

NOTICE OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

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Executive Summary

Federal Agency Name

Fisheries Headquarters Program Office (FHQ)

Funding Opportunity Title

IRA - Indigenous Engagement Program (IEP)

Announcement Type

Competitive

Funding Opportunity Number

NOAA-NMFS-FHQ-2024-25622

Assistance Listing Number(s)

11.454

Dates

Full proposals must be received by 11:59 pm Eastern Time (7:59 pm Alaska Time) on April 26, 2024.

Funding Opportunity Description

The mission of the Alaska Fisheries Science Center (AFSC) Indigenous Engagement Program (IEP) is to facilitate collaboration with Indigenous Knowledge holders to develop bi-directional and parallel knowledge pathways to support climate-informed fisheries and ecosystem policies regionally and internationally. In addition, the IEP may support consortia that bring together Alaska Native community members to promote environmental monitoring and knowledge sharing workshops.

For Fiscal Year 2024, NMFS anticipates that approximately \$500,000 could be made available for projects that address Indigenous engagement as identified in the Program Priority Section (I.B.1 - I.B.3). An additional \$250,000 in each of FY2025 and FY2026 could be made available as well for multiple year projects.

Full Text of Announcement

I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Program Objective

This grant program provides competitive grants to non-Federal entities working to benefit Indigenous Knowledge holders and Alaska Native community members by advancing equity and environmental justice. The grant program will facilitate collaboration with Indigenous Knowledge holders to develop bi-directional and parallel knowledge pathways to support climate-informed fisheries and ecosystem policies regionally and internationally. In addition, the IEP may support consortia that bring together Alaska Native community members to promote environmental monitoring and knowledge sharing workshops.

The [NOAA Fisheries Equity and Environmental Justice Strategy](#) identifies three overarching, long-term goals. They are: (1) Prioritize identification, equitable treatment, and meaningful involvement of underserved communities; (2) Provide equitable delivery of services; and (3) Prioritize equity and environmental justice in our mandated and mission work. This Program seeks to support the development of these long-term goals by implementing the following short-term objectives from the strategy: (a) Outreach and engage equitably; and (b) Ensure inclusive governance. This grant program is also aligned with and advances the goals of the [White House Ocean Justice Strategy](#) written by the Ocean Policy Committee and the [Guidance for Federal Departments and Agencies on Indigenous Knowledge](#) from the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy and Council on Environmental Quality.

B. Program Priorities

The NMFS Alaska Fisheries Science Center (AFSC) seeks to fund projects in the three high-priority areas listed below. The priority that most closely matches your project must be identified in the proposal.

1. **Support Existing Indigenous Knowledge Networks:** Arctic communities are already experiencing significant changes in maritime activities in recent years due to climate change. These changes pose potential social and economic benefits, but also present significant risks to individual and community resilience. Increasingly, these activities and opportunities will affect the social and ecological system, as well as the well-being and resilience of coastal communities, stakeholders, and rightsholders in the Arctic. In this context, funding will support and coordinate existing Knowledge networks to build capacity in remote Arctic communities in line with the NOAA Fisheries Equity and Environmental Justice Strategy.
2. **Elevate Indigenous Knowledge in existing science where possible:** Climate resilience in communities on the front lines of climate change in the Arctic requires NOAA services in the form of partnerships, internships, and education opportunities. Funds will provide ways to increase these opportunities, allowing for NOAA to consider and elevate Indigenous Knowledge in its science products for better understanding how changing climate conditions affect living marine resources.
3. **Conduct Collaborative and Co-produced Research:** For communities, industries, and nations to be resilient to climate changes currently occurring with respect to food security and economic opportunities, significant cross-agency and community collaboration is required to map and monitor seasonal to annual oceanographic processes. Funding will support co-development of research and knowledge needs with academic, international, and Indigenous partners.

C. Program Authority

16 U.S.C. 661 – Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act. The Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act of 1956 (16 U.S.C. 661), implemented through Reorganization Plan No. 4 of 1970, authorizes the Secretary of Commerce to provide assistance to, and cooperate with, Federal, State, and public or private agencies and organizations in the development, protection, rearing, and stocking of all species of wildlife, resources thereof, and their habitat, in controlling losses of the same from disease or other causes, and in minimizing damages from overabundant species.

And/Or

Marine Mammal Protection Act - 16 U.S.C. 1388; Sec. 119(a). The Secretary may enter into cooperative agreements with Alaska Native organizations to conserve marine mammals and provide co-management of subsistence use by Alaska Natives.

II. Award Information

A. Funding Availability

Total federal funding available under this notice is anticipated to be approximately \$1,000,000. Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 availability of federal funds is approximately \$500,000 with an additional \$250,000 to be made available in each of FY2025 and FY2026. All funding for this program is subject to the availability of appropriations. Award amounts will be determined by the content of the proposals and the availability of funds for each year. Publication of this notice does not obligate NOAA to make an award to any specific project or to obligate any funding. If an application is selected for funding, NOAA has no obligation to provide any additional funding beyond the first year.

Funding under this announcement will provide support for 5-15 projects ranging from approximately \$15,000 to \$50,000 per project per year. NOAA does not anticipate funding project proposals requesting greater than \$150,000 in federal funding annually.

A project period will be at minimum 12 months in duration and extend up to a maximum of three years. For multi-year proposals, applicants must include project plans and separate budgets for each year of the project. Multi-year projects may be funded in one-year or greater increments depending on available funds and terms of the award. Any funding required for subsequent years is added to the multi-year award incrementally, provided demonstration of satisfactory performance by the recipient and provided funds to support the continuation of the project are available.

There is no guarantee that sufficient funds will be available to make awards for all qualified projects. The exact amount of funds that may be awarded will be determined in pre-award negotiations between the applicant and NOAA representatives. Publication of this notice does not oblige NOAA to award any specific project or to obligate any available funds. If applicants incur any costs prior to an award being made, they do so at their own risk of not being reimbursed by the government. Notwithstanding verbal or written assurance that may have been received, there is no obligation on the part of NOAA to cover pre-award costs unless approved by the Grants Officer as part of the terms when the award is made, or the award is for research, per 2 C.F.R. 200.308.

B. Project/Award Period

Projects may apply for up to three (3) years in length (multi-year applications), with funding increments of 12 months. Funding beyond year one is contingent upon the availability of funds and satisfactory performance, and is at the sole discretion of the agency. Applications must include project details and a budget for each year of the project. Proposals should clearly identify objectives and products to be completed during that period of activity. The requested start date must begin on the first day of the month and end on the last day of the month. The earliest start date for projects will be May 1, 2024.

C. Type of Funding Instrument

Under this solicitation, NMFS/AFSC will fund IEP Projects as cooperative agreements. The cooperative agreement has been determined to be the appropriate funding instrument because of the substantial involvement by NOAA. Substantial involvement means that, after award, NOAA scientific or program staff will assist, guide, coordinate, collaborate, or participate in project activities in a partnership role; it is not to assume direction, prime responsibility, or a dominant role in the activities. The dominant role and prime responsibility reside with the awardee for the project as a whole, although specific tasks and activities may be shared among the awardees and NOAA. The exact amount of funds, the scope of work, and terms and conditions of a successful award will be determined in pre-award negotiations between the applicant and NOAA/NMFS representatives.

III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants are individuals, institutions of higher education, other nonprofits, for-profit organizations, foreign public entities or foreign organizations, and 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 Share or Matching Requirement

Applicants may include cost sharing, but it is not required and is not part of the evaluation criteria for this program.

C. Other Criteria that Affect Eligibility

Federal agencies and their personnel are not permitted to receive funding under this competition; however, federal scientists can serve as uncompensated partners on proposals. Should you wish to partner with a particular NMFS employee, who will act as a partner in the proposed project, a written agreement of this participation must be provided, detailing their involvement, signed by the employee's supervisor. NMFS involvement could include planning, scheduling, conducting, and analyzing proposed project activities and frequent contact with the Applicant to help solve technical problems/situations as they arise during performance of the award. NOAA will implement appropriate mechanisms regarding any potential conflict of interest in the review process. While proposing partnerships is encouraged, proposing a specific NOAA or Federal partner is not required. If a specific NOAA collaboration is not proposed, NOAA still expects to become substantially involved as described in Section II.C. of this Announcement.

IV. Application and Submission Information

A. Address to Request Application Package

Electronic application packages for full applications are strongly encouraged and are available at: <http://www.grants.gov>.

If the applicant has difficulty accessing Grants.gov or downloading the required forms, they should contact:

NOAA Fisheries – Financial Assistance Division
1325 East West Highway, 14th floor
Silver Spring MD 20910
Derek.Orner@noaa.gov

B. Content and Form of Application

Format requirements full proposals

All application materials should be submitted in Adobe PDF or a common word processing format, and when printed out should meet all format requirements. All pages must be double-spaced, printed or typed in at least 12-point font, and printable on 8.5-inch x 11-inch paper, with 1-inch margins.

Brevity will assist reviewers and program staff in effectively reviewing proposals. The full application should include the following five elements: (1) required Federal forms; (2) Project Summary (1 page limit); (3) Project Narrative (7 page limit); (4) Appendices or Attachments (20 page limit); and (5) Budget Narrative (no page limit). Additional informational material beyond the page limits will be disregarded.

1. Applicants must submit the following Federal forms during initial submission of the application:

1. Application for Federal Assistance (SF-424),
2. Budget Information, Non-construction Programs (SF-424A),
3. Assurances, Non-construction Programs (SF424B),
4. Certification Regarding Lobbying (CD511)

Applicants may submit the information typically included on these documents through the <http://www.grants.gov> website.

2. Project summary (1 page limit):

1. Organization title.
2. Principal Investigator(s) (PI).
3. Address, telephone number, and email address of Principal Investigator(s).
4. Area of interest for which you are applying (see section I. B.).
5. Project title.
6. Project objectives for the project period.
7. Summary of work to be performed within the project period.
8. Budget Information - Total Federal funds requested for Federal fiscal year 2024 and Federal fiscal year 2025 (if applicable).

3. Project Narrative (7 page limit): Each project must be completely and accurately described. The main body of the proposal should be a clear statement of the work to be undertaken and should include: specific objectives, performance measures for the period of the proposed work, and the expected significance. Tables and visual materials, including charts, graphs, maps, photographs and other pictorial presentations are included in the 7 page limit. Each project must be described as follows:

a. Identification of problem(s): Describe the specific problem(s) or area(s) of interest to be addressed. Specify the Program Priority in section I.B. that most closely relates to the proposal.

b. Project objectives: Objectives should be simple and understandable; as specific as possible; clear as to the "what and when," but should avoid the "how and why" (which is fully addressed in the project description), and; attainable within the time, money, and human resources available. Projects should be accomplishment oriented and identify specific performance measures.

c. Project description: The project description is the scientific or technical action plan of activities that are to be accomplished during each budget period of the project. This description must include the specific methodologies, by project job activity, proposed for accomplishing the proposal's objective(s).

d. Permitting: The proposal must describe any Endangered Species Act, Marine Mammal Protection Act, or other permit requirements related to the proposed research. The proposal also must describe whether the investigators have the necessary permits in hand, or what steps the investigators have taken to obtain the necessary permits. All proposals must respond to this required element whether or not permits are required. If no permits are required, this section must indicate "no permits are required."

See also Section IV.G.1. of this Announcement regarding permits. **Permit information may be submitted as appendices or attachments.**

e. Impacts, benefits, or results expected: Identify and document the results or benefits to be derived from the proposed activities.

f. Project management: Describe how the project will be organized and managed. Include resumes of principal investigators, which may be appendices or attachments. List all persons directly employed by the applicant who will be involved with the project. If a consultant and/or subcontractor is selected prior to application submission, include the name and qualifications of the consultant and/or subcontractor and the process used for selection. Describe who will monitor project performance. Also include participation by persons or groups other than the applicant.

g. Results from prior NOAA/NMFS support (not included in the 7 page limitation; can be submitted as an appendix.): If any PI or co-PI identified on the project has received support from the NOAA/NMFS in the past 5 years, information on the prior award(s) is required. The following information should be provided and may be placed in the Project Narrative or in an Appendix:

1. The NOAA award number, amount, and period of support;
2. The title of the project;
3. Summary of the results of the completed work

h. Education and outreach: How will this project provide a focused and effective education and outreach strategy regarding NOAA's mission to protect the Nation's natural resources?

i. Evaluation of project: The applicant is required to provide a description of project accomplishments and progress towards the project objectives and performance measures at the end of each funding period and in the final report. The application must describe the methodology or procedures to be followed to quantify the results of the project.

4. Appendices/Attachments (20 page limit): Appendices or attachments may be combined into a single file and include information such as, Permit information, results from previous NOAA/NMFS funding, resumes, and/or letters of support.

5. Budget Narrative: Total project costs are the amount of funds required to accomplish what is proposed in the Project Description.

a. Provide a detailed table with Budget Narrative (as an attachment not included in the page limits for the Project Narrative or Appendices) to support the requested items or activities (personnel/salaries, fringe benefits, travel, equipment, supplies, contract costs (such as vessel charters), and indirect costs.) Supplies (<\$5,000/item) and equipment (>= \$5,000/item) should be broken out in as much detail as possible. The budget table and narrative submitted with the application should match the dollar amounts on the SF-424 and SF-424A forms. If indirect costs are proposed, include a copy of the current Federally approved rate if applicable; see also Section IV.F.1. below. Additional cost detail may be required prior to a final analysis of overall cost allowability, allocability, and reasonableness.

b. Please note the following restrictions for salaries and fringe benefits: Funds for salaries and fringe benefits may be requested only for those personnel who are directly involved in implementing the proposed project and whose salaries and fringe benefits are directly related to specific products or outcomes of the proposed project. Hourly rates and projected hours worked on the project and/or percentage of time and yearly salary should be included for all salary requests. Applicants are strongly encouraged to request reasonable amounts of funding for salaries and fringe benefits to ensure the proposal is competitive.

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

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

Each applicant (unless the applicant is an individual or Federal awarding agency that is excepted from those requirements under 2 CFR 25.110(b) or (c), or has an exception approved by the Federal awarding agency under 2 CFR 25.110(d)) is required to: (i) Be registered in SAM before submitting its application; (ii) Provide a valid unique entity identifier (UEI) in its application; and (iii) Continue to maintain an active SAM registration with current information at all times during which it has an active Federal award or an application or plan under consideration by a Federal awarding agency. NOAA may not make a Federal award to an applicant until the applicant has complied with all applicable unique entity identifier and SAM requirements and, if an applicant has not fully complied with the requirements by the time NOAA is ready to make a Federal award, NOAA may determine that the applicant is not qualified to receive a Federal award and use that determination as a basis for making a Federal award to another applicant.

D. Submission Dates and Times

Full proposals must adhere to the following provisions and requirements and must be received by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time (7:59 pm Alaska Time) on April 26, 2024. Failure to follow these requirements will result in proposals being returned without review.

Important: All applicants, both electronic and paper, should 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 may be extremely heavy, and if Grants.gov is unable to accept applications electronically in a timely fashion, applicants are encouraged to exercise their option to submit applications in paper format. Paper applicants should 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.

Applications must follow the format described in this document and must be complete. Applicants must identify the specific research priority or priorities to which they are responding. If the proposal addresses more than one priority, it should list first on the application the priority that most closely reflects the objective of the proposals. For applications containing more than one project, each project must be identified individually using the format specified in this section. If an application is not in response to any of the priorities listed in this Announcement, it should so state. Applicants should not assume prior knowledge on the part of NMFS as to the relative merits of the project described in the application.

E. Intergovernmental Review

Applications submitted by state and local governments are subject to the provisions of Executive Order 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 EO 12372. To find out about and comply with a State's process under EO 12372, the names, addresses and phone numbers of participating SPOC's are listed in the Office of Management and Budget's home page at:

http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants_spoc.

F. Funding Restrictions

1. Indirect Cost Rates

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 within 90 days of receiving an award to Michele Mazzocchetti, NOAA Grants Management Division, 1325 East West Highway, 11th Floor, Silver Spring, MD 20910, Michele.Mazzocchetti@noaa.gov. In accordance with 2 C.F.R. § 200.414(f), any non-Federal entity that does not have a current negotiated (including provisional) rate may elect to charge a de minimis rate of 10% of modified total direct costs (MTDC) which may be used indefinitely. No documentation is required to justify the 10% de minimis indirect cost rate.

2. Allowable Costs

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, codified at 2 C.F.R. Part 200. Generally, costs that are allowable include salaries, equipment, supplies, and training, as long as these are "necessary and reasonable."

G. Other Submission Requirements

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

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

The first PD/PI listed on the application must include their eRA Commons ID in the "Credential, e.g. agency login" Applicant Identifier field on the SF424 form. Failure to register in the Commons and to include a valid PD/PI Commons ID in the Applicant Identifier field will prevent the successful submission of an electronic application.

Permits and Approvals

It is the applicant's responsibility to obtain all necessary Federal, State, and local government permits and approvals where necessary for the proposed work to be conducted. If applicable, documentation of requests or approvals of permits must be included in the proposal package as attachments or appendices.

Most projects involving directed or incidental impacts (i.e., introducing sound into an animal's environment or employing gear that may entangle or injure) affecting marine mammals and species listed as threatened or endangered under the ESA may require permits or authorizations under section 101 or 104 of the MMPA and/or section 10 of the ESA (50 CFR 222.307 and 222.308). If an ESA permit covering the proposed activities has already been issued, the permit number must be provided in the application. Issuance of the necessary ESA and/or MMPA permit(s) or authorization(s) or evidence that the applicant has submitted a permit application is required in order for a proposal to be considered for funding. If the grant applicant is not the Principal Investigator (PI) or the permit holder, a copy of the authorization to work under the permit and/or a letter of support from the permit holder is required.

Timelines for processing ESA and MMPA permit applications can take upwards of 1 year. Please consider this timing when putting together your application for funding. For further information on ESA and MMPA permit requirements and application procedures, contact the NMFS Office of Protected Resources Permits Division (301-427-8401) or see <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/permits-and-forms#protected-resources>.

Applicants are expected to design their proposals so that they minimize potential adverse impacts on the environment. Applications will be reviewed to ensure that they have sufficient environmental documentation to allow program staff to determine whether the proposal is categorically excluded from further analysis, covered under an existing programmatic analysis, or whether additional analysis is necessary in conformance with requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). See Section VI.B. of this Announcement for more information about NEPA. For those applications needing further analysis, affected applicants will be informed after the merit review stage and asked to assist by providing any information necessary to complete a draft Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement.

Failure to obtain other Federal, State, and local permits, approvals, letters of agreement, or failure to provide information necessary to complete environmental analyses where necessary (i.e., NEPA environmental assessments or documentation) may delay the award of funds if a project is otherwise selected for funding.

H. Address for Submitting Proposals

Application Submission

Only applicants that submit complete and timely full proposals will have their proposals reviewed and evaluated. Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit applications electronically (through <http://www.grants.gov/>). Facsimile transmissions of proposals will not be accepted. For additional information on application requirements or submission procedures, contact:

NOAA Fisheries – Financial Assistance Division

1325 East West Highway, 14th floor

Silver Spring MD 20910

Derek.Orner@noaa.gov

Please refer to important information in submission dates and times above (Section IV.C) to help ensure your application is received on time.

If for any reason applicants are unable to submit their full application through Grants.gov or are concerned about possible problems associated with the Grants.gov system, they may provide a paper copy of their full application by mail. Signed hard copies of applications may be submitted to the contact information above. Applications submitted by mail must include all relevant application elements described in this funding announcement must include a SF-424 form with original ink or valid electronic signature and date from an authorized recipient organization representative, and must be stamped with an official U.S. Postal Service postmark or provided to a commercial carrier with tracking number and receipt on or before 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time (7:59 pm Alaska Time), on the deadline day; private metered postmarks are not acceptable. Regardless of the method of transmission of a paper application (i.e., mailed in or delivery services), applications received more than five business days after the deadline will not be reviewed or considered for funding. Applicants who submit applications by paper are responsible for tracking their application and should notify the NOAA Contact Official in Section VI. of this announcement by email that the application is forthcoming.

V. Application Review Information

Evaluation Criteria

1. Importance/relevance and applicability of proposed projects to the program goals	Maximum Points: 35
This criterion ascertains whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and/or relevance to NOAA, federal, regional, state, or local activities. This ascertains whether the proposed work has relevance to the program goals and to NOAA and NMFS more broadly. For the IEP, this includes the following questions: Does the project facilitate collaboration with Indigenous Knowledge Holders to develop bi-directional and parallel knowledge pathways to support climate-informed fisheries and ecosystem policies? Does the project promote environmental monitoring and knowledge sharing workshops by Alaska Native community members?	

2. Technical/scientific merit	Maximum Points: 35
This criterion assesses whether the approach is technically sound and/or innovative, if the methods are appropriate, and whether there are clear project goals and objectives. This assesses whether the approach is technically sound and innovative, if the methods are appropriate, and whether there are clear project goals and objectives. For the IEP, this includes the following questions: Does the applicant demonstrate that the objectives are realistic and can be reached within the proposed project period? Is the project design appropriate for addressing the research question, and does the project design include a project evaluation that ensures that the goals and objectives of the project will be met? Does the project include collaboration with partners that help to support climate-informed fisheries and ecosystem policies?	
3. Overall qualifications of applicants	Maximum Points: 15
This criterion ascertains whether the applicant possesses the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project. Does the applicant have experience in this field and/or does the applicant show the capability and experience in successfully completing similar projects? Does the applicant demonstrate a knowledge and comprehension of the problem, and is the applicant familiar with related work that is completed or on-going?	
4. Project costs	Maximum Points: 10
This criterion evaluates the budget to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time frame. This budget is evaluated to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time-frame. Is the budget request reasonable, and does the applicant justify the proposed budget request? Are requested funds for salaries and fringe benefits only for those personnel who are directly involved in implementing the proposed project and/or are directly related to specific products or outcomes of the proposed project?	
5. Outreach and Education	Maximum Points: 5
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. This assesses whether the project provides a focused and effective education and outreach strategy regarding NOAA's mission to protect the Nation's natural resources. For the IEP, this includes the following questions: Does the project include a clear strategy for meaningful engagement with Alaska Native community members and communication about project results?	

Review and Selection Process

1. Initial Evaluation of Applications:

Once a full application has been received by NMFS/AFSC, an initial administrative review is conducted to determine compliance with requirements and completeness of the application.

2. Technical Review:

Applications meeting the requirements of this solicitation will undergo a technical merit review. Technical review is conducted by a minimum of three independent reviewers. Each reviewer will individually evaluate and score proposals (1-100 points) using the evaluation criteria provided in Section V.A. This review may involve subject matter experts from both NOAA and non-NOAA organizations.

Following completion of the technical review, the individual technical review scores will be averaged to determine the final technical score for each application. Applications will be ranked in descending order by their final technical scores. A "cutoff" score will be established at approximately 2x the available funding. Applications that scored below the cutoff will be eliminated from further consideration.

For those applications at or above the cutoff technical evaluation score, NMFS may convene a review panel, which may include federal and non-federal members, to review the scored proposals and to enhance NOAA's understanding of the proposals. Each IEP panelist will evaluate, in a group setting, the applications in terms of the significance of the problem or opportunity being addressed, the degree to which the project involves collaboration with appropriate collaborators, proposed means to disseminate project results, and benefits derived from investment in the project.

During the panel discussion, each member of the panel will independently assign a numerical rating between 1.0 and 10.0 (acceptable to excellent) for each application according to the following scale, and provide comments to support their score.

1—Acceptable; application was adequately responsive to the evaluation criteria (Section V. A), and partially addressed program priorities outlined in the NOFO.

5—Good; application was frequently responsive to the evaluation criteria and satisfactorily addressed program priorities outlined in the NOFO.

10—Exceptional; application was highly responsive to the evaluation criteria and exceptionally addressed program priorities outlined in the NOFO.

Panel members will be required to certify they do not have a conflict of interest and that they will maintain confidentiality of the panel deliberations. NOAA will protect panelist identity to the maximum extent permitted by law.

No consensus advice will be given by the IEP Panelists on recommendations or scores. After the panel scores are submitted, a compilation of all proposals in rank order will be developed based on the average score from the review panel.

Selection Factors

The Federal Program Officer will, in consultation with IEP staff as appropriate, review the ranking of the proposals and make recommendations to the Selecting Official, who is NMFS/AFSC Director or designee. The numerical ranking from the panel review will be the primary consideration by the NMFS/AFSC Director in deciding which of the proposals will be recommended for funding to the NOAA Grants Officer. However, the Director of the NMFS/AFSC will select proposals after considering the panel reviews, panel review comments, technical reviews, and recommendations of the Federal Program Officer. The NMFS/AFSC Director shall award in rank order unless it is justified that a proposal be selected out of rank order based upon any of the following factors:

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

NOAA may select all, some, or none of the applications, or part of any application, ask

applicants to work together or combine projects, defer applications to the future, or reallocate funds to different funding categories, to the extent authorized. Applicants may be required, in consultation with NMFS, to further refine or modify study methodology and/or budget as a condition of project approval.

The NOAA Grants Officer will review financial and grants administration aspects of a proposed award, including conducting an assessment of the risk posed by the applicant in accordance with 2 C.F.R. 200.206. See also Review of Risk in Section VI.B. of this Announcement. In addition to reviewing repositories of government-wide eligibility, qualifications or financial integrity information, the risk assessment conducted by NOAA may consider items such as the financial stability of an applicant, quality of the applicant's management systems, an applicant's history of performance, previous audit reports and audit findings concerning the applicant and the applicant's ability to effectively implement statutory, regulatory, or other requirements imposed on non-Federal entities. Upon review of these factors, if appropriate, specific award conditions that respond to the degree of risk may be applied by the NOAA Grants Officer pursuant to 2 C.F.R. 200.207. In addition, NOAA reserves the right to reject an application in its entirety where information is uncovered that raises a significant risk with respect to the responsibility or suitability of an applicant. The final approval of selected applications and issuance of awards will be by the NOAA Grants Officer. The award decision of the Grants Officer is final.

Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

Subject to the availability of funds, review of proposals will occur during the 120 days following the date given in this announcement that the proposals are due to the NMFS/AFSC. Funding should begin during Spring 2024 for most approved projects. Projects should not be expected to begin prior to May 1, 2024, unless otherwise directed by the Federal Program Officer.

VI. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notices

PRE-AWARD COSTS. Per 2 CFR 200.458, NOAA authorizes award recipients to expend pre-award costs up to 90 days before the period of performance start date at the applicant's own risk without approval from NOAA and in accordance with the applicant's internal policies and procedures. Such costs are allowable only to the extent that they would have been allowable if incurred after the date of the Federal award. This does not include direct proposal costs (as defined at 2 CFR 200.460). In no event will NOAA or the Department of Commerce be responsible for direct proposal preparation costs. Pre-award costs will be a portion of, not in addition to, the approved total budget of the award. Pre-award costs expended more than 90 days prior to the period of performance start date require approval from the Grants Officer. This does not change the period of performance start date.

GRANTS OFFICER SIGNATURE. Proposals submitted in response to this solicitation are not considered awards until the Grants Officer has signed the grant agreement. Only Grants Officers can bind the Government to the expenditure of funds. The Grants Officer's digital signature constitutes an obligation of funds by the federal government and formal approval of the award.

LIMITATION OF LIABILITY. Funding for programs listed in this notice is contingent upon the availability of funds. Applicants are hereby given notice that funds may not have been appropriated yet for the programs listed in this notice. Publication of this announcement does not oblige NOAA to award any specific project or to obligate any available funds.

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

UNIFORM ADMINISTRATIVE REQUIREMENTS, COST PRINCIPLES, AND AUDIT

REQUIREMENTS. Through 2 C.F.R. § 1327.101, the Department of Commerce adopted Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards at 2 C.F.R. Part 200, which applies to awards in this program. Refer to <http://go.usa.gov/SBYh> and <http://go.usa.gov/SBg4>.

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE PRE-AWARD NOTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS FOR GRANTS

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

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

HUMAN SUBJECTS RESEARCH. For research projects involving Human Subjects an Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval or an exemption determination will be required in accordance with DOC Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions Section G.05.i "Research Involving Human Subjects" found at <https://www.commerce.gov/oam/policy/financial-assistance-policy>.

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

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

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 about any information concerning organizational performance listed in the Responsibility/Qualification section of SAM.gov for consideration by the awarding agency.

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

C. Reporting

In accordance with 2 CFR 200.328-9 and the terms and conditions of the award, financial reports are to be submitted semi-annually and performance (technical) reports are to be submitted semi-annually. Reports are submitted electronically through eRA.

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

Award recipients will be required to submit financial and performance (technical) reports in accordance with 2 C.F.R. 200.327-329 and the Department of Commerce Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions.

1. All financial reports should be submitted through the NOAA electronic grants management system. 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 period from the start date of the award.
2. Performance Progress Reports must also be submitted to the Federal Program Officer through the NOAA electronic grants management system on a semi-annual schedule and must be submitted no later than 30 days following the end of each 6-month period from the start date of the award. Basic information that should be in all report submissions includes the project title, award number, dates of the award period, dates of the reporting period, and the name(s) of the grantee and the principal investigator. Inclusion of media such as photography and statistics (tables, graphs, etc.) to help document programmatic activities in report submissions is also encouraged. Pertinent, captioned photographs of project activities are requested, and may be included within the progress report document.

Semi-annual progress reports should describe the tasks scheduled for the reporting period (from the proposal and amendments) and the tasks that were actually accomplished in the period. The report should also explain any special problems or differences between the scheduled and accomplished work. The performance reports must also include documentation of all fish caught by vessels participating in the project, including catch that may or may not be directly applicable to the research subject matter.

The final, comprehensive report should include an "Executive Summary" of the project accomplishments which briefly and succinctly summarizes the final report for website or publication use. Limit this summary to no more than one page.

1. Publications, Videos, and Acknowledgement of Sponsorship: Publication of the results or findings of the funded award activities in appropriate professional journals, outreach materials, or press releases, and production of video or other media is encouraged as an important method of recording and reporting scientific information. These are also constructive means to expand access to federally funded research. The recipient is required to submit a copy of any publication to the funding agency, and when releasing information related to a funded project, include a statement that the project or effort undertaken was or is sponsored by NOAA Fisheries Service. The recipient is also responsible for assuring that every publication of material (including Internet sites and videos) based on or developed under an award, except scientific articles or papers appearing in scientific, technical or professional journals, contains the following acknowledgement and disclaimer: "This project received funding under award [number] from NOAA Fisheries Service, in cooperation with the Bycatch Reduction Engineering Program. The statements, findings, conclusions, and recommendations are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of NOAA Fisheries."
2. The Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act, 31 U.S.C. 6101 note. The Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act includes a requirement for awardees of applicable Federal grants to report information about first-tier sub-awards and executive compensation under Federal assistance awards. 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. Refer to OMB guidance published at 2 C.F.R. Part 170 (2015), accessible at <http://go.usa.gov/cCr8j>.

VII. Agency Contacts

For further information about the Indigenous Engagement Program (IEP), contact:

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VIII. Other Information

Not applicable.