2023/2024 Sea Scallop Research Set Aside

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. Funding Opportunity Description 4
A. Program Objective 4
B. Program Priorities 4
C. Program Authority 7
II. Award Information 7
A. Funding Availability 7
B. Project/Award Period 8
C. Type of Funding Instrument 8
III. Eligibility Information 8
A. Eligible Applicants 8
B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement 9
C. Other Criteria that Affect Eligibility 9
IV. Application and Submission Information 9
A. Address to Request Application Package 9
B. Content and Form of Application 9
C. Unique Entity Identifier and System for Award Management (SAM) 14
D. Submission Dates and Times 14
E. Intergovernmental Review 15
F. Funding Restrictions 15
G. Other Submission Requirements 16
V. Application Review Information 18
A. Evaluation Criteria 18
B. Review and Selection Process 19
C. Selection Factors 19
D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates 20
VI. Award Administration Information 20
A. Award Notices 20
B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements 20
C. Reporting 25
VII. Agency Contacts 26
VIII. Other Information 26

NOTICE OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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

Funding Opportunity Title: 2023/2024 Sea Scallop Research Set Aside

Announcement Type: Initial

Funding Opportunity Number: NOAA-NMFS-GARFO-2023-2007509

Federal Assistance Listings Number: 11.454, Unallied Management Projects

Dates: Complete proposals/applications must be received on or before 5 p.m. EDT on November 18,2022. Proposals received after the established deadline will be rejected and returned to the sender without consideration. For proposals submitted through Grants.gov, a date and time receipt indication will be the basis of determining timeliness. The proposal must be validated by Grants.gov in order to be considered timely. PLEASE NOTE: It may take Grants.gov up to two (2) business days to validate or reject the application. Please keep this in mind in developing your submission timeline.

For those without access to the Internet, one signed original and two hard copy applications must be postmarked or received by the established due date for the program at the following address: Ryan Silva, NMFS, Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office, Gloucester, MA 01930, ATTN: 2022/2023 Atlantic Sea Scallop Research Set-Aside (RSA) Program. Use of U.S. mail or another delivery service must be documented with a receipt. Note that late-arriving hard copy proposals provided to a delivery service on or before 5:00 p.m. on the closing date for applications will be accepted for review if the applicant can document that the proposal was provided to the guaranteed delivery service by the specified closing date and time and if the proposal is received by NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) no later than 5 p.m., two business days following the closing date. No facsimile or electronic mail proposals will be accepted. April 1, 2022, should be used as the proposed start date on proposals, unless otherwise directed by the Program Officer.

Funding Opportunity Description: NMFS, in coordination with the New England Fishery Management Council (Council), is soliciting proposals under the Sea Scallop Research Set Aside (RSA) Program. Projects funded under the Scallop RSA Program must enhance the knowledge of the scallop fishery resource or contribute to the body of information on which scallop management decisions are made. Priority will be given to proposals that investigate research priorities developed by the Council, which are detailed under the Program Priorities section of

this announcement.

Successful applicants will be awarded scallop RSA quota. No federal funds are provided for research under this notification. Rather, proceeds generated from the sale of RSA quota will be used to fund approved activities and compensate scallop vessel owners.

New Program Requirements:

Commercial Fishing Vessel Safety: Fieldwork activities may require additional safety inspections and permitting per US Coast Guard safety requirements. Documentation must be filed with NOAA and approved prior to initiating on-water activities. Complete information concerning this requirement is provided under section IV.B of this announcement.
Recipients will be REQIRED TO SUBMIT RECEIPTS, or other proof of purchase for any equipment or supplies costing $5,000 or more. The receipts should be included on the next scheduled progress report after the purchase has been made.

FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Program Objective

The Scallop RSA Program was established through the Scallop Fishery Management Plan (FMP) to address scallop research priorities developed by the Council.

B. Program Priorities

Projects funded under the Scallop RSA Program must enhance the understanding of the scallop resource or contribute to scallop fishery management decisions. Priority is given to proposals addressing scallop research priorities as set forth below.

Applicants are encouraged to consider previously funded scallop research projects when developing proposals. Applicants responding to scallop survey priorities are encouraged to review and consider the findings of the Scallop Survey Methodologies Peer Review, which was convened by the Northeast Fisheries Science Center in March 2015. Reports and additional information for this peer review can be obtained from the Program Officer upon request.

2023/ 2024 Scallop RSA Research Priorities

High Priority:

1. SCALLOP RESOURCE SURVEYS: Industry-based scallop surveys using dredge and/or optical tools conducted at varying sampling intensities (e.g., intensive and resource-wide), and analysis of collected survey data needed to support annual Atlantic Sea Scallop fishery management and scallop science needs. This includes industry-based surveys within Georges Bank and/or the Mid-Atlantic resource areas, and the Gulf of Maine including the Northern Gulf of Maine Management area.

Survey results must be available by early August of the year in which the survey is conducted (e.g., survey results that would inform 2024 fishing effort decisions must be available by mid-August 2023). The survey or surveys do not need to be carried out by a single grant recipient. In addition, the data needs of some resource areas benefit from redundant surveys that use different sampling technologies (e.g., optical and dredge). Survey data will be used to develop estimates of total and exploitable biomass. Successful projects may be asked to provide data in a standardized format. The primary objective of these

surveys would be to provide length frequencies, abundance and biomass estimates.

Medium Priorities: (Priorities 2-7, Not Listed in Rank Order – Equal Importance)

2. SCALLOP BIOLOGY: Research on Atlantic Sea scallop biology, including studies aimed at understanding recruitment processes (e.g., reproduction and gonad development, timing of spawning, larval transport, larval and early post-settlement stages, source/sink dynamics, age and growth, and yield), spatial population dynamics of the scallop resource, and examination of environmental stressors (anthropogenic and natural) and climate change on all of these processes. This priority also includes research on natural mortality processes, such as scallop predation (e.g., starfish, crab, snails), discard mortality, juvenile mortality events, and disease and parasites. The results of biology research should be informative to scallop stock assessments and projection models (current and future) and to support decision-making by fishery managers.

3. TURTLES: Research to support the investigation of sea turtle behavior in the Mid-Atlantic and Georges Bank (via satellite tagging or other means). This could include, but is not limited to, research to understand their seasonal movements, vertical habitat utilization, and the status and range of the population in response to climate change. This could also include research on gear design to reduce incidental takes of ESA-listed species. This research could assist in the collection of data that may be required by current or future biological opinions, to address reasonable and prudent measures of the biological opinion and could be used to evaluate current turtle regulations (e.g., timing and spatial extent of gear modifications). To the extent practical, data collected during turtle research should be leveraged to support decision making by fishery managers (e.g., bottom temperature data).

4. SCALLOP RESOURCE ENHANCEMENT: Research focused on the development of Atlantic sea scallop enhancement tools (spat collection, seed rearing in hatcheries, grow out of juvenile scallops, and offshore seeding of hatchery reared spat) to supplement the scallop population and fishery harvest in the federally managed scallop fishery. Research could focus on the development of standards and best practices for using husbandry techniques to enhance the wild capture fishery while mitigating the impact of predators, or could evaluate the economic feasibility of enhancement efforts. This includes the placement of scallops in areas where they are more likely to contribute to wild sets of scallops. Research could focus on projects that aim to develop and(or) refine techniques for growing seed from spat and transplanting those scallops to beds in federal waters. Projects conducted in state waters should describe plans to comply with local and state regulations.

5. HABITAT CHARACTERIZATION RESEARCH: Research including (but not limited

to): Continuation of before after control impact (BACI) dredge studies; identification of, which species and life history stages depend on particular habitats vulnerable to alteration by the scallop fishery for use as nursery, over-wintering, or spawning areas; evaluation of long-term or chronic effects of scallop fishing on the ecosystem; and habitat recovery potential from fine scale fishing effort. In particular, projects that would evaluate Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) closures to assess whether these areas are accomplishing their stated purposes and to assist better definition of the complex ecosystem processes that occur in these areas would be of interest. Finally, investigation of variability in dredge efficiency across habitats, times, areas, and gear designs to allow for more accurate quantitative estimates of scallop dredge impacts on the seabed and development of practicable methods to minimize or mitigate those impacts would also qualify under this research priority.

6. FISHING IN HIGH DENSITY AREAS: Research to examine the impacts of intensive fishing effort in areas of high scallop densities such as impacts of sediment disruption, impact of high volumes of viscera on the benthic environment and water quality, scallop shell damage, repeated harvest/discarding cycles, and re-examination of non-harvest mortality assumptions. This may include research that occurs concurrently with harvest. This priority includes research into fisherman’s behavior and decision making and ways to improve fishing practices to minimize waste and maximize yield.

7. WIND: Research aimed to support scallop management through studies that assess socioeconomic impacts on the scallop fishery from offshore wind energy development and production across multiple lease and call areas. This priority also includes research that aims to characterize the impacts of offshore wind energy development on scallop surveys through simulation modeling recommended by the Scallop Survey Working Group, and research that assesses the utility and feasibility of alternative sampling tools.

General Priorities: (Priorities 8-9, Not Listed in Rank Order – Equal Importance)

8. BYCATCH: Identification and evaluation of methods to reduce the impacts of the scallop fishery with respect to bycatch of small scallops and non-target species. This would include projects that determine seasonal bycatch rates of non-target species, characterize spatial and temporal distribution patterns, collect and analyze catch and bycatch data on a near-real time basis, as well as the associated discard mortality rates of key bycatch species. Research efforts focusing on non-target bycatch should provide results that would help the scallop industry avoid or respond to the implementation of accountability measures. Projects should consider the enforceability and feasibility of regulations in the commercial fishery.

9. COMMERCIAL DREDGE GEAR: Commercial dredge research to improve scallop catch

efficiency, improve scallop size selectivity, reduce scallop damage (discard and incidental mortality), reduce non-target species bycatch, and to reduce fuel consumption and improve energy efficiency.

C. Program Authority

Statutory authority for this program is provided under sections 303(b)(11), 402(e), and 404(c) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson Act), 16 U.S.C. 1853(b)(11), 16 U.S.C. 1881a(e), and 16 U.S.C. 1881c(c), respectively. The Scallop RSA Program is established through the Scallop FMP (69 FR 35193, June 23, 2004) and implementing regulations at 50 CFR 648.56.

II. Award Information

A. Funding Availability

Successful applicants will be awarded scallop RSA quota. No federal funds are provided for research under this notification. Rather, proceeds generated from the sale of RSA quota will be used to fund approved activities and compensate scallop vessel owners. The Federal Government is not liable for any costs incurred by the researcher or vessel owner should the sale of set-aside quota not fully reimburse the researcher or vessel owner for their expenses. Any additional funds generated through the sale of set aside landings, above the cost of the research activities, shall be retained by the vessel owner as compensation for the use of his/her vessel.

The Scallop RSA sub-Annual Catch Limit (ACL) is 1.275 million pounds per scallop fishing year (April through March). Under the previous 2022/2023 Notice of Funding Opportunity, NMFS awarded 47,057 pounds of scallops from the 2023 sub-ACL to support multiyear research activities. Consequently, under this solicitation there are 1,227,943 pounds available from the 2023 RSA sub-ACL, and 1.275 million pounds available from the 2024 RSA sub-ACL.

All scallop RSA awards will be made in pounds of scallops. RSA quota may be harvested from any area that is open to the scallop fishery (i.e., open access areas and open areas), unless otherwise restricted by the Council and NMFS. In the event that the entire scallop RSA sub-ACL is not fully expended, NMFS may award unused RSA quota to compensate projects due to low scallop prices or to expand a project within its original topic area. In such an instance, the awarded allocation will be posted on the RSA Program website.

Applicants must submit a budget that is based on funds necessary to execute the research

plan and funds necessary to compensate vessel owners harvesting set-aside quota. Upon project selection, NMFS will negotiate with successful applicants on the specific RSA quota award. Projects will be selected based on technical merit, management relevance, and responsiveness to Council research priorities. NMFS will establish a common scallop price estimate, based on the best and most recent data available at the time of negotiations, to determine the amount of set-aside necessary to cover research and compensation fishing expenses. For reference, $15/lb was used for projects funded through the 2022/2023 scallop RSA competition. Questions about the funding mechanism and RSA compensation fishing should be directed to the Program Officer.

B. Project/Award Period

Proposals may be submitted for research activities that encompass all or part of the 2023 and 2024 scallop fishing years (April 1 through March 31).

C. Type of Funding Instrument

Selected proposals will be funded through a grant or cooperative agreement depending upon the amount of collaboration, participation, or involvement by NMFS in the management of the project. Funding for contractual arrangements for services or products for delivery to NOAA is not available under this notice.

III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants include, but are not limited to, institutions of higher education, hospitals, other nonprofits, commercial organizations, individuals, state, local, and Native American tribal governments. Federal agencies and instrumentalities are not eligible to receive Federal assistance under this notice. Additionally, employees of any Federal agency or Regional Fishery Management (RFM) Council, including Council members, are ineligible to submit an application under this program.

DOC/NOAA supports cultural and gender diversity and encourages women and minority individuals and groups to submit applications to the RSA Program. In addition, 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. DOC/NOAA encourages proposals involving any of the above institutions.

DOC/NOAA encourages applications from members of the fishing community and

applications that involve fishing community cooperation and participation.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement

None required.

C. Other Criteria that Affect Eligibility

Proposals for different and distinct projects must be submitted separately in accordance with the format requirements in Section IV.B. Multiple stand-alone projects in the same proposal will not be accepted.

IV. Application and Submission Information

A. Address to Request Application Package

Application information is available at http://www.grants.gov. Electronic copies of the Standard Forms for submission of research proposals may be found on the Internet in a PDF (Portable Document Format) version at https://www.grants.gov/forms.html. Delays may be experienced when registering with grants.gov near the end of a solicitation period. Therefore, NOAA strongly recommends that you do not wait until the application deadline date to begin the application process through grants.gov.

Applicants without Internet access may contact Ryan Silva, NMFS, 55 Great Republic Drive, by email ryan.silva@noaa.gov, or phone 978-281-9326. To apply to this Notice of Funding Opportunity, go to http://www.grants.gov, and use the following number: NOAA-NMFS-GARFO-2023-2007509.

B. Content and Form of Application

The full application includes required Federal forms, a Project Summary (one page limit), Project Narrative (15 page limit), Budget Narrative (no page limit), Appendices or Attachments (15 page limit, including a Data Management Plan of up to two pages), and NEPA Questionnaire (no page limit).

Each application must include Federal application forms, including:

- SF-424, Application for Federal Assistance. Applicants must enter the NOAA assigned pre-proposal number in box 5b.
- SF-424A, Budget Information - Non-construction Programs must be completed. Indicate any matching funds, if applicable.
- SF-424B, Assurances - Non-construction Programs must be completed for each

submitted non-construction application.
- CD-511, Certification Regarding Lobbying.
- SF-LLL, Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (if applicable).

These forms are available at https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/forms/sf-424-family.html. These forms should be submitted through the www.grants.gov website. Applicants submitting hard copy must include one signed original and two signed unbound copies of the application (including supporting information).

The Standard Form SF424 must include the estimated monetary value of the entire project, including costs of compensation fishing and research project costs. This value must be recorded under item 18. Estimated Funding (e) "Other" on the SF424.
The Standard Form SF424A must report the total value under "Non-Federal."

Format requirements:

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.

Proposal Content Requirements and Guidelines

Project summary (1-page limit):

- Organization title;
- Principal Investigator(s) (PI);
- Address, telephone number, and email address of Principal Investigator(s);
- Area of interest for which you are applying (see section I. B.);
- Project title;
- Project objectives for the project period;
- Summary of work to be performed within the project period; and
- Budget Information - Total funds needed to execute the research plan and compensate fishing industry partners that harvest set-aside quota.

Project Narrative (15 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 and performance measures for the period of the proposed work and the expected significance; relation to longer-term goals of the PI's work; and relation to other work planned, anticipated, or underway through Federal assistance.

Each project must be described as follows:

- Identification of problem(s): Describe the specific problem(s) or area(s) of interest to be addressed. Specify the Program Priority(ies) in section I.B. that most closely relates to the proposal.
- Project objectives: Objectives should be simple and understandable; as specific and quantitative 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.
- 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).
- Project impacts: Describe how these products or services will be made available to the fisheries and management communities. Describe how the development and facilitation of innovative fishing practices and gear technologies is an identified NMFS management priority (please refer to Council research priorities, etc.) and will be transitioned from research to fisheries management.
- 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? This includes the degree to which the potential users of the results, i.e., industry or state resource managers, have been involved in the planning of the activity, will be involved in the execution of the activity and/or are providing funds, and whether there is a plan to disseminate the results to user groups (including Regional Fishery Management Councils and, if applicable, marine mammal take reduction teams) and the public.
- Permitting: The proposal must describe any Magnuson Act, 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."
- 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. Describe how Federal, state, and non-governmental entities, particularly members of fishing communities, will participate in the project, and the nature of their participation.

- 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.
- Vessel participation: Each proposal must identify the activities for the vessel(s) participating in the project, including research and compensation fishing activities. The applicant should differentiate between fishing industry partners that would participate in the project, if funded, and those where no such agreement exists (e.g., previous partners);
- Need for Government financial assistance: Demonstrate the need for assistance. Explain why other funding sources cannot fund all the proposed work. List all other sources of funding that are or have been sought for the project.
- Federal, state and local government activities: List any programs (Federal, state, or local government or activities, including Sea Grant, state Coastal Zone Management Programs, etc.) this project would affect and describe the relationship between the project and those plans or activities. Describe any coordination with other agency programs or on-going research efforts. Describe any other proposals or outside activities that are essential to the success of this proposal.
- Results from prior NOAA/NMFS support (not included in the 15-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:
  - The NOAA award number, amount and period of support;
  - The title of the project;
  - Summary of the results of the completed work, including, for a research project, any contribution to the development of human resources in science/biology;
  - Publications resulting from the award (Reprints may be submitted, and are requested, for documentation if applicable);
  - Brief description of available data, samples, physical collections and other related research products not described elsewhere; and
  - If the proposal is for renewed support, a description of how the completed work relates to the proposed work.

Project Costs and Budget Narrative:

Total project costs are the amount of funds required to accomplish what is proposed in the Project Description and compensate industry partners that harvest set aside quota. 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. Additional cost detail may be required prior to a final analysis of overall cost allowability, allocability, and reasonableness.

The proposal must state how the proceeds from the sale of compensation fishing activities, including those derived from incidental catch, will be divided between the vessel and applicant. Proposals must provide a description of the safeguards that will be used to ensure that the set-aside award will not be exceeded.

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.

Appendices or Attachments:

Supporting documents, including resumes, letters of intent for vessels to participate in research activities, and any relevant contracts; and

Data Sharing Plan:

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.

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. Complete guidance for the data sharing plan can be found under section IV.B.

NEPA Questionnaire:

As part of this application process, questions from The Environmental Compliance Questionnaire for NOAA Federal Financial Assistance Applicants, OMB Approval Number 0648-0538, must be answered and submitted with the application. This form is located at http://www.nepa.noaa.gov. Failure to complete all of the questions with current and relevant information will result in the application being considered incomplete.

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

Unless excepted under 2 C.F.R. 25.110, each applicant is required to: (1) be registered in the Federal System for Award Management (SAM) before submitting its application; (2) provide a valid unique entity identifier in its application; and (3) 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

Complete proposals/applications must be received on or before 5 p.m. EDT on November 18,2022. Proposals received after the established deadline will be rejected and returned to the sender without consideration. For proposals submitted through Grants.gov, a date and time receipt indication will be the basis of determining timeliness. The proposal must be validated by Grants.gov in order to be considered timely. PLEASE NOTE: It may

take Grants.gov up to two (2) business days to validate or reject the application. Please keep this in mind in developing your submission timeline.

For those without access to the Internet, one signed original and two hard copy applications must be postmarked or received by the established due date for the program at the following address: Ryan Silva, NMFS, 55 Great Republic Dr., Gloucester, MA, 01930 ATTN: 2023/2024 Scallop RSA Program. Use of U.S. mail or another delivery service must be documented with a receipt. (Note that late-arriving hard copy proposals provided to a delivery service on or before 5:00 p.m. on the closing date for applications will be accepted for review if the applicant can document that the proposal was provided to the guaranteed delivery service by the specified closing date and time and if the proposal is received by NMFS no later than 5 p.m., two business days following the closing date.)

E. Intergovernmental Review

Applicants will need to determine if their State participates in the intergovernmental review process. Information on Intergovernmental Review (SPOC List) can be found at the following website: https://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/office-federal-financial-management. This information will assist applicants in providing either a Yes or No response to Item 16 of the Application Form, SF-424, entitled "Application for Federal Assistance."

F. Funding Restrictions

- The research project period may encompass all or part of the 2023 and/or 2024 scallop fishing years (April 1, 2023 – March 31, 2024, and April 1, 2024 – March 31, 2025, respectively). Proposals to fund research started before final approval of the project for set-aside awards are eligible for consideration, but any project expense incurred prior to the final determination is done solely at the researcher’s risk.

- Set-aside quota may only be harvested from open areas and open access areas, excluding areas identified by the Council and NMFS as closed to RSA compensation fishing.

- Set-aside quota awarded under this competition must be harvested by the end of July 2023 or 2024 as determined by the fishing year from which the award was derived and scallop fishing regulation, at which point all compensation fishing must cease, regardless if a portion of the set-aside has not been harvested.

- The Federal Government shall not be liable for any costs incurred by any applicant to this announcement or any proposed or selected application or project. Any additional funds generated through the sale of the fish harvested under the research quota, above the cost of

the research activities, shall be retained by the vessel owner as compensation for use of his/her vessel.

G. Other Submission Requirements

1. NOAA employees (whether full-time, part-time, or intermittent) are not permitted to assist in the preparation of an application, except that staff may provide information on program goals, funding priorities, application procedures, and completion of application forms. Because this is a competitive program, NOAA employees will not provide assistance in conceptualizing, developing, or structuring proposals, or write letters of support for an application. However, the Council or NMFS contact person may provide assistance to researchers who are seeking vessels to participate in the harvest of set-aside quota or participate in research activities. NMFS, in consultation with the Council, may decide to hold a meeting with the public to discuss general topics concerning past RSA program accomplishments and ways to enhance communications on funding priorities and associated potential study methods. Such meetings will be publicized by NMFS and the Council in accordance with their respective requirements.

2. NOAA must analyze the potential environmental impacts, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), for applicant projects or proposals that are seeking NOAA federal assistance opportunities, including special fishing privileges. The provisions of the Scallop RSA Program, and the associated 2023 and 2024 sub-ACLs were considered under the Environmental Impact Statement for Amendment 21, and will be considered under the Environmental Assessment for Framework 36. Applications that propose research that is not within the scope of the NEPA analysis for these management actions may require the applicant to provide additional information that will serve as the basis for any further analyses.

3. Permits and Approvals

- If field research will occur in state or federal waters, investigators must secure the appropriate vessel documentation, as determined by the Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office, Sustainable Fisheries Division, and applicable state management agencies. Such documentation may include a Letter of Acknowledgment, Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP), Exempted Educational Activity Authorization, or Temporary Possession Letter of Authorization. In order to assist NMFS in determining whether or not the proposed research would require a permit, researchers should briefly address the following within the application:

o Location and Time of Year - Specify time of year and areas where research will occur

(e.g., coordinates, 10-minute squares, closed areas; include map if possible);

o Gear Type - Specify type(s) of gear, including mesh size or gear modification (trawl; gillnet; dredge; acoustic gear, including frequency and amplitude);

o Effort - Specify the number of vessels, number of tows, length of tows, set duration of tended gear, sampling frequency, etc.; and,

o Catch - Specify the anticipated species composition and amount (directed catch and bycatch).

• If an exemption from Federal regulations is proposed, include a list of the specific regulations, along with a brief justification for each regulation that needs to be waived. Should the applicant submit a request for an EFP to NMFS, the completed application should be received by NMFS at least 60 days before the requested start date of the proposed research. NMFS may not exempt a vessel from any requirement imposed by any state. Therefore, applicants are urged to discuss with state fisheries agencies any proposed landings in their state(s), and must obtain any additional permits that may be required by such state(s).

• Successful applicants must obtain compensation fishing permits from NMFS prior to initiating compensation fishing. NMFS will issue letters of authorization to federally permitted scallop vessels as identified by the Principal Investigator or delegated project coordinator, thereby authorizing such vessels to take compensation fishing trips.

• Grant recipients and partnering vessel owners and operators must adhere to compensation fishing permit and exempted fishing permit terms and conditions. Failure to do so may result in the revocation of RSA compensation fishing and exempted fishing privileges.

• Projects may not have more than 50 vessels authorized to conduct compensation fishing at any given time, unless sufficient rationale can demonstrate that more than 50 vessels are needed. In addition, principal investigators and project coordinators should be aware that it may take NMFS up to 4 weeks to process requests to revise the list of vessels that are authorized to conduct compensation fishing.

• Amendment 15 established a list of scallop management measures from which vessels that are conducting research funded by the Scallop RSA Program could be exempted via a letter of authorization. These management measures include crew restrictions, seasonal

closures in access areas, and the requirement to return to port if fishing in more than one area. The review and issuance of these permits would not entail additional environmental review or public comment beyond that which was conducted for Amendment 15. These authorizations would apply only to dedicated research activities, and would not be available to vessels harvesting scallops for sale.

V. Application Review Information

A. Evaluation Criteria

A. Evaluation Criteria:

NMFS will solicit written technical evaluations from three or more federal and public/private sector experts to determine the technical merit of the proposal and to provide a rank score of the project based on the evaluation criteria.

NMFS may simultaneously convene a technical review panel from the same pool of experts to discuss the technical merit of applications for scallop resource surveys, bycatch research, scallop meat quality, scallop biology research, or other areas of focus. Following the panel discussion(s), reviewers would submit independent written evaluations and a score in accordance with the technical evaluation criteria listed below.

1. Importance and/or relevance and applicability of the proposed project: This criterion ascertains whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and/or relevance to NOAA, Federal, regional, state, or local activities. Applicants should provide a clear definition of the problem, need, issue, or hypothesis to be addressed. The proposal should describe its relevance to RSA Program priorities. If not directly related to priorities listed in this solicitation, applicants should provide justification why the proposed project should be considered. (20 points)

2. Technical/scientific merit: 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. Special emphasis will be given to proposals that foster and improve cooperative interactions with the fishing industry and fishing communities, other research organizations conducting scallop research, Minority Serving Institutions, NMFS, and other stakeholders. A clear description of the project design, including a detailed description of field and laboratory work, and analysis methods, should be provided. The time frame for conducting the proposed research should be clearly specified. Activities that take place over a wider versus narrower geographical range, where appropriate, are preferred. (50 points)

3. Overall qualifications of the project: This criterion assesses whether the applicant, and team members, possess the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project. This includes demonstration of support, cooperation and/or collaboration with the fishing industry, and qualifications/experience of project participants. (10 points)

4. Project costs: This criterion evaluates the budget to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time frame. Cost-effectiveness of the project is considered. (10 points)

5. Outreach and education: This criterion assesses whether the project involves a focused and effective education and outreach strategy regarding NOAA's mission to protect the Nation's natural resources. This includes identification of anticipated benefits, potential users, likelihood of success, a clearly defined data management plan, and methods of disseminating results. (10 points)

B. Review and Selection Process

In addition to the technical evaluation as described above, NMFS, in consultation with the Council, will convene a management review panel, including Council members and scallop fishery experts, to review and individually critique the proposals to enhance NOAA's understanding of the proposals as they relate to the program priorities enumerated in Section I.B. Following this meeting, management panelists will submit comments and recommendations to NOAA to help inform project selections. No consensus recommendations will be made by the management review panel.

NMFS may consult additional subject matter experts to inform final selection recommendations. Applicants may be required, in consultation with NMFS, to further refine/modify the study methodology as a condition of project approval.

C. Selection Factors

The Program Officer will make recommendations to the Selecting Official based on technical ranking, management panelist recommendations, and responsiveness to program priorities. The Selecting Official may also consider one or more of the following factors:

• Availability of funding.
• Balance/distribution of RSA awards:
o Geographically;
o By type of institutions;
o By type of partners;

o By research areas; and
o By project types.

• Whether this project duplicates other projects currently supported or being considered for support by other NOAA offices.
• Program priorities and policy factors.
• Applicant's prior award performance.
• Partnerships and/or Participation of targeted groups.
• Adequacy of information necessary to conduct a NEPA analysis and determination.

Key program policy factors (see 4 above) to be considered by the Selecting Official are: (1) The time of year the research activities are to be conducted; (2) the ability of the proposal to meet the applicable experimental fishing requirements; (3) redundancy of research projects; and (4) logistical concerns. Therefore, the highest scoring projects may not necessarily be selected for an award. All approved research must be conducted in accordance with provisions approved by NOAA. Unsuccessful applications will be returned to the submitter. Successful applications will be incorporated into the award document.

D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

Award announcements are expected 6 months following the deadline for this announcement.

VI. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notices

Successful applicants will receive notification that their application(s) has been recommended for selection to the NOAA Grants Management Division. This notification is not authorization to begin project operations. An official notification of selection, signed by the NOAA Grants Officer, is the authorizing document that grants the set aside award and allows compensation fishing to begin, pending the issuance of compensation fishing permits. These notifications will be issued via email to the Authorizing Official and the Principal Investigator of the project. Successful and unsuccessful applicants will be notified electronically.

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

COMMERCIAL FISHING VESSEL SAFETY. Pursuant to Title 46 U.S.C. Chapter 45, all commercial fishing vessels chartered for NMFS-sponsored research are subject to inspection in accordance with 46 C.F.R. Parts 24, 25, 26, and 28 (as applicable). NMFS financial assistance recipients are responsible for observing all laws and regulations

applicable to their funded projects. Award recipients are encouraged to verify inclusion under valid agreements with the United States Coast Guard and seek any required permits or Letters of Designation to safely conduct research aboard a commercial fishing vessel. Obtaining the proper authorizations may prevent work interruptions resulting from enforcement inquiries. Fieldwork activities proposed in this award may require additional inspections and permitting. No on-water tasks may be performed until appropriate permits are applied for and obtained. Documentation must be filed with NOAA and approved prior to initiating on-water Activities.

DATA SHARING PLAN.

1. 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. 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 NOAA. 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. 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.

Data Accessibility. The NOAA Program recommends that public access to grant/contract-produced data be enabled through one or more of the following means:

- Submission of data to NOAA National Centers for Environmental Information (NCEI, https://www.ncei.noaa.gov/), which will provide public access and permanent archiving.
- Submission of data to an existing publicly accessible online data server described in Data Management Plan.
- Establishment of applicant’s own data hosting capability as described in Data Management Plan.
- Request permission not to make data publicly accessible. (Proposal must explain

rationale for lack of public access, and if funded, approval from Responsible NOAA Official, listed below, must be received).

Technical recommendations. Use of open-standard data formats and methods is encouraged. The RSA Program is not requiring any specific data format. Data Management Plans are to describe their proposed approach.

Resources. Proposals are permitted to include the costs of data sharing or archiving in their budgets.

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.

NOAA may, at its own discretion, make publicly visible the Data Management Plan from funded proposals, or use information from the Data Management Plan to produce a formal metadata record and include that metadata in a Catalog to indicate the pending availability of new data.

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

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE PREAWARD NOTIFICATION REQUIREMENT FOR GRANTS AND COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS. DOC 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 TERMS AND CONDITIONS. Successful applicants who accept a NOAA award under this solicitation will be bound by DOC Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions. This document will be provided in the award package in NOAA’s Grants Online system and is available upon request to the Program Officer.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT (FOIA). In the event that an application contains information or data that you do not want disclosed prior to award for purposes other than the

evaluation of the application, mark each page containing such information or data with the words “Privileged, Confidential, Commercial, or Financial Information – Limited Use” at the top of the page to assist NOAA in making disclosure determinations. DOC regulations implementing the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), 5 U.S.C. 552, are found at 15 C.F.R. Part 4, which sets forth rules for DOC to make requested materials, information, and records publicly available under FOIA. The contents of funded applications may be subject to requests for release under the FOIA. Based on the information provided by the applicant, the confidentiality of the content of funded applications will be maintained to the maximum extent permitted by law.

INDIRECT COST RATE. If an applicant has not previously established an indirect cost rate with a Federal agency they may choose to negotiate a rate with the DOC or use the de minimis indirect cost rate of 10% of MTDC (as allowable under 2 C.F.R. §200.414). The NOAA contact for indirect or facilities and administrative costs is: Lamar Revis, Grants Officer, NOAA Grants Management Division, 1325 East West Highway, 9th Floor, Silver Spring, MD 20910, or lamar.revis@noaa.gov. NOAA may establish a cap on indirect cost rate per DOC FAM 2015-02 http://www.osec.doc.gov/oam/grants_management/policy/documents/FAM%202015-02.pdf. The negotiation and approval of a rate is subject to the procedures required by NOAA and the DOC Standard Terms and Conditions.

LIMITATION OF LIABILITY. In no event will NOAA or the DOC be responsible for proposal preparation costs. Publication of this announcement does not oblige NOAA to award any specific project or to obligate any available funds.

MINORITY SERVING INSTITUTIONS. 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.

NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT (NEPA). NOAA must analyze the potential environmental impacts, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), for applicant projects or proposals which are seeking NOAA federal funding opportunities. Detailed information on NOAA compliance with NEPA can be found at the following NOAA NEPA website: http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/, including NOAA Administrative Order 216-6A for NEPA, https://www.noaa.gov/organization/administration/nao-216-6a, and the Council on Environmental Quality implementation regulations, https://ceq.doe.gov/laws-

regulations/regulations.html. Consequently, as part of an applicant's package, and under its description of its 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 and set aside quota can be withheld by the Grants Officer and NMFS, respectively, 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.

NOAA SEXUAL ASSAULT AND SEXUAL HARASSMENT PREVENTION AND RESPONSE POLICY APPLICABLE TO FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE AWARDS

a. If NOAA-operated, leased, or owned facilities are involved in any awards funded under this Announcement, such awards are subject to the NOAA Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment Prevention and Response Policy Applicable to Financial Assistance Awards Involving NOAA-Operated Facilities (May 2018) found at: https://www.noaa.gov/organization/acquisition-grants/noaa-workplace-harassment-training-for-contractors-and-financial.

b. If the use of a vessel(s) under NOAA contract, order, grant, or cooperative agreement is involved in any awards funded under this announcement where the non-Federal entity employees are anticipated to be crew members aboard the vessel(s), such awards are subject to the NOAA Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment Prevention and Response Policy Applicable to Financial Assistance Awards Involving the use of a Vessel(s) under NOAA Contract, Order, Grant, or Cooperative Agreement (May 2018) found at: https://www.noaa.gov/organization/acquisition-grants/noaa-workplace-harassment-training-for-contractors-and-financial.

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. 200.205. These may include assessments of the financial

stability of an applicant and the quality of the applicant's management systems, history of performance, and the applicant's ability to effectively implement statutory, regulatory, or other requirements imposed on non-Federal entities. Special conditions that address any risks determined to exist may be applied. Applicants may submit comments to the Federal Awardee Performance and Integrity Information System (FAPIIS) about any information included in the system about their organization for consideration by the awarding agency.

UNIFORM ADMINISTRATIVE REQUIREMENTS, COST PRINCIPLES, AND AUDIT REQUIREMENTS. Through 2 C.F.R. § 1327.101, the DOC adopted Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards at 2 C.F.R. Part 200, which apply to awards in this program. Contact the Program Officer for additional information.

C. Reporting

Grant Reporting Requirements: DOC implemented a Research Performance Progress Report (RPPR) for research awards in accordance with the requirement for non-Federal entity submission of performance reports using OMB-approved government-wide standard information collections per §200.328. The recipient must complete the RPPR directly in Grants Online. The RPPR format and instructions are available at http://www.osec.doc.gov/oam/grants_management/policy/.

Performance or progress reports are required to be submitted to the NOAA Program Officer semi-annually. These reports will be due no later than 30 days following the end of each 6-month period from the start date of an award. The final report is due no later than 90 days after the award expiration. The progress reports must include:

- A list of entities, firms, or organizations that performed the work, and a description of how the work was accomplished;
- A detailed accounting of all fish caught during research activities (including catch by vessels operating under a Letter of Acknowledgment), including weight by species, and disposition of catch;
- A detailed accounting for compensation fishing activities should be attached with each progress report and the final report. Compensation fishing reports should be provided in an electronic spreadsheet, and should include the following information: Vessel name, vessel permit number, date landed, RSA scallop pounds landed, scallop RSA value, incidental catch pounds landed by species, incidental catch value, funds provided to grant recipient. In addition, for the final report, the grant recipient must provide a final accounting of all funds derived from compensation fishing, and address the following questions: 1. If more funds were generated than the total amount of funds identified in the proposed budget, provide a

detailed description for how those funds were used, or will be used, or 2. If fewer funds were generated than the total amount of funds identified in the proposed budget, describe why the shortfall occurred, and if it affected project proposed goals and objectives. This information should be sent as a separate attachment with each progress report;

- Recipients must submit receipts, or other proof of purchase, for any equipment or supplies costing $5,000 or more.
- No further financial reporting is required beyond the detailed accounting for compensations fishing listed above;
- Principal Investigators should, when possible, make any report or publication that details research findings accessible to the general public. Where appropriate, data generated from the research must be formatted in a manner consistent with NMFS and Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP) databases. Contact the Program Officer for additional information;
- Principal Investigators should anticipate being requested to provide an oral presentation and a written summary report to the Council's Scallop Committee, Advisory Panel, and(or) Plan Development Team on the results of their research; and
- Data from research projects must be submitted in electronic format with appropriate documentation to NMFS, as requested.

Vessel Reporting Requirements: Vessels operating under an Exempted Fishing Permit or conducting compensation fishing must report each trip to NMFS via the vessel monitoring system in accordance with the instructions provided by NMFS. If the grant recipient or vessel operator does not meet the terms and conditions of these permits, these permits may be revoked by NMFS. Additionally, non-compliance with these reporting requirements could be cause for not awarding future NOAA projects.

Other reporting: 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 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 https://www.fsrs.gov/ on all sub-awards over $25,000. Refer to 2 CFR Parts 170.

VII. Agency Contacts

Ryan Silva, Federal Program Officer, NMFS, 55 Great Republic Drive, Gloucester, MA 01930 by phone at 978-281-9326, or via e-mail at ryan.silva@noaa.gov.

VIII. Other Information

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's Research Set-Aside Program. 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's Research Set-Aside Program. The statements, findings, conclusions, and recommendations are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of NOAA." The final report is a public document and may be posted, partially or in its entirety, on the NOAA Research Set-Aside Program's website.