Cetacean Research in the Pacific Islands - 2023

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NOTICE OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Federal Agency Name(s): National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Department of Commerce

Funding Opportunity Title: Cetacean Research in the Pacific Islands - 2023

Announcement Type: Initial

Funding Opportunity Number: NOAA-NMFS-PIFSC-2023-2007765

Federal Assistance Listings Number: 11.472, Unallied Science Program

Dates: Applications are due by 11:59 p.m., Eastern Standard Time, on May 12, 2023.

Funding Opportunity Description: The objective of this program by the NOAA Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center (PIFSC) is to advance the scientific foundation for the conservation of cetaceans in the Pacific Islands Region. Research supported through this program will contribute to the assessment of whale and dolphin populations in the central and western Pacific Ocean, which requires an understanding of distribution, stock structure, habitat use, and natural and anthropogenic threats, along with estimates of abundance, demography, and mortality. For FY2023, program priorities include 1) Research to inform mitigation measures to reduce interactions between hook-and-line fisheries and false killer whales in the central and western Pacific; 2) Research on the demographics, abundance, and/or movement patterns of Main Hawaiian Islands insular and Hawaii pelagic false killer whale populations; 3) Research on abundance, distribution, and/or human disturbance of spinner dolphins in the main Hawaiian Islands, with special emphasis on spinner dolphins in the Maui Nui region; and 4) Research to inform cetacean stock assessment in the Pacific Islands Region.

FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Program Objective

The objective of this program by the NOAA Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center (PIFSC) is to advance the scientific foundation for the conservation of cetaceans in the Pacific Islands Region. Consisting of the Hawaiian Archipelago in the north, American Samoa and U.S. Pacific Remote Island Areas in the south, and the Marianas Archipelago in the west, the Pacific Islands region encompasses the largest geographical area within NOAA Fisheries' jurisdiction. This region is home to diverse cultures, many protected species, and numerous valuable fisheries that support local and national economies. Research supported through this program will contribute to the assessment of whale and dolphin populations in the central and western Pacific Ocean, which requires an understanding of distribution, stock structure, habitat use, and natural and anthropogenic threats, along with estimates of abundance, demography, and mortality.

B. Program Priorities

Proposals must address at least one (1) of the four (4) stated programmatic Priorities listed below. Applications may address more than one priority, but different priorities should be presented as separate objectives/activities in the proposal. The application should clearly identify which Priority it falls within on the title page of the application. Priorities are listed in the order of anticipated funding availability.

Priority 1: Research to inform mitigation measures to reduce interactions (including hooking or entanglement of the whales in fishing gear, and depredation of bait or catch by the whales) between hook-and-line fisheries and false killer whales in the central and western Pacific. Projects may include (but are not limited to) research to better understand the impact of fisheries interactions on false killer whale populations, how/where/when false killer whales interact with fishing gear, methods for reducing serious injury and mortality rates of false killer whales, examination of the factors leading to depredation, and potential mechanisms for reducing depredation.

Priority 2: Research on the demographics, abundance, and/or movement patterns of Main Hawaiian Islands insular and Hawaii pelagic false killer whale populations. Such projects should contribute methods or information that may be used to improve the quality of the population assessment for these stocks.

Priority 3: Research on abundance, distribution, and/or human disturbance of spinner dolphins in the main Hawaiian Islands, with special emphasis on spinner dolphins in the Maui Nui region.

Priority 4: Research to inform cetacean stock assessment in the Pacific Islands Region. This may include (but is not limited to) development of methods to integrate disparate datasets to carry out quantitative assessments, development of automated approaches for processing photographic, telemetry, or acoustic datasets, and other research to inform stock structure, distribution, abundance, and trends. Projects addressing this priority should focus on one or both of the following areas:
a) Research to inform assessment of island-associated cetaceans in the Hawaiian Islands.
b) Research or methods development that may be used to improve cetacean stock assessments throughout the Pacific Islands Region.

C. Program Authority

16 U.S.C. 661 et seq., 16 U.S.C. 753a

II. Award Information

A. Funding Availability

Total funding available under this notice is not anticipated to exceed $565,000 in FY 2023 funds. Actual funding availability for this program is contingent upon FY 2023 Federal appropriations. Single or multi-year projects are encouraged, with project periods not to exceed 3 years, with annual funding amounts not to exceed $350,000. This means that the maximum funding for multiple-year project or year one of a multi-year project is $350,000, the maximum funding for a two-year multi-year project is $700,000, and the maximum funding for a three-year multi-year project is $1,050,000.

B. Project/Award Period

Applications can apply for up to a 3 year, multi-year project. All projects are recommended to be at least 12 months in duration. October 1, 2023 is the earliest recommended project start date, unless otherwise directed by the NOAA Program Officer. Projects can also begin on the first day of the month up to January 1, 2024 and must end on the last day of the month.

Multi-year applications will be considered. If a multi-year application is selected for initial funding, NMFS has no obligation to provide additional funding in connection with that award in subsequent years. With this in mind, applicants with multi-year project proposals

are encouraged to discuss intermediate project milestones and the impacts to overall project goals if out-year funds are not available.

C. Type of Funding Instrument

NMFS will fund the projects under this competition as grants and/or cooperative agreements. The government will be substantially involved in the management and/or operation of the program if a project is funded through a cooperative agreement. This substantial involvement may include, but is not limited to, partnering in collaborative efforts, operating under a NMFS research permit, and/or alignment of activities to meet program priorities. While there may be a shared effort to complete a project funded as a cooperative agreement, work funded through this announcement cannot be done primarily for NOAA.

If the non-federal applicant is at an institution that has a NOAA approved Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit (CESU) and meets the criteria described below for using that status, they may include a cover letter with their proposal stating their desire to have the proposal associated with that CESU. This letter should specify the name of the CESU. Of the 17 CESUs across the nation, NOAA is a member of 10: North and West Alaska, California, Hawaii-Pacific Islands, South Florida-Caribbean, Gulf Coast, Piedmont-South Atlantic Coast, Chesapeake Watershed, North Atlantic Coast, Pacific Northwest, and Great Plains. The following criteria must be met for NOAA to use the established partnerships with CESUs:
(1) The proposed project must fit within the objectives of the National CESU Network Program, which are to provide research, technical assistance, and education to federal land management, environmental, and research agencies and their partners in biological, physical, social, cultural, or engineering disciplines needed to address natural and cultural resource management issues at multiple scales and in an ecosystem context.
(2) The proposed project must fit the intent of the CESU's existing Cooperative and Joint Agreement, which means (a) the research partnership will carry out or stimulate an activity (e.g., data, products, or services) for a public purpose, and (b) NOAA will be significantly involved in the work.
(3) For universities that are part of a Cooperative Institute (CI) and CESU members, the research proposed must not fit within the scope of a CI whereby a similar project has been completed by the CI in the past. If the proposed project fits within the scope of a CI and the CI has done similar work in the past, yet does not wish to conduct the proposed work, a letter from the CI stating that they do not wish to conduct the proposed work should be included with proposal if electing to associate the proposed project with the CESU.

III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants are individuals, institutions of higher education, nonprofits, commercial organizations, state, local, and Indian tribal governments. Federal agencies or instrumentalities are not eligible to receive Federal assistance under this notice.

The Department of Commerce/ National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (DOC/NOAA) is strongly committed to broadening the participation of historically black colleges and universities, Hispanic serving institutions, tribal colleges and universities, and institutions that work in underserved areas.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement

No cost sharing or matching is required under the program. Cost sharing is voluntary and will not increase the chances of your project being selected. If you choose to cost-share and if your application is selected for funding, you will be obligated to account for the amount of cost-share dollars reflected in the application and award documents, signed by the NOAA Grants Officer. This commitment of matching dollars becomes a binding offer. Failure to meet match included on an award may result in a disallowance of federal funds.

C. Other Criteria that Affect Eligibility

It is the applicant's responsibility to obtain any necessary federal, state, and local government permits and approvals needed to perform the proposed work. The applicant must include in the application package either: 1) an application cover letter from the applicant to the appropriate authorizing entity requesting permits (e.g., MMPA/ESA scientific research or enhancement permit, etc.) or approvals; or 2) a copy of the cover letter only of the final permit or approval; or 3) a letter from a permit holding entity indicating that the work will be conducted under their permit as part of a collaborative effort as well as a copy of the cover letter of the final permit or approval that the proposed work will be conducted under. The applicant must be able to provide the entire permit or approval if requested. For Federally issued permits (e.g. MMPA and ESA permits) the applicant must be able to provide the associated NEPA analysis document (i.e. categorical exclusion, environmental assessment, etc.), if requested. If the proposed activities fall under the jurisdiction of a facility’s Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC), the applicant must have requested or obtained approval from the IACUC prior to applying for funding (as required by the Animal Welfare Act and its relevant implementing regulations at 9 C.F.R. 2.30-2.31). If the proposed data collection involves intrusive research (50 C.F.R. 216.27(c) (6)) or if animals must be held after rehabilitation has been completed (prevented from release), the applicant must also obtain an MMPA (and ESA, if applicable) scientific research and enhancement permit before the proposal will be considered for funding.

IV. Application and Submission Information

A. Address to Request Application Package

Both this NOFO and application instructions for this grant program are available via the Grants.gov website at http://www.grants.gov. Applicants without internet access can obtain application instructions from Jim Foley, NOAA/NMFS/PIFSC/OMI, 1845 Wasp Blvd, Building 176, Honolulu, HI 96818, Phone: (808) 725-5488; e-mail: Jim.Foley@noaa.gov.

B. Content and Form of Application

Application Format:
Proposals must adhere to the following instructions and requirements by the proposal submission deadline. All application materials should be submitted in Adobe PDF (recommended) or a common word processing format, and when printed out should meet all format requirements. All pages must be single-spaced, 12-point font, on 8.5-inch x 11-inch paper, with 1-inch margins. Failure to follow these instructions may be reflected in lower scoring by reviewers.

A complete standard NOAA grant application package is required in accordance with the guidelines in this document. Applications that are not complete on the closing date of this announcement will not be reviewed. Your application must contain all required forms; if these forms are not signed via the www.Grants.gov application process, they MUST be signed and dated in ink. Paper applications without inked signatures on their forms will be considered incomplete and will not be reviewed.

Application content
1) Required Government Forms
SF-424, Application for Federal Assistance
SF-424A, Budget Information, Non-construction Programs.
If requesting more than a 1 year project, each year should be broken out in separate columns in “Section B – Budget Categories” of the SF-424A (e.g., year 1 on column 1; year 2 on column 2). Multiple SF-424A forms may be included if necessary.
SF-424B, Assurances, Non-construction Programs.
CD-511, Certification Regarding Lobbying.
SF-LLL, Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (if applicable).

2) Title page (Proposal cover sheet, limit 1 page) which includes
a. Project title
b. Applicant organization and address
c. Principal Investigator (or Project Manager) and Financial Representative with contact

information (email, and phone number)
d. Any co-investigators (or Co-managers) with contact information
e. Start and end dates of proposed project, starting on the first day of the month and ending on the last day of the month
f. Identification of programmatic priority applicable to the project
g. Funding type request (grant or cooperative agreement)
h. Total cost of the project, including federal and non-federal funding requested. If requesting more than 1 year, breakdown of requested funding by year
i. Abstract of one paragraph.

3) Narrative Project Description (limit: 10 pages)
Each application must include a project narrative that details the project and justifies the project being proposed. Applicants should not assume that reviewers already know about their proposed project. Project descriptions should include clear objectives and specific approaches to achieving those objectives, including relevant background, methods, work plan, milestone timeline, and expected outcomes. For projects longer than one year (multi-year applications), the narrative must include specific project objectives and activities for each proposed year within one inclusive project narrative (i.e., do not duplicate or provide additional project narratives per year). Projects should support diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility during project implementation. This may include, but is not limited to, target audience(s) for outreach, partners, project leadership team, location of project and its potential impacts, and use of culturally appropriate approaches. Please also review the Evaluation Criteria to ensure your application has all of the pieces that will be reviewed. Note: All images, figures, and illustrations are considered part of the proposal narrative and count toward the page limit. Suggested components of the project narrative:

a. Project Synopsis: A short (less than 1 page) high-level summary written for people that may not be familiar with your project or even the subject matter at all. Focus on the fundamental aspects of the project design, and briefly note the purpose of the project, activities to be performed, expected outcomes, and intended beneficiaries.

b. Background: Set the stage for the work proposed and provide rationale of why the work should be conducted.

c. Goals and Objectives: Clear statement of the overall project goal and proposed objective(s) to be accomplished during the project period.

d. Project Activities: Describe the technical plan of activities or methods that will be accomplished or implemented to meet the proposed project objectives. Include detailed

descriptions of activities, survey methodology (if applicable), collaborators, milestones, and expected products resulting from the completed project. If projects are scalable, the scalable project components should be identified as separate objectives or activities with discussion of the value of intermediate products should the project not be fully funded. Include federal permit information if a permit is required to undertake work. Project activities could include:
i. A list of the activities or methods that will be conducted by project personnel. Clearly describe the strategies or methods for meeting each objective and include an indication of relevant milestones. Describe activities such that they are commensurate with the budget and scope of work.
ii. Identification of the outcomes, results, or products, and how they relate to the program priority addressed in the proposed project. Describe how the project outcomes, results, or products will be applied and/or made available to any appropriate user groups through outreach and education efforts.
iii. A milestone schedule or timeline. Describe any timelines/ milestone schedule in project-specific increments (e.g., month one, month two, etc.), rather than by specific dates. Provide an explanation if dates are in fact necessary. Make sure the timelines are reasonable and reflect your overall project period.
iv. Evaluation of project - Specify the criteria and procedures that you will use to monitor and evaluate the relative success or failure of a project in achieving its objectives.
v. Partner activities: List any programmatic partners, plans or activities (Federal, State, local government, or non-governmental groups) this project would affect or collaborate with and describe the relationship between the proposed project and those plans, activities or partners.

e. Project management - Describe how the project will be organized and managed and who will be responsible for carrying out project activities. Abbreviated curricula vitae or resumes (2 page max) of the principal investigator/ project manager and any Co-Managers should be included in the appendices.

f. Permits: List the status of permits that the proposed work will be conducted under. Include a copy of the cover letter of the final permit or approval in the appendices. The applicant must be able to provide the entire permit or approval if requested. For Federally issued permits (e.g. MMPA and ESA permits) the applicant must be able to provide the associated NEPA analysis document (i.e. categorical exclusion, environmental assessment, etc.), if requested.

4) Data Sharing or Management Plan (up to 2 pages, if the project collects environmental data. The data sharing plan will not count towards any other page limits.)
a. 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.

b. If projects submitted in response to this announcement collect or manage environmental data, then applications 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.

c. 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. Proposal submitters are hereby advised that the final pre-publication manuscripts of scholarly articles produced entirely or primarily with NOAA funding will be required to be submitted to NOAA Institutional Repository after acceptance, and no later than upon publication. Such manuscripts shall be made publicly available by NOAA one year after publication by the journal.

5) Budget and Budget Justification:

a. Each application must include clear and concise budget information covering total project costs, both on the required Federal forms and in a detailed budget narrative as a separate file. Scalable projects are encouraged with budgets and objectives drafted such that specific components can be funded independently of other project components. Multi-year applications must include a budget narrative for each year of the proposed project.

b. The SF-424A Budget Information Form must be completed, and there should be a detailed budget justification accompanying the SF-424A budget form. Provide justifications for all budget items in sufficient detail to enable the reviewers to evaluate the

appropriateness of the funding requested. The budget justification should be broken out and detailed using the same budget categories as the SF-424A budget form. Budget Narrative Guidance can be found at:
noaa.gov/sites/default/files/legacy/document/2019/Jun/gmd_budget_narrative_guidance_-_05-24-2017_final.pdf.
c. If an applicant has not previously established an indirect cost rate with a Federal agency they may choose to negotiate a rate with the Department of Commerce or use the de minimis indirect cost rate of 10% of Modified Total Direct Cost (MTDC) as allowable under 2 C.F.R. §200.414. The negotiation and approval of a rate is subject to the procedures required by NOAA and the Department of Commerce Standard Terms and Conditions Section B.06. Please also refer to Section VI. B. of this announcement.
d. Applicants requesting indirect costs at a rate greater than the de minimus 10% must provide a signed copy of their organization's existing approved Federal indirect cost (IDC) rate agreement with the application package.

6) Appendices (maximum 20 pages): Additional materials that are necessary or useful to the description of the project may also be provided (e.g., references, resumes, abbreviated CVs, letters of collaboration, tables or visual materials, permits, maps). A resume or abbreviated CV of the PI should be included. Letters of collaboration between the Principal Investigator and all named participants in the project, describing and agreeing to the specific activities each participant would perform are strongly recommended.

7) NEPA Questionnaire. The NOAA National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) questionnaire may be requested for applications that are recommended for funding if additional information is needed to conduct the NEPA analysis. The questionnaire can be downloaded from the NOAA NEPA website at: https://www.noaa.gov/nepa or directly at https://drive.google.com/file/d/1WVoZ-HPMlBu8Web6ITxAJlmG2tepoTEb/view?usp=sharing For more information on this requirement, see section "VI B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements". Failure to complete the questionnaire upon request will delay or prevent the award of funds for projects that have been preliminarily selected for funding.

So application files are reviewed in the desired order, consider combining documents into three files: 1. Project narrative (title page, project narrative, data management plan); 2. Budget narrative; and 3. Appendices. Please keep in mind that the NOAA grant system has a time limit for downloading and uploading files, so we recommend that the total file size of the application package is less than five 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.

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

Each applicant (unless the applicant is exempt from those requirements under 2 C.F.R 25.110(b) or (c), or has an exception approved under 2 C.F.R 25.110(d)) is required to (i) be registered in SAM before submitting their 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, application or plan under consideration by a Federal awarding agency. The federal awarding agency 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 the federal awarding agency is ready to make a federal award, the federal awarding agency may determine that the applicant is not qualified to receive a federal award and use that determination as a basis for making a federal award to another applicant. Applicants should allow a minimum of two weeks to complete the SAM registration; registration is required only once but must be renewed yearly.

D. Submission Dates and Times

Proposals must be received by https://www.grants.gov, postmarked, or provided to a delivery service by 11:59 p.m., Eastern Standard Time on May 12th, 2023. Use of Grants.gov is preferred. To apply on Grants.gov, you must first have an up-to-date registration in the Federal System for Award Management (SAM) described in Section IV.C. Applications submitted through Grants.gov are automatically stamped with the date and time of submission and will be the basis of determining timeliness. For applications submitted through Grants.gov, there will be three automated email receipts sent to the application submitter with the date and time of submission. The first email confirms the initial receipt of the application by the Grants.gov portal. The second email confirms that there are no errors with the application submission and the third email confirms the application has been forwarded to NOAA for further processing. If email confirmation receipts are not provided within two business days of application submission, contact the Grants.gov Help Desk (800-518-4726) and Jim Foley at Jim.Foley@noaa.gov.

PLEASE NOTE: It may take Grants.gov up to two business days to validate or reject the application. Please consider this when developing your submission timeline. Applicants are responsible for ensuring that all required application elements have been appropriately submitted. Use of U.S. mail or another delivery service for hard copy applications must be documented with a receipt. No facsimile or electronic mail applications will be accepted. Important note on Grants.gov application attachment file names: file names are limited to 50 or fewer characters. Please use only the following UTF-8 characters when naming your attachments: A-Z, a-z, 0-9, underscore, hyphen, space, parenthesis, number sign, dollar sign,

or percent sign. Attachments that do not follow this rule may cause the entire application to be rejected or cause issues during processing.

E. Intergovernmental Review

Applications submitted by some state and local governments are subject to the provisions of Executive Order (E.O.) 12372, Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs. Any applicant submitting an application for funding is required to complete item 16 on SF-424 regarding clearance by the State Single Point of Contact (SPOC) established as a result of E.O. 12372. To find out about and comply with a State's process under EO 12372, the names, addresses and phone numbers of participating SPOCs are listed in the Office of Management and Budget's home page at: https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/SPOC-4-13-20.pdf

F. Funding Restrictions

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 determined by reference to the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements, at 2 C.F.R. Part 200. Generally, costs that are allowable include salaries, travel, equipment, supplies, and training, as long as these are "necessary and reasonable". Funding may not be used to support endowments, building campaigns or capital construction, deficit financing, annual giving, or fundraising.

G. Other Submission Requirements

First-time registration with Grants.gov may take two to five weeks. It is strongly recommended that this registration process be completed as soon as possible. Grants.gov will not accept submissions if the applicant has not been authorized or if credentials are incorrect. Authorizations and credential corrections can take several days to establish. Please plan your time accordingly to avoid late submissions as such submissions will be rejected. The Grants.gov validation process for a submitted application can take up to two business days to complete (following submission through Grants.gov). Only validated applications are sent to NOAA for review. To ensure the successful submission of an application, it is strongly recommended that a final and complete application is submitted at least two business days prior to the submission deadline.

Applicants should not electronically submit packages with files embedded within files as any such files might not be reviewed or factored into the merit review process.

If an applicant submits multiple electronic versions of the proposal, the applicant should advise the federal agency of the tracking number that should be withdrawn.

If Grants.gov cannot reasonably be used, use of U.S. mail or another delivery service must be documented with a receipt; private metered postmarks are not acceptable. Postmarked applications received more than 5 business days following the closing date will not be accepted. No facsimile or electronic mail applications will be accepted. Paper application packages may be submitted to Jim Foley, Federal Programs Officer, NOAA/NMFS/PIFSC/OMI; 1845 Wasp Blvd., Building 176, Honolulu, Hawaii, 96818.

V. Application Review Information

A. Evaluation Criteria

Reviewers will assign scores to applications ranging from 0-100 points based on the following standard NOAA evaluation criteria. The maximum score for each criterion is indicated in parentheses. Each criterion also includes the factors that the reviewers will consider to determine how well an application meets the criterion. We encourage applicants to make explicit connections to the evaluation criterion and factors in their applications. Written comments are required to justify provided scores in each section of the review. Applications that best address these criteria will be most competitive.

1) Importance/relevance and applicability of proposed projects to the program goals (25 points). This criterion ascertains whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and/or relevance to NOAA, federal, regional, state, or local activities. Applications will be evaluated to determine if the project activities are clear and related to the program priorities listed in section 1.B. Proposals should address the following questions: Does the proposed project address an important problem? If the aims of the application are achieved, how will scientific knowledge or practice be advanced? How does the proposed activity address the priorities in 1B?

2) Technical/scientific merit (30 points). 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. Proposals should address the following questions: Does the project proposal describe meaningful goals, objectives, outcomes, results, or products? What is the likelihood of meeting project goals and objectives, and achieving anticipated results or outcomes in the stated time period? Are the conceptual framework, design, methods, and analyses adequately developed, well-integrated, and appropriate to the aims of the project? Does the application acknowledge potential problem areas and consider alternative tactics? If environmental data are collected, is a data sharing plan included which

describes 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?

3) Overall qualifications of applicants (15 points). This criterion ascertains whether the applicant possesses the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project. Reviewers will consider previous related performance experience and qualifications of the project's Principal Investigator, Co-Manager(s) and other personnel, including designated contractors, consultants, and cooperators. Reviewers will consider if the necessary connections (government, local community, partnerships) to implement programmatic objectives have been established. If not, is there certainty that the project can implement objectives while becoming established? Reviewers will also consider whether the proposed project is a status quo continuation of past efforts under a previous award or if it is expected to achieve new or enhanced project results or outcomes.

4) Project costs (20 points). This criterion evaluates the budget to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time frame. This includes reviewing the reasonableness of the costs associated with the activities to be performed, and the overall relationship with the cost effectiveness for successfully completing the project. Is the proposed budget sufficiently detailed, with appropriate breakdown and justification of costs by object class? Is the proposed budget cost-effective and realistic based on the applicant’s stated objectives and time frame? Scalable projects are encouraged with budgets and objectives drafted such that specific components can be funded independently of other project components. Reviewers may recommend specific components of projects be funded based on merit of proposed activities.

5) Outreach and Education (10 points). This criterion assesses whether the project provides a focused and effective education and outreach strategy regarding NOAA's mission to protect the Nation's natural resources. Applications will be evaluated on whether project results or products will be shared appropriately, given the nature of the proposed work, and whether sufficient detail is provided to make this determination. Does the project have a focused and effective education and/or outreach strategy? Does the project include plans to disseminate data and results to all relevant stakeholders and sectors, including non-governmental or academic sectors that are not traditionally included in outreach and education efforts?

B. Review and Selection Process

Upon receipt of a full application, an initial administrative screening will be conducted by the PIFSC to determine compliance with requirements and completeness of the proposal package. 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 minimum requirements will be forwarded for review. If an application does not conform to the minimum requirements listed above, and the deadline for submission has passed, the application will be withdrawn from further consideration in the competition. We are under no obligation to screen applications before the submission deadline in order to identify deficiencies that would cause your application to be rejected so that you would have an opportunity to correct them. However, should we do so and provide you information about deficiencies, or should you independently decide it is desirable to do so, you may correct any deficiencies in your application and resubmit your application before the deadline. After the deadline, the application must remain as submitted.

Applications that pass the initial screening will be independently reviewed by three or more appropriate federal, private, or public sector experts (e.g. industry, academia, or governmental experts) with subject matter expertise. During the technical review, at least three reviewers will independently score each application based on the evaluation criteria in Section V.A above, and the reviewers will provide comments based on the evaluation criteria. The Competition Manager will establish a preliminary rank order based on the average reviewer scores from the technical review.

For the panel review, the reviewers will convene to evaluate the ranking and comments from the technical review, then discuss the proposals as a group. Discussions are based on the evaluation criteria in Section V.A. During the panel meeting, reviewers can revise their scores and comments. Reviewers must individually submit a final ranking to the Competition Manager by the end of the panel meeting. The reviewer’s final rankings will be averaged for each application to produce a final rank order of the proposals during a full panel review.

The Competition Manager will present the panel ranking to the Selecting Official. The Selecting Official will recommend awards based on the final rank order and selection factors listed in the next section (Section V.C.). The Selecting Official may negotiate the funding level of the proposal. The Selecting Official makes final recommendations for award to the Grants Officer who is authorized to obligate funds.

C. Selection Factors

The NMFS PIFSC Director, as the Selecting Official, will review the funding recommendation and comments of the technical/merit panel review to determine which applications will be recommended to the NOAA Grants Officer. The Selecting Official shall recommend proposals to the Grants Officer for funding in the ranked order unless the proposal is justified to be selected out of rank order based on one or more of the following factors listed, in no order of significance:

1. Availability of funds;
2. Balance/distribution of funds;
 (a) By research area;
 (b) By project type;
 (c) By type of Applicant;
 (d) By type of partners;
 (e) Geographic distribution;
3. Duplication of other projects funded or considered for funding by NOAA/federal agencies;
4. Program objectives and priorities as noted in Section I A. and B.
5. Applicant's prior award performance in conducting a previous award, such as the applicant’s use of funds, achievement of project objectives, and compliance with grant conditions. The Selecting Official may also consider whether the applicant failed to submit a timely performance report or submitted a report of unacceptable quality;
6. Partnerships with/Participation of targeted groups; and
7. Adequacy of information necessary for NOAA staff to make a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) determination and draft necessary documentation before project commencement.

NOAA may select all, some, or none of the applications; part of any application; ask applicants to work together or combine projects; defer applications to the future; or reallocate funds to different funding categories to the extent authorized. Depending on availability of funding, a proposal may be considered for funding in another fiscal period without NOAA repeating the competitive process outlined in this announcement. Please note that not all activities submitted under a single proposal may be deemed appropriate for funding. The Selecting Official may recommend alternate activities as appropriate or award only partial funding, based on the selection factors, the merit, and/or panel review written evaluations. For a proposal to be selected for funding, the applicant may be asked to modify objectives, activities, work plans, and budgets, along with providing supplemental information required by the agency prior to the award. This may result in submission of a revised application before final funding decisions are made. The exact amount of funds to be

awarded, the final scope of activities, the project duration, and other relevant application details will be determined in pre-award negotiations among the applicant, NOAA Grants Management Division, and NOAA Fisheries 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.

D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

The competitive selection process and subsequent notification of applications being considered for funding are expected to be complete by July of 2023. The earliest start date for projects will be October 1, 2023, depending upon availability of Federal funding, acceptable completion of all NOAA/applicant negotiations including NEPA analysis and permit requirements, and the provision of other supporting documentation as requested. Projects can also begin on the first day of any month from October 1, 2023 - January 1, 2024. Final award announcements and notification of unsuccessful projects are not anticipated until September 2023.

VI. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notices

Successful applicants will receive notification that the application has been approved for funding by the NOAA Grants Office with the issuance of an award signed by a NOAA grants officer. This is the authorizing document that allows the project to begin. The award will be issued electronically to the authorizing official of the project. Unsuccessful applicants will be notified by the NMFS program office that their proposals were not selected for recommendation.

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 or cooperative agreement. Only Grants Officers can bind the Government to the expenditure of funds. The Grants Officer's digital signature constitutes an obligation of funds by the federal government and formal approval of the award.

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 https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-2/subtitle-A/chapter-II/part-200

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

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

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE (DOC) TERMS AND CONDITIONS.
Successful applicants who accept a NOAA award under this solicitation will be bound by the DOC Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions. This document will be provided in the award package in NOAA's Grants Online system 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.

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

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.

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 materials (excludes cement and cementitious materials, aggregates such as stone, sand, or gravel, or aggregate binding agents or additives) 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. 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. There may be instances where an award qualifies, in whole or in part, for an existing waiver described at whitehouse.gov/omb/management/made-in-america.

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 (see IIJA, § 70917(c)(1)) —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.

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

institutions, and institutions that work in underserved communities.

DATA SHARING PLAN.
1. Environmental data and information collected or created under NOAA grants or cooperative agreements must be made discoverable by and accessible to the general public, in a timely fashion (typically within two years), free of charge or at no more than the cost of reproduction, unless an exemption is granted by the NOAA Program. Data should be available in at least one machine-readable format, preferably a widely-used or open-standard format, and should also be accompanied by machine-readable documentation (metadata), preferably based on widely used or international standards.
2. Proposals submitted in response to this Announcement must include a Data Management Plan of up to two pages describing how these requirements will be satisfied. The Data Management Plan should be aligned with the Data Management Guidance provided by NOAA in the Announcement. The contents of the Data Management Plan (or absence thereof), and past performance regarding such plans, will be considered as part of proposal review. A typical plan should include descriptions of the types of environmental data and information expected to be created during the course of the project; the tentative date by which data will be shared; the standards to be used for data/metadata format and content; methods for providing data access; approximate total volume of data to be collected; and prior experience in making such data accessible. The costs of data preparation, accessibility, or archiving may be included in the proposal budget unless otherwise stated in the Guidance. Accepted submission of data to the NOAA National Centers for Environmental Information (NCEI) is one way to satisfy data sharing requirements; however, NCEI is not obligated to accept all submissions and may charge a fee, particularly for large or unusual datasets.
3. NOAA may, at its own discretion, make publicly visible the Data Management Plan from funded proposals, or use information from the Data Management Plan to produce a formal metadata record and include that metadata in a Catalog to indicate the pending availability of new data.
4. Proposal submitters are hereby advised that the final pre-publication manuscripts of scholarly articles produced entirely or primarily with NOAA funding will be required to be submitted to NOAA Institutional Repository after acceptance, and no later than upon publication. Such manuscripts shall be made publicly available by NOAA one year after publication by the journal. More information can be found on NOAA’s Data Management Procedures at:
https://nosc.noaa.gov/EDMC/documents/Data_Sharing_Directive_v3.0_remediated.pdf and at NAO 212-15 Management of Environmental Data and Information:
https://www.noaa.gov/organization/administration/nao-212-15-management-of-environmental-data-and-information

NOAA SEXUAL ASSAULT AND SEXUAL HARASSMENT PREVENTION AND RESPONSE POLICY

NOAA requires organizations receiving federal assistance to report findings of sexual harassment, or any other kind of harassment, regarding a Principal Investigator (PI), co-PI, or any other key personnel in the award. NOAA expects all financial assistance recipients to establish and maintain clear and unambiguous standards of behavior to ensure harassment free workplaces wherever NOAA grant or cooperative agreement work is conducted, including notification pathways for all personnel, including students, on the awards. This expectation includes activities at all on- and offsite facilities and during conferences and workshops. All such settings should have accessible and evident means for reporting violations and recipients should exercise due diligence with timely investigations of allegations and corrective actions. For more information, please visit: https://www.noaa.gov/organization/acquisition-grants/noaa-workplace-harassment-training-for-contractors-and-financial.

SCIENCE INTEGRITY.

1. Maintaining Integrity. The non-Federal entity shall maintain the scientific integrity of research performed pursuant to this grant or financial assistance award including the prevention, detection, and remediation of any allegations regarding the violation of scientific integrity or scientific and research misconduct, and the conduct of inquiries, investigations, and adjudications of allegations of violations of scientific integrity or scientific and research misconduct. All the requirements of this provision flow down to subrecipients.

2. Peer Review. The peer review of the results of scientific activities under a NOAA grant, financial assistance award or cooperative agreement shall be accomplished to ensure consistency with NOAA standards on quality, relevance, scientific integrity, reproducibility, transparency, and performance. NOAA will ensure that peer review of "influential scientific information" or "highly influential scientific assessments" is conducted in accordance with the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Final Information Quality Bulletin for Peer Review and NOAA policies on peer review, such as the Information Quality Guidelines.

3. In performing or presenting the results of scientific activities under the NOAA grant, financial assistance award, or cooperative agreement and in responding to allegations regarding the violation of scientific integrity or scientific and research misconduct, the non-Federal entity and all subrecipients shall comply with the provisions herein and NOAA Administrative Order (NAO) 202-735D, Scientific Integrity, and its Procedural Handbook, including any amendments thereto. That Order can be found at http://nrc.noaa.gov/ScientificIntegrityCommons.aspx.

4. Primary Responsibility. The non-Federal entity shall have the primary responsibility to prevent, detect, and investigate allegations of a violation of scientific integrity or scientific and research misconduct. Unless otherwise instructed by the grants officer, the non-Federal

entity shall promptly conduct an initial inquiry into any allegation of such misconduct and may rely on its internal policies and procedures, as appropriate, to do so.
5. By executing this grant, financial assistance award, or cooperative agreement the non-Federal entity provides its assurance that it has established an administrative process for performing an inquiry, investigating, and reporting allegations of a violation of scientific integrity or scientific and research misconduct; and that it will comply with its own administrative process for performing an inquiry, investigation, and reporting of such misconduct.
6. The non-Federal entity shall insert this provision in all subawards at all tiers under this grant, financial assistance award, or cooperative agreement.

REVIEW OF RISK.
After applications are proposed for funding by the Selecting Official, the Grants Office will perform administrative reviews, including an assessment of risk posed by the applicant under 2 C.F.R. 200.206. These may include assessments of the financial stability of an applicant and the quality of the applicant's management systems, history of performance, and the applicant's ability to effectively implement statutory, regulatory, or other requirements imposed on non-Federal entities. Special conditions that address any risks determined to exist may be applied. Applicants may submit comments to the Federal Awardee Performance and Integrity Information System (FAPIIS) about any information included in the system about their organization for consideration by the awarding agency.

INDIRECT COST RATE.
If an applicant has not previously established an indirect cost rate with a Federal agency they may choose to negotiate a rate with the Department of Commerce or use the de minimis indirect cost rate of 10% of MTDC (as allowable under 2 C.F.R. §200.414). The negotiation and approval of a rate is subject to the procedures required by NOAA and the Department of Commerce Standard Terms and Conditions. The U.S. Department of Commerce, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) has entered into a working relationship with the U.S. Department of the Interior's Interior Business Center (IBC) to conduct indirect cost rate negotiation services and issue indirect cost rate agreements on behalf of NOAA, to organizations for which NOAA is the cognizant agency. The Indirect Cost and Contract Audit Division (IBC/ICCAD) will collect the required documents, negotiate, issue and countersign indirect cost rate agreements for your organization effective April 1, 2022. Please visit the ICCAD website at: https://ibc.doi.gov/ICS/icrna to download the checklist of items required by ICCAD. Proposals along with the supporting financial statement information and copies of your two most recent NICRAs should be submitted to ICCAD via their email inbox at: ics@ibc.doi.gov. Please note in the subject line of your proposal submission email or in the body of the email that your cognizant agency is NOAA.

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.

C. Reporting

Unless otherwise specified by terms of the award, performance and financial reports are to be submitted semi-annually, in accordance with 2 CFR 200.328-9 and the terms and conditions of the award. Performance reports should include progress on activities and milestones identified in the proposal. Electronic submission of reports is required and conducted through the use of NOAA's Grants Online system. All reports will be submitted on a semi-annual schedule and must be submitted no later than 30 days following the end of each 6-month reporting period. In addition to the financial and performance reports, grant recipients will be required to submit a comprehensive final performance report and a final financial report within 120 days after the project end date.

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

VII. Agency Contacts

For questions regarding the application process, you may contact: Jim Foley, Management and Program Analyst, NOAA Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center, (808) 725-5488, or jim.foley@noaa.gov

VIII. Other Information

In the event that an application contains information or data that you do not want disclosed prior to award for purposes other than the evaluation of the application, mark each page containing such information or data with the words "Privileged, Confidential, Commercial, or Financial Information - Limited Use" at the top of the page to assist NOAA in making disclosure determinations. DOC regulations implementing the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), 5 U.S.C 552, are found at 15 C.F.R. Part 4, which sets forth rules for DOC to make requested materials, information, and records publicly available under FOIA. The contents of funded applications may be subject to requests for release under the FOIA. Based on the information provided by the applicant, the confidentiality of the content of funded applications will be maintained to the maximum extent permitted by law.