Validation or rejection of your application by Grants.gov may take up to two business days after submission. Please consider this process in developing your submission timeline. Applications received after the deadline will be rejected/returned to the sender without further consideration.

Applications must be postmarked, provided to a delivery service, or received by and validated by Grants .gov by 11:59 PM Eastern time on January 25, 2024 (one or the other - hard copy or electronic, but not both).

If for any reason applicants are unable to submit their application through Grants.gov or are concerned about possible problems associated with the Grants.gov system, please contact the Competition Manager, Kris Wall at Kris.Wall@noaa.gov or 541-843-0252 to make alternative arrangements. If necessary, applicants may provide a paper copy of their full application by mail. Applications submitted by mail must include all relevant application elements described above, a SF-424 form with original ink or valid electronic signature and date from an authorized recipient organization representative, and stamped with an official U.S. Postal Service postmark or provided to a commercial carrier with tracking number and receipt on or before 11:59 pm Eastern on January 25, 2024; private metered postmarks are unacceptable. Please address all mailed applications to: Kris Wall, NOAA Office for Coastal Management, 4003 Cirrus Drive, Medford, OR 97504. Paper applications received more than 3 business days after the deadline will not be reviewed, and applicants submitting by paper are responsible for tracking their applications. Proposal application packages, including all letters of collaboration and letters of support, shall be submitted together in one

package. In addition, please email Kris.Wall@noaa.gov to inform NOAA that a paper application is forthcoming.

Applicants should consider the possibility of winter storms and other unforeseen impacts from natural hazards that could affect their Internet access and use of Grants.gov on or before application due dates. Applicants should be aware that localized hazardous weather or other situations beyond their control affecting their ability to submit packages before deadlines may not result in changes to the application deadline.

E. Intergovernmental Review

Funding applications submitted under this competition are subject to Executive Order (EO) 12372, "Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs." It is the state agency's responsibility to contact their state's Single Point of Contact (SPOC) to find out about and comply with the state's process under EO 12372. To assist the applicant, the names and addresses of the SPOCs are listed on the Office of Management and Budget's website https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/SPOC-4-13-20.pdf.

F. Funding Restrictions

1. Ineligible projects

The following projects will not be eligible for funding: (1) Activities that constitute legally required mitigation for the adverse effects of an activity regulated or otherwise governed by state or federal law; (2) Activities that constitute mitigation for natural resource damages under federal or state law; and (3) Activities that are required by a separate consent decree, court order, statute or regulation.

2. Cost Principles

Recipients are subject to the 2 CFR 200, Subpart E “Cost Principles,” as well as any DOC regulations that may be in effect at the time of award. Generally, allowable costs include salaries, fringe benefits, travel, equipment, supplies, and training, as long as the costs are determined to be necessary, reasonable, and allocable to the award.

G. Other Submission Requirements

The standard NOAA funding application package is available at www.grants.gov (Grants.gov) by searching the Funding Opportunity Number or the Federal Assistance Listing number (11.419). Application packages, including all letters of collaboration, shall

be submitted through the “Apply” function on Grants.gov. The Grants.gov site contains directions for submitting an application. Applicants must register with Grants.gov before any application materials can be submitted. To use Grants.gov, applicants must have a Unique Identity Identifier and be registered in the SAM.gov, which requires periodic renewals. Refer to Section IV.C. for details on receiving a unique identity identifier number and registering with SAM.gov.

After electronic submission of the application through Grants.gov, the person submitting the application will receive two email messages from Grants.gov within the next 24 to 48 hours updating them on the progress of their application. The first email provides a tracking number and confirm receipt of the application by the Grants.gov system. The second email indicates that the application has either been successfully validated by the system before transmission to the grantor agency or has been rejected because of errors. Only validated applications are sent to NOAA for review. After the application has been validated, this same person will receive a third email when the application has been downloaded by the federal agency.

If an applicant submits multiple electronic versions of the proposal, the applicant should advise the federal agency of the tracking number that should be withdrawn. Applicants shall not electronically submit packages with files embedded within files as any such files may not be reviewed or factored into the merit review process.

After electronic submission of the application, applicants will receive an automatic acknowledgment from Grants.gov that contains a Grants.gov tracking number. Applications submitted through Grants.gov will be accompanied by THREE automated responses (the first confirms receipt by Grants.gov, not NOAA; the second confirms that the submission is acceptable and timely; and the third validates that the application has been forwarded to NOAA for further processing).

The federal program office has a process to review for completeness. Administrative reviews generally take place after deadlines because the majority of applicants apply just before deadlines. If there are no time constraints and available resources, the federal agency may reach back to applicants who have submitted incomplete packages.

V. Application Review Information

A. Evaluation Criteria

1. IMPORTANCE AND/OR RELEVANCE AND APPLICABILITY OF PROPOSED

PROJECT TO PROGRAM GOALS (45 percent): This verifies whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and/or relevance to NOAA, Federal, regional, state, or local activities. Each application will be judged on the importance of the project to the management of coastal issues in the applicant's State or region and how the CMP will benefit from the project. Applications will be evaluated on the following:

a. Likelihood that the proposed project would help the CMP make substantial progress toward achieving the program change(s) as described in the project proposal. (15 points).
This factor will be scored as follows: Unclear whether the project would support a state's program change(s) as described in the project proposal (0-4 points); Project description adequately describes how the proposal supports a state's program change(s) but some aspects are unclear (5-10 points); Project description clearly explains how the proposal will support a state's program change(s) (11-15 points).

b. Likelihood that the proposed project would result in improved management of ocean and coastal resources, particularly related to coastal hazards, wetlands, and advancing ocean and Great Lakes planning. (15 points)
This factor will be scored as follows: Unclear whether project is likely to result in progress toward improved management of ocean and coastal resources related to coastal hazards, wetlands, or advancing ocean and Great Lakes planning (0-4 points); Project likely to result in improved management of ocean and coastal resources related to coastal hazards, wetlands, or advancing ocean and Great Lakes planning (5-10 points); High likelihood that the project would result in improved management of ocean and coastal resources related to coastal hazards, wetlands, or advancing ocean and Great Lakes planning (11-15 points).

c. Transferability of project results to solve coastal management issues in other states. (5 points)
This factor will be scored as follows: Project results not likely to be transferable to other coastal states (0-1 points); Aspects of the project results may be transferable to address similar problems in some coastal states but may require additional resources and/or effort (2-3 points); Project results are clearly transferable to address similar problems in many coastal states with little additional effort (4-5 points).

d. Level of innovation of the proposed project. (5 points)
This factor will be scored as follows: Project is not innovative (0-1 points); Project is somewhat innovative. Proposal utilizes management tools and/or techniques that appear to be innovative for the requesting coastal management program (2-3 points); Project is innovative. Proposal includes innovative approaches, such as the development or implementation of new management tools or techniques, and has the potential to advance the

field of coastal management (4-5 points).

e. The extent to which the project involves outreach to and engagement with underserved communities as a target audience or partner in the project, and the extent to which the project addresses will help address heightened vulnerabilities, specific needs of, and/or disproportionate impacts on underserved communities (5 points)
This factor will be scored as follows: Project does not involve underserved communities as an audience or partner, and the project does not address vulnerabilities and impacts on underserved communities (0-1 points); Project discusses connections to underserved communities and potential vulnerabilities and impacts on underserved communities, but does not meaningfully involve these partners or address the impacts (2-3 points); Project involves underserved communities as an audience or partner, and the project addresses vulnerabilities and impacts on underserved communities (4-5 points).

2. TECHNICAL/SCIENTIFIC MERIT (30 percent): This criterion assesses whether the approach is technically sound, if the methods are appropriate, and whether there are clear project goals and objectives. Applications will be evaluated on the following:

a. Extent to which the project proposal includes clearly defined, focused and realistic goals, objectives, outcomes and timetables. (10 points)
This factor will be scored as follows: Proposal does not include clear and/or realistic goals, objectives, outcomes, and timetables (0-3 points); Proposal goals, objectives, outcomes, and timetables are moderately well defined and/or moderately realistic (4-7 points); Proposal includes clearly defined, focused and realistic goals, objectives, outcomes, and timetables that are technically sound and likely to be met (8-10 points).

b. Extent to which the proposed approach is technically sound (i.e., the proposed methods, approaches, and concepts are appropriate given the projects goals, objectives, and desired outcomes) (10 points)
This factor will be scored as follows: Approach is not technically sound or insufficient detail provided to determine if approach is technically sound (0-3 points); Approach is described in sufficient detail to determine that it is generally technically sound although a few minor uncertainties may still exist (4-7 points); Approach is clearly technically sound and provides clear and appropriate methods, approaches and concepts (8-10 points).

c. Degree to which the proposal identifies the State's technical needs (as described in the application) and explains how the proposed project will help meet those needs. (5 points)
This factor will be scored as follows: Proposal does not identify any technical needs and/or does not adequately explain how the project will help meet those needs. (0-1 points);

Proposal adequately identifies technical needs and explains how the project will help meet them. (2-3 points); Proposal clearly describes technical needs and makes a clear connection as to how the project will help meet them. (4-5 points).

d. Degree to which there is a meaningful evaluative component to the project to assess the overall success of the project and effectiveness of project outcomes. (5 points)
This factor will be scored as follows: Evaluative component is not included (0-1 points); Evaluative component is included, but unclear whether the approach is sufficient to provide meaningful assessment of the overall success of the project and effectiveness of project outcomes (2-3 points); Evaluative component is included that will provide a meaningful assessment of the overall success of the project and effectiveness of project outcomes (4-5 points).

3. OVERALL QUALIFICATIONS OF THE FUNDING APPLICANTS (10 percent): This criterion assesses whether the funding applicant possesses the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project. Applications will be evaluated based on the following:

a. Overall qualification of the applicant and demonstration of past performance, as described in the application. (5 points)
This factor will be scored as follows: Unclear whether applicant (and/or identified project partners) possesses qualifications to complete the project (0-1 points); Applicant (and/or identified project partners) appears qualified to complete the project (2-3 points); Applicant (and/or identified project partners) is clearly qualified to complete the project and has documented successful past performance within the project proposal (4-5 points).

b. The project involves the appropriate partners to execute the project, as well as the key personnel from other agencies and institutions partnering on the project that have the needed experience, expertise, and/or networks; and the applicant clearly demonstrates they are working with the appropriate partners to execute the equity and inclusion aspects of the proposal, through community engagement, co-development, and partnership of relevant community organizations, underserved communities, and/or cultural experts/practitioners. (5 points)
This factor will be scored as follows: The project does not involve appropriate partners to execute the project, does not have key personnel from other agencies and institutions with the needed expertise, and the applicant has not demonstrated they are working with appropriate partners to execute the equity and inclusion aspects of the proposal (0-1 points); Partners on the project have some experience, expertise and/or networks needed to capitalize on available expertise; however, expertise could be stronger in certain areas or there is

limited demonstration of partners to execute the equity and inclusion aspects of the proposal (2-3 points); The project involves appropriate partners to execute the project. Key personnel from other agencies and institutions are partnering on the project, with extensive experience, expertise and/or networks needed to capitalize on available expertise. Appropriate partners are engaged to execute the equity and inclusion aspects of the proposal (4-5 points).

4. PROJECT COSTS (5 percent): This criterion evaluates the budget to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time-frame. Applications will be evaluated on the following:

a. The reasonableness and appropriateness of the proposed budget for the level of work proposed and with the expected benefits to be achieved, including whether the budget includes sufficient support for the involvement of project partners and participants. Additionally, the extent to which the state describes the fiscal need for Federal funds to complete the project because State funds are not otherwise available. (5 points)
This factor will be scored as follows: Budget is not reasonable and/or not well- justified and/or no connection to fiscal need has been described (0-1 points); Majority of the budget is reasonable and appropriate, but some costs may not be well-justified or appropriate given the level of work and public benefit and/or there is only a minimal description of fiscal need (2-3 points); Budget is well justified and all costs are reasonable and appropriate given the level of work and public benefit and the fiscal need in order to complete the project has been well described (4-5 points).

5. OUTREACH AND EDUCATION (10 percent): This criterion assesses whether the project provides a focused and effective education and outreach strategy regarding NOAA's mission to understand and protect the Nation's natural resources. Applications will be evaluated on the following:
a. The extent to which the project: defines stakeholders and end users who will use or benefit from the final project outcomes (including vulnerable and/or underserved communities, as appropriate); seeks to engage those stakeholders and users during the project itself; and describes the process by which those stakeholders and users will be made aware of, can benefit from, and can use project results. (10 points)
This factor will be scored as follows: Proposal does not include significant detail relating to engaging target audiences during or after the project (0-3 points); Proposal describes target audience(s), and/or how they will be made aware project results or outcomes, but could be clearer about engagement during the project or outreach after project completion to ensure relevant stakeholders are aware of, involved in, and can benefit from project results (4-7 points); Proposal clearly describes target audience(s), how they are involved in the

development of the project, and how they will share outcomes, so that relevant stakeholders are aware of, involved in, and can benefit from the project results (8-10 points).

B. Review and Selection Process

An initial administrative review is conducted on each application to assure that it is timely, responsive, and complete. NOAA, in its sole discretion, may continue the review process for applications with non-substantive issues that may be easily rectified or cured. Applications that meet the minimum requirements will be reviewed by at least three independent peer reviewers during a merit-based review and ranking process. Appropriate mechanisms will be implemented to avoid potential conflicts of interest during the proposal review process. Each reviewer will be asked to individually evaluate and rank proposals using the weighted evaluation criteria above. Proposal evaluations will be based exclusively on information included in the application. Merit reviewer ratings will be used to produce a rank order of the proposals.

The Selecting Official, or their designee, may negotiate the funding level or other major aspects of the proposal, and the Selecting Official will make the final recommendation for award based on the rank order and selection factors in Section V.C. below to the Grants Officer, who is authorized to obligate Federal funding and execute the award.

NOAA may select all, some, or none of the applications, or part of any application, ask applicants to work together or combine projects, defer applications to the future, or reallocate funds to different funding categories, to the extent authorized. Proposals not funded in the current fiscal period may be considered for funding in another fiscal period without NOAA repeating the competitive process outlined in this announcement.

Please note that not all activities submitted under a single proposal may be deemed appropriate for funding, and the Selecting Official may recommend alternate activities as appropriate or only partial funding, based on the selection factors and the merit review evaluations. For a proposal to be selected for funding, the applicant may be asked to modify objectives and activities, work plans, and budgets, and to provide supplemental information required by the agency prior to the award. This may result in submission of a revised application before final funding decisions are made. The exact amount of funds to be awarded, the final scope of activities, the project duration, specific NOAA cooperative involvement with the activities of each project, and other relevant application details will be determined in pre-award negotiations among the applicant, NOAA GMD, and Office for Coastal Management officials. Applicants should also note that modifications to projects may be necessary as a result of NOAA’s efforts to comply with NEPA and other legislation.

When a decision has been made (whether an award or declination), anonymous copies of merit review comments or summaries of panel deliberations, can be made available to the applicant upon request.

C. Selection Factors

The Selecting Official, an official within the Office for Coastal Management (or their designee), anticipates recommending applications for funding in rank order unless an application is justified to be selected out of rank order based upon one or more of the following selection factors:

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

The Selecting Official or designee may negotiate the funding level of the proposal. Hence, awards may not necessarily be made to the highest-scored applications.

D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

Successful applicants will be notified that they are being recommended for funding by July 2024, at the latest. The official award notice is anticipated to be made by September 2024. The anticipated start date for cooperative agreement awards made under this competition is October 1, 2024, regardless of the start date for a State’s annual CMP award. The start date is dependent on funding availability, acceptable completion of all NOAA/applicant negotiations, including NEPA and environmental compliance analysis and permit requirements, and the provision of other supporting documentation as requested. Unsuccessful applicants will be notified by e-mail that their application was not recommended for funding after the final selection package has been approved by the NOAA Grants Management Division, which is expected to be approximately July 2024. Unsuccessful applications submitted to this competition will be retained for a period of up to 3 years and then destroyed.

VI. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notices

Applications recommended for funding by the Selecting Official will be forwarded to the NOAA Grants Management Division (GMD) by the Program Office. The applicant will be notified by the program office by email that their application was recommended for funding and remains under consideration. The applicant should be aware that the notification by the program office is not the official award notice and funding is not assured. Official notification happens only when the applicant receives an award notice from the Grants Officer electronically.

The official notice of award is the Commerce Form 450 (CD-450), Financial Assistance Award, issued by the NOAA Grants Officer Electronically through NOAA's electronic grants management system, Grants Online.

Risk Review: After applications are proposed for funding by the Selecting Official, the Grants Office will perform administration reviews. 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 to the System for Award Management (SAM) (formerly Federal Awardee Performance and Integrity Information System (FAPIIS)) about any information included in the system about their organization for consideration by the awarding agency. NOAA reserves the right to reject an application in its entirety where information is uncovered that raises a significant risk with respect to the responsibility or suitability of an applicant. The final approval of selected applications and issuance of awards will be made by the NOAA Grants Officer.

In addition, award documents provided by NOAA may contain specific award conditions as necessary such as a limitation on the use of funds for activities that have outstanding environmental compliance requirements which may lead to modification of the project's scope of work. These specific award conditions may also include other compliance requirements for the award and will be applied on a case-by-case basis. Applicants are strongly encouraged to review award documents carefully before accepting a Federal award to ensure they are fully aware of the relevant terms that have been placed on the award.

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

1. Pre-Award Notice

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. Refer to http://go.usa.gov/cXC7A.

2. Uniform Administrative Requirements

Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements at 2 C.F.R. 200, implemented by the Department of Commerce at 2 C.F.R. 1327.101, apply to awards in this program. Refer to http://go.usa.gov/cXCJQ.

3. Terms and Conditions

The Department of Commerce Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions will apply to awards in this program. These terms will be provided in the award package in Grants Online. A current version is available for review at https://www.commerce.gov/sites/default/files/2020-11/DOC%20Standard%20Terms%20and%20Conditions%20-%2012%20November%202020%20PDF_0.pdf. Also, NOAA will apply administrative terms, and a current version is at https://www.noaa.gov/sites/default/files/legacy/document/2021/Mar/Administrative%20Standard%20Award%20Conditions%20for%20NOAA%20Financial%20Assistance%20Awards%2002.18.2021.pdf . In addition, award documents provided by NOAA may contain specific award conditions, including those limiting the use of funds for compliance activities such as outstanding environmental compliance requirements, which will be applied on a case-by-case basis, and requirements for submitting progress reports.

4. NEPA Requirements

NOAA must analyze the potential environmental impacts, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), for applicant projects or proposals that 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 specific 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.

5. Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)

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 Federal 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.

6. Data Management Requirements

Refer to Section IV.B of this announcement for details on data management requirements.

7. Limitation of Liability

Funding for programs listed in this notice is contingent upon the availability of appropriations. 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.

NOAA reserves the right to halt activity under the award through enforcement procedures under 2 C.F.R. 200.339-.343, Remedies for Non-compliance, if the recipient is not fulfilling the requirements of the project as outlined in the grant award. Non-compliance with a federally approved project may result in termination of the award as described in 2 C.F.R.

200.340.

8. Coastal Zone Enhancement Program Requirements
The project must meet the CZMA Section 309 Program Guidance FY 2021-2025 published in June 2019. The Guidance may be accessed online at https://coast.noaa.gov/data/czm/media/Sect-309_Guidance_2021-2025.pdf

C. Reporting

Award recipients will be required to submit financial and performance (technical) progress reports consistent with 2 C.F.R. 200.328-.330 and Department of Commerce Standard Terms and Conditions electronically through NOAA’s electronic grants management system, Grants Online. Performance reports must be submitted on a semi-annual schedule no later than 30 days following the end of each 6-month period from the start date of the award. Financial reports must be submitted every 6 months by the end of April and October during the period of the award in accordance with the Department of Commerce Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions. NOAA will provide instructions for submitting financial and progress reports upon request.

A comprehensive final report is due 120 days after the award expiration date, along with copies of all products developed under the award. Copies of all materials (including but not limited to brochures, posters, videos, DVDs, publications, reports, management plans, public service announcements, workshop proceedings, etc.) produced through the award, along with copies of any reports submitted by subcontractors as part of the award, must be provided to the program office within 120 days of the end of the award. Except where limited by law, regulation, policy, or security, recipients are requested to include a statement on the front page of all products to indicate the material is: "Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited." If the applicant has requested publication costs, resulting journal publications must be made available to the public free of charge.

Successful applicants will be requested to ensure that all interim progress reports indicate whether financial reports have been submitted to NOAA's Grants Management Division and are up to date. In their final progress report, recipients will be asked to (a) clearly state the resulting impact of their project and products in the coastal management community; and (b) certify that: "Final financial reports have been submitted to NOAA's Grants Management Division, and a final funding draw-down has been made through the Automated Standard Application for Payments (ASAP)."

If equipment or tangible personal property is purchased with grant funds, applicants shall submit an inventory to the extent required by the Office of Management and Budget

Uniform Guidance set out at 2 C.F.R. Part 200.313. As necessary, SF-428 forms may be attached as an appendix to the final progress report or submitted directly to the NOAA program officer.

Recipients must submit reports at least annually and at award closeout on the status of real property in which the federal government retains an interest, unless the federal interest in the real property extends 15 years or more. As necessary, SF-429 forms may be attached as an appendix to progress reports or submitted directly to the NOAA program officer.

The program office recommends that if the equipment is no longer needed, recipients are encouraged to request disposition instructions for equipment approximately 150 days before the project period ends to allow sufficient time to have equipment disposition requests addressed before a project ends. Equipment disposition instructions typically require that recipients “Submit Additional Closeout Documents" as an award action request in Grants Online. NOAA will provide instructions for disposition in accordance with OMB requirements.

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 issued. All awardees of applicable grants and cooperative agreements are required to report to the Federal Subaward Reporting System (FSRS) available at www.FSRS.gov on all subawards over $25,000. See 2 CFR 170 at http://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title02/2cfr170_main_02.tpl.

VII. Agency Contacts

For administrative or technical questions regarding the announcement, contact the competition manager: Kris Wall, NOAA’s Office for Coastal Management, at 541-843-0252, or via email at Kris.Wall@noaa.gov.

VIII. Other Information

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

cost principles applicable to the particular type of organization concerned.

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, Federal agents and contractors, and/or by non-Federal personnel, all of whom enter into appropriate conflicts of interest and nondisclosure 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 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.