# NOTICE OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

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# Executive Summary

## Federal Agency Name

Fisheries Headquarters Program Office (FHQ)

## Funding Opportunity Title

FY25 Saltonstall-Kennedy Pre-Proposal Competition

## Announcement Type

Competitive

## Funding Opportunity Number

NOAA-NMFS-FHQ-2025-26840

## Assistance Listing Number(s)

11.427

## Dates

Pre-proposals must be received at http://www.Grants.gov under the competition link named "FY25 Saltonstall-Kennedy Pre-Proposal Competition", postmarked, or provided to a delivery service by 11:59 pm, Eastern Time, July 23, 2024, 60 days after the posting date of the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO). Use of Grants.gov is preferred. If Grants.gov cannot reasonably be used, use of U.S. mail or another delivery service must be documented with a receipt; private metered postmarks are not acceptable. Postmarked applications received more than 10 business days following the closing date will not be accepted. Within 60 days of the pre-proposal due date, NOAA will inform the authorized representatives if the Saltonstall-Kennedy (S-K) Program encourages or does not encourage submission of a full proposal. Regardless of whether you are encouraged or not encouraged, all those who submit accepted pre-proposals and meet all requirements are eligible to submit a subsequent full proposal. The full proposal competition will be posted under a separate Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO), NOAA-NMFS-FHQ-2025-26868.

**NOTE**: Only the Authorized Representative/Signing Official listed on the application will receive status notifications on any pre-proposal should one be submitted. It will be the responsibility of the Authorized Representative to forward any notification received to others within the project team, including the Project Leader.

When developing your pre-proposal application submission timeline, please keep in mind that you are encouraged to apply through the www.grants.gov website. This electronic submission system is relatively complex for first time users and involves several preliminary registrations to be completed before your application can be submitted. If you have already used the Grants.gov w website, the required registrations may have already been completed. Please allow sufficient time for the application to be submitted electronically and for possible computer delays.

Validation or rejection of your application by Grants.gov may take up to 2 business days after submission. Please consider this process in developing your submission timeline. Applications not adhering to postmark or submission deadlines will be rejected and destroyed.

**NOTE: We strongly encourage all prospective applicants to begin required registrations as early as possible**. Completing the required registrations can take six weeks or longer. Submission due dates will not be extended because of registration delays. Submissions received after the due date will be considered late and will not be accepted.

Applicant organizations and individuals must register for three different Federal systems prior to submitting an application through Grants.gov (SAM.gov, eRA Commons, and Grants.gov).

Applicant organizations and individuals must first register with SAM.gov and obtain a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI). After you obtain your UEI, you can complete your Grants.gov and eRA Commons registrations concurrently.

See Section IV(G) for detailed instructions on registration requirements. If you do not have access to the internet, please contact the Agency Contacts listed in this NOFO for submission instructions

### Funding Opportunity Description

The Saltonstall-Kennedy Act established a fund (known as the S-K fund) used by the Secretary of Commerce to provide grants or cooperative agreements for fisheries research and development projects addressing aspects of U.S. fisheries, including, but not limited to, harvesting, processing, marketing, and associated business infrastructures (seesection IV, F; Funding Restrictions). Under this authority, grants and cooperative agreements are made on a competitive basis (subject to availability of funding) to assist in carrying out projects to expand domestic and foreign markets related to U.S. commercial and recreational fisheries.

The term “U.S. fisheries” refers to any marine fishery (including the Great Lakes) that encompasses commercial, recreational, charter, subsistence, wild capture, and aquaculture that is, or may be, engaged in by citizens or nationals of the United States or other eligible applicants. The objective of the S-K Research and Development Program, referred to throughout this document as the S-K Competitive Grant Program, is to promote U.S. fisheries by assisting the fishing community to address marketing and research needs.

The term “fishing community” means harvesters, marketers, growers, processors, recreational fishermen, charter fishermen, fishermen, and persons providing them with goods and services.

Proposals submitted to this competition must address at least one of the following priorities: Promotion, and Marketing; Development, Infrastructure and Capacity Building; Science or Technology that Enhances Sustainable U.S. Fisheries. This Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) includes information on application requirements and criteria for proposals requesting a maximum of $500,000 in Federal funding for up to a two-year period. Matching funds are not required, nor will they be considered during the evaluation process. Awards are anticipated to start no earlier than September 1, 2025.

# Full Text of Announcement

# I. Funding Opportunity Description

## A. Program Objective

**NOTE: Submission requirements in this NOFO may change from previous year' announcements**. The S-K Program recommends reading the full announcement carefully, paying close attention to Section IV Application and Submission Information, for changes to application submission requirements.

The objectives of the S-K Program and, therefore, the funding priorities for the S-K Grant Competition, have changed over the years since the program began in 1980. The program has evolved as Federal fishery management laws and policies and research needs have evolved in response to changing circumstances.

The Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act requires fishery managers to undertake efforts to prevent overfishing, rebuild overfished fisheries, ensure conservation, minimize by-catch, protect essential fish habitats, and realize the full potential of U.S. fishery resources. It further requires that the Federal government take into account the importance of fishery resources to fishing communities; provide for the sustained participation of such communities; and, to the extent possible, minimize the adverse economic impacts of conservation and management measures on such communities.

The objective of the S-K Research and Development Program, referred to throughout this document as the S-K Competitive Grant Program, is to promote U.S. fisheries by assisting the fishing community to address marketing and research needs.

NMFS seeks applications that demonstrate direct benefits to U.S. fisheries and meaningful participation of fishing communities. The S-K Grant Competition is open to applicants from a variety of sectors, including individuals, industry, academia, and state, local, and Indian Tribal governments.

## B. Program Priorities

Applications shall address one or more of the three priorities listed below. However, a singular research priority that most closely reflects the objectives of your proposal should be identified and will be used by NMFS for review purposes. These priorities are aimed at promoting and developing United States fisheries by growing awareness of and demand for products made from U.S. fishery resources, improving infrastructure, ensuring sustainable harvest and seafood supply, and supporting vibrant recreational fishing opportunities.

Within the scope of the project, applications should include support, cooperation, and/or collaboration with the fishing community.

Solicitation Priorities:

Priority #1 - Promotion and Marketing

Projects sought should:

- Increase market demand and value of U.S. fisheries and/or;
- Demonstrate a direct economic benefit to the fishing community and/or;
- Develop or improve regional, national or global public relations and marketing opportunities to increase domestic production and/or demand for domestic products, and/or;
- Include marketing strategies which involve participation of the seafood industry locally, regionally, or nationally, and/or;
- Conduct domestic market research and/or develop value-added products focused on stimulating demand for U.S. fisheries.

Priority #2 - Development, Infrastructure, and Capacity Building

Projects sought should:

- Develop new or underutilized U.S. fisheries; and/or

- Improve the capacity of fishery sectors, including but not limited to indigenous,artisanal, recreational and other sectors to participate in scientific initiatives, cooperative management, fishery management regulatory processes, or developing and/or marketing of new sustainable fishing opportunities; and/or
- Encourage greater or more effective participation by fishing communities in a targeted area of the U.S. fishery supply chain; and/or
- Demonstrate that any proposed new infrastructure or infrastructure improvement is needed and provides a broad benefit for the fishing community (see Section IV, F. Funding Restrictions).

Priority #3 - Science or Technology that Enhances Sustainable U.S. Fisheries
Projects sought should:

- Directly impact a need identified by the fishing community through science and technology based projects to increase harvest or prevent reduction of harvest of seafood, increase recreational fishing opportunities, or create new market opportunities for fishing communities; and/or
- Demonstrate a direct need or benefit as identified by the fishing community, and connect with one or more segments of the U.S. fisheries supply chain.

### C. Program Authority

Authority for the Saltonstall-Kennedy Program is provided under the Saltonstall Kennedy Act, as amended (15 U.S.C. 713c-3).

## II. Award Information

### A. Funding Availability

Grant awards are dependent on the availability of Federal funding as provided in enacted Appropriations Acts. This NOFO is being released prior to final appropriations due to award process time frames. Final Congressional direction has not been determined. Applicants are not guaranteed any level of funding.
Project proposals requesting less than $25,000 or greater than $500,000 in federal funding, will not be accepted or reviewed. The number of awards made as a result of this solicitation will depend on the number of eligible applications received, the amount of funds requested for each project, the merit and ranking of the proposals, and the amount of funds made available to the S-K Program.
Approximately 50% of available funds may be awarded to project proposals addressing Priority #1.
Approximately 25% of available funds may be awarded to project proposals addressing Priority #2.
Approximately 25% of available funds may be awarded to project proposals addressing Priority #3.
Approximately 10% of available funding may be allocated for projects requesting up to $100,000 in Federal funding.
Multiple pre-proposal submissions from the same entity or applicant are limited to three.

### B. Project/Award Period

We will award grants or cooperative agreements for a maximum period of two years (24 months), but shorter term project proposals are welcomed. The requested award start date must begin on the first day of the month and end on the last day of the month. Project start dates will be no earlier than September 1, 2025 and no later than March 1, 2026. No awards will be funded under this current NOFO. Whether you are encouraged or not encouraged, all accepted Pre-Proposal submissions under this NOFO are eligible to submit a full proposal under a separate Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO), NOAA-NMFS-FHQ-2025-26868, which will post in Grants.gov on September 26, 2024. Award obligation resulting from the full proposal competition will be dependent upon availability of Federal funding as provided by Congress, and acceptable completion of all NOAA/applicant negotiations including National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis and permit requirements, and the provision of other supporting documentation as requested. Applicants selected to receive funding may be asked to modify the project start date.

### C. Type of Funding Instrument

The funding instrument (grant or cooperative agreement) will be determined by NOAA. A cooperative agreement will be used if the proposed project involves substantial Federal involvement. Substantial involvement means that, after award, NOAA staff will assist, guide, coordinate, 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 resides with the award recipient for the project as a whole, although specific tasks and activities may be shared among the recipient 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's Authorized Representative and NOAA/NMFS representatives.

## III. Eligibility Information

### A. Eligible Applicants

You are eligible to apply for a grant or a cooperative agreement under the Saltonstall Kennedy Grant Competition if:

1. You are a citizen or national of the United States;

2. You represent an entity that is a corporation, partnership, association, or other non Federal entity, non-profit or otherwise (including Indian tribes), if such entity is a citizen of the United States within the meaning of section 2 of the Shipping Act, 1916, as amended (46 U.S.C. app. 802); or

3. You are a citizen of the Republic of the Marshall Islands, Republic of Palau, or the States of Micronesia.

We recognize the interest of the Secretaries of Commerce and Interior in defining appropriate fisheries policies and programs that meet the needs of the U.S. insular areas, so we encourage applications from individuals, government entities, and businesses in U.S. insular areas. We support cultural and gender diversity in our programs and encourage women and minority individuals and groups to submit applications. We are also committed to broadening the participation of Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs), which include Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Hispanic Serving Institutions, and Tribal Colleges and Universities, in our grant programs. To find out more about MSIs go to https://www.doi.gov/pmb/eeo/doi-minority-serving-institutions-program

We encourage applications from members of fishing communities (including the Great Lakes) and applications that involve fishing community cooperation and participation. We will consider the extent of fishing community involvement when evaluating the potential benefit of funding a proposal.

Eligible Applicants must submit a pre-proposal that meets the submission requirements listed in this NOFO by the established due date.

Non Eligible Applicants

You are not eligible to submit an application under this program if you are an employee of any Federal agency; a member of the American Fisheries Advisory Committee (AFAC); a Regional Fishery Management Council (Council); or an employee of a Council. However, Council members who are not Federal employees can submit an application to the S-K Grant Competition.

Multiple pre-proposal submissions from the same entity or applicant are limited to three.

NOTE: We strongly encourage all prospective applicants to begin required registrations as early as possible. Completing the required registrations can take six weeks or longer. Submission due dates will not be extended because of registration delays. Submissions received after the due date will be considered late and will not be accepted.

Applicant organizations and individuals must register for three different Federal systems prior to submitting an application through Grants.gov (SAM.gov, eRA Commons, and Grants.gov).

Registration Requirements: Applicant organizations and individuals must first register with SAM.gov and obtain a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI). After you obtain your UEI, you can complete your Grants.gov and eRA Commons registrations concurrently.

See Section IV(G) for detailed instructions on required registrations. If you do not have access to the internet, please contact the Agency Contacts listed in this NOFO for submission instructions.

### B. Cost Share or Matching Requirement

No cost sharing or matching is required. Cost sharing is voluntary and will not increase the chances of your project being selected. If you choose to cost-share and if your application is selected for funding, you will be obligated to account for the amount of cost share dollars reflected in the award documents, signed by the NOAA Grants Officer. This commitment of matching dollars becomes a binding offer. If project costs are shared, NMFS must provide at least 50 percent of tota project costs.

### 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 Federal agency, a written agreement detailing this participation must be provided by an agency official authorized to make the commitment. The agreement should describe any planning, scheduling, conducting, and analyzing of proposed project activities or work to be conducted by a Federal employee, and/or resources provided by the partnering agency, e.g. equipment or lab space.

Infrastructure (see section IV, F; Funding Restrictions).

## IV. Application and Submission Information

### A. Address to Request Application Package

The pre-proposal application must include a completed and signed standard form SF-424, available at http://www.grants.gov.

If an applicant has problems with Grants.gov, contact the Grants.gov Customer Support at 1-800-518-4726 or support@Grants.gov. If you do not have internet access, a pre-proposal application package may be received by contacting Jennifer Foss, S-K Program Manager, NOAA/UNH Joint Hydrographic Center, Chase Ocean Engineering Bldg, 24 Colovos Road, Durham, NH 03824, or email: Jennifer.foss@noaa.gov. Any suggestions or questions regarding the solicitation and application process should be submitted to the S-K Program Manager at Jennifer.foss@noaa.gov.

### B. Content and Form of Application

Format requirements for pre-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 no less than single-spaced printed or typed, in at least 12-point font, and printable on 8.5-inch x 11-inch paper, with 1- inch margins. If these requirements are not followed, the pre-proposal will be withdrawn without consideration.

Pre-proposals should be submitted through Grants.gov. The SF-424 must be filled out and signed as part of the grants.gov pre-proposal process. Though the SF-424 form allows for additional attachments, do not use this function. Pre-Proposals may only have an SF-424 form, and a separate 2-page pre-proposal narrative. Please do not include any additional pages other than the 2-page pre-proposal narrative and the SF-424 form. If these requirements are not followed the pre-proposal will be withdrawn without consideration.

The pre-proposal process is intended to provide an indication to potential applicants of the technical merit and the relevancy of the proposed project to the S-K Program before preparing a full proposal. The intent is to reduce the burden of preparing full proposals that do not have a high probability for being funded. When drafting a pre-proposal, applicants should clearly convey how your proposed project meets the four evaluation criteria and the identified single priority area. Late or incomplete pre-proposals, as well as those that deviate from content or format requirements, will be withdrawn without consideration.

Neither Federal employees nor AFAC members are allowed to assist in the preparation of pre-proposals. Additionally, AFAC members, Fishery Management Councils or employees of a Fishery Management Council are restricted from participating on an S-K project as a PI, Co-PI, Project Lead, Collaborator or Partner. Applications that do not follow these eligibility guidelines will not be accepted into the competition. However, they may provide applicants with information on program goals, funding priorities, and pre-proposal application procedures. Because this is a competitive program, federal employees and AFAC members will not provide assistance in conceptualizing, developing, or structuring pre proposals.

The pre-proposal must contain a completed SF-424 and a maximum 2 page narrative. The SF-424 form will serve as the cover page for the 2-page pre-proposal and does not count towards pre-proposal page limits. Each pre- proposal may not exceed two pages, single-spaced, and may not include any other attachments. Pre-proposals that deviate from content or format requirements will be withdrawn without further consideration.

The 2-page pre-proposal narrative must be submitted using the format described above and must provide:

a. Name of organization, Title of project, and Project Leader(s), with email contact(s).

b. Identify how you are part of the Fishing Community as defined in the Executive Summary (Applicants that are not part of the fishing community should provide the name for a member or entity of the fishing community who can verify the project’s fishing community’s support, cooperation and/or collaboration.)

c. Priority: Applicants should identify the single priority that is most addressed by the preproposal. If more than one priority is addressed by the pre-proposal, one priority must be identified as the primary. The primary priority will determine the subject matter expert used to evaluate your pre-proposal. If one is not identified, a priority will be identified for you.

d. Background section that sets the stage for the work and identifies which one of the priorities in Section I.B the pre-proposal addresses directly.

e. Clear statement of why the work would benefit the fishing community.

f. Clear statement of objectives and a brief description of how objectives will be accomplished.

g. Identification of required permits (i.e. ESA, MMPA) and permit numbers, if applicable.

h. Estimated budget amount (a detailed budget narrative is not required).

Information contained in the pre-proposal narrative needs to provide sufficient information for reviewers to evaluate the project based on the pre-proposal evaluation criteria (see Section V. A. Evaluation Criteria).

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

Please identify any required permits (i.e. ESA, MMPA) and permit numbers, if applicable.

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

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

Each applicant (unless the applicant is an individual that is exempted 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, 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 the NOAA is ready to make a federal award, NOAA may determine that the applicant is not qualified to receive a federal award and use that determination as a basis for making a federal award to another applicant.

Applicants should allow a minimum of two weeks to complete the SAM registration prior to the application due date specified in this NOFO; registration is required only once, but must be renewed periodically. On April 4, 2022, the federal government began using a new UEI number provided by SAM. The organization’s Employer Identification Number (EIN) will be needed to receive a UEI, which is provided by SAM. If an entity is already registered in SAM.gov, the new UEI has already been assigned and is viewable in SAM.gov. This includes inactive registrations.

Note: 2 CFR 25.110(b): Exceptions for individuals. None of the requirements in this part apply to an individual who applies for or receives Federal financial assistance as a natural person (i.e., unrelated to any business or nonprofit organization he or she may own or operate in his or her name).

## D. Submission Dates and Times

Pre-proposals must be received at http://www.Grants.gov under the competition link named “FY25 Saltonstall-Kennedy Pre-Proposal Competition”, postmarked, or provided to a delivery service by 11:59 pm, Eastern Time, 60 days after the posting date of the NOFO. Use of Grants.gov is preferred. If Grants.gov cannot reasonably be used, use of U.S. mail or another delivery service must be documented with a receipt; private metered postmarks are not acceptable. Postmarked applications received more than 10 business days following the closing date will not be accepted. Within 60 days of the pre-proposal due date, NOAA will inform the Authorized Representative identified on the SF-424, based upon their pre-proposal, if they are encouraged or not encouraged to submit a full proposal. Whether you are encouraged or not encouraged, all those who submit an accepted pre-proposal and meet all requirements are eligible to submit a subsequent full proposal. Full proposals must be submitted under a separate NOFO, NOAA-NMFS-FHQ-2025-26868, which will post in grants.gov on September 26, 2024.

Eligible Applicants must submit a pre-proposal by the date specified in the Executive Summary section. Full proposals, submitted under the separate NOFO will not be reviewed or evaluated if a pre-proposal was not received and ranked.

**NOTE:** This NOFO is for pre-proposal submission only.  Full proposals will be submitted under a subsequent NOFO, NOAA-NMFS-FHQ-2025-26868, which will post in grants.gov on September 26, 2024.

## 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 19 on SF-424 regarding clearance by the State Single Point of Contact (SPOC), established as a result of EO 12372.

## F. Funding Restrictions

Projects that mainly involve infrastructure (to include personnel, buildings or equipment) development that are for the primary benefit of the applicant are not eligible for funding under the S-K Program. Such projects will be rejected from the competition with no further review.

The S-K Program will not pay fees, fund-raising activities, travel for activities not directly related to project implementation, travel or salaries for Federal employees, or profit on any award. NOAA funds may not be used to support ongoing efforts to comply with legal requirements, including permit conditions, mitigation and settlement agreements. However, grant funds may be used to support projects that enhance or improve upon existing baseline compliance efforts.

Applicants will not be reimbursed for time expended or costs incurred in developing a project or in preparing an application, or in any discussions or negotiations with the agency prior to the award. Such expenditures may not be considered as part of the applicant's cost share or matching contribution. Profits are not paid on an award under the S-K Program.

## G. Other Submission Requirements

Registration requirements

NOTE: We strongly encourage all prospective applicants to begin required registrations as early as possible. Completing the required registrations can take six weeks or longer. Submission due dates will not be extended because of registration delays. Submissions received after the due date will be considered late and will not be accepted.

Applicant organizations and individuals must register for three different Federal systems prior to submitting an application through Grants.gov (SAM.gov, eRA Commons, and Grants.gov). See below for more detailed information on each required registration process.

1. System for Award Management (SAM.gov)
SAM.gov registration is required to do business with the U.S. government. After registering with SAM.gov, you will receive a 12-character Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) that you will use throughout the application process.

We recommend allowing at least three weeks for initial SAM.gov registrations and at least two weeks for SAM.gov registration renewals. Additional information on SAM.gov registration is available here: https://sam.gov/content/entity-registration

You must update your SAM.gov registration any time your entity's information changes. You must also renew and revalidate your entity's SAM.gov registration at least every 12 months from the date you last certified to and submitted the registration. The renewal process may take up to two weeks. Your SAM.gov account's primary point of contact will receive an email message alerting them to the renewal requirement at 60 days, 30 days, and 15 days prior to expiration. If you do not renew your registration by the deadline, it will expire.

2. eRA Commons
After completing your SAM.gov registration and receiving your Unique Entity Identifier (UEI), you must register with eRA Commons and create several required user accounts. NOAA uses eRA Commons to process grant applications and manage grant awards.

NOTE: eRA Commons requires applicants to create one ORGANIZATIONAL PROFILE and two USER ACCOUNTS before submitting an application. These requirements are described in detail below.
We recommend allowing at least three weeks for eRA Commons registration. This process can be completed concurrently with your Grants.gov registration. Additional information on the eRA Commons registration process is available here:
https://www.commerce.gov/ocio/programs/gems/applicant-and-grantee-training

After creating an overall account for your "institution", which may be for your organization or yourself as an individual, eRA Commons requires you to set up at least two user accounts: one Signing Official (SO) account and one Program Director/Principal Investigator (PD/PI) account.
● The Signing Official (SO) user account must be assigned to an individual with signature authority to legally bind the organization in grants administration matters. The SO will receive 4-5 emails throughout the registration process.
● The Program Director/Principal Investigator (PD/PI) account must be assigned to an individual with primary responsibility for the project(s) described in the grant application. The eRA
Commons User ID for the PD/PI must also be listed on the SF-424 form for item 4 (Applicant Identifier).

Your SO and PD/PI user accounts must be active before you submit an application. Both accounts can be assigned to the same individual if appropriate.

3. Grants.Gov
After completing your SAM.gov registration and receiving your Unique Entity Identifier (UEI), you must complete a one-time registration process with Grants.gov. Grants.gov is a government-wide portal used to solicit and accept grant applications.

We recommend allowing at least two weeks for Grants.gov registration. This process can be completed concurrently with your eRA Commons registration. Additional information on the Grants.gov registration process is available here:
https://www.grants.gov/applicants/applicant-registration

Submission Validation

The Grants.gov and eRA Commons validation processes for a submitted application can take up to two business days after submission. Only validated applications are sent to NOAA to review. To ensure successful submission of an application, we strongly recommend that you submit a final and complete application at least two business days prior to the submission deadline.

Grants.gov and eRA Commons will not accept submissions if the applicant has not been authorized or if credentials are incorrect. Submissions may also be rejected if:

- The Project Director/Principal Investigator (PD/PI)'s account username within eRA Commons is not provided on the SF-424 form for item 4 (Applicant Identifier).
- The Universal Entity Identifier (UEI) from SAM.gov is not provided on the SF-424 form for item 8.c (UEI).
- The Congressional District is not entered in the correct format on the SF-424 form for item 16 (Congressional Districts). The correct format is: [State Abbreviation]-[three digit district number]. For example, Virginia's 1st Congressional District would be listed as VA-001.
- PDF files are not flattened. To flatten a fillable PDF, you can use the "Print to PDF" function from any web browser or PDF reader application.
- File sizes exceed 100 MB.
- Page sizes are greater than 8.5x11.
- File names exceed 50 characters (including spaces).
- File names include special characters.

After you submit your application, you will receive an automatic acknowledgment of receipt that contains a Grants.gov tracking number. This notification indicates receipt by Grants.gov only, not receipt by NOAA. Applications submitted through Grants.gov will be accompanied by FOUR automated responses (1-Grants.gov Submission Receipt; 2-Grants.gov Submission Validation Receipt for Application; 3-Grants.gov Grantor Agency Retrieval Receipt for Application; 4-Grants.gov Agency Tracking Number Assignment for Application).

In addition to the Grants.gov automated notification messages, you may receive automated email notifications of any errors or warnings identified by eRA Commons. You must resolve all eRA Commons errors prior to the application due date in order for the application to be processed.

Once an electronic application is accepted in eRA Commons, you will receive an additional automated notification that the completed application was received and that an application number will be assigned.

You should save and print the proof of submission messages from both Grants.gov and eRA Commons. If you do not receive an acceptance message from both Grants.gov and eRA Commons, you should follow up with the agency contact listed in VII to confirm NOAA's receipt of the complete submission.

### H. Address for Submitting Proposals

## V. Application Review Information

### Evaluation Criteria

Pre-Proposal Evaluation Criteria

Scoring will be determined by subject matter experts. Reviewers will assign scores to pre-proposals ranging from 0-100 points (whole numbers only) based on the following four evaluation criteria, which need to be addressed in the pre-proposal. The maximum score for each criterion is indicated in the parentheses. The S-K Competitive Grant Program will review the complete set of pre-proposals and consider the merit ranking and relevance to determine whether to 'encourage' or 'not encourage' full proposals.

| 1. Need and Relevance | Maximum Points: 30 |
|---|---|
| This criterion ascertains whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and/or relevance to NOAA, federal, regional, state, or local activities.<br>oes the pre-proposal:<br>• Define the need of a fishing community?<br>• Address the identified need?<br>• Describe its relevance to the S-K priority described in Section B? | |
| **2. Objectives and approach** | **Maximum Points: 25** |
| 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.<br>oes the pre-proposal:<br>• Clearly identify the objective(s)<br>• Provide a clear description of the approach to be used | |
| **3. Connection to the fishing community** | **Maximum Points: 30** |
| his criterion ascertains whether the applicant possesses the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project.<br>oes the pre-proposal:<br>• Clearly demonstrate involvement/collaboration with the fishing community?<br>• Meaningfully incorporate participation of the fishing community into the project design?<br>• Clearly demonstrate a commitment from the collaborators? | |
| **4. Benefit of project** | **Maximum Points: 15** |
| This criterion evaluates the budget to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time frame.<br>oes the pre-proposal:<br>• Demonstrate direct benefits to U.S. fisheries?<br>• Demonstrate return on investment (cultural, economic, or other)? | |

## Review and Selection Process

This will be a two-stage competition, with a Pre-Proposal and full proposal stage. ONLY Pre-proposals will be submitted to this current NOFO. Full proposals must be submitted under a separate NOFO, NOAA-NMFS-FHQ-2025-26868, which will post in grants.gov on September 26, 2024. An administrative review will be conducted by NOAA to determine compliance with requirements, completeness of the application, and responsiveness to this NOFO and programmatic priorities.

Encouragement of pre-proposals is based primarily on how well the proposal addresses the four evaluation criteria located in section "V. Pre-Proposal Evaluation Criteria". Scoring will be determined by subject matter experts, providing scores up to the maximum score indicated in parentheses for each criterion. The Selecting Official will review the complete set of pre-proposals and consider the merit ranking and relevance to determine whether to 'encourage' or 'not encourage' full proposal submission.

A summary statement will only be provided to the Authorized Representative listed on the SF-424 submitted for a pre-proposal, stating whether their pre-proposal was complete and timely and whether a full proposal is 'encouraged' or 'not encouraged' for the full proposal stage. It will be the responsibility of the Authorized Representative to forward notification to the Project Leader(s). Regardless of whether you are encouraged or not encouraged, all those who submit accepted pre-proposals and meet all requirements are eligible to submit full proposals.

We do not have to screen applications before the submission deadline in order to identify deficiencies that would cause your application to be rejected so that you would have an opportunity to correct them. However, should we do so and provide you information about deficiencies, or should you independently decide it is desirable to do so, you may correct any deficiencies in your application before the deadline. After the deadline, the application must remain as submitted; no changes can be made to it. If your application does not conform to the requirements listed above by the submission deadline, the application will not be considered and will be withdrawn.

NOTE: All Pre-proposal applicants will receive reviewer comments. Whether you are encouraged or not encouraged, you may submit a full proposal under the full proposal competition. See Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO), NOAA-NMFS-FHQ-2025-26868, which will post in grants.gov on September 26, 2024. No awards will be funded under this current NOFO. All eligible applicants who were either encouraged or not encouraged under this NOFO may proceed to submit under the full proposal competition.

### Selection Factors

The Selecting Official shall award in the rank order unless the proposal is justified to be selected out of rank order based on one or more of the following factors:

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

### Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

Awards will not be funded based on the current NOFO. Successful applicants will be notified of whether they are encouraged or not encouraged to submit a full proposal to the S-K Full Proposal competition. Whether you are encouraged or not encouraged, you may submit a full proposal under the full proposal competition. See Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO), NOAA-NMFS-FHQ-2025-26868, which will post in grants.gov on September 26, 2024.

## 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

**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.

### C. Reporting

In accordance with 2 CFR 200.328-9 and the terms and conditions of the award, financial reports are to be submitted every 6 months and performance (technical) reports are to be submitted every 6 months. 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.

Awards will not be funded based on the current NOFO. As such, no reports are required to be submitted based on this NOFO.

## VII. Agency Contacts

Headquarters - Program Manager – Jennifer Foss, telephone (202) 657-3389 email: Jennifer.foss@noaa.gov,

Alaska Region: Kristin Cieciel, telephone: (907) 586-7273-; email: Kristin.cieciel@noaa.gov;

Greater Atlantic Region: Nicole MacDonald, telephone (978) 281-9299; email: Nicole.MacDonald@noaa.gov;

Pacific Islands Region: Scott Bloom, telephone: (808) 725-5055; email: Scott.Bloom@noaa.gov;

Southeast Region: Kim Raneses, telephone: (206) 669-4151; email: Kim.Raneses@noaa.gov;

West Coast Region: Katie Glick, telephone: (301) 427-7843; email: Katherine.a.glick@noaa.gov.

## VIII. Other Information

The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) (5 U.S.C. § 552) generally provides that any person has a right of access to Federal agency records, except to the extent that such records (or portions thereof) are protected from disclosure by exemptions. The DOC regulations implementing the FOIA are found at Subpart A of 15 CFR Part 4 (Disclosure of Government Information) which sets forth rules for DOC and operating units to make requested materials, information, and records publicly available under FOIA. Unless prohibited by law and to the extent permitted under the FOIA, contents of applications and proposals submitted by successful applicants may be released in response to FOIA requests. In addition, 2 CFR §200.315 (Intangible property) requires that research data relating to published research findings produced under an award that were used by the Federal Government in developing an agency action that has the force and effect of law will be made available to the public through the procedures established under the FOIA.