

NOTICE OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

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Executive Summary

Federal Agency Name

OAR Cooperative Institutes Administration Office (CIAO)

Funding Opportunity Title

Cooperative Institute in the Northern Gulf of America (CINGA)

Announcement Type

Competitive

Funding Opportunity Number

NOAA-OAR-CIAO-2026-32786

Assistance Listing Number(s)

11.432

Dates

Deadline to submit proposal: **February 2nd, 2026**

After the application is validated by Grants.gov, please send an email to cipo.oar@noaa.gov to notify us of your submission.

Period of Performance: The award period will be 5 years and may be renewed for up to an additional 5 years based on the outcome of a review of scientific and administrative performance conducted in the fourth year of the award period, as described in the [NOAA Cooperative Institute Handbook](#). See also Section II B. Project/Award Period.

Funding Opportunity Description

The NOAA Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research (OAR) invites applications for the establishment of the Cooperative Institute in the Northern Gulf of America (CINGA). This CI may consist of a group of academic institutions (a consortium), at times working in conjunction with supporting research affiliates, with expertise and capabilities in the NOAA priority areas that contribute to the areas of research described in the Funding Opportunity Description of this announcement.

Applicants to this Notice of Funding Opportunity will submit **only one** overarching application that seeks to establish the CINGA at an eligible group of institutions (a consortium). This application should be submitted by the lead institution of the eligible group. This application should address high level research themes (See Section I.B. of this Announcement) that could encompass future projects and should not include detailed projects at this time.

Following the selection of the CI host institution, the awardee will be requested to submit additional subsequent non-competitive projects proposals that fall under the research themes for review and potential funding. The host institution will continue to submit detailed project applications at various funding levels and periods of performances throughout the life of the five-year award.

Applicants must complete and maintain three registrations to be eligible to apply for or receive an award. These registrations include [SAM.gov](https://sam.gov), [Grants.gov](https://grants.gov), and eRA Commons. All registrations must be completed prior to the application being submitted. The complete registration process for all three systems can take 4 to 6 weeks, so applicants should begin this activity as soon as possible. NOAA has created a website to aid applicants in understanding Notices of Funding Opportunities (NOFOs), the application process, and how to properly format application packages to eRA, linked [here](#).

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

This document sets out requirements for submitting to NOAA-OAR-CIAO-2026-32786

Full Text of Announcement

I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Program Objective

The purpose of this announcement is to invite the submission of proposals to establish a Cooperative Institute in the Northern Gulf of America (CINGA) and to provide details on the application, review, and selection process. NOAA's mission requires a forward-thinking, interdisciplinary perspective to provide the scientific underpinning for an ecosystem approach to management of ocean resources. This institute will focus on interdisciplinary research to support NOAA's mission, specifically addressing:

- Model and observing system interactions among living resources, habitats, ecosystem processes, anthropogenic impacts, and stressors to assist with making ecosystem-based management decisions;
- Determination of impacts of extreme events on coastal areas in terms of sea-level change, rate of elevation change, shoreline change, role of coastal development in preventing migration of marshes and other habitats, and change in inland, coastal and ocean hydrology and apply this knowledge to habitat restoration and coastal resiliency;
- Identification of approaches that local governments are employing to adapt to sea level change;
- Identification of the relationships between nutrient loading, eutrophication, hypoxia and harmful algal blooms and examine their impacts on ecosystem health;
- Determination of the manner in which storm surge, subsidence and sea-level change affects ecosystems, native coastal habitat, wetland composition, saltwater intrusion, and coastal flooding;
- Development of advanced sampling technologies to enhance and more comprehensively sample fish stocks in challenging regimes (sub-littoral zones) or fragile environments (coral and fringing reefs);

- Improvement of survey methodologies for science and recovery projects regarding protected species in the Gulf of America (GoA);
- Development of innovative, standards-based data methods for long term data stewardship, to enhance the operational data stewardship capabilities inherent to NOAA's mission and to support large scale data integration and dissemination needs for multidisciplinary, multidimensional data originating from numerous sources.

Furthermore, for a CI to maximize its value to NOAA, it should have complementary activities integrating research and knowledge from social science disciplines that focus on related problems, but are sometimes addressed independently of physical science activities. This linkage between physical and social sciences is critical to closing information and service gaps articulated by diverse stakeholders. This linkage is considered to be especially important in the area of weather, water and climate adaptation and mitigation. Specific areas of focus include:

- Economics including institutional and market arrangements
- Legal analysis of environmental and scientific research issues
- Resource management and planning
- Risk communication, including risk analysis, comprehension, perception, dissemination, and management
- Partnering and collaboration, including NOAA and the wider Federal government, community groups, state agencies and local governments, NGOs, regional gulf entities, and industry

General CI Concept/Program Background

A Cooperative Institute (CI) is a NOAA-supported, non-Federal organization that has established an outstanding research program in one or more areas that are relevant to the NOAA mission "to understand and predict changes in climate, weather, oceans, and coasts, to share that knowledge and information with others, and to conserve and manage coastal and marine ecosystems and resources." CIs are established at research institutions with outstanding graduate degree programs in NOAA-related sciences. CIs provide significant coordination of resources among all non-government partners and promote the involvement of students and post-doctoral scientists in NOAA-funded research. NOAA establishes a new CI competitively when it identifies a need to sponsor a long-term (5-10 years) collaborative partnership with one or more outstanding non-Federal, non-profit research institutions. For NOAA, the purpose of this long-term collaborative partnership is to promote research, education and outreach aligned with NOAA's mission; to obtain research capabilities that do not exist internally; and/or to expand research capacity in NOAA-related sciences to:

- Conduct collaborative, long-term research that involves NOAA scientists and those at the research institution(s) from one or more scientific disciplines of interest to NOAA;
- Utilize the scientific, education, and outreach expertise at the research institution(s) that, depending on NOAA's research needs, may or may not be located near a NOAA facility;
- Support student participation in NOAA-related research studies; and
- Strengthen or expand NOAA-related research capabilities and capacity at the research institution(s) that complements and contributes to NOAA's ability to reach its mission goals.

A CI may be comprised of a single academic institution or a consortium of academic institutions, at times working in conjunction with supporting research affiliates, each of which demonstrates outstanding performance within one or more established research programs in NOAA-related sciences. The Institutes conduct research under approved scientific research themes and tasks. These tasks may not be redefined or abbreviated:

- Task I activities are related to the management of the CI, as well as general education and outreach activities. This task also includes support of postdoctoral and visiting scientists conducting activities within the research themes of the CI that are approved by the CI Director, in consultation with NOAA, and are relevant to NOAA and the CI's mission goals.
- Task II research activities usually involve ongoing direct collaboration with NOAA scientists. This collaboration typically is fostered by the collocation of Federal and CI employees.
- Task III research activities require minimal collaboration with NOAA scientists and may include research funded by other NOAA competitive grant programs.

B. Program Priorities

Research priorities, also called "scientific themes", for the CINGA are listed below, in no particular order. Several of the priorities are intersecting or related, and should not be considered mutually exclusive.

1. **Technology-based Solutions to Environmental Variability.** Research that leads to development of technology, research tools, and scientific approaches to address the impacts of changing environmental conditions of the region, as well as bio-geographical characterizations, that will enable improvements in defining, observing, forecasting, and protecting components of the Gulf of America ecosystem. Research under this theme will use technology-based approaches to advance understanding of a wide range of problems from environmental variability effects on coastal and marine ecosystems to the economic well-being of the region and the adjacent watershed.
2. **Coastal Hazards.** Research in this theme encompasses the physical and biological systems, as well as the biological and socio-economic dimensions, associated with coastal hazards. Research will lead to improved forecasting of tropical weather systems and the structure and function of coastal and marine ecosystems including the provision of ecosystem services in the Gulf of America ecosystem.
3. **Ecosystem Management.** Research in this theme will focus on promoting sustainable coastal development, facilitating community resiliency and enabling an ecosystem approach to management, including ecosystem-based fisheries' management. These topics are based upon enhanced scientific understanding of the interconnections between the coastal and marine ecosystem and the adjacent watershed including their resource stewardship implications.
4. **Effective and Efficient Data Management Systems Supporting a Data-driven Economy.** Research in this theme will investigate, develop and test innovative data stewardship solutions, enhancing NOAA's data management, visualization, and dissemination capabilities. This research will address gaps in data management capacity resulting from the development of new environmental data sensors and platforms, larger data volumes, and increased public demand for information.

Specific research foci are also desirable in the following areas:

- **Monitoring and evaluation of Gulf of America and inland U.S. coastal marine ecosystems,** including the services they provide and their response to environmental variability, with particular focus on the downstream impacts of ecosystem changes (e.g., hypoxia, fisheries, and sediment transport) on the Mississippi River watershed and major inland water systems.
- **Research to understand and implement ecosystem-based fisheries' management approaches,** considering the connectivity between Gulf of America fisheries, migratory species, and inland river systems that sustain both coastal and inland economies.
- **Research to understand and develop innovative, standards-compliant data stewardship tools and techniques** for the transition to NOAA data archive operations, ensuring accessibility and usability for stakeholders across coastal and inland regions.
- **Coastal ecosystem resilience and adaptation,** including mapping methodologies that assess vulnerability to climate change, land-use change, and watershed-driven impacts on Gulf and inland riverine ecosystems.

- **Decision-support informational systems for the Gulf of America and the central U.S.**, including integrated geo-spatial data management and visualization to improve preparedness for extreme weather, flooding, and water resource management throughout inland watersheds.
- **Research and development on the forecasting, analyses, verification, and observation of hurricanes and tropical cyclones**, including their associated **coastal and inland** atmospheric hazards (e.g., tornado outbreaks, extreme precipitation, and flooding impacts along major U.S. river systems).
- **Ensemble-based numerical weather prediction (data assimilation, physics, and cloud parameterizations) to inform probabilistic impact-based decision support services (IDSS)**, with a focus on **hurricane-driven inland flooding, heat waves, and severe convective outbreaks** in the central U.S.
- **Utilization of AI for tropical cyclone evaluation and prediction**, expanding applications to improve forecasting of **extreme precipitation and flooding impacts** from tropical remnants moving inland.
- **Sub-seasonal and seasonal-scale meteorological studies on extreme heat, precipitation, drought, and flooding**, with an emphasis on how Gulf of America variability influences **weather extremes across the Midwest and central U.S.**
- **Total water level (storm surge, waves, hydrodynamic, and coastal inundation) research and development**, expanding to include **riverine flooding, reservoir management, and inland flood risk modeling** driven by tropical and extratropical storm systems.

Cross-Cutting Expectations:

Education and Outreach

Applicants are expected to be strong education partners with NOAA. As the focal point for development of the next generation of environmental scientists and managers, CIs are well-positioned to build the talent for the future workforce in our shared area of expertise.

Outreach initiatives play a critical role in community development and any effort to make change. The CI, as a partner for NOAA, will engage in outreach with the community. The CI is expected to directly and creatively engage with community members to foster excitement and spur involvement, if possible. The CI will help raise awareness around scientific issues and equip community members with information to make informed decisions and improve their quality of life, as well as build support within the community to make changes. These efforts might also provide opportunities for the CI to learn about pressing issues within the community.

The CI is encouraged to build coalitions and work with other NOAA programs, such as Cooperative Science Centers or NOAA Sea Grant, in these efforts.

The new CI should be able to provide research and development capabilities in the following areas:

Research Facilities

- Research vessel
- Super-computing access
- Advanced sampling technologies, including non-traditional optical and acoustic systems
- Laboratory facilities capable of processing oceanographic and environmental samples to support examination of the impact of multiple pressures on coastal and marine ecosystems and species, and meet the needs of coastal managers, fisheries managers and communities
- Scientific diving and ROVs

Expertise and capabilities:

- Advancing the use of artificial intelligence for technology-based solutions
- Ecosystem monitoring and assessment, including habitats

- Leading edge environmental data stewardship
- Data assimilation and advanced computer visualization
- Uncrewed platforms
- Oceanographic, hydrologic, and watershed observations and modeling integration
- Variable environmental impacts and adaptation methods
- Meteorology
- Socioeconomic analysis
- Fisheries and protected resources
- Computing programming and software engineering
- Satellite data availability
- Coastal resiliency strategies
- Ocean energy and the Blue Economy

COMPOSITION OF THE CINGA INSTITUTE

The proposed CI should be comprised of **multiple academic institutions (a consortium)** with supporting research affiliates, if appropriate. A consortium must be led by a single academic institution that offers accredited graduate level degree-granting programs in NOAA-related sciences that are within the Gulf of America region. The proposed CI is expected to utilize all consortium members to complete CINGA's work. Applicants must have strong programs in support of at least one of the identified research areas. The CI would be expected to develop and implement mechanisms to facilitate collaborative research, development, education, and outreach with NOAA.

DEMONSTRATED ABILITY TO SUPPORT NOAA'S LONG-TERM GOALS AND RESEARCH FOCI

The proposed CI should support the long-term goals of [NOAA's Research and Development Vision Areas: 2020-2026](#) and [NOAA's 2026 Strategic Research Guidance Memorandum](#) by advancing key goals in:

- Climate Science
- Ecological Forecasting
- Unmanned Systems
- 'Omics
- AI and Machine Learning
- Big Data

Partnering Expectations

The CI must spend time to plan and execute strategic partnerships with NOAA to leverage a strong network and maximize its impact. At a minimum, the CI will:

1. Plan and host planning efforts with NOAA partners bi-annually
2. Plan and host routine meetings with the NOAA Federal Program Officer (FPO) and Technical Program Manager (TPM) bi-monthly
3. Attend CIAO-hosted meetings, when invited
4. Plan and host project communication meetings with NOAA partners (for T3 projects) monthly

CI Website

The CI will become a part of NOAA's CI enterprise, and is required to build a dedicated website. The website should be user-friendly, accessible and regularly maintained and updated. The website should be consistent across different browsers, devices and platforms to enable more reliability and consistency across the CI enterprise.

The website will include the following at a minimum:

1. Research products, including results from projects
2. Annual reports & metrics
3. News, social media, outreach and other marketing efforts
4. Any awards and recognition achieved
5. Partnerships, including consortium members, community groups, industry, government organizations and others
6. Societal impacts of the CI's work

C. Program Authority

Statutory authority for Cooperative Agreements is provided under NAO 216-107A to support 15 U.S.C. 1540; 118 Stat. 71 (January 23, 2004); 15 U.S.C. 313; 15 U.S.C. 2901 et seq.; 16 U.S.C. 753a; 49 U.S.C. 44720(b).

II. Award Information

A. Funding Availability

Subject to the availability of funding, this announcement describes how eligible applicants should apply to the Cooperative Institute in the Northern Gulf of America competition. NOAA is seeking to establish this CI with a maximum ceiling of \$100,000,000.00 in federal funds for the initial 5 year term of the Institutional award. The actual annual funding that the CI receives will be less than the proposed ceiling amount and will depend on the specific projects that are submitted by the CI and approved by NOAA after the main CI award begins, the availability of funding, the quality of the research, the satisfactory progress in achieving the stated goals described in project proposals, and continued relevance to program objectives.

This award and individual project applications DO NOT require non-federal match. However, leveraging other non-federal resources is allowed and encouraged to maximize the impact of the work. See also section III. B. "Cost Share and Matching Requirements".

There is no guarantee that funds will be available to make awards, or that any application will be selected for funding. If an applicant incurs any cost prior to receiving an award agreement signed by an authorized NOAA official, it does so at its own risk of not being selected or of these costs not being included in a subsequent award. NOAA and DOC will not be responsible for any incurred project cost if a project fails to receive full funding.

B. Project/Award Period

The award period for the CI will be **5 years** and may be renewed for up to an additional 5 years based on the outcome of a review of scientific and administrative performance conducted in the fourth year of the award period, as described in the [NOAA CI Institute Handbook](#).

The CI must have a proposed start date of **October 1, 2026** and an end date of no later than 5 years after the proposed start date. This original application to this particular Notice of Funding Opportunity will be identified as the **T1**.

Subsequent individual project applications (which will be identified as T3s) must have project durations of 1 to 5 years that fit within the CI award period (the T1).

Pre-award spending may be authorized 90 days prior to the start date of the award (See Section VI below for more details).

Renewal Review

The CI may be extended for an additional five-year, non-competitive cooperative agreement award. To earn this opportunity, the CI will undergo a robust scientific and administrative performance review process (a “renewal review”), as prescribed by the [Department of Commerce Federal Financial Assistance Manual](#) and [NOAA Cooperative Institute Handbook](#). The renewal review evaluates the merit of the CI’s scientific work and the CI’s adherence to Federal programmatic requirements and regulations. If the CI successfully passes the renewal review, they may receive an additional five-year cooperative agreement award. Recommendations for improvement may be provided during the renewal review, and compliance may be required through specific award conditions.

C. Type of Funding Instrument

The funding instrument for this institutional award will be a cooperative agreement since NOAA will be substantially involved in working with the CI. The nature of the substantial involvement includes the following: The recipient can expect substantial collaboration, participation, and/or intervention in the management of the project by NOAA. Some examples of substantial involvement by NOAA include, but are not limited to: required NOAA approval before certain projects can be initiated in grant out-years; the ability of NOAA to halt an activity immediately if detailed performance specifications are not met; NOAA specifying direction or redirection of scope of work due to the interrelationships with other projects; proposals for collaboration between NOAA scientists and a CI scientist and/or assistance by NOAA personnel in developing curricula; and NOAA involvement in mid-cycle programmatic evaluation and planning processes. NOAA will issue only one award to the successful lead academic institution of a consortium of universities, with supporting research affiliates if applicable, where the Institute will be established and resident.

III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applicants

The following entities are eligible to submit to this opportunity:

Eligibility is limited to non-Federal public and private non-profit universities, colleges and research institutions that offer accredited graduate level degree-granting programs in NOAA-related sciences and that are within the Gulf of America region. Only the lead institution in the consortium applying for the award (and where the CI will be established) must satisfy the location requirement. Federal agencies and their personnel are not permitted to receive federal funding under this competition; however, federal scientists and other employees can serve as uncompensated partners or co-Principal Investigators on subsequent T3 projects proposals. Federal labs and offices can also make available specialized expertise, facilities or equipment to applicants but cannot be compensated under this competition for their use.

To be eligible to apply or receive an award, applicants must complete and maintain three registrations; [SAM.gov](#), [Grants.gov](#), and [eRA Commons](#). For each, the complete registration process can take 4 to 6 weeks, so applicants must begin this activity as soon as possible and well before the proposal due date. For more information on how to meet these registration and application submission requirements without errors, we advise all to carefully review relevant Applicant and Grantee Training modules: <https://www.commerce.gov/ocio/programs/gems/applicant-and-grantee-training>. Additionally, we advise that all carefully read ‘Additional Application Package Forms’ within the ‘Full Proposal Required Elements’ section below.

B. Cost Share or Matching Requirement

Cost sharing or matching is not required. It cannot be used as an evaluation factor during the merit review of applications or proposals but may be considered. Values for non-Federal entity contributions of services and property must be established in accordance with applicable cost principles. Voluntarily committed cost sharing is not considered when determining the level of the CI’s funding ceiling. Per 2 C.F.R. §200.1, voluntary committed cost sharing becomes a binding requirement of the Federal award.

Acceptable cost sharing proposals could include, but are not limited to:

- Offering a reduced indirect cost rate against activities in one or more Tasks;
- Waiver of any indirect costs assessed by the awardee on subawards;
- Waiver of indirect costs assessed against base funds and/or Task I activities;
- Waiver or reduction of any costs associated with the use of facilities at the CI;
- Full or partial salary funding for the CI director, administrative staff, graduate students, visiting scientists, or postdoctoral scientists.

C. Other Criteria that Affect Eligibility

None.

IV. Application and Submission Information

A. Address to Request Application Package

Application packages are available online as part of the NOFO announcement on Grants.gov under opportunity NOAA-OAR-CIAO-2026-32786. Users of Grants.gov will be able to download a copy of the application package, and submit all application forms via Grants.gov. The application will then be screened and submitted to eRA Commons. Applicants should not consider their application complete and received by the agency until they receive a final email from eRA Commons confirming a successful application with no errors or warnings and/or can verify the successful status in eRA Commons.

B. Content and Form of Application

This section provides an overview of these required proposal elements (and where to locate them).

Applications must adhere to the provisions under "Required Elements" below. Failure to adhere to these provisions may result in a delay in award processing or rejection of the application, based on the extent of the noncompliance.

The submitting applicant should not include any Personally Identifiable Information (PII) in the application materials prior to final submission to grants.gov. PII includes, but is not limited to, social security number, date of birth, student identification number (from transcripts) or other information which if lost, compromised, or disclosed without authorization, could result in harm, embarrassment, inconvenience, or unfairness to an individual.

IMPORTANT NOTE: This proposal package will be using a different set of forms than applicants may have completed in the past. Instead of the "SF424 NOAA Standard Non-Construction Application Package", this application will include the "SF424 NOAA Research & Related (R&R) Forms Package." **While many of the forms may be familiar, please pay special attention to the headings and instructions in this section.**

NOAA has created a guide to aid applicants format application packages to eRA: Tips and Tricks for Successful eRA Submissions, linked [here](#). Recent applicants have had their applications rejected for formatting issues. Please be aware of the following:

- All attachments must be in PDF form.
- Do not use "bundling" or "portfolio" features to combine PDFs into a single document. Everything must be visible in the PDF.
- Descriptive filenames may only be 50 characters or less (including spaces).
- Keep attachment file size to 100 MB or less.
- eRA won't accept any pages larger than the U.S. standard letter paper size (8.5" x 11").
- eRA will not accept applications with the same project titles and PI.

We **strongly** recommend that applicants submit their completed proposals at least a few days prior to the due date in case they encounter issues with the system. We will not extend the deadline date based on issues you may encounter in submitting your application into the system. Please contact the [eRA Service Desk](#) for assistance.

Required Elements:

Applications must include the following elements. Failure to adhere to these provisions may result in a delay in award processing or rejection of the application, based on the extent of the noncompliance.

Letter of Intent Requirements

Letters of Intent are not required for this NOFO.

Full Proposal Required Elements

(please also see VIII. Other Information for additional post-application required elements for submission):

REMEMBER: The intent of this application is to be high level and propose the establishment of the CI. Specific project level detail, goals or budget should NOT be included at this time.

The application must include the following 23 elements:

1. Standard Form (SF) 424 (R&R)
2. Title Page
3. Project Abstract Summary Form
4. Results from Prior Research
5. Description of Work - Research Plan
6. Description of Project Performance Sites
7. List of Senior and Key Personnel
8. Publication/Reference Review
9. Research & Related Budget (Total Fed & Non-Fed - Budget Form)
10. R&R Subaward Budget (Fed/Non-Fed) Attachment(s) Form (if applicable)
11. Detailed Budget Justification
12. Vitae
13. Current and Pending Support
14. CD-511
15. SF-424B
16. SF-LLL (if applicable)
17. Copy of the applicant's current approved Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA)
18. Monitoring Plan
19. Societal Impact Statement
20. Strategic Plan
21. Business Plan
22. Outreach Plan
23. Data Management Plan

The instructions for preparation of full proposals provided below are mandatory. Required content includes:

Standard Form 424 (R&R): All applicants requesting direct funding must submit the Standard Form 424 (R&R), (SF-424 R&R), "Application for Federal Assistance" to indicate the total amount of funding proposed for their institution for the whole project period. This form is to be the cover page for the original proposal and is the first required form in the Grants.gov proposal package. The form can be downloaded at <https://www.grants.gov/forms/forms-repository/r-r-family> in the Forms Repository section under the R&R Family hyperlink. For a NOAA and non-NOAA Federal partner, applications for Federal assistance (SF-424 (R&R) and the Research & Related Budget (Total Fed + Non-Fed) Budget Form, must show the total amount less what would go to the Federal partner.

- Federal Award Payment Requirement - be sure that the Employer Identification Number (EIN) and Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) numbers are correct.

Title Page: The title page should clearly indicate the proposed name of the CI, principal investigators (for the institutional award), total amount of Federal funds being requested, and award period. In the event that the application is submitted by a consortium, the lead academic institution for the consortium should submit the application on behalf of the consortium and any supporting research affiliates. Applications submitted by a CI consortium should include the name of each academic institution and supporting research affiliate, along with each associated principal investigator.

Project Abstract Summary Form: The Project Abstract Summary succinctly describes the project in plain language that the public can understand and use without the full proposal. If the application is funded, your project abstract information (as submitted) will be made available to public websites and/or databases including USAspending.gov. An abstract must be included and should contain a brief description of the CI, research themes, and proposed activities. The form can be downloaded at <https://www.grants.gov/forms/forms-repository/r-r-family>. The abstract should appear on a separate page, headed with the proposal title, institution's investigators, total proposed cost and budget period. The summary should be prepared to be readable to a broad audience and contain the following sections:

- Project Name/Title
- Primary Contact (name address, telephone, email)
- Primary Recipient's Institution
- Other Investigators (name, affiliated institution or agency)
- Brief Project Summary including objectives and intended benefits
- Consortium Members and other Partners

Results from Prior Research: The results of related projects supported by NOAA and other agencies should be described, including their relation to the currently proposed work. Reference to each prior research award should include the title, agency, award number, Principal Investigators, period of award, and total award. The section should be a brief summary and should not exceed two pages.

Description of Work - Research Plan: The project description includes the following sections:

- Introduction/Narrative (information contained in this section of the proposal should provide background information and significance of the proposed research).
- Specific aims/milestones (information in this section of the proposal should provide the proposed goals and expected outcomes. It should also show when the researcher expects to reach the proposed goals and outcomes).
- Timeline for milestones (table showing the timeline for the milestones).

- Relationship to NOAA Goals (information in this section of the proposal should show how the proposed research relates to the current NOAA Research Goals and, if applicable, include impacts to DOC / NOAA program goals).
- Educational outreach plans.

Description of Project Performance Sites: List the facilities that may be used (including any Federally owned property) where research conducted will be directly related to the proposed research – this may include consortium members.

List of Senior and Key Personnel: Describe their specific roles as they relate to the specific aims/milestones.

- Each Key Personnel must have an eRA Commons account in order to be successfully included in the application.

Publication/Reference Review: Each reference should include the names of all authors in the same sequence they appear in the publications, the article title, the journal or book title, volume number, page numbers, and year of publications. While there is no established page limitation, this section should include bibliographic citations only and should not be used to provide parenthetical information outside of the Research Plan.

Research & Related Budget (Total Fed + Non-Fed) Form: All applicants are required to submit a Research & Related Budget (Total Fed + Non-Fed) Form, which identifies the budget for each fiscal year of the primary proposal. A new Research & Related Budget (Total Fed + Non-Fed) form is required for each fiscal year in sections A - D for the primary award. The form can be downloaded at <https://www.grants.gov/forms/forms-repository/r-r-family>.

- Avoid the section titled “Statement of Work/deliverables.” This phrase suggests a contractual arrangement.

Detailed Budget Justification: All proposals must include a detailed budget narrative covering the proposed period of performance with a justification to support all proposed budget categories for each fiscal year. A separate budget narrative is required for each subcontract/subaward, if applicable. For additional information concerning each of the required budget categories and appropriate level of disclosure please see: https://coast.noaa.gov/data/coasthome/funding/_pdf/forms/budget-narrative-guidance-for-NOAA-grants.pdf

If a consortium member or partner is requested to perform any work as part of the project, please be advised that the work to be performed must be reflected separately in the project description and partner budget. The budget should clearly identify the recipient and funded activity.

Each subaward should provide a R&R Subaward Budget (Fed/Non-Fed) Attachment(s) Form if applicable for each fiscal year of the project and accompany the budget narrative specific for each partner. The form can be downloaded at <https://www.grants.gov/forms/forms-repository/r-r-family>.

If more than one institution is collaborating in a project awarded funds, a separate budget narrative is required for each subaward and must be provided to the lead institution for submission. The lead institution will be the only institution to directly receive funds from NOAA and is responsible for sending funds to their subaward institutions. The Budget Narrative must match the same direct cost categories as the Research & Related Budget (Total Fed + Non-Fed) Budget and the R&R Subaward Budget (Fed/Non-Fed) Attachment(s) forms for the primary and each subaward.

Curriculum Vitae: (single-spaced, 12-point font, 1-inch margins, two (2) pages maximum, per person)
Provide resumes of the Principal Investigator for the CI and other key personnel critical to the success of the CI. Ensure that resumes address qualifications relevant to conducting the proposed work. Publication lists should be limited to all publications in the last 3 years with up to five other relevant papers.

Current and pending support: For each principal investigator, submit a list which includes project title, supporting agency with grant number, investigator months, dollar value, and duration. Requested values should be listed for pending support.

CD-511: Certification Regarding Lobbying: Required only for the lead institution, which may submit this form through the Grants.gov CD511 document placeholder without a hard signature because electronic signatures are allowed on documents from the submitting institution. The form can be downloaded at: <https://www.grants.gov/forms/forms-repository/sf-424-family>.

SF-424B: Assurances - Non-Construction Programs: Required only for the lead institution, which may submit this form through the Grants.gov SF-424B document placeholder without a hard signature because electronic signatures are allowed on documents from the submitting institutions. The form can be downloaded at <https://www.grants.gov/forms/forms-repository/sf-424-family>.

SF-LLL: Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (if applicable): If lobbying activity is or has been secured to influence the outcome of a covered federal action, complete the SF-LLL standard lobbying disclosure form found at <https://www.grants.gov/forms/forms-repository/sf-424-family> and include it with your proposal package.

Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA): Applicants must include a copy of their most recent approved NICRA. NOAA and the Cooperative Institute may share resources such as facilities, equipment, or personnel, which may offset the use of the institution's facilities and administration, as recovered under the indirect rate. In accordance with 2 C.F.R. 200.414(c)(3), the NOAA Cooperative Institute program has an approval to deviate from negotiated indirect cost rates. More information is available at <https://www.commerce.gov/oam/policy/financial-assistance-policy>.
If the applicant is proposing a lower indirect cost rate to be applied to this award, please document it in the Detailed Budget Justification.

Monitoring Plan: The applicant will submit a monitoring plan that describes their structured approach to track and evaluate the progress and performance under this award. The plan should include the applicant's self-assessment strategy, data that will be collected, and how it will be analyzed to ensure the applicant stays on track and achieves its objectives.

All proposals for subsequent projects awarded funds must include a monitoring plan that addresses (1) required inputs and resources for the successful completion of the project, (2) the proposed outputs and outcomes from the successful completion of the project, (3) the project timeline, with major milestones addressed (may be the same as that included in Description of Work - Research Plan), (4) status reports for the project (including when such reports will be received, the POCs to send and receive such reports, the format of the status reporting, and how status reports will be documented), and (5) the measurable objectives for the project (how to measure the success of the project).

Societal Impact Statement: NOAA plays a wide-ranging and critical role in helping the nation achieve sustainable economic growth and protection of human life, health and the environment. The applicant will describe how their proposed work is connected to socioeconomic impacts that align with NOAA's public purpose. The applicant's proposal should exhibit understanding of societal needs by integrating social science with their proposed scientific work. All proposals for subsequent projects awarded funds must include the project's proposed socioeconomic impact, in addition to the project's proposed outcomes.

Strategic Plan: CIs are important partners for NOAA science. A strategic plan demonstrates the applicant's foresight for future work, aligns proposed work with NOAA, and provides a clear, actionable road map for success. The strategic plan should clearly address the applicant's strategy for completion of work and describe how this work will complement and enhance NOAA's programs. The applicant should provide a commitment to resources and illustrate how they will foster a long-term collaborative research environment / culture with NOAA.

Business Plan: The applicant should describe its proposed organization, and certain policies or procedures, via a business plan. The business plan should include, but not be limited to, elements such as (i) detailed organizational structure, including roles and responsibilities, (ii) communication plan, both internal and external to the organization, including NOAA and other work partners, (iii) proposed general schedule for work, including routine cycles for planning, budget / financial, proposal submission, etc., (iv) grants management and financial management information, including systems utilized and process maps / workflows, (v) internal controls program and processes, and (vi) listing of HR policies, including those pertaining to travel.

Outreach Plan: Outreach plans transform vague intentions into concrete, achievable goals, ensure efficient resource use and foster meaningful connections with the community. The applicant will submit an outreach plan with this application that includes, at a minimum, the (i) target populations for outreach efforts, (ii) community partners for outreach, and (iii) the socioeconomic impact of this outreach work.

Data Management Plan: Information in this section of the proposal shows how the final research data will be shared and with whom or explains why data-sharing is not possible at this time and the plan and time-frame for data sharing.

Proposals submitted in response to this Announcement must include a Data Management Plan (up to 2 pages). See Section VI.B., Administrative and National Policy Requirements, below for additional information on what the plan should contain.

Environmental Compliance

The U.S. Department of Commerce National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Environmental Questionnaire & Checklist, which may be found at: <https://www.nepa.noaa.gov/docs/NOAA-Grants-Questionnaire-final.pdf>. Applicants are required to submit answers to the following abbreviated set of questions and, depending on the specifics of the project as indicated in response to those questions, may be required to provide additional detail, prior to a funding decision, as NOAA deems necessary in order for NOAA to fulfill its NEPA responsibilities:

The NEPA Questionnaire is required for ALL research projects even if the project is fully lab-based or relies on social science. The NEPA Questionnaire is also required for any project that will have components including:

- Requires environmental permits, authorizations or waivers
- Includes Biological take and/or release
- Includes Environmental sampling
- Generates Hazardous or toxic substances and waste
- Could have Permanent or temporary environmental effects
- Could involve Endangered or threatened species and/or protected areas

- Could have Known or unknown risks to human health or the environment
- Includes Controversial environmental subject matters

NEPA Statement

Projects or actions that fall into the below categories do not need a questionnaire. If a program believes that a project in the application meets one of the exceptions, the program should include the following NEPA Statement directly after the relevant project narrative. Please use the following format for the NEPA Statement:

“This project’s activities are exclusively composed of [choose applicable activities from the bulleted list below] and therefore no NEPA Questionnaire is being submitted, as allowed by NOAA guidance.”

NOAA has final responsibility to determine whether a project or action requires environmental compliance review. If NOAA determines that a project or action needs an environmental review, and the NEPA Statement is not sufficient, staff may request completion of a NEPA Questionnaire be provided instead.

Some examples of projects that can use the NEPA Statement are:

- Program management
- Program Development projects (these projects may need to undergo environmental compliance review when the program identifies project activities; please work with the federal program officer during implementation of these projects).
- Placeholder projects (e.g., "Future Competed Projects"; these projects will have a Specific Award Condition on the grant and undergo environmental compliance review when the program submits an award action request to satisfy that specific award condition)
- Workshops or conferences that do not involve the above list of actions in the previous section
- Communication activities that do not involve the above list of actions in the previous section
- Hiring actions
- Purely administrative actions (e.g., purchase of office supplies)

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

Any applicant awarded in response to this Announcement will be required to use the System for Award Management (SAM), which may be accessed online at <https://sam.gov>. SAM enables the use of a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) and to build the quality of information available to the public as required by the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act, 31 U.S.C. 6106 Note, to the extent applicable.

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

D. Submission Dates and Times

The initial T1 award application must be submitted to Grants.gov and accepted by eRA by 11:59 p.m. Eastern time on **February 2nd 2026**. Once a tentative selection is made, the selected applicant will be provided guidance and a timeline for submitting their detailed project T3 applications (first round of projects).

Please note: validation or rejection of an application by Grants.gov and eRA may take up to two business days after submission. Eligible applicants should consider this process in developing their submission timeline. For eligible applications submitted through Grants.gov and eRA, a date and time receipt indication is included and will be the basis of determining timeliness. NOAA has created a guide to aid applicants format application packages to eRA: [Tips and Tricks for Successful eRA Submissions](#), linked [here](#).

E. Intergovernmental Review

Applications under this program are not subject to Executive Order 12372, "Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs."

F. Funding Restrictions

NOAA will not consider expenses associated with fees, fund-raising activities, travel for activities not directly related to project implementation, travel or salaries for Federal employees, or profit as allowable costs in the proposed budget. The total costs of a project consist of all allowable costs incurred in accomplishing project activities during the project period. Project costs can only include support for activities conducted between the effective start date and end date of the award, and cannot include activities undertaken either before or after the agreed upon dates. 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.

G. Other Submission Requirements

Federal employees are not allowed to assist in the preparation of an application or proposal, except that these individuals may provide you with information on program goals, funding priorities, application procedures, and completion of application forms. Because this is a competitive program, Federal employees will not provide assistance in conceptualizing, developing, or structuring proposals, or write letters of support for an application or proposal.

Registration Requirements

NOTE: We strongly encourage all prospective applicants to initiate 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.

System for Award Management

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>

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.

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 Research & Related Senior/Key Person Profile form in Credential, e.g., agency login;
- Key Personnel don't have individual eRA Commons accounts to be included in the application;
- The Universal Entity Identifier (UEI) from SAM.gov is not provided;
- The Congressional District is not entered in the correct format. 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;
- Two applications have the exact same project title and PI.

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, once an electronic application is accepted in eRA Commons, you will receive an automated notification from eRA Commons that the completed application was received and that an application number will be assigned. If there are errors in the application, eRA Commons will send an automated email notification(s) 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.

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 eRA Helpdesk at 1-866-504-9552 and the agency contact listed in Section VII to confirm NOAA's receipt of the complete submission. See Section IV(G) for detailed instructions on submission validation requirements.

H. Address for Submitting Proposals

Proposals should be submitted using Grants.gov. Proposal materials are available at <http://www.grants.gov> as part of the electronic proposal package, which includes the federal forms. Please contact the Cooperative Institute Administration Office (CIAO) should you have an issue accessing the materials (see Section VII for contact information).

V. Application Review Information

1. Importance/relevance and applicability of proposed projects to the program goals	Maximum Points: 35
<p>Strategic Planning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the applicant's strategic plan fully developed and adequately describe the applicant's proposed strategy to complete CI science work? Does the applicant's proposal meaningfully and substantially address the Program Priorities described in the NOFO? Does the applicant's proposal meet the unique technical requirements identified in the NOFO and required for this CI? <p>Socioeconomic Impact:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has the applicant connected their work with socioeconomic impacts? Do applicant's noted societal impacts align with NOAA's public purposes? 	
2. Technical/scientific merit	Maximum Points: 30
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the applicant's proposal specifically describe the applicant's plans and ability to meet the unique scientific requirements and NOAA' mission goals identified in the NOFO? Has the applicant's proposal proved their ability to enact a forward-thinking, interdisciplinary perspective for their work? 	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the applicant able to integrate its scientific work with the specific areas of focus further detailed in the NOFO? 	
Does the applicant's proposal include a Data Management Plan that is appropriate for work and that addresses the intent of NOAA Administrative Order 212-15B: Management of NOAA Data and Information ?	
3. Overall qualifications of applicants	Maximum Points: 20
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If the institution(s) and/or Principal Investigators (the applicant) have received current or recent NOAA funding (within the past 5 years), is there a demonstrated record of outstanding performance working with NOAA and/or NOAA scientists on research projects? Does the applicant have nationally and/or internationally recognized expertise within the appropriate disciplines needed to conduct the collaborative/interdisciplinary research activities required for the CI, and is this adequately described in the proposal? Does the applicant have any unique capabilities in mission-critical areas of research required for the CI? Has the applicant adequately shown a substantial investment to foster a long term collaboration with NOAA? Has the applicant provided verification of the CI's involvement in partnerships with other universities or research institutions that will strengthen the required activities of the CI? Does the applicant have a well-developed business plan? 	
4. Project costs	Maximum Points: 5
Is the applicant's proposed budget realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time frame?	
5. Outreach and Education	Maximum Points: 10
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is there a strong education program with established graduate degree programs in NOAA related sciences that also encourages student participation in NOAA-related research studies? Has the applicant provided a well-developed outreach plan? Has the applicant included a robust education plan in support of the research plan? 	

Evaluation Criteria

Once an application has been received by NOAA, an initial administrative review is conducted to determine compliance with requirements and completeness of the application. Ineligible, incomplete, and/or non-responsive applications may be eliminated from further review. NOAA, in its sole discretion, may continue the review process for applications with non-substantive issues that can easily be rectified or cured. All applications that pass this initial review will be evaluated and individually ranked in accordance with the assigned weights of the above-listed evaluation criteria by an independent merit review panel. At least three subject-matter experts, who may be Federal or non-Federal, will be used in this process, with each individual having expertise in a separate area, so that the panel, as a whole, covers a range of relevant scientific expertise. Each expert will submit an individual merit review and there will be no consensus opinion. The merit reviewers' ratings are used to produce a rank order of the proposals.

Review and Selection Process

The Selecting Official selects proposals after considering the merit reviews and selection factors listed below. In making the final selections, the Selecting Official will recommend awarding in rank order unless the proposal is justified to be selected out of rank order based upon one or more of the selection factors.

The Selecting Official will make recommendations to the NOAA Grants Management Division, and the final approval of selected application and issuance of award will be by the NOAA Grants Officer. The award decisions of the NOAA Grants Officer are final.

The Competition Manager, or Grants Specialist may contact the applicants to discuss questions about the merit or administrative correctness of the application and may delay approval of the application, or impose conditions on the award preventing funding or execution of certain activities, until all questions are satisfactorily answered.

The NOAA Grants Officer will review financial and grants administration aspects of a proposed award, including conducting an assessment of the risk posed by the applicant in accordance with 2 C.F.R. 200.206. In addition to reviewing repositories of government-wide eligibility, qualifications or financial integrity information, the risk assessment conducted by NOAA may consider items such as the financial stability of an applicant, quality of the applicant's management systems, an applicant's history of performance, previous audit reports and audit findings concerning the applicant and the applicant's ability to effectively implement statutory, regulatory, or other requirements imposed on non-Federal entities. See also "Review of Risk" in Section VI.B of this Announcement.

Applicants should be in compliance with the terms of any existing NOAA grants or cooperative agreements and otherwise eligible to receive Federal awards, or make arrangements satisfactory to the NOAA Grants Officer, to be considered for funding under this competition. All reports due should be received, and any concerns raised by the agency should be timely addressed in order to receive a new award. Upon review of these factors, if appropriate, specific award conditions that respond to the degree of risk may be applied by the NOAA Grants Officer pursuant to 2 C.F.R. 200.208. In addition, NOAA reserves the right to reject an application in its entirety where information is uncovered that raises a significant risk with respect to the responsibility or suitability of an applicant. The final approval of the selected application and issuance of awards will be by the NOAA Grants Officer.

Selection Factors

The Selecting Official shall recommend awarding 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.

Consequently, awards may not necessarily be made to the highest-scored application. Investigators may be asked to answer questions; and/or modify objectives, work plans, and/or budgets (including overall funding level) to address the issues raised by the reviewers, the competition manager, the Selecting Official, or the Grants Officer before an award is made. Subsequent administrative processing will be in accordance with current NOAA grants procedures.

Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

It is anticipated that successful applicants will be notified in **April 2026** that the Selecting Official is recommending them for funding to the NOAA Grants Officer. Subject to the availability of funds, The T1 award is expected to start **October 1, 2026**. Unsuccessful applicants will be notified by e-mail that their application was not recommended for funding after the final selection package has been approved by the NOAA GMD, which is expected in **April 2026**. Unsuccessful applications submitted to this competition will be retained for three years and then destroyed.

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.

RELEASE OF APPLICATION INFORMATION. Privileged or confidential commercial or financial information, patentable ideas, or trade secrets, disclosure of which may harm the applicant, should be included in the proposal only when such information is necessary to convey an understanding of the proposed work. In the event that a proposal contains information or data that the applicant does not want disclosed prior to award for purposes other than the evaluation of the proposal, 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. A proposal that results in an award will be available to the public on request, except for privileged information or material that is personal, proprietary, or otherwise exempt from disclosure under law. Appropriate labeling in the proposal aids identification of what may be specifically exempt. Such information will be withheld from public disclosure to the extent permitted by law, including the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), 5 U.S.C. 552, and 15 C.F.R. Part 4, which sets forth rules for the Department of Commerce to make requested materials, information, and records publicly available under FOIA.

Without assuming any liability for inadvertent disclosure, NOAA will seek to limit disclosure of such information to its employees and contractors, and to outside reviewers when necessary for merit review of the proposal or as otherwise authorized by law. Portions of proposals resulting in awards that contain descriptions of inventions in which either the Government or the funding recipient owns a right, title, or interest (including a nonexclusive license) will not normally be made available to the public until a reasonable time has been allowed for filing patent applications. NOAA will notify the recipient of receipt of requests for copies of funded proposals so the recipient may advise NOAA of such inventions described, or other confidential, commercial, or proprietary information contained in the proposal. NOAA may, at its own discretion, make publicly visible the data management plan from funded projects, 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.

The applicant acknowledges and understands that information and data contained in applications for financial assistance, as well as information and data contained in financial, performance and other reports submitted by applicants, may be used by the Department of Commerce in conducting reviews and evaluations of its financial assistance programs. For this purpose, applicant information and data may be accessed, reviewed, and evaluated by Department of Commerce employees, other Federal employees, and also by Federal agents and contractors, and/or by non-Federal personnel, all of whom enter into appropriate conflict of interest and confidentiality agreements covering the use of such information. As may be provided in the terms and conditions of a specific financial assistance award, applicants are expected to support program reviews and evaluations by submitting required financial and performance information and data in an accurate and timely manner, and by cooperating with the Department of Commerce and external program evaluators. Following 2 C.F.R. § 200.303(e), applicants are reminded that they must take reasonable measures to safeguard protected personally identifiable information and other confidential or sensitive personal or business information created or obtained in connection with a Department of Commerce financial assistance award.

PERMITS. It is the applicant's responsibility to obtain all permits and approvals from Federal, state, and local governments and private landowners where necessary for the proposed work to be conducted. If applicable, documentation of requests or approvals of environmental permits must be received by the NOAA Program Manager prior to release of funding. Failure to apply for and obtain Federal, state, and local permits, approvals, or letters of agreement may delay the award of funds if a project is otherwise selected for funding. In some cases, if additional permits and approvals are required after an application is selected, funds may be withheld by the NOAA Grants Officer under a specific award condition requiring the recipient to submit required permits and approvals.

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

UNIFORM ADMINISTRATIVE REQUIREMENTS, COST PRINCIPLES, AND AUDIT REQUIREMENTS.

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

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE PRE-AWARD NOTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS FOR GRANTS AND

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

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE (DOC) TERMS AND CONDITIONS. Successful applicants who accept a NOAA award under this solicitation will be bound by the DOC Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions. This document will be provided in the award package in eRA at <http://www.ago.noaa.gov> and at <https://www.commerce.gov/oam/policy/financial-assistance-policy>.

BUREAU TERMS AND CONDITIONS. Successful applicants who accept an award under this solicitation will be bound by bureau-specific standard terms and conditions. These terms and conditions will be provided in the award package in NOAA's Grants Online system. For NOAA awards only, the Administrative Standard Award Conditions for National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Financial Assistance Awards U.S. Department of Commerce are applicable to this solicitation and may be accessed online at <https://www.noaa.gov/organization/acquisition-grants/financial-assistance>

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

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

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

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

More information can be found on NOAA's Data Management Procedures at:

https://nosc.noaa.gov/EDMC/documents/Data_Sharing_Directive_v3.0_remediated.pdf and at NAO 212-15 Management of Environmental Data and Information:

<https://www.noaa.gov/organization/administration/nao-212-15-management-of-environmental-data-and-information>

NOAA SEXUAL ASSAULT AND SEXUAL HARASSMENT PREVENTION AND RESPONSE POLICY. NOAA requires organizations receiving federal assistance to report findings of sexual harassment, or any other kind of harassment, regarding a Principal Investigator (PI), co-PI, or any other key personnel in the award.

NOAA expects all financial assistance recipients to establish and maintain clear and unambiguous standards of behavior to ensure harassment free workplaces wherever NOAA grant or cooperative agreement work is conducted, including notification pathways for all personnel, including students, on the awards. This expectation includes activities at all on- and offsite facilities and during conferences and workshops. All such settings should have accessible and evident means for reporting violations and recipients should exercise due diligence with timely investigations of allegations and corrective actions.

For more information, please visit: <https://www.noaa.gov/organization/acquisition-grants/noaa-workplace-harassment-training-for-contractors-and-financial>.

SCIENCE INTEGRITY. 1. Maintaining Integrity. The non-Federal entity shall maintain the scientific integrity of research performed pursuant to this grant or financial assistance award including the prevention, detection, and remediation of any allegations regarding the violation of scientific integrity or scientific and research misconduct, and the conduct of inquiries, investigations, and adjudications of allegations of violations of scientific integrity or scientific and research misconduct. All the requirements of this provision flow down to subrecipients. 2. Peer Review. The peer review of the results of scientific activities under a NOAA grant, financial assistance award or cooperative agreement shall be accomplished to ensure consistency with NOAA standards on quality, relevance, scientific integrity, reproducibility, transparency, and performance. NOAA will ensure that peer review of "influential scientific information" or "highly influential scientific assessments" is conducted in accordance with the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Final Information Quality Bulletin for Peer Review and NOAA policies on peer review, such as the Information Quality Guidelines. 3. In performing or presenting the results of scientific activities under the NOAA grant, financial assistance award, or cooperative agreement and in responding to allegations regarding the violation of scientific integrity or scientific and research misconduct, the non-Federal entity and all subrecipients shall comply with the provisions herein and NOAA Administrative Order (NAO) 202-735D, Scientific Integrity, and its Procedural Handbook, including any amendments thereto. That Order can be found at <https://www.noaa.gov/organization/administration/nao-202-735d-2-scientific-integrity>. 4. Primary Responsibility. The non-Federal entity shall have the primary responsibility to prevent, detect, and investigate allegations of a violation of scientific integrity or scientific and research misconduct. Unless otherwise instructed by the grants officer, the non-Federal entity shall promptly conduct an initial inquiry into any allegation of such misconduct and may rely on its internal policies and procedures, as appropriate, to do so. 5. By executing this grant, financial assistance award, or cooperative agreement the non-Federal entity provides its assurance that it has established an administrative process for performing an inquiry, investigating, and reporting allegations of a violation of scientific integrity or scientific and research misconduct; and that it will comply with its own administrative process for performing an inquiry, investigation, and reporting of such misconduct. 6. The non-Federal entity shall insert this provision in all subawards at all tiers under this grant, financial assistance award, or cooperative agreement.

REVIEW OF RISK. After applications are proposed for funding by the Selecting Official, the Grants Office will perform administrative reviews, including an assessment of risk posed by the applicant under 2 C.F.R. 200.206. These may include assessments of the financial stability of an applicant and the quality of the applicant's management systems, history of performance, and the applicant's ability to effectively implement statutory, regulatory, or other requirements imposed on non-Federal entities. Special conditions that address any risks determined to exist may be applied. Applicants may submit comments about any information concerning organizational performance listed in the Responsibility/Qualification section of SAM.gov for consideration by the awarding agency.

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

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

The Department of Commerce has designated this award as Research and Development (R&D) under 2 CFR § 200.1 for purposes of award administration. The Federal-wide Research Terms and Conditions, dated November 12, 2020, are no longer in effect and do not apply to this award. 2 CFR 200.308(h), which applies to this award, provides a waiver of prior approval requirements in certain circumstances. In the event the Department of Commerce adopts additional terms specific to R&D awards, this award may be amended by the Grants Officer to incorporate the additional terms.

Executive Order 14173: Ending Illegal Discrimination and Restoring Merit-Based Opportunity

Pursuant to Executive Order 14173, 90 FR 8633 (Jan. 21, 2025), Ending Illegal Discrimination and Restoring Merit-Based Opportunity, each recipient that accepts a U.S. Department of Commerce financial assistance award:

- (1) agrees that compliance in all respects with all applicable Federal anti discrimination laws is material to the government's payment decisions for purposes of section 3729(b)(4) of Title 31 United States Code; and
- (2) certifies to the Department that it does not operate any programs promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion that violate any applicable Federal anti-discrimination laws.

Indirect Cost Rate

Indirect Cost Rate - If an applicant does not have a current indirect cost rate with a federal agency they may choose to negotiate a rate with the Department of Commerce or use the de minimis indirect cost rate of 15% of Modified Total Direct Cost (MTDC) (as allowable under revisions to 2 C.F.R. §200.414 in effect since October 2024). The negotiation and approval of a rate is subject to the procedures required by NOAA and the Department of Commerce Standard Terms and Conditions. Do not include participant support costs when determining the indirect cost base. Additionally, applicants should be aware that most indirect cost rate agreements require that participant support costs be excluded from the MTDC base when calculating indirect costs. Applicants should reference their official agreements. The NOAA contact for indirect or facilities and administrative costs is: Jennifer Jackson, Grants Officer, NOAA Grants Management Division, jennifer.jackson@noaa.gov.

C. Reporting

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

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

Research Performance Progress Reports (RPPR) must follow NOAA CI Administration Office (CIAO) policy requirements.

VII. Agency Contacts

For questions regarding this announcement contact the Cooperative Institutes Administration Office (CIAO), OAR, NOAA at cipo.oar@noaa.gov.

VIII. Other Information

Section 508 Compliance

All public-facing products produced with funding from the award(s)/project(s) must ensure compliance with Section 508 of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

The grant application and final report of all funded grants are public documents, except for privileged information or material that is personal, proprietary or otherwise exempt from disclosure under law. Appropriate labeling in the application will aid identification of what may be specifically exempt. The applicant acknowledges and understands that information and data contained in applications for financial assistance, as well as information and data contained in financial, performance and other reports submitted by applicants, may be used by the Department of Commerce in conducting reviews and evaluations of its financial assistance programs. For this purpose, applicant information and data may be accessed, reviewed and evaluated by Department of Commerce employees, other federal employees, and also by federal agents and contractors, and/or by non-federal personnel, all of whom enter into appropriate conflict of interest and confidentiality agreements covering the use of such information. As may be provided in the terms and conditions of a specific financial assistance award, applicants are expected to support program reviews and evaluations by submitting required financial and performance information and data in an accurate and timely manner, and by cooperating with Department of Commerce and external program evaluators.