

ANNOUNCEMENT OF FEDERAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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

Funding Opportunity Title: Fiscal Year (FY) 2015 NOAA Marine Debris Prevention through Education and Outreach

Announcement Type: Initial

Funding Opportunity Number: NOAA-NOS-ORR-2015-2004319

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 11.463, Habitat Conservation

Dates: Full proposals must be received and validated by Grants.gov, postmarked, or provided to a delivery service on or before 11:59 p.m. EST, January 15, 2015. Please note: Validation or rejection of your application by Grants.gov may take up to 2 business days after submission. Please keep this in mind when developing your submission timeline. No fax or email applications will be accepted. Use of U.S. mail or another delivery service must be documented with a receipt. Applications not adhering to postmark or submission deadlines will be rejected without further consideration.

Funding Opportunity Description: The purpose of this notice is to solicit grant proposals from eligible organizations to educate the public about the issue of marine debris through dedicated activities to prevent the introduction of marine debris including, but not limited to: 1) encouraging changes in behavior to reduce and address marine debris; 2) developing and implementing activities to reduce and prevent marine debris working with students, teachers, industries, and the public; and 3) engaging the public in active, personal participation (e.g. a small-scale shoreline cleanup with students or other hands-on activities, etc.).

This document describes the types of marine debris projects that NOAA envisions and explains the criteria used to evaluate applications for funding consideration. Selected proposals will be funded through cooperative agreements. There is a one-to-one match requirement for all proposals.

Typical project awards will range from \$30,000 - \$75,000. NOAA will NOT accept proposals with a budget less than \$15,000 or more than \$100,000 under this solicitation. The anticipated number of awards ranges from five to twelve. Applications shall cover a performance period between one and two years. The selection process is anticipated to be highly competitive with limited funding available compared to the amount requested. Total funding of up to \$750,000 is expected to be available to fund marine debris prevention through education and outreach projects in FY 2015. Funding is contingent upon the availability of FY 2015 appropriations.

This call is focused on efforts to prevent marine debris from entering the environment through education and outreach, as described above. It is not intended for project proposals centered on large-scale debris removal, mechanisms to reduce debris (e.g. catchment basins), or scientific research. For more information about the NOAA Marine Debris Program (MDP) go to: <http://marinedebris.noaa.gov/>

FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Program Objective

A principal objective of the NOAA Marine Debris Program (MDP) is to provide federal financial and technical assistance to organizations with the expertise to identify, evaluate, and execute marine debris prevention through education and outreach projects. These activities must meet NOAA's mission to conserve and manage coastal and marine ecosystems and resources, and support formal and informal education. This solicitation aims to cooperatively develop impactful and cost-effective marine debris prevention through education and outreach projects.

B. Program Priorities

The NOAA MDP, a division of the Office of Response and Restoration, leads national efforts to address marine debris. The mission of the NOAA MDP is to identify and solve the problems that stem from marine debris through research, prevention, and reduction activities, in order to conserve and protect our nation's marine environment and coastal economy from the impacts of marine debris as well as ensure navigation safety. Marine debris is defined as "any persistent solid material that is manufactured or processed and directly or indirectly, intentionally or unintentionally, disposed of or abandoned into the marine environment or the Great Lakes" (15 C.F.R. § 909.1).

The Marine Debris Act (33 U.S.C. § 1951 et seq.) directs the MDP to undertake outreach and education activities and to utilize grants and cooperative agreements to address the adverse impacts of marine debris. Marine debris can include land based items such as plastic bags, cigarette butts, foam take-out containers, or balloons, and ocean-based items such as derelict fishing gear and abandoned vessels. Marine debris is primarily the result of human actions such as ineffective or improper waste management, dumping and littering, or storm water runoff. Fishing gear may be lost from storms or accidents and become marine debris. The impacts of this debris are many and include wildlife injury and death from entanglement or ingestion, exposure to toxic chemicals which attach to or are in plastics, vessel damage, economic loss, and habitat destruction.

For this solicitation, the NOAA MDP is interested in education and outreach projects that demonstrate meaningful, measurable, and sustainable ecological benefits to coastal and marine resources by preventing marine debris from entering the marine environment.

The highest program priorities to be addressed by this solicitation will:

- 1) encourage changes in behavior to address marine debris;

2) develop and implement activities to prevent marine debris working with students, teachers, industries, and the public; and

3) include active, personal participation activities (e.g. a small-scale shoreline cleanup with students or other hands-on activities, etc.).

This funding opportunity is limited to activities that support or stimulate marine debris prevention through education and outreach efforts. This is not a call for large scale debris removal, design of mechanisms to reduce debris (e.g. catchment basins), or marine debris research proposals. Projects funded under this federal funding opportunity (FFO) shall engage audiences in measurable behavior-changing activities and limit marine debris in the oceans and Great Lakes. Education and outreach activities are needed at all levels, from children and adults living in non-coastal areas, to coastal residents, and those who depend on the oceans for their livelihoods. Outreach and education to impart key messages and information to audiences through effective and strategically targeted campaigns or activities are vital to the success of this mission. Since experiential learning techniques have been shown to increase interest in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM), the MDP is looking for a hands-on participation component in all project proposals.

Proposals for national, regional, and cross-regional projects are encouraged. Applications should make note of the expected geographic regions where activities will take place or if they will occur on a national level. Regional and national proposals shall tailor project goals and objectives so that they increase marine debris prevention and are measurable within the geographic area of the project. Proposals shall also note whether activities fit into any existing national or regional strategic plans to address marine debris (e.g. the "Honolulu Strategy," the "Marine Debris Strategy for the West Coast Governors Alliance on Ocean Health," the "Great Lakes Land-based Marine Debris Action Plan," etc.) and describe how they do so.

For an application to rank highly, it shall be sufficiently detailed in accordance with the guidelines and information requirements listed in this FFO, and it must be feasible for the proposed project to be completed within the period of performance specified. Selected proposals will support NOAA's goals in implementing the Marine Debris Act, particularly those activities that address the adverse impacts of marine debris and benefit critical habitat and marine life, including protected species, through education and outreach as described in this section of the FFO. Such activities must demonstrate that marine debris activities will be consistent with NOAA MDP priorities and goals outlined in this FFO and include a direct link to protecting coastal, Great Lake, or ocean areas.

The program priorities for this FFO support NOAA's overall mission to conserve and manage coastal and marine ecosystems and resources. This opportunity also supports the NOAA mandate to conduct, develop, support, promote, and coordinate formal and informal

education on all levels to increase public awareness about ocean, coastal, Great Lakes, and atmospheric science and stewardship. Proposals emphasizing general administration of an existing program are discouraged, as are applications that propose to expand an organization's day-to-day activities or that primarily seek support for administration, salaries, overhead, and travel. Due to limited funding, proposals that request funds for large equipment purchases will be a low priority.

The NOAA MDP's primary goal is to fund projects that will lead to the prevention of marine debris entering the marine, coastal, and Great Lakes environments through the implementation of dedicated education and outreach activities to further the work of the NOAA MDP. Examples include:

- creating educational programs or initiatives, including those with active, personal participation or hands-on components, that encourage the general public, students, other constituents, employees, or members of varying industries to be environmental stewards and engage their peers in actions to prevent marine debris; and
- engaging and educating diverse audiences, for example high school students, inner city communities, fishing communities, cruise ship passengers, commercial and non commercial entities, entrepreneurs, etc., about marine debris through innovative, on the ground means, which will result in measurable behavioral changes that will prevent marine debris.

While NOAA is open to the methods of outreach that utilize digital means, this opportunity seeks unique, innovative techniques and technologies (more than developing a website or mobile phone application) that would engage diverse audiences for the NOAA MDP. Proposals that leverage and use existing NOAA MDP products, such as existing education curricula, are encouraged. Proposals that utilize existing materials should clearly explain how the effort expands upon the existing product and identify areas of potential overlap. Under this FFO, NOAA does not encourage proposals to develop new marine debris study curricula. In addition, projects should focus on measuring success. This could involve pre- and post-project tests, or a measurement of how many people will be reached and the effectiveness of outreach efforts. Projects that are duplicative of those the NOAA MDP currently supports or those that have been funded by NOAA, partner organizations, and/or other federal agencies will not be ranked highly.

In Fiscal Year (FY) 2014, the latest year for which information is available, ten applications were funded, ranging from \$25,000 to \$85,000, with an average award amount of \$50,000. The total grant funding level was \$499,805, which was met by over \$504,119 of matching contributions. A total of \$3 million was requested by all the proposals received. Projects ranged from education for fishers to social marketing and awareness campaigns. They have carried the message that prevention is the key to solving the marine debris

problem, through projects such as museum and aquarium exhibits, outreach to teens, teacher workshops, dockside education, hands-on cleanups, and science activities for children. Examples of those projects are:

- University of South Florida, through its “Clean Community-Clean Coast” education and outreach campaign, will develop a program to engage, educate, and inspire 3,000+ youth, 500 educators, and the general public in the Tampa Bay region. The project team will raise awareness of marine debris through information exchange, hands-on activities, and messaging that resonates with middle and high school students and addresses social norms associated with effective litter prevention. Students will work with artists to create a large scale public art sculpture made of marine debris and engage in peer-to-peer outreach using the project's social media tools.

- Hawai'i Wildlife Fund will use education both inside and outside the classroom as a means to engage and inspire the keiki (children) of Hawai'i to reduce their local marine debris footprint. The hands-on, locally relevant activities will provide the building blocks and tools needed to spark a positive change for these youngsters, starting with their own daily choices at home and at school, leading to community and family involvement.

- Virginia Department of Environmental Quality will use a social marketing approach to reduce a deadly and common source of marine debris: balloons and their attachments (often made of non-biodegradable plastics). Through formative research --interviews, focus groups and surveys --project staff will determine the underlying drivers of mass balloon release behavior. Project staff will then design and test a social marketing strategy to promote alternative ways of commemorating important events and reduce the amount of balloon debris.

- Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History will take a three-pronged approach to tackle debris prevention in Santa Barbara County, California. The first component, “Marine Debris, the Ocean, & Me”, is implemented through the Museum and the Ty Warner Sea Center and connects elementary school student's daily consumer choices to debris found in the ocean. The second component, “The Quasar to Sea Stars Classroom Education Outreach,” will teach teens at local high schools and middle schools about marine debris impacts on the environment; and the final prong, “Marine Debris Community Outreach” will educate the general public, such as local residents, tourists, and specifically beach goers, on debris types found at local beaches and provide prevention tips to promote environmentally conscious consumer choices.

For more information about FY14 prevention grants go to:
<http://marinedebrisblog.wordpress.com/2014/08/19/10-marine-debris-prevention-partnerships-launched/>. For more about on-going NOAA-MDP supported activities, visit <http://www.marinedebris.noaa.gov>.

The following activities will not be considered for funding under this FFO:

- 1) activities that constitute legally required mitigation for the adverse effects of an activity regulated or otherwise governed by local, state or federal law;
- 2) activities that constitute restoration for natural resource damages under federal, state or local law; and,
- 3) activities that are required by a separate consent decree, court order, statute or regulation.

C. Program Authority

The NOAA Administrator is authorized under the Marine Debris Act (33 U.S.C. § 1951 et seq.) to provide cooperative agreements to address the adverse impacts of marine debris on the United States economy, the marine environment, and navigation safety through identification, determination of sources, assessment, prevention, reduction, and removal of marine debris.

II. Award Information

A. Funding Availability

Total funding of up to \$750,000 is expected to be available to establish marine debris prevention through education and outreach projects in FY 2015. Funding is contingent upon the availability of FY 2015 Congressional appropriations. NOAA MDP anticipates that typical project awards will range from \$30,000 - \$75,000. NOAA will NOT accept proposals with a budget less than \$15,000 or more than \$100,000 under this solicitation. The anticipated number of awards ranges from five to twelve. Applications shall cover a period of performance between one and two years. The selection process is anticipated to be highly competitive with limited funding available compared to the amount requested. The number of awards to be made as a result of this solicitation will depend on the number of eligible applications received, the amount of funds requested, the merit and ranking of proposals, and the amount of funds made available to the NOAA MDP by Congress.

There is no guarantee that sufficient funds will be available to initiate awards where funding has been recommended, and the number of national and regional awards established will be up to the discretion of the NOAA Selecting Official. The exact amount of funds that may be awarded for a marine debris prevention project will be determined in pre-award negotiations between the applicant and NOAA. Publication of this document does not obligate NOAA to fund any specific project proposed or to obligate all or any part of the available funds for project activities.

If an applicant incurs any costs prior to receiving an award agreement signed by an authorized NOAA official, they do so at their own risk of these costs not being included in a subsequent award. In no event will NOAA or the U.S. Department of Commerce (DOC) be responsible for any proposal preparation costs. In addition, NOAA and DOC will not be responsible for proposal or project costs if this program fails to receive funding. Recipients and sub-recipients are subject to all federal laws and agency policies, regulations, and procedures applicable to federal financial assistance awards. Applicants must be in good standing under any existing NOAA grants and/or cooperative agreements in order to receive funds.

B. Project/Award Period

Applications shall cover a period of performance between one and two years and must include a project description and a budget for the entire period. The earliest anticipated start date for awards will be August 1, 2015; however it may be later. Applicants should consider this date when developing plans for initiating proposed project activities. Applicants selected to receive funding may be asked to modify the project start date. It is recommended to include flexibility of requested start date in the project description. NOTE: Due to potential delays in federal appropriations, these dates may change.

If an application is selected for funding, NOAA has no obligation to provide any additional prospective funding in connection with that award in future years. Applications for renewal or supplementation of existing projects are eligible to compete with applications for new awards; any subsequent proposal to continue work on an existing project must be evaluated through the competitive process articulated under this FFO and will not receive preferential treatment. Permission to extend the period of performance is at the sole discretion of NOAA and must be requested in writing at least 30 days in advance of an award's expiration date.

C. Type of Funding Instrument

Selected applications will be funded through cooperative agreements as NOAA MDP staff will be substantially involved in aspects of the project. Substantial involvement of the federal government may include, but is not limited to, activities such as: assisting recipients to promote local marine debris activities; involvement in public events to highlight project activities; hands-on technical or permitting assistance; support in developing project goals and protocols (e.g., for data collection or monitoring); evaluating performance of projects sub-awarded through recipients; and, collaborating on performance measures. Specific terms regarding substantial involvement will be contained in special award conditions for selected proposals.

III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applicants

In accordance with the Marine Debris Act, eligible applicants are state, local, and tribal governments whose activities affect research or regulation of marine debris and any institution of higher education, nonprofit organization, or commercial (for-profit) organization with expertise in a field related to marine debris. Applications from federal agencies or employees of federal agencies will not be considered. Federal agencies and employees are not allowed to receive funds under this announcement, but may serve as collaborative project partners with others that are eligible to apply. If federal agencies are collaborators, applicants must provide detail on the level of federal engagement in the application. Examples might include, but are not limited to in-kind services; serving in a review capacity; or participating in priority task teams, working groups, or leadership teams.

International organizations are not eligible to apply. All projects must take place in the U.S. or U.S. waters.

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

NOAA is strongly committed to broadening the participation of veterans, historically black colleges and universities, Hispanic-serving institutions, tribal colleges and universities, and institutions that work in under-served areas. NOAA encourages proposals involving any of the above institutions.

Applications that have been submitted to other NOAA grant programs or as part of another NOAA grant may be considered under this solicitation.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement

A major goal of the NOAA MDP is to fund projects that leverage funds and other contributions from a broad public and private sector. To this end, the Marine Debris Act requires proposals to demonstrate a minimum 1:1 ratio of non-federal matching contributions to NOAA funds requested to conduct the proposed project. In addition to formal match, NOAA strongly encourages applicants to leverage as much additional investment as possible. However, selected proposals will be held to this amount for financial reporting as described below.

Match can come from a variety of public and private sources and can include in-kind goods and services (e.g., private boat use, volunteer labor, etc.). To meet the 1:1 match requirement, applicants are permitted to combine contributions from non-federal project collaborators, as long as such contributions are not being used to match any other funds and are available within the period of performance stated in the application. Federal sources

cannot be considered for matching funds, but can be described in the budget narrative to demonstrate additional leverage. Applicants are also permitted to combine contributions from multiple non-federal project collaborators in order to meet the 1:1 match recommendation, as long as such contributions are not being used to match any other funds. Applicants are permitted to apply federally negotiated indirect costs in excess of federal share limits as described in Section IV.E.2. "Indirect Costs."

The following activities, in general, will not be considered as match under project awards: (1) activities that constitute legally required mitigation for the adverse effects of an activity regulated or otherwise governed by local, state or federal law; (2) activities that constitute restoration for natural resource damages under federal, state or local law; and (3) activities that are required by a separate consent decree, court order, statute or regulation.

If the match requirement cannot be met, the Marine Debris Act allows the NOAA Administrator to waive all or part of the matching requirement if the applicant can demonstrate the following:

- 1) no reasonable means are available through which applicants can meet the matching requirement, and
- 2) the probable benefit of such project outweighs the public interest in such matching requirement.

The Marine Debris Act also allows the NOAA Administrator to authorize, as appropriate, the non-federal share of the cost of a project to include money paid pursuant to, or the value of any in-kind service performed under, an administrative order on consent or judicial consent decree that will remove or prevent marine debris.

Any applicant wishing to request a match waiver must provide such request in the required budget narrative as a part of the application package. The request must contain a detailed justification explaining the need for the waiver, descriptions of attempts to obtain sources of matching funds, how the benefit of the project outweighs the public interest in providing match, and any other extenuating circumstances preventing the incorporation or local availability of matching contributions. However, if available, the inclusion of matching contributions is strongly encouraged.

Additionally, under 48 U.S.C. § 1469a(d), any department or agency may waive any requirement for matching funds otherwise required by law to be provided by an Insular Area (defined here as the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands). Notwithstanding any other provisions herein, and in accordance with 48 U.S.C. § 1469a(d), NOAA may waive any requirement for local matching funds to Insular Areas.

Note that cost sharing is an element considered in Evaluation Criterion #4. "Project Costs."

NOTE: Proposals selected for funding will be bound by the percentage of cost sharing reflected in the award document signed by the NOAA Grants Officer. Successful applicants must carefully document matching contributions, including the names of participating volunteers and the overall number of volunteer or community participation hours devoted to individual marine debris projects. Letters of commitment for any secured resources expected to be used as match for an award must be submitted within the application.

C. Other Criteria that Affect Eligibility

NOAA defines marine debris as any persistent solid material that is manufactured or processed and directly or indirectly, intentionally or unintentionally, disposed of or abandoned into the marine environment or the Great Lakes (as defined at 15 C.F.R. § 909.1). Applications addressing other types of pollution not fitting the definition of marine debris will not be considered.

IV. Application and Submission Information

A. Address to Request Application Package

Complete application packages, including required federal forms and instructions, and supplementary instructions specific to the FY 2015 NOAA Marine Debris Prevention through Education and Outreach competition, can be found on the Grants.gov website (<http://www.grants.gov>). If a prospective applicant is having difficulty downloading the application forms from Grants.gov, contact Grants.gov Customer Support at 1-800-518-4726 or support@grants.gov.

If the application forms and instructions cannot be downloaded from Grants.gov, please contact Alison Hammer Weingast (Alison.Hammer@noaa.gov, 301-713-4248 x206). For supplementary information specific to the NOAA Marine Debris Program Funding, see the NOAA MDP website at <http://marinedebris.noaa.gov/about-our-program/applicant-resources>.

B. Content and Form of Application

Applicants are strongly encouraged to apply through Grants.gov. A complete standard NOAA grant application package shall be submitted in accordance with the guidelines in this FFO. Applicants must follow the proposal application requirements stated in this announcement to be considered.

Proposals shall follow the content and format described below. All pages shall be single-spaced and shall be composed in 12-point font with one-inch margins on 8 1/2 x 11 inch paper. NOTE: All page number limits must be adhered to and pages that exceed the limit for each section will not be reviewed. Applicants must paginate proposals and any appendices or associated files. Proposals failing to comply with the format prescribed in this section will be deemed incomplete and will not be considered for further review.

Applicants are advised that the total electronic file size of the proposal narrative and appendices combined should not exceed 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.

Each application must contain the following documents, unless otherwise noted below.

1) REQUIRED FEDERAL APPLICATION FORMS, including the following:

- a) Application for Federal Assistance: Form SF-424 (7/03 version or newer)
- b) Budget Information, Non-construction Programs: Form SF-424A
- c) Assurances, Non-construction Programs: Form SF-424B
- d) Certifications Regarding Lobbying: Form CD-511
- e) Disclosure of Lobbying Activities: Form SF-LLL (if applicable)

2) PROJECT SUMMARY (described below, maximum of two pages).

NOTE: applications must adhere to page limits and any pages that exceed the limit for each section will not be reviewed. The project summary shall include:

- a) Applicant Organization Name
- b) Project Title
- c) Principal Investigator(s) Name, Address, Telephone Number and Email Address.
- d) Purpose: clearly state the purpose of the project and summarize planned actions (200-300 words or less).
- e) Geographic Scope: list whether the project is national or regional, and what states and/or watersheds it will cover.
- f) Impacted Resources Likely to Benefit: briefly describe the targeted resources (marine life, endangered or protected species, critical habitat, etc.) that may benefit from this project.

g) Outcomes: briefly describe the anticipated outputs and outcomes the project may be expected to produce and an associated timeline.

h) Federal Funds Requested and Non-Federal Match Anticipated: this must be a minimum of a 1:1 match and include other federal contributions that may help support the project. Include a letter of commitment for any secured resources expected to be used as match for an award in the Appendix- Other Application Submission Information section (described below).

3) PROJECT NARRATIVE (described below, maximum of 12 pages). NOTE: applications must adhere to page limits and any pages that exceed the limit for each section will not be reviewed.

The project narrative shall closely follow the organization of the evaluation criteria (see Section V. A. "Evaluation Criteria") for the application to receive a consistent review against competing applications. It must not be more than 12 pages long and shall give a clear presentation of the proposed work. The project narrative shall include:

a) Description: a brief description of the type of marine debris to be addressed (i.e., derelict fishing gear, land based litter, derelict or abandoned vessels, etc.), and the education and/or outreach method(s) to be implemented. Clearly demonstrate the broad based benefits expected to living marine resources, habitat, and/or navigation safety, and how these benefits will be achieved through the proposed project activities. Include a description of how the project is innovative and helps to distribute marine debris material more broadly;

b) Issue and Area of Concern: Specific problems the project will address and the geographic area of the project;

c) Target Audience: who the proposal is targeting and why (e.g. K-12 students, fishing industry, teachers, cruise ship passengers, etc.).

d) Objectives and Goals: a description of short- and long-term objectives and goals including the expected success of projects implemented. If specific on-going projects are identified in the application, the narrative shall describe the history of these projects. If a project leverages an existing educational curriculum, it should be identified and integrated or clearly contrasted. The applicant shall indicate whether the proposed project is part of an on going marine debris regional action plan and which plan. Proposal narratives shall list or otherwise cite such documents for verification purposes. Projects taking place in marine protected areas such as National Marine Sanctuaries, National Estuarine Research Reserves, or in special management areas such as those under state coastal management, in Great Lakes Areas of Concern, in National Estuary Program sites, in Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) or areas within EFH identified as Habitat Areas of Particular Concern may receive greater consideration.

e) Outcome Measures: describe proposed outcome measures that will be used to track the success of the project. For example, tracking the number of participants involved in or students reached through a marine debris activity, pre- and post- surveys or tests to measure behavior changes to an education or outreach program, a project evaluation plan, etc.

f) Project Implementation Timeline with Milestones: Describe the anticipated project duration (between 12 and 24 months) and associated timeline and milestones including the amount and timing of funds requested, potential sources of national/regional and local match, including cash match available at the national/regional level for supporting project sub-awards, and any restrictions the recipient may impose on the further use of federal funds. For example, if the recipient anticipates designating funding for specific project phases, cost categories or to specific recipients, restricting habitat types, debris types, organization types or geographic locations from consideration, these limitations or restrictions shall be clearly detailed in the narrative.

g) Sub-Award Information: If sub-awards are part of the proposal, briefly describe the process that will be used to identify high quality projects, including a proposed timeline for solicitation, and implementation. Projects that propose to use sub-awards shall employ a competitive mechanism or similarly rigorous process for the funding of any sub-awards or for the direct funding of highly qualified projects. In selecting a sub-award, the recipient should use the NOAA standard evaluation criteria and will be relatively consistent for NOAA across a wide variety of activities. The five standard NOAA criteria are 1) importance and applicability of proposal; 2) technical and scientific merit; 3) overall qualifications of applicants; 4) project costs; and 5) outreach and education. NOAA will review and approve any sub-awards.

h) Environmental Compliance: If the project includes field activities, describe how recipients will ensure that all federal, state, and local environmental laws will be met including obtaining necessary environmental permits and consultations and an explanation of how these will be secured prior to the use of federal funds for implementing individual projects that may require permits and consultations. This shall include the appropriate contact information for each permitting agency, documentation of all permits already secured for the project, and an expected timeline for those permits not yet acquired. Applications submitted with evidence of completed environmental assessments, completed consultations and/or secured permits, and that demonstrate that proposed field activities, if applicable, are legally permissible in the project area are likely to score higher. This related information must be provided to NOAA MDP staff to enable them to make a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) determination for all projects (see Section VI. B. 2 "Administrative and National Policy Requirements - National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Requirements" for further guidance).

i) Organizational Structure and Project Staff: describe the organizational structure of the applicant, detailing their qualifications and identifying proposed staff. Resumes of all key personnel shall be included in the other attachments (see below). A partner list of anticipated project participants other than the applicant shall be identified, and supporting documentation indicating their intent to participate and identifying their potential contributions shall be included. If known, the applicant should state the level of NOAA involvement in and/or support for the project and include name(s) of any relevant NOAA staff.

j) Communications Plan: explain an external communications plan for promoting the project activities and accomplishments to a broader audience, including methods to disseminate information on project goals, results, project partners and their roles, sources of funding and other support provided. If there is no communications plan, proposals are encouraged to include a list of existing tools (e.g. social media accounts, list serves, etc.).

4) BUDGET JUSTIFICATION (described below, maximum of 4 pages).

NOTE: applications must adhere to page limits and any pages that exceed the limit for each section will not be reviewed.

The narrative budget justification shall include a detailed breakdown by category of cost (object class) separated into federal and non-federal shares as they relate to specific aspects of the project, with appropriate narrative justification for both the federal and non-federal shares. The object classes shall match those found on the Form SF-424A. Applications will be evaluated for cost-effectiveness by examining the proportion of funds directed to marine debris prevention through education and outreach activities compared with that to be used for general program support.

The narrative budget justification shall also indicate if the project has been submitted for funding consideration elsewhere or has already been funded, in full or in part, what amount has been requested or secured from other sources, and whether the funds requested/secured are federal or non-federal. The source of any matching funds or in-kind contributions shall be explained. Any funding other than the proposal request and match should be considered additional leverage.

The narrative budget justification shall also indicate if the applicant is requesting a waiver of all match requirements, as outlined above in Section III. B. "Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement." Notwithstanding any other provisions herein, and in accordance with 48 U.S.C. § 1469a (d), NOAA may waive any requirement for local matching funds to Insular Areas, as defined and outlined above in Section III. B. "Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement."

The NOAA Grants Management Division will review budget information for recommended applications to determine if costs are allowable, allocable, reasonable, and realistic.

For any equipment proposed to be purchased under the award that costs \$5,000 or more, the applicant must itemize and describe the intended use of such equipment and also must complete a lease versus purchase analysis for the equipment. The applicant, to the extent possible, is requested to state who will be requested to retain ownership of any equipment purchased through grant funds after the project ends.

Funding for salaries must also be used to support staff directly involved in accomplishing the work and shall contain a detailed breakdown of personnel hours and costs by task. Requests for salaries are expected to support staff with the proper qualifications and relevant skill sets to support the technical aspects of prevention and outreach such that NOAA staff augment and assist with project implementation rather than serve as the primary. The narrative budget justification shall be sufficiently detailed to enable a clear understanding of the cost breakdown and calculations used to come up with the line item totals in each object class of the Form 424A.

The budget narrative must also provide, to the extent possible, detailed information on travel, including costs, a description of anticipated travel, destinations, the number of travelers, and a justification of how the requested travel is directly relevant to the successful completion of the project. If actual trip details are unknown, applicants must state the basis for the proposed travel charges. Applicants must allocate travel funds for any coordination meetings at regional or national levels. All travel must comply with the requirements of the Fly America Act and foreign travel must receive prior written approval, and therefore, must be included in the proposal to avoid having to request prior approval after the project starts.

5) APPENDIX - OTHER APPLICATION SUBMISSION INFORMATION (not to exceed 22 pages). NOTE: applications must adhere to page limits and any pages that exceed the limit for each section will not be reviewed. Only material that is submitted as a single file will be reviewed. Appendices must be limited to materials that directly support the main body of the proposal (e.g. detailed budget information, data sharing plans, letters of collaboration, resumes, references, lists of data sources, maps, etc.).

Applicants shall not assume prior knowledge on the part of NOAA or the reviewers as to the relative merits of the project described in the application. Inclusion of supplementary materials (e.g., photographs, summaries of project designs, key diagrams, copies of secured permits, and maps) are strongly encouraged. Such supplementary information shall be combined and submitted as a single file in the Grants.gov application. At a minimum, these shall include:

a) Letters of support and collaboration. Letters must clearly indicate the level of commitment and/or collaboration. These letters from partners, local and state governments, and Congressional representatives are helpful to demonstrate support for the project.

b) The curriculum vitae or resume of primary project personnel (2 pages maximum for each major participant).

c) Data Sharing Plan (not to exceed 1 page): A data sharing plan is required. Environmental data and information collected or created under NOAA grants or cooperative agreements must be made visible, accessible, and independently understandable to general users in a timely manner (typically no later than 2 years after the data are collected or created), free of charge or at minimal cost to the user that is no more than the cost of distribution, except where limited by law, regulation, policy, or security requirements. A typical plan should include the types of environmental data and information 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; policies addressing data stewardship and preservation; procedures for providing access, data, and security; and prior experience in publishing such data. A sample Data Sharing Plan may be found at: <http://marinedebris.noaa.gov/about-our-program/applicant-resources> under Sample Documents.

The Data/Information Sharing Plan will be reviewed as part of the NOAA Standard Evaluation Criteria, Item 1 -- "Importance and/or relevance and applicability of proposed project to the mission goals." The Data/Information Sharing Plan (and any subsequent revisions or updates) will be made publicly available at time of award and, thereafter, will be posted with the published data.

Failing to share environmental data and information in accordance with the submitted Data/Information Sharing Plan may lead to disallowed costs and be considered by NOAA when making future award decisions. If applicable, principal investigators (PIs) must indicate how and when they have made their data accessible and usable by the community in the past.

Information on NOAA's Environmental Data Management Policy is available under: http://www.corporateservices.noaa.gov/ames/administrative_orders/chapter_212/212-15.pdf

d) Other relevant attachments the applicant deems important to the overall understanding and evaluation of the proposed project, such as a summary of a regional marine debris action plan or a site location map to indicate the geographic scope of the project activity.

Applications submitted through the Grants.gov website shall include only three files in addition to the federal application forms. PDF files are the preferred format.

- 1) Project Summary and Project Narrative (14 pages total),
- 2) Budget Justification (4 pages total), and
- 3) Appendix - Other Application Submission Information: to include all other attachments combined into one file including: data sharing plan, resumes, letters of support, maps, etc. (not to exceed 22 pages).

PLEASE NOTE: Applications must adhere to page limits and pages exceeding the limits for a given section will not be sent forward for review.

All applications to the Grants.gov website MUST follow the guidance on file naming conventions. To avoid submission issues, please follow the guidance provided in the Applicant FAQs. File attachment names longer than approximately 50 characters can cause problems processing packages. Please limit file attachment names. Also, do not use any special characters (example: &, i, *, %, /, #, -), this includes periods (.), spacing followed by a dash in the file and for word separation, use underscore (example: Attached_File.pdf) in naming the attachments. Please note that if these guidelines are not followed, Grants.gov may reject your application.

If Grants.gov cannot reasonably be used, or internet access is not available to the applicant, a paper-copy application must be mailed to the NOAA Marine Debris Program (see Section IV. F. "Other Submission Requirements" for complete mailing information). For paper-copy submissions Forms SF-424, SF-424B, and CD-511 MUST BE SIGNED IN INK. No fax or e-mail applications will be accepted. Paper applications shall be printed on one side only, on 8.5" x 11" paper, and shall not be bound or stapled in any manner for ease of scanning.

C. Submission Dates and Times

Submission Dates and Times

APPLY EARLY. Full proposals must be received and validated by Grants.gov, postmarked, or provided to a delivery service on or before 11:59 p.m. EST, January 15, 2015. Applications received after the deadline will be rejected and returned to the sender without further consideration.

Applications must be submitted online through Grants.gov, unless Grants.gov cannot reasonably be used or internet access is not available to the applicant as noted above. For applications submitted through Grants.gov, a date and time receipt indication is included and will be the basis of determining timeliness. Note: Validation or rejection of your application by Grants.gov may take up to 2 business days after submission. Please schedule accordingly and consider this in developing your submission timeline.

After electronic submission of the application through Grants.gov, the person submitting the application will receive within the next 24 to 48 hours two e-mail messages from Grants.gov updating them on the progress of their application. The first e-mail will confirm receipt of the application by the Grants.gov system, and the second will indicate that the application has either been successfully validated by the system prior to transmission to the grantor agency or has been rejected due to error(s). After the application has been validated, this same person will receive another e-mail when the application has been downloaded by the Federal agency.

Hard copy applications arriving after the closing date given above will be accepted for review only if the applicant can document that the application was provided to a delivery service that guaranteed delivery prior to the specified closing date and time; in any event, hard copy applications received by NOAA later than two business days following the closing date will not be accepted. Faxed or emailed copies of applications will not be accepted.

IMPORTANT: Applicants are strongly advised to submit in advance of the deadline. All applicants, both electronic and paper, shall be aware that adequate time must be factored into applicant schedules for delivery of the application. Electronic applicants are advised that volume on Grants.gov is currently extremely heavy, and if Grants.gov is unable to accept applications electronically in a timely fashion, applicants may exercise their option to submit applications in paper format. Paper applicants shall allow adequate time to ensure a paper application will be received on time, taking into account that guaranteed overnight carriers are not always able to fulfill their guarantees.

D. Intergovernmental Review

Funding applications are subject to Executive Order 12372, "Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs." It is the state agency's responsibility to contact their state's Single Point of Contact (SPOC) to find out about and comply with the state's process under EO 12372. All applications for funding under this competition are required to complete item 16 on the Form SF-424 regarding clearance by the State Single Point of Contact (SPOC) established as a result of E.O. 12372. To assist the applicant, the names and addresses of the participating SPOCs are listed on the Office of Management and Budget's website at: http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants_spoc

E. Funding Restrictions

1) Allowable Costs: Funds awarded cannot necessarily pay for all the costs that the recipient might incur in the course of carrying out the project. Generally, costs that are allowable include salaries, equipment and supplies, as long as these are "necessary and reasonable" specifically for the purpose of the award. Allowable costs are determined by reference to relevant Office of Management and Budget (OMB) requirements. Please note

that by December 26, 2014, DOC anticipates adopting the OMB Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (OMB Uniform Guidance), which is codified at 2 C.F.R. Part 200. The OMB Uniform Guidance supersedes and streamlines requirements from previous OMB circulars, including OMB Circulars A 122, "Cost Principles for Non-profit Organizations" (2 C.F.R. Part 230); A-21, "Cost Principles for Education Institutions" (2 C.F.R. Part 220); and A-87, "Cost Principles for State, Local and Indian Tribal Governments" (2 C.F.R., Part 225). While the Federal Acquisition Regulation, codified at 48 C.F.R. Part 31 "Contract Cost Principles and Procedures", remains effective, federal awarding agencies may apply applicable requirements of the OMB Uniform Guidance to commercial entities. All cost reimbursement sub-awards (subgrants, subcontracts, etc.) are subject to those federal cost principles applicable to the particular type of organization concerned.

Pre-award costs are unallowable. A pre-award cost incurred before a notice of award document is provided by the NOAA Grants Office is at the applicant's own risk. Typically, the earliest date for receipt of awards will be August 1, 2015, however this timing is dependent on Congressional appropriations and it may be later. Applicants should consider this award timing when planning activities and developing requested start dates for proposed project activities. See 2 C.F.R. § 200.458 for more information on pre-award costs.

Construction is not an allowable activity under this program. Therefore, applications will not be accepted for construction projects.

2) Indirect Costs: The budget may include an amount for indirect costs if the applicant has an established indirect cost rate with the federal government. Indirect costs are essentially overhead costs for basic operational functions (e.g., lights, rent, water, insurance) that are incurred for common or joint objectives, and therefore cannot be identified specifically within a particular project activity. For this solicitation, the federal share of the indirect costs must not exceed the lesser of either the indirect costs the applicant would be entitled to if the negotiated federal indirect cost rate were used or 25 percent of the direct costs proposed. For those situations in which the use of the applicant's indirect cost rate would result in indirect costs greater than 25 percent of the federal direct costs, the difference may be counted as part of the non-federal share.

If applicable, a copy of the current, approved negotiated indirect cost agreement with the federal government must be included with the application. If the applicant does not have a current negotiated rate and plans to seek reimbursement for indirect costs, documentation necessary to establish a rate must be submitted prior to receiving an award. If an award recipient has not previously established an indirect cost rate with a federal agency, the negotiation and approval of a rate is subject to the procedures required by NOAA and the DOC. The DOC's Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions require that recipients within 90 days of the award start date, submit to the address listed below

documentation (indirect cost proposal, cost allocation plan, etc.) necessary to perform the review. Contact: Lamar Revis, Grants Officer. NOAA Grants Management Division. 1325 East West Highway, 9th Floor. Silver Spring, Maryland 20910.

F. Other Submission Requirements

Applications shall be submitted through the Grants.gov website (www.grants.gov). Note: it takes approximately four weeks to register with Grants.gov and the System for Award Management (SAM). Applicants shall consider the time needed to register with Grants.gov, and shall begin the registration process in advance of the application due date if they have never registered with Grants.gov.

Users of Grants.gov will be able to download a copy of the application package, complete it off line, and then upload and submit the application via the Grants.gov site. If an applicant has problems downloading the application forms from Grants.gov, contact Grants.gov Customer Support at 1-800-518-4726 or support@grants.gov.

NOTE: It may take Grants.gov up to two (2) business days to validate or reject the application. Please keep this in mind in developing your submission timeline. Applicants should allow themselves sufficient time to submit their application to Grants.gov in advance of the deadline to ensure applications have been submitted successfully, as the deadline for submission cannot be extended. NOAA may request that you provide original signatures on forms at a later date.

NOTE: Even if an applicant has registered with Grants.gov previously, the applicant's password may have expired or their SAM registration (formerly Central Contractor Registration [CCR]) may need to be renewed or updated prior to submitting to Grants.gov. (Note that an old CCR username will not work in SAM; you must create a new SAM User Account to renew or update your registration). 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. Please plan accordingly to avoid late submissions. To enable the use of a universal identifier and to enhance the quality of information available to the public as required by the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006, to the extent applicable, any applicant awarded in response to this announcement will be required to use the System for Award Management (SAM). For further information please visit the SAM web portal (<https://www.sam.gov/portal/public/SAM/>). Electronic submission is encouraged.

If Grants.gov cannot reasonably be used, or internet access is not available to the applicant, a paper-copy application package (as outlined in Section IV. B. "Content and

Form of Application" and signed in blue ink) may be submitted to the NOAA Marine Debris Program at the following address. The application package must be postmarked, or provided to a delivery service and documented, by January 15, 2015.

Alison Hammer Weingast. NOAA Office of Response and Restoration/Marine Debris Division. ATTN: NOAA Marine Debris Prevention through Education and Outreach Grant Applications. 1305 East West Highway. SSMC 4, 10206, N/ORR. Silver Spring, MD 20910

V. Application Review Information

A. Evaluation Criteria

Technical reviewers will assign scores to proposals ranging from 0 to 100 points based on the following five standard NOAA evaluation criteria and respective weights specified below. Applications that address the issues contained in these criteria are likely to be more competitive.

1) Importance and Applicability of Proposal (30 points):

This criterion ascertains whether the proposed work is relevant to the goals set out by the NOAA Marine Debris Program in this Federal Funding Opportunity, is a reasonable and feasible project, and has direct applicability to NOAA, federal, regional, state, or local activities. Proposals will be evaluated on the following:

- The proposal addresses marine debris prevention through education or outreach activities that meet the priorities as described in this FFO, including 1) encouraging changes in behavior to address marine debris; 2) developing and implementing activities to prevent marine debris working with students, teachers, industries, and the public; and, 3) engaging the public in active, personal participation. The potential of the proposal's activities to prevent marine debris from entering the environment. (10 points)
- The proposal clearly identifies deliverables, including goals and objectives. Whether the goals and timelines for those deliverables are reasonable and will deliver tangible, specific results that are measurable. (10 points)
- The proposal has the potential to address the adverse impacts of marine debris and benefit critical habitat and marine life, including protected species. (5 points)
- The proposed activity fits into an existing regional or national marine debris strategic plan (e.g. the "Honolulu Strategy," the "Marine Debris Strategy for the West Coast Governors Alliance on Ocean Health," the "Great Lakes Land-based Marine Debris Action Plan," etc.). (4 points)

- The proposal includes a Data Sharing Plan that makes data and information collected visible, accessible, and independently understandable to general users in a timely manner including, as applicable, descriptions of the types of environmental data and information 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; policies addressing data stewardship and preservation; procedures for providing access, sharing, and security; and prior experience in publishing such data. (1 point)

2) Technical and Scientific Merit (15 points):

This criterion assesses whether the approach is technically sound and if the methods are appropriate, and whether there are clear project goals and objectives. Applications will be evaluated based on the following:

- The appropriateness of the project's mechanisms to meet the stated goals and objectives. Including a project time line documenting project phases and milestones. The project goals and objectives appear achievable within the proposed time-frame and are measurable. (5 points)

- The project proposal lists specific permits acquired, if needed, to meet the standards described in the FFO and includes an expected timeline for those permits not yet acquired. For assurance that implementation will meet all federal, state, and local environmental laws, projects that would require such permits and consultations shall list all necessary permits required to complete the project. This should include the appropriate contact information for each permitting agency, documentation of all permits already secured for the project, and an expected timeline for those permits not yet acquired. Applications submitted with evidence of completed environmental assessments, completed consultations and/or secured permits, and that demonstrate that proposed field activities, if applicable, are legally permissible in the project area are likely to score higher on this criterion. See Section VI. B. 2 "Administrative and National Policy Requirements - National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Requirements" for more information. (5 points)

- The proposal is scientifically sound, and proposed scientific methods and approaches are valid to achieve the activities. The overall technical feasibility of the project from a biological, ecological, and safety perspective. (5 points)

3) Overall Qualification of Applicant (15 points):

This criterion ascertains whether the funding applicant has the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project. Proposals will be evaluated on the following:

- The capacity of the applicant and associated project personnel to conduct the scope and scale of the proposed work, as indicated by the qualifications and past experience of the project leaders and/or recipients in designing, implementing, and effectively managing and overseeing projects. Examples of projects similar in scope and nature that have been successfully completed by the implementation team are encouraged. If that is not possible, applicants will be evaluated on their potential to effectively manage and oversee all project phases, as evidenced by the explanation of characteristics, via resumes, such as education, training, and/or experience of primary project participants. (5 points)

- The facilities and/or administrative resources and capabilities are available to the applicant to support and successfully manage marine debris prevention, education, outreach, and grant responsibilities. (5 points)

- The proposal includes appropriate partners from other agencies and institutions are collaborating on the project to capitalize on available expertise and promote a regional or national approach. The proposal includes letters of support from the partners who have committed to collaborate on the project. Letters of support from local and state governments, and Congressional representatives or relevant resource agency personnel familiar with the issue are also helpful in demonstrating support for the project. The depth and breadth of support is highlighted, as reflected by the diversity and strength of project partners and sponsorship by other entities (through cash contributions or in-kind goods and services such as boat use time and technical expertise). If the project takes place within a protected or otherwise managed public area, a letter of commitment from the appropriate resource management agency is required. (5 points)

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. If funds are requested for partial support of a project, the budget will be examined with respect to the overall project budget to allow an informed determination of a project's readiness and cost-benefit ratio. Proposals will be evaluated on the following:

- The proposal provides the percentage of funds that will be dedicated to all phases of project implementation compared to the percentage for general program support such as administration, salaries, overhead, and travel. Applications proposing to use NOAA funds to expand an organization's day-to-day administrative activities are unlikely to obtain a high score under this criterion. To encourage tangible results, funding for salaries should be used to support staff directly involved in accomplishing the specific debris prevention, outreach and education work and should contain a detailed breakdown of personnel hours and costs by task. (5 points)

- The proposal is sufficiently detailed, with appropriate budget breakdown and justification of both federal and non-federal shares by object class as listed on form SF-424A. Applicants should also include a description of specific activities for which federal funding will be used by object class within the budget narrative. Requests for equipment (any single piece of equipment costing \$5,000 or more) such as vehicles, boats, and similar items will be a low priority and a comparison with rental costs should be used to justify the need to purchase. (5 points)

- The proposal includes overall leverage of other funds anticipated, including the amount of match. NOAA expects non-federal cost-sharing at a minimum 1:1 ratio of formal matching contributions to federal funds except for those proposals eligible for a waiver according to Section III. B. "Cost Sharing or Matching Requirements." These funds or other resources should improve cost-effectiveness and further encourage partnerships among government, industry, and academia. Applicants that provide documentation that an acceptable secured match is available within the proposed project period are likely to score higher on this criterion. (5 points)

- The proposed budget is realistic and reasonable based on the applicant's stated objectives and time frame. (3 points)

- The proposal demonstrates a critical need for NOAA funding and support. (2 points)

5) Outreach and Education (20 points):

This criterion assesses whether the proposed activities provide a focused education and outreach strategy to the public and other stakeholders to prevent marine debris, and clearly explains how this will be executed. Proposals will be evaluated on the following:

- The proposed activities will broaden the public's understanding of the marine debris problem and effectively encourage the general public, students, other constituents, employees, or members of varying industries to be environmental stewards, leading to a prevention of marine debris entering the environment. (10 points)

- The proposal identifies a target audience and tailored approach to that audience. Whether the proposal demonstrates that information generated by the project will reach its target audience and have a positive impact on preventing marine debris. (5 points)

- The proposal includes an external communications plan for promoting the project activities and accomplishments to a broader audience, including methods to disseminate information on project goals, results, project partners and their roles, sources of funding and other support provided. If the proposal uses existing marine debris curriculum, the proposal should identify and either integrate or contrast with it. (5 points)

B. Review and Selection Process

Applications will be screened to determine if they are eligible, complete and in accordance with instructions detailed in the standard NOAA Grants Application Package. Eligible proposals will then undergo a technical review, ranking, and selection process. As appropriate during this process, NOAA will solicit individual technical evaluations of each project proposal to determine how well it meets program goals. Proposal evaluations may be requested from NOAA offices and staff, other federal and state agencies (e.g., state coastal management agencies and state fish and wildlife agencies), and private and public sector experts who have knowledge of a specific applicant, program, or its subject matter.

Applications will be evaluated by at least three individual technical reviewers, including those mentioned in the above paragraph, according to the evaluation criteria and weights described in this solicitation. Each reviewer will independently evaluate each project and provide an individual score. No consensus advice will be given. Reviewer comments, project scores, and a rank order will be presented to the NOAA Marine Debris Program Selecting Official. The Selecting Official will identify the proposals to be recommended to the NOAA Grants Management Division for funding and determine the amount of funds available for each approved proposal.

C. Selection Factors

The proposals shall be recommended in the rank order unless the selection of a proposal out of rank order is justified based on one or more of the following factors:

- 1) The availability of funding;
- 2) The balance/distribution of funds:
 - a) Geographically;
 - b) By institution type;
 - c) By partner type;
 - d) By habitat type;
 - e) By project type
- 3) Duplication of other projects funded or considered for funding by NOAA, partner organizations, and/or other Federal agencies;
- 4) Program priorities and policy factors as described in section I.A and I.B;
- 5) The applicant's prior award performance;

6) Partnerships and/or participation of targeted groups, and;

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

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

D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

Subject to the availability of funds, successful applicants generally should be identified by June 30, 2015 and notifications to all applicants are anticipated to be made as soon as possible thereafter. Typically, the earliest anticipated start date for projects will be August 1, 2015, dependent on the completion of all NOAA/applicant negotiations, NEPA analysis, and documentation supporting cooperative agreement activities. Please note: this date may be later depending on timing of Congressional appropriations. Applicants should consider this timeline when developing requested start dates for proposed activities.

VI. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notices

Successful applicants may be asked to modify objectives, work plans, and/or budgets prior to final approval of an award. The exact amount of funds to be awarded, final scope of activities, project duration, and specific NOAA cooperative involvement with the activities of each project will be determined in pre-award negotiations between the applicant, the NOAA Grants Management Division, and NOAA program staff. Projects shall not be initiated in expectation of federal funding until a notice of award is received from the NOAA grants office. Applicants that initiate project activities in expectation of federal funding, do so at their own risk. Official award notification will be made electronically via e-mail from the NOAA Grants Management Division via Grants Online, NOAA's online grants management program.

Applications recommended for funding by the Selecting Official will be forwarded to the NOAA Grants Management Division by the Program Office. The applicant must be aware that the notification by the program office is not the official award.

Unsuccessful applicants will be notified that their applications were not among those recommended for funding.

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

1) Administrative Requirements:

a) Department of Commerce standard terms and conditions - Successful applicants who accept a NOAA award under this solicitation will be bound by Department of Commerce standard terms and conditions. This document will be provided in the award package in Grants Online, NOAA's online grants management program, and can be found on DOC's website.

b) Special Award Conditions - award documents provided by the NOAA Grants Management Division in the Grants Online award package may also contain special award conditions limiting the use of funds for activities that have outstanding environmental compliance requirements and/or stating other compliance requirements for the award as applicable.

c) 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 17, 2012 (77 FR 74634) are applicable to this solicitation. A copy of the notice may be obtained at: <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/>.

Please note that on December 26, 2013, OMB published final guidance titled, "Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (OMB Uniform Guidance)", which streamlines the language from eight existing OMB circulars, including Cost Principles (OMB Circulars A-21, A-87, A-122) and administrative requirements (OMB Circulars A-102 and A-110), into one consolidated set of guidance applicable to federal assistance awards. Once adopted, the OMB Uniform Guidance will supersede DOC's uniform administrative requirements set out at 15 C.F.R. parts 14 and 24. The DOC expects to adopt the OMB Uniform Guidance by December 26, 2014, meaning that the OMB Uniform Guidance will apply to all new awards and to additional funding to existing awards made after December 26, 2014.

In addition, the audit requirements of the OMB Uniform Guidance will apply to audits of non-federal entities beginning on or after December 26, 2014. Therefore, applicants should familiarize themselves with the OMB Uniform Guidance. Additional information on the substance of and transition to the OMB Uniform Guidance may be found at <https://cfo.gov/cofar/>. The OMB Uniform Guidance may be downloaded from the Federal Register's webpage at <https://www.federalregister.gov/articles/2013/12/26/2013-30465/uniformadministrative-requirements-cost-principles-and-audit-requirements-for-federalawards>.

d) Limitation of Liability - In no event will NOAA or the DOC be responsible for proposal preparation costs if these programs fail to receive funding or are cancelled because of other agency priorities. Publication of this announcement does not oblige NOAA to

award any specific project, obligate any available funds, or to provide special fishing privileges.

2) National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Requirements:

NOAA must analyze the potential environmental impacts, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), for applicant projects or proposals seeking NOAA funding. Detailed information on NOAA compliance with NEPA can be found at the NOAA NEPA website: <http://www.nepa.noaa.gov>, including NOAA Administrative Order 216-6 for NEPA and the Council on Environmental Quality implementation regulations. Consequently, as part of an applicant's award package, and under their description of 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 and implementing feasible measures to reduce or avoid any identified adverse environmental impacts of their proposal. Failure to do so will result in denial of an application. In some cases if additional information is required after an application is selected, funds can be withheld by the Grants Officer under a special award condition requiring the recipient to submit additional environmental compliance information sufficient to enable NOAA to make an assessment on any impacts that a project may have on the environment.

Applicants proposing marine debris activities that cannot be categorically excluded from further NEPA analysis or that are not covered by the NOAA Marine Debris Program Programmatic Environmental Assessment (PEA) and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) will be informed after the peer review stage and may be asked to help prepare an environmental assessment (EA) prior to an award being made or provide for NOAA review a copy of an EA that covers proposed activities, if one exists. The MDP PEA and FONSI can be found at: http://marinedebris.noaa.gov/sites/default/files/mdp_pea.pdf

It is the applicant's responsibility to obtain all necessary federal, state, and local government permits and approvals for the proposed work to be conducted. Applicants are expected to design their proposed activities to minimize the potential for adverse impacts to the environment. If applicable, documentation of requests for or approvals of required environmental permits shall be included in the application package. Applications will be reviewed to ensure that they contain sufficient information to allow MDP staff to conduct a

NEPA analysis so that appropriate NEPA documentation, required as part of the application package, can be submitted to the NOAA Grants Management Division along with the recommendation for funding for selected applications.

3) Felony and Tax Certification for Corporations:

In accordance with current federal appropriations law, NOAA will provide a successful corporate applicant a form to be completed by its authorized representatives certifying that the corporation has no federally-assessed unpaid or delinquent tax liability or recent felony criminal convictions under any federal law.

C. Reporting

Successful applicants will be required to submit progress and financial reports semi-annually that cover 6-month periods as indicated in the award documentation provided by GMD. Electronic submission of reports is completed through the Grants Online System. Reports are due to NOAA via the Grants Online System no later than 30 days after each 6-month project period. A final report is due no later than 90 days after the expiration date of an award. Progress reports shall detail project activities that have occurred at the national or regional level during the reporting period that correspond with goals and objectives identified in the narrative, as well as provide specific, project-related information. Recipients are encouraged to include the following elements in performance reports: grant number, recipient organization, project start and end dates, reporting period end date, and performance narrative. The narrative shall include a description of approved award activities performed to achieve short and long-term goals associated with expenditures being reported on during the time period, status of activities (completed, not-completed, on-going), and an explanation of why targets may not have been met. Other attachments may be included.

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

Financial reports cover the periods from October 1 to March 31 (due by April 30) and April 1 to September 30 (due by October 30) throughout the award period and are submitted to the NOAA Grants Management Division via NOAA Grants Online system. Complete details on reporting requirements will be provided to successful applicants in the award

documentation provided by the NOAA Grants Management Division in the Grants Online award package.

If equipment was purchased with grant funds or obtained from a federal agency, applicants may be asked to submit an equipment inventory with 15 CFR 14.34(f)(3), 15 CFR 24.32(b) or 15 CFR 24.32(d)(2) as an appendix to interim and final progress reports. Further, the program office recommends that recipients request disposition instructions for equipment approximately 150 days before the project period ends to allow sufficient time to have equipment disposition requests addressed before a project period ends. Equipment disposition instructions typically require that recipients complete a "Submit Additional Closeout Documents" award action request in Grants Online. NOAA will provide instructions for disposition in accordance with 15 CFR 14.34(g)-(h) and 15 CFR 24.32(g)(2).

The Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006 includes a requirement for awardees of applicable federal grants to report information about first-tier sub-awards and executive compensation under federal assistance awards issued in FY 2011 or later. All awardees of applicable grants and cooperative agreements are required to report to the Federal Sub-award Reporting System (FSRS) available at www.FSRS.gov on all sub-awards over \$25,000.

Applicants are also required to use the Dun and Bradstreet Universal Numbering System and will be subject to reporting requirements, as identified in OMB guidance published at 2 CFR Part 25. See link: http://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?c=ecfr&tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title02/2cfr25_main_02.tpl

VII. Agency Contacts

For further information contact Alison Hammer Weingast (Alison.Hammer@noaa.gov, 301-713-2989, x206).

VIII. Other Information

In no event will NOAA or the Department of Commerce be responsible for proposal preparation costs if programs fail to receive funding or are canceled because of other agency priorities. Publication of this announcement does not oblige NOAA to award any specific project or to obligate any available funds.

Prior notice and an opportunity for public comment are not required by the Administrative Procedure Act (5 U.S.C. 553 (a) (2)) or by any other law for this document concerning grants, benefits, and contracts. Because notice and opportunity for comment are

not required pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 553 or any other law, the analytical requirements of the Regulatory Flexibility Act (5 U.S.C. 601 et seq.) are not applicable. Therefore, a regulatory flexibility analysis has not been prepared.

NOAA adheres to the principals of scientific integrity. This policy can be found; <http://nrc.noaa.gov/scientificintegrity.html>.

Collection of information requirements: The use of the standard NOAA grant application package referred to in this notice involves collection-of-information requirements subject to the Paperwork Reduction Act. The use of Standard Forms 424, 424A, 424B, SF-LLL, and CD-346 have been approved by OMB under the respective control numbers 4040-0004, 4040-0006, 4040-0007, 0348-0046 and 0605-0001.

Notwithstanding any other provisions of the law, no person is required to respond to, nor shall any person be subjected to a penalty for failure to comply with, a collection of information subject to the requirements of the Paperwork Reduction Act, unless that collection of information displays a currently valid OMB Control Number.

Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) - Department of Commerce regulations implementing FOIA 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 FFO 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 which is exempt from disclosure under FOIA, that information should be identified, bracketed, and marked as Privileged, Confidential, Commercial or Financial Information. Based on these markings, the confidentiality of the contents of those pages will be protected to the extent permitted by law.

The NOAA Marine Debris Program will not release the names of applicants submitting proposals unless ordered by a court or requested to do so by an appropriate NOAA official and administrative protocol. Applicants can use a NOAA public search feature to find out information about NOAA awards at:

<https://grantsonline.rdc.noaa.gov/flows/publicSearch/begin.do;jsessionid=GbZDVT7JqmXqNlm84y2DBn5CpmGR2vJvQKfnX5CLd94YvywZQTZq!-1742093309> or go through the Freedom of Information Act process to request more information about grant competitions. More information about the NOAA FOI process is on-line at: <http://www.rdc.noaa.gov/~foia/>