NOTICE OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

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Executive Summary

Federal Agency Name

NOS Office for Coastal Management (OCM)

Funding Opportunity Title

National Estuarine Research Reserve System (NERRS) Land Acquisition and Construction Program for Fiscal Year 2026

Announcement Type

Competitive

Funding Opportunity Number

NOAA-NOS-OCM-2026-33239

Assistance Listing Number(s)

11.420

Dates

Complete grant applications must be submitted by 11:59 p.m., Eastern Time, September 18, 2026

Funding Opportunity Description

The National Estuarine Research Reserve System (NERRS) consists of estuarine areas of the United States and its territories designated and managed for research and educational purposes (Reserve) as specified in 15 C.F.R. Part 921. By funding Reserve lead agencies and universities to conduct land acquisition and construction projects that support the NERRS mission, NOAA will strengthen protection of key land and water areas, enhance long-term protection of Reserve areas for research and education, and provide for facility and exhibit construction activities that meet the highest sustainable design standards possible. Each Reserve was designated to ensure its effectiveness as a conservation unit and as a site for long-term research and monitoring. In maintaining their effectiveness, the Reserves may find it necessary to expand their boundaries through strategically planned land acquisitions and/or to develop or enhance their reserve facilities, including their in-situ monitoring infrastructure, to meet the demands of research, monitoring, and education program objectives.

NOAA anticipates approximately $8.5 million in Fiscal Year 2026 will be available to designated lead Reserve agencies or universities in coastal states. NOAA anticipates funding between 5-20 construction, acquisition, and/or planning & design projects. Project periods are expected to range from 12–36 months. Complex construction projects may request extended project periods, but the cumulative must not exceed 60 months. Final project selections are subject to availability of funds and negotiation with NOAA.

Acquisition or construction projectshave a $3,000,000 federal funding cap . Stand-alone planning and design projects have a $500,000 federal funding cap.

At the discretion of NOAA's Office for Coastal Management, up to 10% of the Fiscal Year 2026 funds will be reserved for critical reserve vehicle or vessel needs. These funds will be awarded noncompetitively to stand-alone vehicle or vessel project applications that address a critical reserve need.

Full Text of Announcement

I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Program Objective

NOAA provides funding to designated Reserve agencies for acquiring additional property interests, for facilities planning and design, acquisition of vehicles and vessels, and for construction projects that serve to support reserve programming and meet the goals of the reserve. Under this funding opportunity:

- Acquisition projects should serve to enhance long-term protection of habitat, protection of communities, and provide space for facility infrastructure.
- Construction projects may be new projects or upgrades and/or retrofits to existing structures.
- Planning and design projects should support the construction of future reserve infrastructure.
- Vehicle or vessel acquisition projects should address a critical operational need in support of research, stewardship or educational programs.

B. Program Priorities

Overall, priority will be given to projects that support the protection of habitats or increase a reserve's natural or built infrastructure's resiliency and sustainability. Priorities under the eligible projects types include:

- Acquisition projects: priority will be given to those projects that: (i) provide pathways for habitat and species migrations; (ii) support species or ecosystems resilience to climatic events; (iii) protect key ecosystem features, (e.g. keystone species or habitats); (iv) maintain species or habitat diversity; and (v) support the managed retreat of a reserve's core facilities infrastructure. Non-core/buffer lands that are identified as being acquired for Reserve facility construction is a secondary priority.
- Construction projects: priority will be given to new construction, critical upgrades and retrofits to existing facilities or campus infrastructure, and or enhancements to existing nature-based infrastructure. For new-build core facilities, the following are priorities:
  - Proposed in already disturbed areas;
  - Located outside of the 100-year flood zone;
  - Design is expected to conserve and protect water resources;
  - Incorporates sustainable design principles,
  - Optimizes energy performance,
  - Resilient to the impacts of coastal hazards and flooding over its useful life; or
  - Incorporates natural or nature-based infrastructure elements.
- Planning and design projects: The planning and design of new or upgraded facilities and other infrastructure is recognized as a necessary and sometimes stand-alone aspect of the facilities' construction process.

- Vehicles & Vessels projects: These are eligible projects but not a program priority. However, NOAA's Office for Coastal Management may reserve a portion, up to 10%, of the Fiscal Year 2026 funds for critical reserve vehicle or vessel needs.

Supporting definitions of key terms in this FFO include:

- *Core Facilities* - Facilities that support the primary mission and goals of the Reserve located near and/or within the Reserve boundary, preferably in the designated buffer area of the Reserve.
- *Designated State Agency*: The state agency that was designated to lead the reserve and accept funds on behalf of reserve. This could also include an agency that has a memorandum of understanding with NOAA and the designated state agency to receive funds.
- *Estimated Useful Life* - Place-based reserve facility useful life is 30 years for new buildings, 20 years for existing buildings that have been rehabilitated, or 15 years for infrastructure improvements other than buildings (*Department of Commerce Financial Assistance Manual (2024) and NERRS Facilities Infrastructure Inventory & Standard Reserve Infrastructure - 5.1.2025 Version*).
- *Habitat Migration* – The natural movement of habitats to a new area in response to changes in environmental conditions.
- *Multi-phased Construction Project* – An approach to building a single large-scale structure in a series of steps that takes place over multiple years. All phases must be contained within one proposal and clearly detailed out by phase, including costs for each phase. An example is a Reserve facility that has multiple components that can be constructed in sequential phases over multiple years.
- *Nature-Based Infrastructure* – Human designed, engineered, and constructed systems that use natural features, including habitats, that provide multiple ecosystem service benefits, such as storm protection through wave attenuation or flood storage capacity, enhanced water services and security, and habitat for fish, wildlife and plants.
- *Sustainable Facilities* – Facilities that are designed, constructed and operated to create and maintain conditions that balance the economic, social, and environmental well being of present and future generations.
- *Resilient Facilities* - Facilities that have the ability to absorb impacts from hazards or disturbances and maintain an acceptable level of functioning; reduce the amount of time and financial resources needed to return to full level of functioning; and adapt to future risks.
- *Retrofit* - Construction project replacing existing infrastructure components to improve operational efficiency. E.g. replacing the current HVAC system with a high efficiency system.
- *Small Scale Construction* – Construction projects of less than $250,000 that improve existing core facilities or support non-core facility capabilities at a reserve.
- *Upgrade* - Adding a new component to existing infrastructure to increase operational efficiency. E.g. installing solar panels
- *Vessel* – A watercraft valued at more than $10,000 that is part of a larger construction project or supports specific programmatic capabilities at the Reserve. This could include vessels that support habitat restoration or management needs, expand educational programming or support access for water based field research and monitoring.
- *Vehicle* -A vehicle valued at more than $10,000 that will serve to meet the goals of the reserve and reserve staff to carry out their jobs.

C. Program Authority

Statutory authority for the NERRS Land Acquisition and Construction Program is established under the Coastal Zone Management Act, 16 U.S.C. 1461(e).

II. Award Information

A. Funding Availability

This funding opportunity announces that NOAA anticipates approximately $8.5 million will be available to designated Reserve agencies or universities for construction, acquisition, and planning and design projects in fiscal year 2026. Depending on the availability of funds, NOAA anticipates funding approximately 5-20 projects. Funding for land acquisition, construction, planning & design, or vehicle & vessel awards are subject to negotiation with NOAA. Publication of this announcement does not obligate NOAA to establish any specific partnership or to obligate available funds for partnership activities. NOAA or the

Department of Commerce (DOC) are not responsible for direct costs of proposal preparation. There is no guarantee that funds will be available to make awards for this federal funding opportunity or that any proposal will be selected for funding. NOAA and DOC will not be responsible for project costs if this program fails to receive funding. If an applicant incurs any costs prior to receiving an award agreement signed by an authorized NOAA official, the applicant does so at its own risk of not receiving an award or these costs not being included in a subsequent award. Recipients and sub-recipients are subject to all federal laws and agency policies, regulations, and procedures applicable to federal financial assistance awards. Applicants must be in compliance with all existing NOAA grants or cooperative agreements and otherwise eligible to receive federal awards in order to be considered for funding under this competition.

B. Project/Award Period

Applicants may submit applications covering a 12 to 36 month project period with anticipated start date(s) as early as March 1, 2027. For complex construction projects, the performance period for FY2026 funding cannot exceed 60 months. The Federal share of project funding will be fully obligated at the time of award, and is subject to payment provisions outlined in 2 C.F.R. 200.305 and further implementing award terms.

C. Type of Funding Instrument

Successful applicants will enter into a grant with NOAA’s National Estuarine Research Reserve System (NERRS) Land Acquisition and Construction Program.

III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants are lead state agencies or universities designated to receive NERRS operations funding through a Memorandum of Understanding with NOAA in coastal states and territories. Applicants should meet requirements as stated in the NERRS regulations codified at 15 C.F.R. 921.32 which are available online at http://go.usa.gov/xkGEf .

Federal agencies and employees are not allowed to receive funds under this announcement but may serve as collaborative project partners. Federal agencies and employees’ ‘in-kind’ services 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 might include, but are not limited to partnership services; serving in a review capacity; or participating in priority task teams, working groups, or leadership teams.

B. Cost Share or Matching Requirement

The Department of Commerce Appropriations Act, 2026, P. L. 119-74 permits a 50% reduction of the match requirement in 16 U.S.C. 1461(e)(3) and 15 CFR Part 921.31 upon request of the applicant. Therefore, in applications for this competition, the amount of Federal funds requested must be matched by the applicant as follows: 15 percent total project match for construction, planning & design, or vehicles & vessels awards and 25 percent total project match for land acquisition awards.

Recipient contributions and third party in-kind contributions directly benefiting the project may be used to satisfy the matching requirements. If using previously acquired real property as match, a list of this “banked” match, and a description of the method of valuation of the cost consistent with 2 C.F.R. 200.306(d),(h), or (i) must be included in the application. If the project is selected, all matching funds will become part of the project, and subject to the requirements of the award. Applicants must identify all match sources and amounts equal to that requested above. Projects without match or with highly speculative match will not be considered eligible (see Section V.A.4. of this federal funding opportunity (FFO)).

“Cost sharing or matching” is defined by 2 C.F.R. 200.1 as “the portion of project costs not paid by federal funds or contributions (unless otherwise authorized by federal statute).” Any shared costs or matching funds and all contributions, including cash and third party in- kind contributions of goods and services, will be accepted as part of an application's cost sharing or matching when they meet all of the following criteria listed in 2 C.F.R. 200.306(b):

1. Are verifiable from the non-federal entity's records;
2. Are not included as contributions for any other federal award;
3. Are necessary and reasonable for accomplishment of project or program objectives;
4. Are allowable under Subpart E - Cost Principles of 2 C.F.R. § 200;
5. Are not paid by the federal Government under another federal award, except where the federal statute authorizing a program specifically provides that federal funds made available for such program can be applied to matching or cost sharing requirements of other federal programs;
6. Are provided for in the approved budget when required by the federal awarding agency; and
7. Conform to other provisions of 2 C.F.R. § 200, as applicable.

Matching funds may come from a variety of public and private sources and may include third party in-kind goods and services such as private boat use and volunteer labor. Goods and services provided by the recipient have the valuation described in 2 C.F.R. 200.306.

Federal agencies and employees’ in-kind services cannot be considered as part of an applicant’s matching funds, but can be described in the budget narrative to demonstrate additional leverage. Applicants are permitted to combine contributions from multiple non-federal partners in order to meet the match requirement, consistent with the standards described in 2 C.F.R. 200.306, and if funds are available within the project period stated in the application. See also 15 C.F.R. 921.81(d)(2) regarding cost sharing in NERRS acquisition and construction projects.

Applicants must specify the source(s) of match in their proposal and detailed budget narrative and may provide or be asked to provide letters of commitment to confirm stated match contributions. Applicants whose proposals are selected for funding will be bound by the percentage of cost sharing reflected in the award document signed by the NOAA Grants Officer. Successful applicants should be prepared to carefully document matching contributions, including the number of volunteer or community participation hours devoted to specific projects, and all other cash or third party in-kind contributions.

Applicants may choose to designate part or all of their federally-negotiated indirect costs as match. This may be convenient because the valuation of such costs has already been federally-approved and documentation is readily available. Refer to the “Indirect Costs” policies in Section IV.B.14 and Section IV.D. of this announcement.

C. Other Criteria that Affect Eligibility

- Large scale construction or acquisition projects must be identified in construction and/or acquisition plans, within an approved management plan or a complete draft that has been submitted to OCM for review in compliance with 15 C.F.R. 921.13. The specific level of detail required in a NERRS management plan must conform with 15 C.F.R. 921.13(a)(6) and/or (7).
- Acquisition projects that involve the potential to invoke eminent domain are not eligible for funding.

- Construction projects must occur on land under adequate state control either through direct state ownership or pursuant to a long-term lease between the Reserve and the landowner. See also the clarification on the meaning of adequate per 15 C.F.R. 921.30(d).
- Administrative costs related to acquisition, planning and design, or construction are eligible per 15 C.F.R. 921.81; see also 2 C.F.R. 200, Subpart E. Cost Principles [for Federal Awards].
- Facility planning and design is eligible as part of a construction project (20% of total share of project costs). These planning efforts may address, among other things, detailed facility design work, evaluation of sustainable features appropriate for reserve future facility needs and associated maintenance or applicable environmental analyses required under federal statutes (e.g., ESA, NHPA, MMPA).
- Administrative tasks may constitute up to 20% of facility and/or acquisition costs within a construction proposal.
- Small scale projects that support reserve programmatic activities and incorporate resilient or sustainable features are eligible for funding per 15 C.F.R. 921.31. Examples include projects such as vehicles and vessels, boardwalks, piers, storage, and monitoring platforms, as well as, small scale habitat restoration activities associated with a construction and acquisition project. These projects may or may not be identified within an approved management plan. Examples of eligible project activities could include:
    - Preserving historic or culturally significant structures;
    - Acquisition that includes small scale restoration;
    - Ecological restoration demonstration;
    - Restoring habitat impacted by construction activities
    - Sustainability attributes (i.e., alternative energy generation onsite; energy efficient lighting systems; rain gardens; EV charging stations; high efficiency environmental control systems; etc.)
    - Hazard resiliency upgrades (i.e., backup energy systems; dry flood proofing; hurricane roof straps; metal roofs; elevating utilities; or storm shutters; etc.) with preference given to nature-based infrastructure approaches.
- Specialized vehicles & vessels that directly support a specific reserve programmatic capability are eligible for purchasing.
- Nature-based infrastructure that mimic or support natural processes are eligible if part of a larger scale construction or acquisition project or as a stand-alone small-scale project. Such projects should be consistent with NOAA's Guidelines for Nature-based Infrastructure.

The following are not eligible for federal funding under this competition:

1. Activities that constitute legally required mitigation for the adverse effects of an activity regulated or otherwise governed by state or federal law. This includes replacing previously federally funded structures lost due to natural hazard, such as catastrophic weather events. Recipients should follow the insurance provisions in 2 C.F.R. 200.310, requiring that real property acquired with federal funds have equivalent insurance coverage to real property acquired with non-federal funds;
2. Activities that constitute mitigation for natural resource damages under federal or state law;
3. Activities that are required by a separate consent decree, court order, statute or regulation; and
4. Activities for structural improvements such as general maintenance including unscheduled and scheduled repairs of buildings, structures, and installed building equipment to correct deficiencies.

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 an applicant does not have access to the internet, application packages may be requested from: Matt Chasse of the Office for Coastal Management at 240-628-5417 or email at Matt.Chasse@noaa.gov.

B. Content and Form of Application

A complete standard NOAA financial assistance application package must be submitted in accordance with the following guidelines:

- All application materials will use a legible 11 or 12-point font with 1-inch margins on all sides.
- The application package must include the following forms and documents and be grouped in two separate files (Project Narrative & Project Budget)
    - Note that project narratives that exceed the 15-page limit will be shortened by removing pages at the end of the proposal narrative before it is forwarded to merit reviewers for evaluation. Pages excised 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.
- The following Office of Management and Budget-approved Standard Forms must be included, as applicable:
    - Application for Federal Assistance for all proposals: Form SF- 424 (7/03 version or newer)
    - Budget Information for Non-Construction Projects (for planning & design, vehicles & vessels, and acquisition proposals): Forms SF-424A and SF-424B (Assurances for Non-construction Programs)
    - Budget Information for Construction Proposals: Forms SF-424C and SF-424D (Assurances for Construction Programs
    - Certification Regarding Lobbying for all proposals: Form CD-511
    - Disclosure of Lobbying Activities: Form SF-LLL (if applicable)
- Appendices shall 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 information, letters of collaboration, letters of support, lists of data sources, permits, and maps).
- Paginate the proposal and any appendices. Appendices should not total more than 30 total pages excluding forms, information to complete forms, detailed budget narrative, and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and environmental compliance information.
- Upload supporting documentation by using the 'Optional Form' box under 'Other Attachments' in Grants.gov during the application submission process.
- Federal forms, NEPA information, and other information (e.g., Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement) should be submitted separately as flattened PDF documents.
- Total electronic file size of the proposal narrative and appendices combined shall not exceed 5 megabytes. Files that are larger than five megabytes may not be properly downloaded, uploaded, or received by the agency or the reviewers. Files that cannot be opened or downloaded will not be reviewed.

Title Page - with the following information:

- Proposed Project Title
- Proposed project period (start and end dates)
- Type of Project (e.g., land acquisition, construction, planning & design, multi-phase construction, or vehicles & vessels)
- Recipient/Applicant name (must match registered name as a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) created in SAM.gov
- Reserve Name
- Recipient UEI number (must match applicant information in SAM.gov)
- Principal and other investigator (names, organization, and contact information)
- Financial representative (names, organization, and contact information)

Project summary - Provide a one to two-paragraph summary of the proposed project. The summary must contain the following components:
1. Project name/title
2. Requested funding by year (as appropriate).
3. Brief project summary including objectives, expected results and intended benefits and outcomes, and, if applicable, a short description of partners and professional or technical networks that will be leveraged or created.
4. Identify the specific area where the project will take place and mention any sustainability, resilient design, or nature-based features
5. Applicable connection to the Reserve management plan and/or strategic plan.

Project Narrative (limited to 15 pages, excluding title page and project summary).

- Describe in the narrative the specific project goals and objectives to be achieved. Goals and objectives must be specific for each year of the work plan. (Recipients will be required to submit semi-annual progress reports in which progress against these goals and objectives will be reported).
- Sufficient detail on the relevance and applicability of proposed work to program priorities described in Section I.B. and to determine the technical/scientific merit of the proposed work; to review the qualifications of the applicants; and to assess whether the proposed scope of work raises any concerns with regard to federal policy considerations (e.g., National Environmental Policy Act, Endangered Species Act, Historic Preservation Act, and Marine Mammal Protection Act).

Narrative Components

1. **Background** - Provide sufficient background information for reviewers to independently assess the significance of the proposed project. Background information should summarize the problem, gap or need that the proposal addresses; and the importance of the project to the reserve including specific reference and page number(s) within an approved management plan or a complete draft that has been submitted for OCM review; a summary of NOAA/NERRS funds provided in previous five years for construction or acquisition from with summary of progress; and any reference to the project in a CZMA Section 312 evaluation. Applicants must address their qualifications for performing the project. Reserves may demonstrate in their applications that they have solid operating performance, preferably a full complement of core staff (manager, education coordinator, and research coordinator), and effective performance in completing past PAC projects. Applicants may briefly address how they possess the necessary experience, education, training, and administrative resources, to accomplish the project. The individual reserve must be capable of performing the project in general and supporting the project by supplying the required match amounts.
2. **Approach** - Provide a work plan that: identifies specific project tasks to be accomplished; explains the technical approach (including quality assurance) needed to accomplish the tasks; identifies the roles and qualifications of staff, partners, and cooperators; and identifies potential obstacles to successful completion of the goals and objectives. . The description must align with budget categories and fully explain the scope of work including preparatory work, environmental review, planning, design elements, sustainable or resilient features, etc.

For *acquisition or construction* proposals, address how the project will incorporate resilience or adaptation strategies to coastal hazards, to changing coastal conditions.

For *land acquisition* proposals with an 'in-kind' match parcel, provide information about the match parcel (in addition to the target property), such as its location, when acquired, cost/appraised value, current ownership, and relationship to the Reserve's acquisition priorities.

For *planning and design* proposals, provide specific information on how this effort will support future reserve construction needs.

For eligible *facility retrofits*, provide a description of the cost savings and other benefits resulting from the addition of sustainable or resilient features.

For eligible *small-scale construction* proposals, describe how either incorporating sustainable/resilient features or nature based infrastructure enhances facility or infrastructure resilience to coastal hazards or environmental risks. See Section I. B. Program Priorities of this FFO.

If the project includes federal partners, their roles and responsibilities must be clearly identified.

3. **Outcomes/Results** - Identify and describe the anticipated project outcomes or results. Explain how the project will benefit reserve programs or capabilities in support of reserve goals and describe how the project will evaluate success.

4. **Milestone Schedule** – The project must display timelines for major tasks, target milestones for important intermediate and final outcomes and NEPA review periods. For a multi-phased project, the project must include a detailed description of each project phase with drawings or diagrams and a detailed milestone schedule. This can be completed through a separate planning and design project or independently using other resources.

Budget narrative & Justification

OAA Grants Management Division Budget Narrative Guidance is accessible at http://www.ago.noaa.gov/grants/training.html. and https://sites.google.com/noaa.gov/acquisition-and-grants-office/training-andprofessional-development/1109-grants-series?authuser=0 . In order to allow reviewers to evaluate the appropriateness of all costs, applications must include:

1. Detailed budget narrative and a budget justification broken out by individual task.
2. Application budget narrative must 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.
3. The budget narrative must 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 C.F.R. 200, Subpart E. Budget narrative categories will correspond to the standard object class categories listed in Section B of the SF-424A.
4. Applicants should include detailed budget information regarding all contracts and subawards,and indicate the basis for the cost estimates in the narrative.
5. Describe project activities to occur or products or services to be obtained and indicate the applicability or necessity of each to the project. Each identified sub-award should include form SF-424A. Detailed budget information includes:
    - Name of identified qualified sub-recipient. Sub-recipient, 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.
    - Period of Performance. Include the dates for the performance period. If it involves a number of tasks, include the performance period for each task.
    - Scope of Work. List and describe the specific activities or tasks to be performed and the 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.
    - Itemized Budget. Include categories used in program budget for sub-recipients or contractors if applicable under 2 C.F.R. 200.101. If applicable, include any direct cost paid under the sub-award and the indirect cost rate used. All sub-awards and contracts must be made consistent with the requirements of 2 C.F.R. 200.331- 200.333 for sub-awards, and 200.317- 200.327 for procurements.

- For any equipment, a description of the item and associated costs 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 $10,000. See 2 C.F.R. 200.1, 2 C.F.R. 200.313, and 2 C.F.R. 200.317-327.
- 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 C.F.R. 200.317-327. For "to be determined," describe plans for selection.

6. Federal and non-federal costs per object class category identified in the NOAA grants package (Federal Form SF 424-A and/or C)
7. Justification of the budget including the source of match (50% for acquisition and 30% for construction).
8. Additional information regarding the use of funds for budget categories found in Form SF-424A (Acquisitions or Planning & Design Projects) or Form SF 424C (Construction Projects) must be included in an appendix. In this appendix, the budget narrative shall clearly identify the cost of separable elements of the proposed work and shall identify the elements of the project prioritized for revision or elimination if sufficient funding is not available for all proposed activities.
9. For any equipment or standalone vehicle or vessel projects, a description of the item and associated costs is required, including a description of how it will be used in the project.

Allowable Costs

1. Administrative and/or planning costs, including data to support environmental analyses required under federal statutes (e.g., ESA, NHPA, MMPA), that are up to 20% of the federal portion of the budget are allowable.
2. Restoration costs up to 20% of the proposed project are allowed for restoration or enhancement associated with the proposed (See Section I.B of this FFO).
3. For construction: project planning and design; administrative and legal expenses; architectural and engineering costs; project inspection fees; site work; demolition and removal costs; equipment costs; and other construction tasks breakdown such as structural (i.e., windows, doors, roofing, flooring), carpentry, plumbing, heating, electrical.
4. For land acquisition: personnel involved in the project; land acquisition fees; travel, equipment, supplies, and contractual.
5. For planning & design projects: personnel involved in the project, planning, facilities designs, engineering, surveying, permitting, administrative and legal expenses, and contractual.

Other Application Materials

Appendices - (30 page limit)

Only material submitted as a single package will be reviewed. Appendices must be limited to materials that directly support the main body of the proposal (for example, letters of collaboration, references, lists of data sources, information to support environmental analyses, and maps). Provide résumés/CVs of the Principal Investigator for the project and other key personnel critical to the success of the project that address qualifications relevant to conducting the proposed work. Please limit résumés to a maximum of two pages for each key investigator.

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

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 NOAA NEPA webpage 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. See Section VI.B., Administrative and National Policy Requirements, below for additional NEPA information.

Federal Forms

Standard Form 424A: Budget Information for Non-construction Programs (if applicable)(include a separate form for each proposed sub-award of $30,000 or more)

Applicants are required to submit a SF-424A Budget Form for acquisition, planning & design, and vehicle & vessel proposals. Both federal and non- federal funds should be expended at a similar rate throughout the course of the project. All budget figures must match the funding requested on the application cover sheet and correspond with the descriptions contained in the project and budget narratives. All sub-awards should also be accompanied by a separate SF-424A form to fully document the proposed sub-award budget.

Standard Form 424B: Assurances for Non-Construction Programs (if applicable)

Applicants are required to submit a signed SF-424B, 'Assurances for Non-Construction Programs' for acquisition, planning & design, and vehicle & vessel proposals.

Standard Form 424C: Budget for Construction Programs (if applicable)

Applicants are required to submit a signed SF424C “Budget for Construction Programs” for construction projects.

Standard Form 424D: Assurances for Non-Construction Programs (if applicable)

Applicants are required to submit a signed SF-424C, 'Assurances for Construction Programs' for construction projects.

Standard Form CD-511: Certification Regarding Lobbying

Applicants are required to submit a form CD-511, 'Certifications Regarding Lobbying for all projects.

Standard Form LLL Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (if applicable)

If applicable, applicants may be required to disclose certain lobbying activities described in form SF-LLL.

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. You 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 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.

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 C.F.R. 200.56-.57 and 200.412- .415.

A copy of the current, approved negotiated indirect cost agreement with the federal Government must be included with the final application package, however, 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 15% of Modified Total Direct Costs (as allowable under 2 C.F.R. §200.414). Refer to Section IV.F. of this announcement for more information.

This announcement is not seeking proposals that generate environmental data. Therefore, a Data Management Plan is not required as part of the Proposal.

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

To enable the use of a universal identifier and to enhance the quality of information available to the public as required by the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act, 31 U.S.C. 6101 note, to the extent applicable, any proposal awarded in response to this announcement will be required to use the System for Award Management (SAM), which may be accessed online at https://www.sam.gov/portal/public/SAM/.

Applicants are also required to use the Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) as identified in OMB guidance published at 2 C.F.R. 25, found at http://go.usa.gov/xZZn4. A recipient's UEI number must correspond with the recipient's information in SAM.Gov.

Applicants should allow a minimum of thirty days to receive a UEI number and to be registered in SAM.Gov, or to assure that required annual updates are complete. Applicants are strongly encouraged not to wait until the application deadline date to begin the application process through www.grants.gov.

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 submitted for funding under this competition must be (1) received and validated by Grants.gov on or before the deadline of 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time, on September 18, 2026.

Applicants shall be aware that localized hazardous weather or other situations beyond their control impacting 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 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

Indirect Costs

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 will submit a copy of their current and signed indirect cost rate agreement with their application package. If an award recipient does not have a current indirect cost rate with any federal agency, the recipient may request to use the de minimus rate described at 2 C.F.R. 200.414, as described in Section IV.B. of this Announcement. Alternatively, the negotiation and approval of a new rate is subject to the procedures required by NOAA 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.

Jennifer Jackson, Grants Officer

NOAA Grants Management Division

1325 East West Highway, 9th Floor

Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

jennifer.jackson@noaa.gov

Indirect-cost-rate-agreement documentation is not required for sub-awardees, however, indirect cost rates at the negotiated levels should be paid by the primary awardee. Under 2 C.F.R. 200.414 “Indirect (F&A) Costs,” any applicant that does not have a current negotiated indirect cost rate may elect to charge a de minimis rate of 15% 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 C.F.R. 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.

Ineligible projects:

The following projects will not be eligible for Federal funding under this competition:

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.

Cost Principles:

Funds awarded cannot necessarily pay for all the costs that the recipient might incur in the course of carrying out the project. Allowable costs are limited to costs necessary and reasonable to achieve the approved goals and objectives and are determined by reference to relevant Office of Management and Budget (OMB) requirements. Recipients are subject to the 2 C.F.R. 200, Subpart E "Cost Principles" and as well as any DOC implementing regulations that may be in effect at the time of award. Generally, costs that are allowable 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

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

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

H. Address for Submitting Proposals

V. Application Review Information

1. Importance/relevance and applicability of proposed projects to the program goals	**Maximum Points: 35**
This criterion is used to evaluate if the project is eligible and appropriate under the ~~definitions for acquisition and construction outlined in the regulations (~~CZMA (16 U.S.C. 1461(e)(1)(A)(i and ii)),~~.~~ ~~These definitions state~~ which provides that funding may ~~will~~ be provided to a coastal state for ~~(i)~~ specific purposes, as defined in Section I of this FFO. **Planning & design projects will be scored as follows**: • Project focuses on planning for core facilities or core facilities that require a multi-phase approach (0-2 points). • Project demonstrates the inclusion of significant resiliency, nature-based, or sustainability features. (0-8 points) • Project documents detailed facility design work, evaluation of sustainable features appropriate for reserve future facility needs and associated maintenance or applicable environmental analyses required under federal statutes (e.g., ESA, NHPA, MMPA). (0-15 points) • Project supports a future reserve construction project(s). (0-5 points) • Project costs do not exceed the $500,000 federal funding threshold. (0-5 points) **Construction projects will be scored as follows**: • Project addresses dormitory needs. (0-2 points)	

• Project clearly incorporates at least two of the following attributes:

1. Project in already disturbed areas;
2. Project outside of the 100-year flood zone and minimally disrupt the environment;
3. Design is expected to conserve and protect water resources;
4. Optimizes energy performance;
5. Incorporates natural or nature-based infrastructure. (0-10 points)

• Project is located near, and/or within, the Reserve boundary, preferably in the designated buffer area of the Reserve. (0-8 points)

• Project includes detailed documentation of a completed planning and design phase. (0-3)

• Project includes exhibit construction or aquaria that incorporate hazard resilient features. (0-2 points)

• If project is a core facility, it clearly includes features that increase hazard resiliency or sustainability. (0-10 points)

• If project is non-core facilities infrastructure, small-scale construction, or nature-based infrastructure, it:

1. Incorporates resilient or sustainable features (i.e., onsite energy generation, protecting access, Firewise approaches, etc.) or
2. Utilizes applicable nature-based approaches (i.e., living shorelines, wetlands creation, etc.) to minimize the adverse impacts of coastal hazards and flooding on existing facilities or other infrastructure (i.e., reserve-monitoring infrastructure, etc.) (0-10 points)

For **acquisition projects**:

• Project is a fee-simple acquisition of lands and waters that expand or enhance a reserve's core areas, including in-holdings within the Reserve's boundaries (0-12 points)

• Project provides pathways for the migration of key reserve habitats/species; maintain species or habitat diversity; protect key ecosystem features; or support species or ecosystem resilience to climatic events (0-20 points)

• Project supports the managed retreat of core reserve facilities. (0-3 points)

For **vehicle and vessel needs**:

• Specialty vehicles or vessels support the array of reserve research, stewardship, and education activities. Examples could include pontoon boats to support educational programs, small off-road vehicles, and drones (0-35)

2. Technical/scientific merit	**Maximum Points: 30**

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. ~~This criterion primarily assesses whether the approach is technically sound and/or innovative, if the methods are appropriate, and whether there are clear project goals and objectives.~~

- To assess the opportunity gained by funding this project now and/or lost by not funding it now (e.g., availability of match or additional construction or land acquisition funds; option on a parcel of land; protection of a critical resource). Projects of greater immediacy are given a higher score.

- Assess whether the applicant is able to undertake the project. Applicants that clearly demonstrate staff capacity and technical expertise to implement the project or describe how it will add capacity to successfully implement and manage the project will score higher than those that do not.
- Determine how far along the recipient is in the acquisition process (e.g., contact with landowners, negotiations, current appraisal, title options) or the planning process for facilities construction (plans, design, permitting, etc.) and account for feasible timelines for completion. Applications with a detailed milestone schedule for completion of award outcomes will have a higher score than those that do not.

All projects:

• Projects of greater immediacy. Reviewers should assess the opportunity gained by funding this project now and/or lost by not funding it now (e.g., availability of match or additional construction or land acquisition funds; option on a parcel of land; protection of a critical resource). (0-5 points)

• Clearly document staff capacity and technical expertise needed to implement the project or describe how the proposal will add capacity to successfully implement and manage the project. (0-5 points)

• Provides a detailed milestone schedule for completion of award outcomes. Milestone schedules help determine how far along the recipient is in the acquisition process (e.g., contact with landowners, negotiations, current appraisal, title options) or the planning process for facilities construction (plans, design, permitting, etc.) and account for feasible timelines for completion. (0-5 points)

Under each project type category, additional considerations are provided to support reviewer scoring.

Planning and design projects:

• Project contains technical details about sustainable, nature-based, or resilient design features to be incorporated into the project. (0-15 points)

Construction projects:

• Project contains technical details about sustainable, nature-based or resilient features being incorporated into the project. (0-10 points)

• Project describes efforts to minimize impacts to sensitive resources or reduce environmental impacts of construction materials. This could include:

1. Using materials with recycled content or bio-based content;
2. Minimizing construction waste;
3. Using paper of at least 30 percent post-consumer fiber content;
4. Reducing the quantity of hazardous chemicals and materials acquired, used, or disposing of by the facility;
5. Diversion of solid waste as appropriate;
6. Maintain cost effective waste prevention and recycling programs at the facility. (0-2 points)

• Document previous work in completing detailed facility design and project planning. (0-3 points)

Examples of sustainability, resiliency and nature-based infrastructure described in a project may include:

Sustainable Design

1. Optimizes energy performance: (a) improves energy efficiency; (b) minimize energy use throughout the life of the facility; or (c) to the extent feasible, implement electric or thermal renewable energy generation projects on its property.

2. Protects and conserves water through strategies that reduce stormwater discharges offsite to protect natural hydrology and ecosystem health (i.e., rain gardens, rainwater harvesting, etc.) or water use reduction approaches for facilities infrastructure.
3. Employs features that enhance indoor environmental quality (i.e., high efficiency environmental control systems, low pollutant emitting materials, daylighting, moisture & mold control)

Resilient Design

1. Incorporates hazard risk assessment, planning, and resilient design standards (i.e., storm shutters, backup energy systems onsite, dry flood proofing, etc.) to minimize adverse impacts from coastal hazards such as, flooding, wildfires, extreme storms, drought and other hazards to facilities.
2. Uses approaches that mitigate risks to life and property while providing social, economic, and environmental benefits.

Nature Based Infrastructure

1. Incorporates approaches that mimic or support natural processes (i.e., living shorelines, wetlands creation, constructed oyster reefs, etc.).

Acquisition projects:

• Project (fee-simple, easement, etc.) provides for adequate state control of the property. (0-5 points)

• Project documents the feasibility for successful completion (e.g., willing seller; a recent appraisal; initial assessment for environmental hazards). (0-10 points)

Vehicle and vessel needs:

• Project describes the utility of the vehicle or vessel needed to support reserve research, stewardship, and education activities. (0-10 points)

• Project documents the useful life and specifications of the vehicle or vessel needed. (0-5 points)

3. Overall qualifications of applicants	**Maximum Points: 10**

This criterion ascertains whether the applicant possesses the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project. This criterion is used to assess how the individual reserve is capable of performing the project in general (based on information provided by the applicant in its proposal).

• Application demonstrates that the reserve has solid operating performance and a full complement of core staff (manager, education coordinator, and research coordinator). (0-2 points)

• If r~~R~~eserve designated more than five years ago, applicants document a clear track record of completing projects. (0-8 points)

• If r~~R~~eserve designated within the last five years, application demonstrates that the reserve have, or have access to, the necessary capabilities and capacities to complete the project. (0-8 points).

4. Project costs	**Maximum Points: 25**

This criterion evaluates the budget to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time-frame. Additionally the project should provide information needed to determine whether the cost estimates and budget are reasonable, realistic, and cost-effective for the proposed project. • Documents realistic budgets and demonstrates cost-sharing. (0-15 points) Specifically under Construction type projects this includes: 1. Proposal provides a description of the cost savings and other benefits resulting from the addition of sustainable or resilient features. Specifically under vehicle and vessel type projects this includes: 1. The proposal documents a Lease vs Buy justification. • Match clearly identified and not speculative. (0-10 points) Specifically under Acquisition type projects this includes: 1. If a bank match is being used, the applicant must include a bank match spreadsheet/table with supporting documentation. 2. If an 'in-kind' match parcel is used, the applicant should provide information about the match parcel (in addition to the target property), such as its location, when acquired, cost/appraised value, current ownership, and relationship to the Reserve [or Reserve's acquisition priorities].

5. Outreach and Education	**Maximum Points: 0**

Evaluation Criteria

Reviewers will assign scores to proposals ranging from 0 to 100 points. Reviewers will select points within a defined range based on agreement with specific criterion.

Lowest points = *unacceptable* (weakness)

Highest points = *excellent* (strength)

Point ranges are weighted and are defined based on specific evaluation criteria. For each project, reviewers must identify the strengths and weaknesses under the following criteria to support scoring determinations.

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 independently evaluate and rank proposals using the weighted evaluation criteria above. Proposal evaluations will be based exclusively on information included in the application. Reviewers may discuss the applications, but if one or more non-Federal reviewer is used, final scoring will not be consensus. 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 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. Additionally, NOAA may ask applicants to work together or combine projects, or may reallocate funds to different funding categories to the extent authorized. 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 offer partial funding, based on the selection factors and the merit and/or panel review written 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. This may result in the 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, 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.

For projects that extend beyond five years, exceed the original award amount, or include additional components not previously evaluated, the applicant must recompete for funding in a subsequent competition cycle.

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

Applicants must be in compliance with the terms of any existing NOAA grants or cooperative agreements and otherwise eligible to receive Federal awards, or make arrangements satisfactory to the Grants Officer, to be considered for funding under this competition. All reports due should be received and any concerns raised by the agency should be timely addressed in order to receive a new award. Upon review of these factors, if appropriate, specific award conditions that respond to the degree of risk may be applied by the NOAA Grants Officer pursuant to 2 C.F.R. 200.208. In addition, NOAA reserves the right to reject an application in its entirety where information is uncovered that raises a significant risk with respect to the responsibility or suitability of an applicant. The final approval of selected applications and issuance of awards will be by the NOAA Grants Officer. The award decision of the Grants Officer is final. When a decision has been made (whether an award or declination), anonymous copies of mail merit review comments or summaries of panel deliberations, can be made available to the applicant upon request.

Selection Factors

The final panel ratings shall provide a rank order to the Selecting Official for final funding recommendations. The competition manager will make recommendations to the Selecting Official about applying the selection factors below. 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 project types

3. Duplication of other projects funded or considered for funding by NOAA/Federal agencies.

4. Program priorities and policy factors as described in section I.B of this federal funding opportunity.

5. Applicant's prior award performance: Unsatisfactory performance by a recipient under prior Federal awards may result in an application not being considered for funding.

6. Partnerships with/Participation of targeted groups.

7. Adequacy of information necessary for NOAA staff to make a NEPA determination and draft necessary documentation before recommendations for funding are made to the Grants Officer.

Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

Successful applicants will be notified in October 2026 that the Selecting Official is recommending them for funding to the NOAA Grants Officer. The anticipated start date for grants made under this competition is February 1, 2027, 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 GMD, which is expected to be sometime in October, 2026. Unsuccessful applications submitted to this competition will be retained for three years and then destroyed.

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.

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 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 the eRA system. For NOAA awards only, the Administrative Standard Award Conditions for National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Financial Assistance Awards U.S. Department of Commerce are applicable to this solicitation and may be accessed online at https://www.noaa.gov/organization/acquisition-grants/financial-assistance

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

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

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 (at the time of publication or within two years of the project ending), 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 upon publication by the journal.

More information can be found on NOAA’s Data Management Procedures at: NOAA Administrative Order (NAO) 212-15B: Management of NOAA Data and Information, Data Management Handbook.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

REVIEWS AND EVALUATION. The applicant acknowledges and understands that information and data contained in applications for financial assistance, as well as information and data contained in financial, performance and other reports submitted by applicants, may be used by the Department of Commerce in conducting reviews and evaluations of its financial assistance programs. For this purpose, applicant information and data may be accessed, reviewed and evaluated by Department of Commerce employees, other Federal employees, and also by Federal agents and contractors, and/or by non-Federal personnel, all of whom enter into appropriate conflict of interest and confidentiality agreements covering the use of such information. As may be provided in the terms and conditions of a specific financial assistance award, applicants are expected to support program reviews and evaluations by submitting required financial and performance information and data in an accurate and timely manner, and by cooperating with the Department of Commerce and external program evaluators. In accordance with §200.303(e), applicants are reminded that they must take reasonable measures to safeguard protected personally identifiable information and other confidential or sensitive personal or business information created or obtained in connection with a Department of Commerce financial assistance award.

REQUIRED USE OF AMERICAN IRON, STEEL, MANUFACTURED PRODUCTS, AND CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS. If applicable, and pursuant to the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act ("IIJA"), Pub.L. No. 117-58, which includes the Build American, Buy American (BABA) Act, Pub. L. No. 117-58, §§ 70901-52 and OMB M-22-11, recipients of an award of Federal financial assistance from the Department of Commerce (DOC) are hereby notified that none of the funds provided under this award may be used for a project for infrastructure unless: 1) all iron and steel used in the project are produced in the United States–this means all manufacturing processes, from the initial melting stage through the application of coatings, occurred in the United States; 2) all manufactured products used in the project are produced in the United States—this means the manufactured product was manufactured in the United States; and the cost of the components of the manufactured product that are mined, produced, or manufactured in the United States is greater than 55 percent of the total cost of all components of the manufactured product, unless another standard for determining the minimum amount of domestic content of the manufactured product has been established under applicable law or regulation; and 3) all construction materials1 are manufactured in the United States—this means that all manufacturing processes for the construction material occurred in the United States. The Buy America preference only applies to articles, materials, and supplies that are consumed in, incorporated into, or affixed to an infrastructure project. As such, it does not apply to tools, equipment, and supplies, such as temporary scaffolding, brought to the construction site and removed at or before the completion of the infrastructure project. Nor does a Buy America preference apply to equipment and furnishings, such as movable chairs, desks, and portable computer equipment, that are used at or within the finished infrastructure project but are not an integral part of the structure or permanently affixed to the infrastructure project.

WAIVERS. When necessary, recipients may apply for, and DOC may grant, a waiver from these requirements. DOC will notify the recipient for information on the process for requesting a waiver from these requirements. 1) When DOC has made a determination that one of the following exceptions applies, the awarding official may waive the application of the domestic content procurement preference in any case in which DOC determines that: a. applying the domestic content procurement preference would be inconsistent with the public interest; b. the types of iron, steel, manufactured products, or construction materials are not produced in the United States in sufficient and reasonably available quantities or of a satisfactory quality; or c. the inclusion of iron, steel, manufactured products, or construction materials produced in the United States will increase the cost of the overall project by more than 25 percent. A request to waive the application of the domestic content procurement preference must be in writing. DOC will provide instructions on the format, contents, and supporting materials required for any waiver request. Waiver requests are subject to public comment periods of no less than 15 days and must be reviewed by the Made in America Office.

DEFINITIONS. "Construction materials" includes an article, material, or supply—other than an item of primarily iron or steel; a manufactured product; cement and cementitious materials; aggregates such as stone, sand, or gravel; or aggregate binding agents or additives —that is or consists primarily of: non-ferrous metals; plastic and polymer-based products (including polyvinylchloride, composite building materials, and polymers used in fiber optic cables); glass (including optic glass); lumber; or drywall. "Domestic content procurement preference'' means all iron and steel used in the project are produced in the United States; the manufactured products used in the project are produced in the United States; or the construction materials used in the project are produced in the United States. "Infrastructure" includes, at a minimum, the structures, facilities, and equipment for, in the United States, roads, highways, and bridges; public transportation; dams, ports, harbors, and other maritime facilities; intercity passenger and freight railroads; freight and intermodal facilities; airports; water systems, including drinking water and wastewater systems; electrical transmission facilities and systems; utilities; broadband infrastructure; and buildings and real property. Infrastructure includes facilities that generate, transport, and distribute energy. ''Project'' means the construction, alteration, maintenance, or repair of infrastructure in the United States. -- 1 Excludes cement and cementitious materials, aggregates such as stone, sand, or gravel, or aggregate binding agents or additives. 2 IIJA, § 70917(c)(1).

GOLD STANDARD SCIENCE. In performing activities under Federal awards, applicants should commit to complying with administration policies, procedures, and guidance respecting Gold Standard Science. As detailed in Executive Order 14303, Restoring Gold Standard Science (May 23, 2025), Gold Standard Science refers to science conducted in a manner that is:

- Reproducible.
- Transparent.
- Communicative of error and uncertainty.
- Collaborative and interdisciplinary.
- Skeptical of its findings and assumptions.
- Structured for falsifiability of hypotheses.
- Subject to unbiased peer review.
- Accepting of negative results as positive outcomes.
- Without conflicts of interest.

TERMINATION. In accordance with 2 CFR § 200.340(a), this federal award may be terminated in part or in its entirety as follows:

a. By DOC or the pass-through entity if the recipient or subrecipient fails to comply with the terms and conditions of this federal award.

b. By DOC or the pass-through entity with the consent of the recipient or subrecipient, in which case the two parties must agree upon the termination conditions. These conditions include the effective date and, in the case of partial termination, the portion to be terminated.

c. By the recipient or subrecipient upon sending DOC or the pass-through entity a written notification of the reasons for termination, the effective date, and, in the case of partial termination, the portion to be terminated. If DOC or the pass-through entity determines that the remaining portion of this federal award will not accomplish the purposes for which this federal award was made, DOC or the pass-through entity may terminate this federal award in its entirety.

d. By DOC or the pass-through entity to the extent authorized by law, if the award no longer effectuates the program goals or agency priorities.

PROHIBITION ON USING FEDERAL AWARDS TO PROMOTE OR SUPPORT THEORIES OF DISPARATE-IMPACT LIABILITY. In accordance with Executive Order 14281, Restoring Equality of Opportunity and Meritocracy (April 23, 2025), it is the policy of the Federal Government to eliminate the use of disparate-impact liability in all contexts to the maximum possible and permitted by law.

EXECUTIVE ORDER 14173: ENDING ILLEGAL DISCRIMINATION AND RESTORING MERIT-BASED OPPORTUNITY. Pursuant to Executive Order 14173, 90 FR 8633 (Jan. 21, 2025), Ending Illegal Discrimination and Restoring Merit-Based Opportunity, each recipient that accepts a U.S. Department of Commerce financial assistance award: (1) agrees that compliance in all respects with all applicable Federal anti-discrimination laws is material to the government's payment decisions for purposes of section 3729(b)(4) of Title 31 United States Code; and (2) certifies to the Department that it does not operate any programs promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion that violate any applicable Federal anti-discrimination laws.

C. Reporting

In accordance with 2 CFR 200.328-9 and the terms and conditions of the award, financial reports are to be submitted every 6 months by the end of April and October during the period of the award in accordance with the DOC Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions and performance (technical) reports are to be submitted no later than 30 days following the end of each 6- month period . 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.

Performance Measures. NOAA will evaluate project performance based on alignment with administration priorities, including but not limited to, domestic economic expansion, infrastructure modernization, capacity building, and national food security, alongside adherence to Executive Orders and 'Gold Standard Science.' These overarching criteria are assessed through a framework that measures a project's contribution to fishery economic optimization, domestic seafood utilization, infrastructure capacity, supply chain resilience, and national maritime strategy. To ensure effective implementation, NOAA reserves the right to incorporate specific quantitative and qualitative metrics into the award agreement (i.e. Notice of Award; Specific Award Conditions), These metrics will be focused on the project's objectives and its ability to foster industry growth, technical modernization, and workforce readiness.

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 GMD and are up-to-date. In their final progress report, applicants will be asked to (a) clearly state the resulting impact of their project with respect to reserve program implementation and, if applicable, environmental conservation; and (b) certify that "Final financial reports have been submitted to NOAA's GMD 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 at the time of closeout and if applicable when otherwise required by Special Award Condition in accordance with the equipment requirements of the OMB Uniform Guidance set out at 2 C.F.R. Part 200.313 and Department of Commerce Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions.

Recipients must inventory tangible property at least once every two years and at award closeout. When required by an award condition and at closeout, SF-428 forms may be attached as an appendix to progress reports 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 equipment under an award is no longer needed as described in 2 C.F.R. 200.313, 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 complete an "other" award action request in Grants Online. NOAA will provide instructions for disposition in accordance with OMB requirements.

VII. Agency Contacts

For administrative and technical questions regarding the program and application process, please contact Matthew Chasse, Program Coordinator, via phone: 240-628-5417, or via email: contact Matt.Chasse@noaa.gov.

VIII. Other Information

If an applicant submits multiple electronic versions of the proposal, the applicant must advise the federal agency of the duplicate version's 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.

The federal program office has a process to review applications 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 resources are available, the federal agency may reach back to applicants who have submitted incomplete packages.