

NOTICE OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

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Executive Summary

Federal Agency Name

NOS Integrated Ocean Observations System (IOOS)

Funding Opportunity Title

FY 2026 Implementation of the U.S. Integrated Ocean Observing System (IOOS)

Announcement Type

Competitive

Funding Opportunity Number

NOAA-NOS-IOOS-2025-30552

Assistance Listing Number(s)

11.012

Dates

Full proposals must be received no later than 11:59 PM (EDT) (60 days after Publish date).

Funding Opportunity Description

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) National Ocean Service (NOS) U.S. Integrated Ocean Observing System (IOOS) Office is requesting proposals for 5-year awards supporting coordinated regional efforts that advance the Nation’s understanding and decision-making of its coastal ocean and Great Lakes through integrated observations, data provision and management, modeling, and engagement. The U.S. IOOS is a national and regional partnership working to produce, integrate, and communicate high quality ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes data that meets the safety, economic, and stewardship needs of the nation. Information regarding this Announcement, including additional background information, is available on the U.S. IOOS website (<https://ioos.noaa.gov/about/funding-opportunities/ra-base-nofo/>).

Funding is subject to availability and will be adjusted based on annual appropriations. NOAA anticipates making multiple awards for up to approximately \$5,000,000 per award per year, for up to five years. Proposals may be for less than \$5,000,000 per year and should include direct and indirect costs.

Final recommendations for funding under this Announcement are anticipated to be made in June 2026. Proposals funded under this Announcement will have an anticipated start date of September 1, 2026 and anticipated end date of August 31, 2031.

Full Text of Announcement

I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Program Objective

The mission of the U.S. Integrated Ocean Observing System (IOOS[®]) is to produce, integrate, and communicate high quality ocean, coastal and Great Lakes information that meets the safety, economic, and stewardship needs of the Nation. The work of the U.S. IOOS supports NOAA's mission: to understand and predict conditions in the ocean, coasts, and atmosphere; to share that knowledge and information with others; and to conserve and manage coastal and marine ecosystems and resources.

The Integrated Coastal and Ocean Observation System (ICOOS) Act of 2009 (P.L. 111-11, Title XII, §12301; 33 USC 3601-3610) mandates the establishment of a national integrated system of ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes observing systems coordinated at the federal level to benefit society. Reauthorized by the Coastal Ocean Observations and Research Act (COORA) of 2020 (P.L. 116-271), the system supports public, national security, search and rescue, commerce, safety, forecasting, food, energy, water quality, scientific, and resource management needs.

Decision makers, businesses, managers, scientists, and communities at local, regional, and national levels all use U.S. IOOS information tailored to their needs to:

- Improve predictions of ocean and weather conditions and their effects on coastal communities and the nation
- Improve the safety and efficiency of maritime operations
- More effectively mitigate the effects of natural and anthropogenic hazards
- Improve national and homeland security
- Reduce public health risks
- More effectively protect and restore healthy coastal ecosystems
- Enable the sustained use of ocean and coastal resources

The U.S. IOOS is intended to represent the full scale of partners who contribute to, or benefit from, the integrated ocean observing system. To achieve this purpose, U.S. IOOS comprises public-private sector partnerships at national, regional, and local levels. These partnerships work together to collect and integrate observations, develop numerical predictions, and synthesize information into decision-support tools. Any entity contributing toward solutions or implementation of U.S. IOOS is welcome as a part of the Enterprise. This includes global to local participants in ocean observing, data management, and prediction from federal, academic, non-profit, and private firms or organizations.

As a central component of the U.S. IOOS, the U.S. IOOS Office serves to oversee the national coordination and integration of regional efforts by implementing policies, protocols, standards, and federal assistance funding opportunities. By leveraging regional partnerships that coordinate ocean observing activities, the U.S. IOOS footprint spans the Nation's coasts.

U.S. IOOS regional partners are responsible for operating the Regional Coastal Observing Systems, through the management of the Governance and Management, Observing, Data Management and Cyberinfrastructure (DMAC), Modeling and Analysis, and Engagement sub-systems.

Through this funding announcement, NOAA seeks to continue sustained management, operation, and development of the national network of Regional Coastal Observing Systems. This announcement requests proposals for five-year awards that build on the past 25 years of progress toward the implementation and enhancement of Regional Coastal Observing Systems.

Definitions

Cooperative Agreement - A legal instrument of financial assistance that is similar to a grant, but used when substantial involvement between the federal agency and the recipient is anticipated when carrying out the activities contemplated by the award. This means that the recipient can expect substantial agency collaboration, participation, or intervention in project performance.

Data Management and Cyberinfrastructure (DMAC) - The information technology (IT) infrastructure and procedures enabling interoperable marine and Great Lakes environmental data and metadata transmission from a data provider to a data/services customer, quality assurance and quality control (QA/QC), DMAC-compliant data products for end users, catalogs of discoverable observation data and systems made widely available and useful to users, and long-term preservation of data and information.

Engagement - The process of identifying and understanding intermediate- and end-user priorities, requirements, and feedback; training users on how to use U.S. IOOS data and products based on their needs; and developing a U.S. IOOS-relevant workforce.

Governance and Management - The collection of activities and functions supporting the U.S. IOOS on policy, planning, guidance, resources, processes, tools, and infrastructure.

Modeling and Analysis - U.S. IOOS-provided data, data products, and models derived from U.S. IOOS data, and services used by U.S. IOOS users and customers. Intermediate users synthesize those data, products, models, and services into reports, alerts, outputs, or other tailored products.

Observations - The collection of marine and Great Lakes environmental measurements (especially the 34 U.S. IOOS core variables) to understand and predict environmental behaviors and roles in Earth systems.

Project - A planned unit of activity or undertaking included in the proposal to address a particular issue or need. One project may involve numerous partners, span across multiple subawards, or involve work in different geographic locations, as long as all activities within that project are working toward addressing the same need. There may be several distinct projects within the proposal. In the proposal, each project shall be numbered with a numbering system that would enable projects to be distinctly tracked in documentation over the lifetime of the award if the proposal is selected for funding.

Regional Association (RA) - an organization that coordinates at a regional level with the goal of engaging the private and public sectors in designing, operating, and improving regional ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes observing systems in order to ensure the provision of data and information that satisfy the needs of user groups from the respective region.

Regional Coastal Observing System (RCOS) - A federally certified end-to-end network of observations, data management and delivery, data analysis and modeling, engagement, and governance and management that links the needs of users to observations of coastal marine, estuarine, and Great Lakes environments on regional scales while adhering to national standards. The RCOS consists of the infrastructure and expertise required for each of these subsystems. It also includes oversight, evaluation, and evolution mechanisms that ensure the sustained and routine flow of data and information to end users and the infusion of new technologies and approaches.

B. Program Priorities

U.S. IOOS is an integrated, sustained and operational ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes observing system, comprising a network of 11 Regional Coastal Observing Systems, each managed by a Regional Association (RA). These RAs work within their respective regions to contribute data and products to the national system in coordination with stakeholders and federal and industry partners. Through this funding opportunity, awarded U.S. IOOS regional partners shall continue conducting activities that support regional priorities while advancing regional contributions to national goals. In particular, NOAA is interested in projects that provide timely and tailored information and data integration to support the priorities of public mission agencies at national, regional, state, local, and tribal levels.

This funding announcement invites five-year proposals to continue the implementation and enhancement of a sustained Regional Coastal Observing System (RCOS) for each of the following 11 IOOS regions. The First IOOS Development Plan (Ocean.US 2006) defines the geographic extent of a Regional Coastal Ocean Observing System as including the nation's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), Great Lakes, and estuaries to the head of tide. NOAA intends to make 11 awards, one in each geographic region, and expects each successful awardee to serve as a Regional Association responsible for operating and maintaining a certified RCOS (<https://ioos.noaa.gov/about/governance-and-management/certification-extending-reach-regional-data/>).

- Northeast Atlantic - coastal waters from the Canadian Maritime Provinces to the New York Bight
- Mid-Atlantic - the ocean and estuaries between Cape Hatteras and Cape Cod
- Southeast Atlantic - the ocean and estuaries from North Carolina through the west coast of Florida
- Gulf of America - "the U.S. Continental Shelf area bounded on the northeast, north, and northwest by the States of Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and Florida and extending to the seaward boundary with Mexico and Cuba" (Executive Order 14172) and its estuaries
- Caribbean - Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the island of Navassa
- Great Lakes - Great Lakes, St. Lawrence River and interconnecting waterways
- Southern California - the Southern California Bight
- Central and Northern California - from Point Conception north to the California-Oregon border
- Pacific Northwest - primarily Washington and Oregon
- Alaska
- Pacific Islands - the State of Hawai'i, the territories of Guam and American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and the U.S. Minor Outlying Islands (Baker, Howland, Jarvis, Johnston, Kingman, Midway, Palmyra, and Wake), and possibly other Pacific islands

Proposals should describe the approach and benefits of integration and implementation at the geographic scale of the U.S. IOOS regions described above (i.e., not at a smaller, sub-regional geographic scale). Proposals should build on the efforts of existing RAs and demonstrate how the proposing organization will manage and operate the RCOS as an RA. Furthermore, proposals should describe how the proposed activities leverage or build on substantial existing U.S. IOOS and RA investments (e.g., prior RCOS base- and supplementally funded activities and infrastructure). NOAA encourages applicants to leverage and find efficiencies by including integrated pan-regional and national activities and objectives that further the greater U.S. IOOS, such as establishing or sustaining national observing networks, integrating and maintaining national data assembly centers, convening observing communities of practice, developing and sharing new products and services by working with stakeholders, and evaluating observing technologies.

Applicants should address how they will integrate each of the following subsystem elements, which are described in further detail below, and how each element contributes to an end-to-end system delivering stakeholder-driven products and services to end users.

1. Governance and Management
2. Observing
3. Data Management and Cyberinfrastructure (DMAC)

4. Modeling and Analysis
5. Engagement

Importantly, proposals should clearly demonstrate the applications and benefits of the proposed activities to society at the local, regional, and national levels. Proposals should clearly identify what intermediate and end users will be engaged and the societal needs that the activities will address.

Successful applicants will be required to report on progress and performance over the life of the award and participate in meetings as directed by the U.S. IOOS Office (including the semi-annual U.S. IOOS Meeting, the annual National DMAC Meeting, and any other meetings related to the core subsystem elements).

Mandated IOOS Subsystem Elements

1. Governance and Management

Governance refers to the representation of regional stakeholder interests. It is the organizational body that directs and oversees management to ensure the regional system achieves desired outcomes.

Management refers to the group of people whom the governing body authorizes to achieve results and the actions the group takes to do so. Because the coastal component of U.S. IOOS comprises a national network of regional systems, the regional governance and management bodies shall be responsive to national direction provided by the U.S. IOOS Office.

The Governance and Management subsystem supports an RA and U.S. IOOS in terms of guidance, resources, processes, tools, and infrastructure. Governance and management are executed through a variety of functions, including councils and boards, financial management, policies, plans and operations, human resources, acquisitions and grants, marketing and outreach, and IT support. As the subsystem that underpins the entire RCOS and any pan-regional or national integration efforts, the applicant should ensure adequate resources are devoted to maintain successful business functions and an effective Governance and Management team.

An RA's governance and management functions should improve the Nation's capability to measure, track, explain, and predict events related directly or indirectly to environmental conditions and phenomena in the ocean, coasts, Great Lakes, and atmosphere. These functions should also promote regional to national scale innovation and system improvements. Proper governance and management also ensures the RCOS represents the interests of, and includes the active participation of, the variety of data providers and user groups in the region.

2. Observing

The Observing subsystem monitors environmental and ecological conditions and trends in the coastal ocean and Great Lakes. These observation data are critical for understanding oceanic and atmospheric conditions and phenomena and are essential for predicting events and changes that may threaten the Nation's economy, safety and security, and public health. Observing is implemented through data collection, asset lifecycle management, and subsystem management. This subsystem serves as the source of RA-provided data and is the backbone of the U.S. IOOS national network of regional observing systems.

Proposals should describe how the observing subsystem supports regional and national priorities as a part of the RCOS and demonstrate the connection of this subsystem with DMAC, modeling and analysis, and the delivery of products and services to meet identified user needs. Data collection efforts should prioritize societal and user needs as well as the 34 core U.S. IOOS variables (<https://iooc.us/task-teams/bio/ioos-core-variables>). Applicants are encouraged to provide details about ongoing and planned intra-regional, inter-regional, and national collaboration on observing activities.

Observing systems may consist of multiple platforms and sensors, including but not limited to: underwater and surface systems or vehicles, high-frequency radar, animal-borne sensors, satellites (remote sensing), buoys, fixed shore stations, bottom-mounted sensors, floats, and ships.

Proposals should describe plans for sustaining the operation and maintenance of existing assets and for enhancements to the observing system based on user-driven need. Deployment costs, both initial and annual requirements for operations and maintenance, of new and existing observing assets should be included by asset class. Additionally, proposals should describe the strategy for balancing changes in regional priorities with the need to maintain established data sets, for which the long-term record may be the primary value.

A number of guiding documents have been written by the ocean observing community. Proposals should discuss how their regional observing subsystem activities will be designed and implemented in a way that is consistent with these and other national frameworks. Applicants should be familiar with documents outlining national plans and strategies related to specific data types and observing technologies. Proposals should describe how their work contributes to these national efforts and is consistent with the guidance in the following documents:

- These documents describe the goals and the tenets of the U.S. IOOS:
 - The First U.S. IOOS Development Plan https://cdn.ioos.noaa.gov/media/2017/12/ioos_devplan.pdf
 - U.S. IOOS Summit Report https://ioos.us/sites/default/files/2022-11/U.S.-IOOS-Summit-Report_Final_8.29.13.pdf
- Framework for Ocean Observing http://www.oceanobs09.net/foo/F00_Report.pdf
- OceanObs'19 Living Action Plan <http://www.oceanobs19.net/living-action-plan/>
 - OceanObs '19 Community White Papers <https://oceanobs19.net/outcomes/community-white-papers>
- Quality Assurance of Real Time Ocean Data (QARTOD) manuals <https://ioos.noaa.gov/project/qartod/>
- Guidance for NOAA Commercial Data Buys https://nosc-prod.woc.noaa.gov/public_docs/Guidance_for_NOAA_Commercial_Data_Buys-v1-final.pdf
- A National Operational Wave Observation Plan https://cdn.ioos.noaa.gov/media/2018/01/wave_plan_final_03122009.pdf
- National Strategy for a Sustained Network of Coastal Moorings https://cdn.ioos.noaa.gov/media/2018/01/NationalStrategyforSustainedNetworkofCoastalMoorings_FINAL.pdf
- National Coastal Ecosystem Moorings Workshop https://www.act-us.info/Download/Workshops/2018/Ecosystem_Mooring_Workshop_Report.pdf
- The National Surface Current Mapping Plan (2015 update) https://cdn.ioos.noaa.gov/media/2017/12/national_surface_current_planMay2015.pdf
- A Network Gaps Analysis for the National Water Level Observation Network – Updated Edition https://tidesandcurrents.noaa.gov/publications/Technical_Memorandum_NOS_COOPS_0048_Updated.pdf
- Gap Analysis of the Great Lakes Component of the National Water Level Observation Network (NWLON) https://tidesandcurrents.noaa.gov/publications/NOAA_Technical_Report_NOS_COOPS_074.pdf
- The 2024 Underwater Glider User Group Workshop Report https://underwatergliders.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/2024_UG2GliderWorkshop_report.pdf
- Toward a U.S. IOOS® Underwater Glider Network Plan https://cdn.ioos.noaa.gov/media/2017/12/glider_network_whitepaper_final.pdf
- Strategic Plan for Federal Research and Monitoring of Ocean Acidification (2023) <https://oceanacidification.noaa.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/StrategicPlanforFederalResearchandMonitoringofOceanAcidification.pdf>

- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Ocean, Coastal, and Great Lakes Acidification Research Plan: 2020-2029 https://oceanacidification.noaa.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/ResearchPlan2020-2029_comp.pdf
- The National Ocean Council's Biological Integration and Observation Task Team report http://www.iooc.us/wp-content/uploads/biological_and_ecosystem_observations_within_united_states_waters2.pdf
- Attaining an Operational Marine Biodiversity Observation Network (BON) Synthesis Report https://cdn.ioos.noaa.gov/media/2017/12/BON_SynthesisReport.pdf
- Toward a National Animal Telemetry Observing Network (ATN) for our Oceans, Coasts, and Great Lakes https://cdn.ioos.noaa.gov/media/2017/12/noaa_tm_nmfs_swfsc_482.pdf
- Framework for the National Harmful Algal Bloom Observing Network https://cdn.coastalscience.noaa.gov/page-attachments/news/NHABON_Framework_WkshpReport_12-18-20_Final.pdf
- Implementation Strategy for a National Harmful Algal Bloom Observing Network (NHABON) https://ioosassociation.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/NHABON_StrategyDocWeb_FEB21.pdf

3. Data Management and Cyberinfrastructure (DMAC)

A key premise of the U.S. IOOS is that information, regardless of its method of collection, is a public resource; therefore, one of the primary goals of the Data Management and Cyberinfrastructure (DMAC) subsystem is to enable the public to discover, access, and understand ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes information. DMAC ensures effective handling of U.S. IOOS oceanographic data, delivery to end users, and connections to Federal and community models and other downstream uses.

DMAC provides the hardware, software, and policy framework to ingest and manage ocean observations and other derived information, as described in Subsystem 2. Observing. Management of these data types covers all lifecycle steps from initial observation of raw data, to ingestion into the cyberinfrastructure, quality control, public dissemination, product generation, and long-term storage and archiving. In addition, DMAC supports analyses and syntheses of various information streams into value-added information products.

DMAC systems must also be capable of operating or otherwise supporting and disseminating outputs from numerical simulations of the ocean yielding hindcasts, nowcasts, or forecasts of ocean conditions, as described in Subsystem 4. Modeling and Analysis.

In order to meet these requirements to manage ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes information through its entire lifecycle, DMAC systems are expected to comprise the following components: information technology, data managers, standard processes and procedures, and governance policies.

Applicants should describe their approach to operating a U.S. IOOS Regional Data Assembly Center (DAC) that both effectively implements these DMAC subsystem goals and meets data management requirements for their regions. Additionally, they should describe their policies and procedures to ensure regional data that are suitable for inclusion in a U.S. IOOS national DAC (e.g. profiling gliders, high-frequency radar data) are submitted on a routine basis to the relevant national DAC either by the RA or partner/operator, following IOOS guidance published at <https://ioos.github.io> and elsewhere.

Further, proposals should describe how the applicant plans to specifically address the U.S. IOOS DMAC Data Standards & Requirements guidelines: <https://ioos.noaa.gov/data/data-standards>, in operating a Regional DAC:

- Open Data Sharing
- Data Publishing
- Provision of Data to the Global Telecommunications System (GTS)
- Storage and Archiving
- Catalog Registration
- Data Management Planning and Cyberinfrastructure

DMAC systems must also adhere to the following NOAA guidance and policies pertaining to data management and information technology:

- NOAA Administrative Order (NAO) 212-15B: Management of NOAA Data and Information; NOAA Data Management Handbook <https://www.noaa.gov/organization/administration/nao-212-15-management-of-environmental-data-and-information>
- NAO 201-118: Software Governance and Public Release Policy <https://www.noaa.gov/administration/nao-201-118-software-governance-and-public-release-policy>
- 2020 NOAA Artificial Intelligence Strategy <https://sciencecouncil.noaa.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/2020-AI-Strategy.pdf>

Additional Requirements & Guidance:

In addition to addressing each of the above requirements in their DMAC system implementation plans, proposals should also:

- Describe the applicant's commitment to allot staff and financial resources to attend the DMAC Annual Meeting and participate in DMAC code sprints or related national DMAC activities that require regional expertise and input.
 - Proposals must identify resources that will be applied to national DMAC operations and advancements, including how they will participate in the operations, maintenance, and evolution of the national DMAC, and support coordination of U.S. IOOS efforts with other ocean observing organizations, groups, and networks.
- Describe how emerging technologies will interface or integrate into DMAC systems where practical and appropriate. These might include:
 - Cloud computing
 - Artificial Intelligence (AI) / Machine Learning (ML), publishing regional data for consumption by AI/ML models
 - Support for interactive computing and analysis platforms or user communities (e.g. JupyterHub/Pangeo)
 - Edge computing and the Internet of Things
 - Transition from legacy technologies (& applications)
 - Pan-regional interoperability
- Describe plans, if any, to increase efficiencies and share infrastructure, expertise, and technology between regions. Inter-regional collaboration is strongly encouraged on all aspects of DMAC planning and implementation in order to maximize the efficiency of DMAC funding across the entire U.S. IOOS Enterprise. It is not assumed that each region must operate a completely separate and distinct infrastructure. Applicants should prioritize pursuing opportunities to share or pool resources between regions where feasible.
- Describe the applicant's ability and approach to serve as data stewards for local and regional partners, regardless of funding relationships. Applicants should prioritize managing data and information generated by the project partners, however, they should similarly provide the capability to manage data that exists within their region but may be collected or funded by organizations other than the U.S. IOOS.

4. Modeling and Analysis

Models enhance our understanding of ocean and coastal phenomena over various timescales and enable prediction of conditions and events. They provide essential assistance to operational oceanography, which is the routine and sustained provision of oceanographic information needed for decision-making purposes. Numerical modeling enables the simulation of past, present, and future ocean conditions and, when combined with sustained in situ and remote observations, provide synthesized information products that leverage the strengths of both models and observations. Integrating data assimilation techniques into numerical models can inform the design of the observing system and provide information on the efficacy of the observing system to meet its intended purpose.

U.S. IOOS regional models integrate cross-disciplinary, cross-platform data from a variety of partners to improve predictions of ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes phenomena. RA modeling efforts can support maritime commerce and safety, ecological forecasting, water levels, and more by enhancing the NOS modeling network and serving as an important link between NOAA, federal partners, and regional stakeholders.

In accordance with the Administration's priorities, NOAA calls for proposals which support a plan for evaluating consolidation of modeling systems within and across geographical regions covered by the RAs. This need for consolidation particularly applies to prediction systems based on the core operational forecast models used by NOS (e.g., Advanced Circulation Model (ADCIRC), Semi-implicit Cross-scale Hydroscience Integrated System (SCHISM), Regional Ocean Modeling System (ROMS), and Finite Volume Community Ocean Model (FVCOM)). Applicants should propose work that aligns with the NOS Modeling Implementation Plan (in particular, see Sections 3.2.2 and 3.2.3 of the NOS Modeling Implementation Plan linked below).

In addition to describing how numerical modeling is integrated into a comprehensive strategy for deriving and delivering information to support regional and national stakeholders, proposals should describe both a down-select process among models as well as the combining of systems across certain regions consistent with Fig. 3 in Section 3.2.2 of the NOS Modeling Implementation Plan.

Federal agencies provide global and regional predictions that can be factored into RCOS plans for an integrated system. Applicants should consider several guiding documents when developing their proposal. Proposals should describe how the project's ongoing and planned modeling systems address these strategic guidelines and interface with federal modeling systems, including emerging federal collaborations, to advance earth system modeling and unified forecast system development. The documents are:

- Wilkin, J., et al. (2017) Advancing coastal ocean modelling, analysis, and prediction for the US Integrated Ocean Observing System. *Journal of Operational Oceanography*.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1755876X.2017.1322026>
- American Meteorological Society Statement on the Future of Ecological Forecasting
<https://www.ametsoc.org/ams/about-ams/ams-statements/statements-of-the-ams-in-force/the-future-of-ecological-forecasting/>
- NOS Modeling Strategy <https://cdn.oceanservice.noaa.gov/oceanserviceprod/tools/coastal-predictions/NOS-Modeling-Strategy-2023.pdf>
- NOS Modeling Implementation Plan
<https://cdn.oceanservice.noaa.gov/oceanserviceprod/tools/coastal-predictions/NOS-Modeling-Implementation-2024.pdf>
- A Strategic Vision for NOAA's Ecological Forecasting Roadmap
<http://oceanservice.noaa.gov/ecoforecasting/noaa-ecoforecasting-roadmap.pdf>
- Advanced Circulation Model (ADCIRC):
 - <https://adcirc.org/>
 - https://wiki.adcirc.org/Main_Page
 - <https://github.com/adcirc>
- Semi-implicit Cross-scale Hydroscience Integrated System (SCHISM)

- <https://ccrm.vims.edu/schismweb/>
- <https://github.com/schism-dev/schism>
- Regional Ocean Modeling System (ROMS)
 - <https://www.myroms.org/>
 - <https://github.com/myroms/roms>
- Finite Volume Community Ocean Model (FVCOM)
 - Chen, C. et al.(2006) An Unstructured-Grid Finite-Volume Coastal Ocean Model (FVCOM) System https://tos.org/oceanography/assets/docs/19-1_chen.pdf
 - <https://www.fvcom.org/>
 - <https://github.com/FVCOM-GitHub/FVCOM>

The U.S. IOOS Office also leads the Coastal and Ocean Modeling Testbed (COMT, <https://ioos.noaa.gov/project/comt/>), which funds targeted research and development to accelerate the transition of scientific and technical advances from the coastal and ocean modeling research community to improve identified operational ocean products and services. The COMT is a conduit between Federal operational and external research communities that facilitates the sharing of numerical models, observations, and software tools. COMT projects are designed to assess the performance of existing models, create new model code and tools, inform and train users, and build a repository of evaluation data sets to expand and improve the modeling capabilities of operational partners and the broader coastal and ocean modeling community. Applicants should be cognizant of COMT projects and describe any relationships or intersections between their proposed activities and COMT projects. Proposals may address any barriers that limit the access of modeling system enhancements by operational systems.

5. Engagement

Regional Associations build strong relationships with local, regional, and national stakeholders and end users to identify their needs and understand how and why they use information. Through a methodological and iterative approach, RAs engage users in creating tailored data products and services that are fit for purpose and easy to use. Applicant should consider the following guiding documents in developing plans for the engagement subsystem:

- A Model of Service Delivery for the NOAA Water Initiative - https://www.noaa.gov/sites/default/files/2022-02/A-Model-of-Service-Delivery-for-the-NOAA-Water-Initiative_FINAL.pdf
- Iwamoto, M.M., et al. (2019) Meeting Regional, Coastal and Ocean User Needs With Tailored Data Products: A Stakeholder-Driven Process. *Frontiers in Marine Science*. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fmars.2019.00290>

Proposals should address how the applicant will engage in stakeholder outreach and engagement region-wide, support delivery of products to identified users, receive feedback from users regarding their needs, further modify products based on that input, and evaluate the success of funded activities. Proposals should identify engagement priorities, the types of groups the applicants expect to contact, and the relevance of regional U.S. IOOS products and tools to those target groups. Additionally, proposals should note how communication with various audiences will occur, as different groups require tailored engagement methods. Applicants should consider collaboration with existing ocean- and coastal-related programs in the region that can serve as force multipliers because they are centralized conduits for efficient and effective engagement, have well developed networks of users to communicate system needs, and/or coordinate workforce development (e.g., National Marine Sanctuaries, National Estuarine Research Reserves, Sea Grant, maritime professional associations).

C. Program Authority

The Integrated Coastal and Ocean Observation System (ICOOS) Act of 2009 (P.L. 111-11, Title XII, §12301), as amended by the Coordinated Ocean Observation and Research Act (COORA) of 2020 (P.L. 116-271), codified at 33 U.S.C. 3601-3610.

II. Award Information

A. Funding Availability

Maximum estimated funding for each award is approximately \$5,000,000 per year, subject to availability of funds, for up to 5 years. The number of awards anticipated to be given is 11. Funding for each year of the award is contingent upon availability of funds from annual appropriations and the satisfactory performance of the recipient and is at the sole discretion of NOAA.

B. Project/Award Period

The full proposal must cover an award period of no greater than 60 months, or 5 years, starting September 1, 2026.

C. Type of Funding Instrument

NOAA will make awards using competitive cooperative agreements.

III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applicants

Eligible funding applicants for this competition are institutions of higher education, non-profit and for-profit organizations, and state, local and tribal governments.

Federal agencies or institutions and foreign governments may not be the primary recipient of awards under this announcement, but they may partner with applicants when appropriate.

If an applicant has a partner who would receive funds, the lead grantee will be expected to use a subcontract or other appropriate mechanism to provide funds to the partner. If a partner is a NOAA office or laboratory, the U.S. IOOS Office will transfer funds internally. If the proposal includes a federal agency outside of NOAA, the applicant must plan its own mechanism to fund that partner. The U.S. IOOS Office will not transfer funds to any other agencies on behalf of an awardee.

Applicants should note that paying for transportation, travel, or other expenses for any federal employee are not allowable costs. This includes federal employees who may serve as board members on applicant governance structures.

B. Cost Share or Matching Requirement

None

C. Other Criteria that Affect Eligibility

None

IV. Application and Submission Information

A. Address to Request Application Package

Application packages are available online as part of the NOFO announcement on grants.gov and final applications will only be accepted via submission through www.grants.gov. Applications will need to pass eRA minimum requirements in order to be accepted. Please verify all attachments meet the requirements outlined on the National Institute of Health's Grants and Funding website <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/how-to-apply-application-guide/format-and-write/format-attachments.htm>.

B. Content and Form of Application

The application must include the following 15 elements, with the exception of the Letters of Support and the SF-LLL (only if applicable), to meet minimum requirements. Each element should be uploaded as a separate file and numbered corresponding to the order below. You must follow the instructions for each of the following specific components. All required documents must be submitted with the proposal. External documents linked within proposal materials will not be accepted for review as part of the proposal package.

1. **Standard Form (SF-424) - "Application for Federal Assistance"**

Format Requirements: none

Guidance: This form is required to indicate the total amount of funding proposed for the institution for the whole period of performance. This form is to be the cover page for the original proposal and is the first required form in the Grants.gov proposal package. The form can be downloaded at <https://www.grants.gov/forms/forms-repository/sf-424-family>. If funding will be directed to NOAA partners, the SF-424 must show the total amount less what would go to the NOAA partner.

2. **Title Page**

Format Requirements: Single-spaced, 12-point font, 1-inch margins, 1 page maximum

Guidance: Include proposal title, complete contact information for the Principal Investigator and Financial Representative, proposed period of performance, and total funds requested. If funds are to be transferred to a NOAA partner as a holdback, state the amount to the NOAA partner on the cover.

3. **Abstract**

Format Requirements: Single-spaced, 12-point font, 1-inch margins, 5 sentences maximum

Guidance: Provide a very brief, high-level summary of the proposal in 3-5 sentences. The abstract should be written using plain language for a broad, non-technical audience and highlight the main goal of the proposed work and societal impacts.

4. **Proposal Summary**

Format Requirements: Single-spaced, 12-point font, 1-inch margins, 2 pages maximum

Guidance: Provide a summary of the proposed work. The summary should be prepared using plain language to be readable to a broad audience and contain the following sections:

- a) Proposal Name/Title
- b) Primary Contact (name, address, telephone, e-mail)
- c) Primary Recipient Institution
- d) Other Investigators (name, affiliated institution or agency)
- e) Proposal Summary including objectives and intended benefits
- f) Partners

5. **Proposal Narrative and Milestones Schedule**

Format Requirements: Single-spaced, 12-point font, 1-inch margins, 20 pages maximum

Guidance: All proposal narratives must include the following sections and should be clear and concise, focusing on the who, what, when, where, why, and how of the proposed work, including the description of the proposed scope of work. There may be several distinct projects within the proposal. In this element, each distinct project shall be numbered with a numbering system that would enable projects to be individually tracked in documentation over the lifetime of the award if the proposal is selected for funding. This section should include the following, by project where practical:

- a) **Goals and Objectives.** Describe the specific goals and objectives to be achieved. Recipients will be required to submit regular progress reports in which progress against these goals and objectives will be reported.
- b) **Background.** Provide sufficient background information for proposal reviewers to assess independently the significance of the proposed work. Summarize the problem to be addressed and the status of ongoing efforts to address the identified needs.

c) **Audience.** Identify specific users of the results of each project, outline the process for how they will be engaged for input in project development, describe how they will use the results, and identify any training that will be needed for users to make full use of the results.

d) **Approach.** Provide a work plan that: identifies specific tasks to be accomplished; explains the technical approach (including quality assurance and any innovations) needed to accomplish the tasks; identifies partner roles and contributions, including resources; and identifies potential obstacles to successful completion of the goals and objectives. Describe how end users are involved in the planning and design process. Describe how the work achieves efficiencies and how it will complement any other U.S. IOOS funding received. If work is being carried out through a sub-award or contract, that work should be included in the Proposal Narrative. If the project includes federal partners, clearly identify their roles, responsibilities, and contributions.

e) **Benefits.** Identify, with a high degree of specificity, the users of the products or information derived from the work and the benefits that will be achieved for those users, as well as society as a whole. Document how valid user needs and user requirements are guiding the proposed work. Describe how the technologies or information from the projects will be delivered to those users, and any special considerations or requirements for ensuring or improving the delivery of the technology or information.

f) **Milestones Schedule.** Organized by project, display timelines for major tasks, target milestones (or project phases) for important intermediate and final products including key accomplishments and outcomes. Milestones should be aligned with the goals and objectives of each project.

6. Data Management Plan

Format Requirements: Single-spaced, 12-point font, 1-inch margins, 2 pages maximum

Guidance: Proposals must provide a detailed Data Management Plan that describes how metadata and data collected will be disseminated to the broader community, and plans for longer term archiving of these data. PIs that propose to collaborate with data centers or networks, including federal data centers or networks, are advised to obtain letters of commitment that affirm the collaboration. Where possible, all PIs are strongly encouraged to use existing data centers and data portals to archive and disseminate their data. Costs associated with use of data centers, or data archiving, should be included in the application budget. See Sec. VI. for data reporting requirements under Data Sharing Plan.

7. References Cited

Format Requirements: Single-spaced, 12-point font, 1-inch margins, no page limit

Guidance: Each reference should include the names of all authors in the same sequence they appear in the publications, the article title, the journal or book title, volume number, page numbers, and year of publication. While there is no established page limitation, this section should include bibliographic citations only and should not be used to provide parenthetical information outside of the Proposal Narrative.

8. Resumes

Format Requirements: Single-spaced, 12-point font, 1-inch margins, 3 pages maximum, per person

Guidance: Provide resumes for the Principal Investigator of the proposal and other key personnel critical to the success of the proposed work. Ensure that resumes address qualifications relevant to conducting the proposed work.

9. Letters of Support (not required)

Format Requirements: Single-spaced, 12-point font, 1-inch margins, 2 pages maximum, per letter

Guidance: Letters from unfunded collaborators, verifying their contribution to the project, or letters of support may also be included, but are not required.

10. SF-424A - Budget Form

Format Requirements: none

Guidance: The SF-424A identifies the budget for each fiscal year of the proposal. The budget figures in the SF-424A should correspond to the appropriate budget narrative. Place each fiscal year in separate columns in section B of page one on the SF-424A. Since the SF-424A only has four columns for yearly figures, applicants for five years of funding MUST use and submit two SF-424A forms, as follows:

- Place the first four years on one of the SF-424A forms in Section B, columns (1) through (4).
- Total the first four years in column (5).
- Place the total from the first form (from column (5)) onto the second SF- 424A form in Section B column (1) and use column (2) for the fifth-year budget figures.
- Total all five years in column (5) on the second SF-424A.

A separate SF-424A is required for each subaward and NOAA partner receiving funding (all subawards/partners, including lower tier subawards), to be provided to the lead institution for submission. Per NOAA guidance, the lead institution should list the total for subcontracts under 6.f. "Contractual" and the total for subawards under 6.h. "Other" in their SF-424A (see [2 CFR 200.331](https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-2/chapter-II/subchapter-A/part-200/subpart-B/section-200.331) on the difference between a subaward and a contract).

If funding will be directed to NOAA partners, the SF-424A for the lead institution must show the total amount less what would go to the NOAA partner. Note that funding for other federal agencies (previously known as interagency holdbacks) will not be processed by the U.S. IOOS Office. In these instances, the grantee must have their own mechanism for transferring the funds to the partner federal agency.

This revised SF-424A section B format is a NOAA requirement that is not reflected in the Instructions for the SF-424A. The form can be downloaded at <https://www.grants.gov/forms/forms-repository/sf-424-family>.

11. Budget Narrative

Format Requirements: Single-spaced, 12-point font, 1-inch margins

Guidance: All proposals must include a detailed budget narrative covering the proposed period of performance with a justification to support all proposed budget categories for each fiscal year. The Budget Narrative must match the same direct cost categories as the SF-424A forms for the primary and each subaward. Within that structure, the budget narrative should clearly connect costs to activities, when possible referring back to the project numbering system applied in the Proposal Narrative section.

For additional information concerning each of the required budget categories and appropriate level of disclosure please see Budget Narrative Guidance for NOAA Grants https://coast.noaa.gov/data/coasthome/funding/_pdf/forms/budget-narrative-guidance-for-NOAA-grants.pdf. Please note that internal references to 2 CFR 200 have not been updated in the budget narrative guidance to be compliant with recent changes (October 1, 2024). The document is otherwise applicable to developing a budget for a grant application. For the most current information, please refer to [2 CFR 200](https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-2) at <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-2> (e.g., the current equipment minimum value threshold is \$10,000, the current de minimis indirect cost rate is 15%).

A separate budget narrative is required for each subaward (all subawards, including lower tier subawards) and any NOAA partner receiving funding. The lead institution must include the subaward budget narratives in its application. The work to be performed by the partner must be reflected separately in the Proposal Narrative and partner budget. Subaward budgets should be included in the lead entity's budget under the "Other" category. Do not include NOAA partner budgets into the lead's budget. The budget should clearly identify the recipient and funded activity, as well as the project number(s) supported by the subaward. An SF-424A and indirect cost rate agreement (if applicable) should accompany the budget narrative specific to each subaward or partner.

The lead institution will be the only institution to directly receive funds from NOAA and is responsible for sending funds to their other subaward institutions, except for funded NOAA partners which may be funded directly by NOAA. If funding will be directed to NOAA partners, the budget narrative for the lead institution must show the total amount less what would go to the NOAA partner as noted above for the SF-424A (Sec. IV.B.10).

To the extent possible, detailed information on travel, including costs, a description of anticipated travel, destinations, number of travelers, and a justification of relevance to the project must be included. If trip details are unknown, applicants must state the basis for any proposed travel charges. Applicants must allocate travel funds for coordination meetings at the regional and national levels, including travel to the semi-annual meeting with U.S. IOOS Office staff at NOAA headquarters or other location as determined by the U.S. IOOS Office. Foreign travel must receive prior approval and should be included in the proposal to avoid having to request approval after the project starts. Applicants may factor in travel costs for participation in a NOAA Grants Management Division workshop for recipients. Non-employee travel is considered a participant support cost and must be included in the "h.Other" budget category.

Itemize and describe the intended use of equipment costing \$10,000 or greater that will be purchased under the award (for such items, applicants should include a brief narrative in the proposal and detailed budget information in the budget narrative). Applicants must include a lease versus purchase analysis for any equipment \$10,000 or greater.

12. CD-511 - Certification Regarding Lobbying

Format Requirements: none

Guidance: Required only for the lead institution, which may submit this form through the Grants.gov CD511 document placeholder without a hard signature because electronic signatures are allowed on documents from the submitting institution. The form can be downloaded at: <https://www.grants.gov/forms/forms-repository/sf-424-family>.

13. SF-424B - Assurances- Non-Construction Programs

Format Requirements: none

Guidance: Required only for the lead institution, which may submit this form through the Grants.gov SF-424B document placeholder without a hard signature because electronic signatures are allowed on documents from the submitting institutions. The form can be downloaded at <https://www.grants.gov/forms/forms-repository/sf-424-family>.

14. SF-LLL - Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (if applicable)

Format Requirements: none

Guidance: If lobbying activity is or has been secured to influence the outcome of a covered federal action, complete the SF-LLL standard lobbying disclosure form found at <https://www.grants.gov/forms/forms-repository/sf-424-family> and include it with your proposal package.

15. Environmental Compliance Questionnaire for NOAA Notice of Federal Funding Opportunity Applicants

Format Requirement: Use the Environmental Compliance Questionnaire for NOAA Notice of Federal Funding Opportunity Applicants

Guidance: The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires federal agencies to complete an environmental analysis for all major federal actions, including funding non-federal projects through federal financial assistance awards where federal participation in the funded activity is expected to be significant. The Environmental Compliance Questionnaire for NOAA Notice of Federal Funding Opportunity Applicants (NOAA Environmental Compliance Questionnaire) is used by NOAA to collect information about proposed activities for NEPA and other environmental compliance requirements associated with the proposal, including but not limited to federal consultations under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), the National Marine Sanctuaries Act (NMSA). The NOAA Environmental Compliance Questionnaire can be found at <https://www.noaa.gov/general-counsel/nepa>. A fillable version of the NOAA Environmental Compliance Questionnaire is available at: <https://ioos.noaa.gov/about/funding-opportunities>. Additional information on the IOOS environmental compliance process is found at: <https://ioos.noaa.gov/about/governance-and-management/environmental-compliance/>.

Applicants should answer the questions to the best of their ability with as much detail as possible, referencing the same project numbering system as the Proposal Narrative section for each activity described in the Questionnaire. Some of the questions may overlap with material provided in other parts of the application. As appropriate, please copy the information from other parts of the application and paste it into the answers to the Questionnaire.

In addition to providing specific information that will serve as the basis for any required impact analyses, applicants may 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 or activities may be restricted under a special award condition requiring the recipient to submit sufficient environmental compliance information to enable NOAA to make an assessment on any impacts that a project may have on the environment.

Proposals submitted in response to this Announcement must include a Data Management Plan (up to 2 pages). See Section VI.B., Administrative and National Policy Requirements, below for additional information on what the plan should contain.

Applicants are required to respond to the following questions:

- Proposed Activity-Information: Questions 1 - 2
- Proposed Activity-Location: Questions 3 - 7
- Proposed Activity-Time Frame: Questions 8 - 9
- Project Partners, Permits, and Consultations: Questions 10 - 13
- Proposed Activity Details and Impacts: Question 14
 - (If applicable) Fishing Activities: Questions 15-32
 - (If applicable) Aquaculture and Mesocosms and Hawaiian Coastal Fishponds: Questions 33-41
- Marine Debris: Question 44
- Equipment Installation, Construction and/or Maintenance: Questions 46-50
- Data, Safety and Environmental Impacts, Monitoring, And Habitat Restoration: Questions 51-64

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

Any applicant awarded in response to this Announcement will be required to use the System for Award Management (SAM), which may be accessed online at <https://sam.gov/>. SAM enables the use of a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) to build the quality of information available to the public as required by the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act, 31 U.S.C. 6106 Note, to the extent applicable.

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.

Applicants are advised to complete SAM registration or renewal well in advance of the full proposal deadline. For UEI registration visit this link:

https://sam.directory/UEI?gclid=CjwKCAjw_b6WBhAQEiwAp4HylJaUI9DfZ6GgKVQxxe%20LeLsp72ZneUyTrcA7qQsOB_vQdGh9Z8B_XIRoCm-0QAvD_BwE.

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

Full proposals must be received no later than 11:59 PM (EDT) (60 days after Publish date).

E. Intergovernmental Review

Not Applicable

F. Funding Restrictions

This announcement solicits applications for financial assistance. Profit, fee, or other increment above cost may not be included on awards issued under this competitive NOFO.

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.

SAM.gov - You must have an active account with [SAM.gov](https://sam.gov/). This includes having a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI). To register, go to SAM.gov Entity Registration at <https://sam.gov/entity-registration> and select Get Started. From the same page, you can also select the Entity Registration Checklist for the information you will need to register. Reference "Section C. Unique entity identifier and System for Award Management (SAM)" for additional details.

Grants.gov - You must also have an active account with [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov/). You can see step-by-step instructions in the Quick Start Guide for Applicants at <https://www.grants.gov/quick-start-guide/applicants>.

eRA Commons - You must register in [eRA Commons](https://www.era.nih.gov/register-accounts/register-in-era-commons.htm) at <https://www.era.nih.gov/register-accounts/register-in-era-commons.htm>. 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.

Applicants using www.Grants.gov must locate the downloadable application package for this solicitation by the Funding Opportunity Number or the CFDA number (11.012). Applicants will be able to download a copy of the application package, complete it offline, and then upload and submit the application through Grants.gov.

Grants.gov will provide information about submitting a proposal through the site as well as the hours of operation. After electronic submission of the application, the person submitting the application will receive within 24 to 48 hours two email messages from Grants.gov updating him or her on the progress of the application. The first email will confirm receipt of the application by Grants.gov, and the second will indicate that the application has been either successfully validated by the system prior to transmission to the grantor agency or rejected due to errors. After the application has been validated, this same person will receive another email when the application has been downloaded by the Federal agency. Applicants may want to build this Grants.gov review and notification period into their own submission timeline ahead of the deadline stated in this funding announcement.

H. Address for Submitting Proposals

Full application packages must be submitted through Grants.gov. Hard copy, faxed, or emailed submissions will not be accepted.

V. Application Review Information

1. Importance/relevance and applicability of proposed projects to the program goals	Maximum Points: 30
<p>This criterion ascertains whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and/or relevance to NOAA, Federal, regional, state, or local activities. This criterion evaluates the proposed work's relevance and ability to successfully operate, manage, and coordinate a regional component of U.S. IOOS. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the proposal demonstrate linkages to the ocean observing national frameworks and policy priorities cited in this Notice of Funding Opportunity? • Does the proposal clearly demonstrate progress in and plans for collaborations to build the regional and/or national components of U.S. IOOS? • Does the proposal clearly demonstrate means to sustain and grow each of the five subsystems (1) Governance and Management, 2) Observing, 3) Data Management and Cyberinfrastructure (DMAC), 4) Modeling and Analysis, and 5) Engagement in the management and operation of the Regional Coastal Observing System? • How responsive and valuable are the proposed activities in addressing societal areas of need at the relevant regional and national levels? 	
2. Technical/scientific merit	Maximum Points: 25

This criterion assesses whether the proposed approach is technically sound and/or innovative, if the methods are appropriate, and whether there are clear goals and objectives. The emphasis is on proposals that provide an end-to-end capability from observation to modeling that meets user needs. Reviewers will evaluate how effectively the proposal builds upon prior investments in regional ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes observing technologies and systems. This includes:

- Does the proposal target technical and scientific areas of highest regional priority?
- Does the proposed work enhance service, data, and information delivery to reach the intended users?
- How well does the proposed work address the 34 U.S. IOOS core variables?
- Does the proposal demonstrate the ability to meet U.S. IOOS DMAC requirements successfully?
- Does the proposal clearly demonstrate how applicable observing systems will be operated and maintained and how data from these systems will be published via regional and national data assembly centers?
- Does the Data Management Plan align with the Data Management Guidance provided by NOAA in this Funding Announcement?
- Does the proposal demonstrate a plan for integrating regional state, local, tribal and NGO data from sources not funded by the Regional Association?
- Does the proposal demonstrate the ability to operate the regional data assembly center efficiently and effectively, especially in times of emergency?
- Do the proposed approaches incorporate current guidance, scientific, and/or technical advancements in the development and implementation of the U.S. Integrated Ocean Observing System?

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 includes:

- Does the proposal identify an organizational framework appropriate to manage and operate a regional observing system across the region, and are the investigators qualified?
- Does the organization structure show a balanced variety of members, representing government, private industry, non-profit organizations, tribes, and academia?
- Does the organizational framework devote adequate resources to maintain successful business functions and an effective Governance and Management team?

4. Project costs

Maximum Points: 15

This criterion evaluates the budget to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time frame. This includes:

- Are the cost, schedule, and deliverables clear, reasonable, and logically presented?
- Does the budget show the costs are necessary, reasonable, and realistic for successful completion of the proposed work?
- Does the proposed work leverage NOAA’s long-term and sustained investment in the national network of regional coastal observing systems and recent investments?
- Does the proposed work leverage efficiencies found through pan-regionally and nationally integrated activities?

5. Outreach and Education	Maximum Points: 20
<p>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. In addition to NOAA's mission, it assesses relevance of the proposed engagement strategy to partner agency missions. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the proposal demonstrate that the target user community has been or will be fully engaged in developing the desired outcomes? • Does the proposal seek to reach new partners or users who have not previously been engaged with the applicant? • Does the proposal demonstrate that information generated by the projects will reach its target audience and have a positive impact on American society and the development of regional and national observing system infrastructure? 	

Evaluation Criteria

Review and Selection Process

Screening, review, and selection procedures will take place in four steps described below: 1) an initial screening, 2) a merit review, 3) selection, and 4) final approval.

- **Initial Screening.** The initial screening will ensure that application packages have all required forms and application elements and meet all of the eligibility criteria in accordance with "Section B: Content and Form of Application." Applications that pass this initial screening will be submitted for merit review.
- **Merit Review.** The Federal Program Officer is responsible for conducting the evaluation process described in this Announcement. Eligible applications will be evaluated in accordance with the criteria and weights described in this solicitation by at least three professionally and technically qualified reviewers. Each reviewer will independently evaluate their assigned proposals, compose written reviews, and provide individual proposal scores. Both federal and non-federal experts may be used in this process. The merit review's ratings will be used to produce a rank order of the proposals. The purpose of this review is to provide advice to the Selecting Official as to the technical soundness and merits of the application.
- **Selection.** Based on the numerical ranking, merit-review written evaluations, and the additional selection factors set in Section V.C below, the Selecting Official will develop a list of proposals recommended for funding. For a proposal to be selected for funding, the applicant may be asked to modify objectives, work plans, and budgets, and to provide supplemental information required by the agency prior to the award.

- **Final approval.** 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. 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 should 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 NOAA 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.

When a decision has been made (whether an award or declination), verbatim anonymous copies of reviews and summaries of review panel deliberations, if any, will be made available to the applicant, upon request. Declined applications will be held in IOOS for three years in accordance with current retention policies, and then destroyed.

Selection Factors

The competition manager will present selection recommendations to the selecting official in rank order as determined by the merit review ratings. The Selecting Official shall award in the rank order unless the proposal is justified to be selected out of rank order based on one or more of the following factors:

1. Availability of funding.
2. Balance/distribution of funds:
 - a. geographically
 - b. by type of institution
 - c. by type of partners
 - d. by research priority
 - e. by project types
3. Duplication of other projects funded or considered for funding by NOAA/Federal agencies.
4. Program priorities and policy factors.
5. Applicant's prior award performance.
6. Partnerships with/Participation of targeted groups.
7. Adequacy of information necessary for NOAA staff to make a NEPA determination and draft necessary documentation before recommendations for funding are made to the Grants Officer.

The Selecting Official makes final recommendations for awards to the Grants Officer who is authorized to obligate the funds.

Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

Final recommendations for funding under this Announcement are anticipated to be made in June 2026. Proposals funded under this Announcement will have an anticipated start date of September 1, 2026 and anticipated end date of August 31, 2031.

VI. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notices

The Notice of Award (NoA) is issued by the NOAA Grants Officer electronically through NOAA's electronic grants management system, eRA Commons, to the signing official in the recipient organization's business office.

In addition, the award document provided by NOAA may contain Specific Award Conditions unique to a proposed work that will be applied on a case-by-case basis. For example, the award may include conditions that limit the use of funds for activities that have outstanding environmental compliance requirements or stating other compliance requirements for the award as applicable. The applicant is 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.

Official notification of an award is provided by the Grants Management Division, not the U.S. IOOS Office. If one incurs any costs prior to receiving an award agreement from an authorized NOAA grant official, one would do so solely at one's own risk of these costs not being included under the award.

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 <http://www.ago.noaa.gov> and at <https://www.commerce.gov/oam/policy/financial-assistance-policy>.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

SCIENCE INTEGRITY. 1. Maintaining Integrity. The non-Federal entity shall maintain the scientific integrity of research performed pursuant to this grant or financial assistance award including the prevention, detection, and remediation of any allegations regarding the violation of scientific integrity or scientific and research misconduct, and the conduct of inquiries, investigations, and adjudications of allegations of violations of scientific integrity or scientific and research misconduct. All the requirements of this provision flow down to subrecipients. 2. Peer Review. The peer review of the results of scientific activities under a NOAA grant, financial assistance award or cooperative agreement shall be accomplished to ensure consistency with NOAA standards on quality, relevance, scientific integrity, reproducibility, transparency, and performance. NOAA will ensure that peer review of "influential scientific information" or "highly influential scientific assessments" is conducted in accordance with the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Final Information Quality Bulletin for Peer Review and NOAA policies on peer review, such as the Information Quality Guidelines. 3. In performing or presenting the results of scientific activities under the NOAA grant, financial assistance award, or cooperative agreement and in responding to allegations regarding the violation of scientific integrity or scientific and research misconduct, the non-Federal entity and all subrecipients shall comply with the provisions herein and NOAA Administrative Order (NAO) 202-735D, Scientific Integrity, and its Procedural Handbook, including any amendments thereto. That Order can be found at <https://www.noaa.gov/organization/administration/nao-202-735d-2-scientific-integrity>. 4. Primary Responsibility. The non-Federal entity shall have the primary responsibility to prevent, detect, and investigate allegations of a violation of scientific integrity or scientific and research misconduct. Unless otherwise instructed by the grants officer, the non-Federal entity shall promptly conduct an initial inquiry into any allegation of such misconduct and may rely on its internal policies and procedures, as appropriate, to do so. 5. By executing this grant, financial assistance award, or cooperative agreement the non-Federal entity provides its assurance that it has established an administrative process for performing an inquiry, investigating, and reporting allegations of a violation of scientific integrity or scientific and research misconduct; and that it will comply with its own administrative process for performing an inquiry, investigation, and reporting of such misconduct. 6. The non-Federal entity shall insert this provision in all subawards at all tiers under this grant, financial assistance award, or cooperative agreement.

REVIEW OF RISK. After applications are proposed for funding by the Selecting Official, the Grants Office will perform administrative reviews, including an assessment of risk posed by the applicant under 2 C.F.R. 200.206. These may include assessments of the financial stability of an applicant and the quality of the applicant's management systems, history of performance, and the applicant's ability to effectively implement statutory, regulatory, or other requirements imposed on non-Federal entities. Special conditions that address any risks determined to exist may be applied. Applicants may submit comments about any information concerning organizational performance listed in the Responsibility/Qualification section of SAM.gov for consideration by the awarding agency.

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

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 semi-annually and performance (technical) reports are to be submitted semi-annually. Reports are submitted electronically through eRA.

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

VII. Agency Contacts

For questions regarding this announcement, contact: Harvey Kincaid, U.S. IOOS, harvey.kincaid@noaa.gov.

For information on establishing Indirect or Facilities and Administrative Costs, contact: Jennifer Jackson, NOAA Grants Management Division, Jennifer.Jackson@noaa.gov.

eRA Service Desk

- Phone: 866-504-9552 (option 1)
- [Grant Support Portal](https://www.era.nih.gov/need-help) for additional methods of contact (<https://www.era.nih.gov/need-help>)
- Monday-Friday, 7am-8pm EST

eRA Commons Trainings

<https://www.commerce.gov/ocio/programs/gems/about-gems>

eRA Commons User Guide

https://www.era.nih.gov/docs/Commons_UserGuide.pdf

VIII. Other Information

Not Applicable

