

Pacific Islands Ocean Acidification Masters Student Fellowship

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NOTICE OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Federal Agency Name(s): Oceanic and Atmospheric Research (OAR), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Department of Commerce

Funding Opportunity Title: Pacific Islands Ocean Acidification Masters Student Fellowship

Announcement Type: Initial

Funding Opportunity Number: NOAA-OAR-OAP-2022-2007070

Federal Assistance Listings Number: 11.017, Ocean Acidification Program (OAP)

Dates: Letters of intent must be received by:

11:59 pm Eastern Time (UTC-5) on Monday, December 13, 2021

4:59 pm Fiji Time (UTC+12) on Tuesday, December 14, 2021.

Check your time zone conversion here:

<https://www.timeanddate.com/worldclock/converter.html?iso=20211214T045900&p1=282&p2=277&p3=82&p4=280&p5=193&p6=726&p7=145&p8=95&p9=263>

Email letters of intent to Erica.H.Ombres@noaa.gov

Full proposal submissions must be received by:

11:59 pm Eastern Time on, Thursday, March 10, 2022

4:59 pm Fiji Time (UTC+12) on Friday, March 11, 2022.

<https://www.timeanddate.com/worldclock/converter.html?iso=20220311T045900&p1=282&p2=277&p3=82&p4=280&p5=193&p6=726&p7=145&p8=95&p9=263>

Submit all full proposal application materials to www.grants.gov. Letters of Reference can be directly emailed to Erica.H.Ombres@noaa.gov.

Funding Opportunity Description: The NOAA Ocean Acidification Program (OAP) is supporting a competitive graduate fellowship that will support students conducting research, in pursuit of a Masters degree, related to ocean acidification (OA) in the Pacific Islands region to help fill a critical gap in capacity for OA research and monitoring in the region. OAP is seeking to fund students who would contribute to the body of knowledge on regional vulnerabilities to OA and potential solutions to build greater resilience against the impacts of OA. Successful applicants will conduct research that addresses physical/chemical oceanographic, biological, and/or socioeconomic questions and concepts. This funding call is part of a broader initiative, which involves multiple international scientific networks and capacity building organizations.

The goals of this fellowship are to (A) support early-career scientists who will provide the Pacific Islands region with ocean acidification research expertise, and (B) provide Pacific Island countries and communities with additional knowledge, information, and resources, which can be used to build greater resilience against acidification and its impacts. Please see Section III. Eligibility Information for a list of the prioritized Pacific Island countries.

Subject to the availability of funding, OAP anticipates up to \$300,000 USD total will be available to support approximately 3-6 graduate fellows, with each fellow funded at the approximate level of \$20,000 - \$32,000 USD per year for 2 years. Each award is intended to fund the fellow's tuition, stipend, research budget, and/or other costs associated with completing a 2-year Masters degree program. For a full description of the types of costs that can and cannot be applied to this award, please see Section IV. F

This document sets out requirements for submitting to NOAA-OAR-OAP-2022-2007070. For additional guidance and tips on how best to prepare an application, please contact the Program Managers listed in Section VII.

FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Program Objective

The NOAA Ocean Acidification Program (OAP) was established by the Federal Ocean Acidification Research and Monitoring (FOARAM) Act of 2009. Ocean acidification (OA) is the ongoing change in ocean chemistry in response to the ocean's uptake of increasing carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. Ocean pH has declined by 0.11 globally since the industrial revolution, an increase in acidity of about 30%. The OAP coordinates OA research, monitoring, and other activities to improve our understanding of how the chemistry of the ocean is changing, how variable that change is by region, and what impacts these changes are having on marine organisms, people, and the local, regional, and national economies that depend on the ocean. As part of its responsibilities, the OAP provides grants for research projects that explore the effects on marine organisms, ecosystems, and the socioeconomic impacts that can lead to potential adaptive strategies.

OAP is supporting a competitive graduate fellowship for students in the Pacific Islands region with the objective of filling critical gaps in capacity for ocean acidification research and monitoring. As part of the US Interagency Partnership for Resilient Infrastructure Investment in Pacific Island Countries, OAP is seeking proposals from students in pursuit of a Masters degree who would contribute to the body of knowledge on regional vulnerabilities to OA and potential solutions to build greater resilience against the impacts of OA. Successful applicants will conduct research that addresses physical/chemical oceanographic, biological, and/or socioeconomic questions and concepts.

In addition to the awarded fellowship funds, successful applicants will also receive:

- Access to a community of practice composed of universities, non-profits, and government organizations focused on capacity development in the Pacific Islands region, including the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), The Ocean Foundation (TOF), the National Institute of Water and Atmospheric Research (NIWA), Secretariat of The Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), the University of Hawaii (UH), the Pacific Community (SPC), the University of the South Pacific (USP), the University of Otago (UO), the Global Ocean Acidification Observing Network (GOA-ON), and the GOA-ON Pacific Islands & Territories Ocean Acidification hub (PI-TOA).
- Access to a network of scientists conducting OA monitoring in the Pacific Islands, as well as around the globe.
- Depending on the availability of resources, an invitation to a hands-on, in-person training workshop at the new Pacific Islands Ocean Acidification Regional Training Hub in Suva,

Fiji (anticipated in 2023, Covid-19 permitting)

This funding call is part of a broader initiative including efforts by the US Department of State, The Ocean Foundation (TOF), the Global Ocean Acidification Observing Network (GOA-ON), the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO (IOC-UNESCO), the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), and other partners, to build capacity in monitoring and understanding OA and its impacts in the Pacific Islands. To this end, NOAA and its partners are working with a newly established OA Regional Training Hub in Suva, Fiji hosted by the Institute of Applied Science at the University of the South Pacific (USP), the Pacific Community (SPC), the National Institute of Water and Atmospheric Research (NIWA), and the University of Otago (UO), to provide consistent support and resources to scientists, students, and other community members engaged in OA research in the region.

B. Program Priorities

The goals of this fellowship are to:

- (A) support early-career scientists who will provide the Pacific Islands region with ocean acidification research expertise
- (B) provide Pacific Island countries and communities with additional data, information, and resources, which can be used to build greater resilience against acidification and its impacts

Applicants must propose a Masters-level research project that incorporates one or more of the following priority areas:

1. Connecting historic, current, and/or predicted future oceanographic conditions, including parameters related to ocean acidification, to species and ecosystem responses in the Pacific Islands region; this includes, but is not limited to, experimental manipulation to derive estimates of sensitivity and response, sampling that elucidates the relationship between physical/chemical and biological parameters, and analyses of coral cores for geological records of ocean acidification events
2. Synthesizing disparate data sources to identify data needs and knowledge gaps about ocean acidification and its impacts in the Pacific Islands region
3. Increasing community awareness and understanding of ocean acidification and its impacts through engagement, particularly among policymakers, commercial, recreational, and subsistence fishers and aquaculturists, and communities whose livelihoods depend on ecosystems that are vulnerable to OA
4. Using existing and new regional carbonate chemistry datasets to conduct nation-, island-, or community-level vulnerability assessments in the Pacific Islands region
5. Using existing and new regional carbonate chemistry datasets to inform national or local management strategies that may be implemented in the Pacific Islands region

6. Building coastal resilience against ocean acidification and its impacts in Pacific Islands countries by testing and monitoring the effectiveness of community-based mitigation or adaptation strategies, such as using “blue carbon” (e.g., sea grasses and mangroves) to attenuate acidification

Each proposal must include an outreach and education strategy that is designed to communicate the research outcomes with the appropriate audience, such as the ocean acidification research community, fisheries and aquaculture communities, resource managers, policymakers, and other local community members.

Applicants are encouraged to leverage past and present international ocean acidification capacity development and training activities in the Pacific Islands region.

The proposed activity must bolster scientific capacity for OA research in the Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Maldives, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Palau, the Philippines, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, and Vietnam; preference will be given to applicants who are citizens, nationals, or permanent residents of these nations, to applicants whose work will be conducted in these nations, and to a lesser extent, to applicants whose work is being conducted in other non-US countries and territories in the Pacific Islands region but directly benefits these nations.

To learn more about the types of ocean acidification research that NOAA has prioritized please review the 2020-2029 NOAA Ocean and Great Lakes Acidification Research Plan (<https://oceanacidification.noaa.gov/ResearchPlan2020/Download.aspx>). Specific information about the Pacific Region can be found in chapter 6, pages 56-64.

The NOAA Ocean Acidification Program (OAP) champions diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) by recruiting, retaining, and preparing a diverse, global workforce, and proactively engaging and serving the diverse populations of coastal communities. OAP is committed to building inclusive research, communication, and education programs that serve people with unique backgrounds, circumstances, needs, perspectives, and ways of thinking. We encourage applicants of all ages, races, ethnicities, national origins, gender identities, sexual orientations, disabilities, cultures, beliefs, citizenship types, marital statuses, and socioeconomic status types to apply for this opportunity.

C. Program Authority

33 U.S.C. Chapter 50, Sec. 3701-3708, the Federal Ocean Acidification Research and Monitoring (FOARAM) Act of 2009 established the NOAA Ocean Acidification Program (OAP). The OAP coordinates ocean acidification research, monitoring, and other activities to

improve our understanding of how the chemistry of the ocean is changing, how variable that change is by region, and what impacts these changes are having on marine organisms, people, and the local, regional, and national economies that depend on the ocean.

This funding opportunity is made possible by the United States Department of State (DOS) through Interagency Agreement 19318819Y0021-190001: the Partnership for Resilient Infrastructure Investment in Pacific Island Countries. The partnership aims to improve disaster preparedness and response to increase prosperity and safeguard economic security in the Pacific region. The DOS is authorized to enter into agreements with NOAA to provide and perform services under section 632(b) of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended (FAA) (22 U.S.C. 2392(b)).

II. Award Information

A. Funding Availability

Subject to the availability of funding, this announcement describes how eligible applicants should apply for the funding opportunity, “The Pacific Islands Ocean Acidification Masters Student Fellowship”. The OAP anticipates approximately \$200,000 USD total will be available to support approximately 3-5 graduate fellows, with each fellow funded at the approximate level of \$20,000 - \$32,000 USD per year for 2 years. Each award is intended to fund the fellow’s tuition, stipend, research budget, and other costs associated with a 2-year Masters degree program. For a full description of the types of costs that can and cannot be applied to this award, please see Section IV. F.

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 costs prior to receiving an award agreement signed by an authorized NOAA official, they do so at their own risk of not being selected or of these costs not being included in a subsequent award. NOAA and the United States Department of Commerce will not be responsible for any incurred project costs if this program fails to receive full funding.

B. Project/Award Period

The anticipated start date is September 1, 2022, with projects to be completed no later than August 31, 2024. Subsequent funding is contingent on the availability of out year appropriations and performance under the current award. Pre-award spending may be authorized 90 days prior to the start date of the award.

C. Type of Funding Instrument

Successful proposals will be funded through a grant or cooperative agreement. A cooperative agreement is used when substantial involvement of the US federal government during performance of the proposed work is anticipated. Examples of substantial involvement may include (but are not limited to) collaboration between NOAA program managers, NOAA scientists and grantees. 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 individuals who are currently enrolled in, or who have applied and intend to enroll in, a research-based Master's degree program in oceanography, marine science, environmental science, ocean engineering, resource management, coastal community social science, or a related field at an institution of higher education. Top priority will be given to applicants who are citizens, nationals, or permanent residents of the following countries: Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Maldives, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Palau, Philippines, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, and Vietnam. Preference will also be given to applicants who conduct research in the aforementioned countries, or other non-US countries and territories in the Pacific Islands region.

An eligible applicant must apply through the university or other institution of higher learning where the applicant is obtaining their Masters degree. While the applicant's university or other institution of higher learning must submit the full proposal application to www.grants.gov, the individual applicant is allowed to directly submit the Letter of Intent to the Program Manager. For more information, please see Sections IV. B. and IV. D.

Proposals selected for funding will be funded through a grant or cooperative agreement as described in Section II. C. of this notice.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement

Not Applicable

C. Other Criteria that Affect Eligibility

Letters of Intent (LOIs) are required for this funding opportunity. An applicant who submits a full proposal but who did not submit a LOI will not be considered and their application will be returned without review.

Applicants submitting proposals that involve the use of human test subjects should state so clearly in their application. These proposed research activities require approval of the applicant's Institutional Review Board (IRB) before such research can proceed. Applicants are responsible for obtaining IRB approval from their institution and providing that documentation to NOAA once the approval is obtained and prior to any NOAA-funded human subject testing. Proposals intending to use human test subjects should specify clearly in the timeline approximately when IRB approval will be obtained and when the testing is expected to occur.

IV. Application and Submission Information

A. Address to Request Application Package

Application packages are available online and can be downloaded from www.grants.gov under opportunity NOAA-OAR-OAP-2022-2007070. If an eligible applicant does not have access to the internet, please contact the agency contacts listed in Section VII for submission instructions.

B. Content and Form of Application

This section provides an overview of the Required Proposal Elements (and where to locate them). Applications must adhere to the provisions under "Required Proposal 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.

All required proposal elements should be single spaced in 12-point font with 1-inch margins.

The submitting applicant should redact all Personally Identifiable Information (PII) in the application materials prior to final submission to www.grants.gov. PII that should be redacted from the application 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.

For additional guidance on completing an application, please contact the Program Managers listed in Section VII.

Required Proposal Elements:

Letter of Intent Requirements:

LOIs are intended to help the Ocean Acidification Program to gauge the merits of the applicants and the relevance of their proposed projects to the goals and priorities of this funding opportunity. The intent is to reduce the burden of preparing full proposals for applicants who do not have a high probability for being funded. Late or incomplete LOIs, as well as those that considerably deviate from content or format requirements, will be rejected without consideration.

To be eligible to submit a full proposal, LOIs must be received via email by the Program Manager (Erica.H.Ombres@noaa.gov) with the subject: PI Fellowship LOI _ Applicant last name (eg: PI Fellowship LOI_Ombres) by 11:59 pm Eastern Time (UTC-5) on Monday, December 13, 2021

4:59 pm Fiji Time (UTC+12) on Tuesday, December 14, 2021.

Check your time zone conversion here:

<https://www.timeanddate.com/worldclock/converter.html?iso=20211116T040000&p1=282&p2=277&p3=82&p4=280&p5=193&p6=726&p7=145&p8=95&p9=263>

LOI content:**1. Cover page (maximum 1 page)**

- a. Applicant's name, title, affiliation
- b. Applicant's contact information (address, email, phone)
- c. Applicant's country of origin
- d. Applicant's academic advisor (name, title, affiliation, and email)
- e. Name and contact information for the Financial Office point-of-contact of the applicant's institutions (if applicants are unsure who from their institution they should list here, then they should contact the Program Manager).
- f. Program Priority Number (i.e., #1-6 from Section I B)
- g. Relevant Personal Background and Career Goals Statement (1/2 page recommended): This section should briefly discuss the applicant's prior education, the applicant's abilities, and the ways this fellowship will support the applicant's career goals.

2. Research plan (maximum 1 page)

- a. Project Title
- b. Project Description: a brief discussion of the focal topic, project objectives, methodological approach, and expected results (2/3 page recommended)
- c. Budget Justification: total cost, annual breakdown of requested funding, and a brief budget justification that indicates how the requested funding will be used (1/3 page recommended)

Program managers from NOAA will review each LOI based on the following four

evaluation criteria:

1. Is the applicant from a priority country (listed in Section I. B.) and will the research take place in a priority country or another nation in the Pacific Islands region?
2. Does the applicant have the necessary educational background and skills to accomplish the research plan?
3. How well does the research plan address one or more of the Program Priorities?
4. Does the proposed research plan contain clear objectives and sound methodological approaches, and is it likely to produce the expected results?

Approximately one month after the LOI due date, all applicants will be emailed with a notice that either encourages or discourages a full proposal. The final decision to submit a full proposal will be made by the applicants, regardless of the recommendations made by the program manager. However, late LOIs will not be considered and any associated full applications will not be accepted.

Full Proposal Requirements

A full proposal must include the following seven elements:

1. Project Narrative - must include the following elements to be considered complete:
 - a. Project Description. Excess pages beyond the maximum listed for each section will be redacted prior to review.
 - i - Cover page (1 page maximum)
 - Applicant's name, title, affiliation
 - Applicant's contact information (address, email, phone)
 - Applicant's country of origin
 - Status of Master's Program enrollment (applied, accepted, or enrolled)
 - Applicant's academic advisor (name, title, affiliation, and email)
 - Program Priority Number (i.e., #1-6 from Section I B)
 - Budget overview - Total cost and annual breakdown of requested funding
 - ii - Research Plan (5 pages maximum)
 - Project Title
 - Project Abstract: a concise, 250 word summary of the proposed project
 - Background: explain the specific problem(s) this project seeks to address, justify its importance, and describe how it aligns with the goals and priorities of this funding opportunity (1 ½ pages suggested)
 - Objectives
 - Methodology (1 ½ pages suggested)
 - Anticipated Outcomes and Deliverables
 - Outreach and Education Plan: provide a strategy that is designed to communicate the

research outcomes with appropriate audiences in the local community. This plan should also include details of how the proposed work will broaden the participation of underrepresented groups in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). (1 page suggested)

iii - Relevant Personal Background and Career Goals Statement (2 pages maximum) - This section should include a detailed discussion of the applicant's prior education, the applicant's abilities, and the ways this fellowship will support the applicant's career goals.

iv - Curriculum vitae (CV) for the applicant and the academic advisor (2 pages maximum per person)

The following Project Description sections do not have page limits

v - Project Timeline: Provide a timeline for accomplishing the research plan, including approximate dates for reaching key milestones, deliverables, and achieving anticipated outcomes (1 page suggested)

vi - Works Cited, which includes all in-text citations

vii - Official copies of undergraduate and any postgraduate student transcripts

viii - Proof of application or acceptance into a Master's program

ix - One signed Letter of Support from the applicant's academic advisor

b. Two signed Letters of Recommendation - These letters should come from individuals with knowledge of the applicant's academic performance. Letters of Recommendation from elected officials, friends, or relatives will not be accepted. These should be sent directly to the Project Manager via email to Erica.h.ombres@noaa.gov with the applicant's name and Pacific Islands Fellowship in the subject line (i.e., Applicant's first name last name Pacific Islands Fellowship).

c. Abbreviated Environmental Compliance Questionnaire (OMB Control No. 0648-0538)

i - Applications must include an Abbreviated Environmental Compliance Questionnaire that includes detailed information regarding project information, such as location, methodology, and permits. Copies of all permits required for project activities should be included with application materials. If a permit is pending or planned, please provide this information. The full questionnaire can be found here:

<https://www.nepa.noaa.gov/docs/NOAA-Grants-Questionnaire-final.pdf>

ii - When answering the questionnaire, applicants may cite sections of their Project Description or other components of their application to minimize paperwork burden. Applicants may also contact the Program Manager for assistance with completing the questionnaire.

iii - All applicants should complete questions 4-7 and 10-13.

d. Data Management Plan (2 pages maximum) - All applications must include a Data Management Plan that is compliant with NOAA's Public Access to Research Results Plan

(<https://www.ngdc.noaa.gov/parr.html>). The Data Management Plan should include descriptions of the types of metadata and data expected to be created during the course of the project, plans for disseminating the metadata and data to the broader community, and plans for long-term archiving of the metadata and data. The National Centers for Environmental Information (NCEI) serves as the data management focal point for the NOAA Ocean Acidification Program (<https://www.nodc.noaa.gov/oads/>), and all data resulting from proposals selected for funding must be archived and accessible through NCEI. It is highly encouraged that applicants share information about how they will provide their data and/or metadata to the GOA-ON Data Portal, the International Oceanographic Data Exchange (IODE) Sustainable Development Goal indicator data repository, PI-TOA, etc.

2. Budget Narrative - The Budget Narrative or budget justification must be included for each year of the project. Each year's Budget Justification should explain the budget items in sufficient detail to enable review of the appropriateness of the funding requested.

3. SF-424 Form (Grants.gov, OMB Control No. 4040-0004) - This form, titled "Application for Federal Assistance," must identify the entire funding period, as well as the federal funding amount being requested by the applicant and the non-federal matching fund amount. The form must be completed with the institution's accurate EIN and DUNS and Point of Contact, and signed by the institution's authorized representative or designee.

4. SF-424A Form (Grants.gov, OMB Control No. 4040-0006) - This form, titled "Budget Information - Non-Construction Programs," should describe the entire funding period in federal and non-federal dollars, for the entire application. Fill out Section B of this SF-424A form to show the overall budget breakdown by object class by year. Each federal and match year should have its own column. If there is insufficient space, an additional SF-424A Form, Extra Section B should be used (see below).

5. SF-424B Assurances (Grants.gov, OMB Control No. 4040-0007) - The form, titled "Assurances – Non-Construction Programs," should be completed and signed by the institution's authorized representative or designee.

6. CD-511 (Grants.gov, US Department of Commerce) - The form, titled "Certification Regarding Lobbying," should be completed and signed by the institution's authorized representative or designee. In some instances, the SF-LLL Disclosure of Lobbying Activities form may also be required. See the instructions on the CD-511 for further information.

7. SF-LLL (Grants.gov, OMB Control No. 0348-0046) if applicable - The form, titled "Disclosure of Lobbying Activities," should be completed and signed by the institution's

authorized representative or designee, if appropriate.

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

To enable the use of a universal identifier and to enhance the quality of information available to the public as required by the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act, 31 U.S.C. 6101 note, to the extent applicable, any proposal awarded in response to this announcement will be required to use the System for Award Management (SAM), which may be accessed online at <https://www.sam.gov/SAM/>. Applicants are also required to use the Dun and Bradstreet Universal Numbering System, as identified in OMB guidance published at 2 CFR Parts 25, which may be accessed at: https://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title02/2cfr25_main_02.tpl

D. Submission Dates and Times

Letters of Intent must be received by the Program Manager via email (Erica.H.Ombres@noaa.gov) by:

11:59pm Eastern Time (UTC-5) on Monday, December 13, 2021

4:59 pm Fiji Time (UTC+12) on Tuesday, December 14, 2021.

You can check your time zone conversion here:

<https://www.timeanddate.com/worldclock/converter.html?iso=20211116T040000&p1=282&p2=277&p3=82&p4=280&p5=193&p6=726&p7=145&p8=95&p9=263>

Full proposal applications must be received by:

11:59 pm Eastern Time on, Thursday, March 10, 2022

4:59 pm Fiji Time (UTC+12) on Friday, March 11, 2022.

You can check your time zone conversion here:

<https://www.timeanddate.com/worldclock/converter.html?iso=20220311T045900&p1=282&p2=277&p3=82&p4=280&p5=193&p6=726&p7=145&p8=95&p9=263>

All full proposal application materials - except Letters of Reference - must be submitted to www.grants.gov by the applicant's university or other institution of higher learning. Letters of Reference must be emailed directly to the Program Manager (Erica.H.Ombres@noaa.gov) with the subject heading: PI Fellowship_Applicant Last Name_Reference Letter (eg: PI Fellowship_Ombres_Reference Letter)

Applicants should be aware that OAP staff will only be available to answer questions until 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time (UTC-5) on the due dates. Please note: validation or rejection of an application by www.grants.gov may take up to two business days after submission.

E. Intergovernmental Review

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

F. Funding Restrictions

Funds may only be used for the following budget categories:

- The stipend, tuition, indirect costs, fringe benefits, and other fees associated with attending a research-based Master's degree program at an institution of higher education.
- Any materials necessary for accomplishing the proposed research
- Any materials necessary for accomplishing the proposed outreach activities
- Publication and data management costs
- Costs associated with travel for field work and for attending scientific conferences, workshops, and trainings

G. Other Submission Requirements

All full proposal application materials - except Letters of Reference - must be submitted through www.grants.gov. However, if an eligible applicant does not have access to the Internet, please contact the Agency Contacts listed in Section VII. for submission instructions.

V. Application Review Information

A. Evaluation Criteria

1. Quality of project and applicability to program priorities (45 points) - This criterion ascertains whether there is intrinsic value in the research plan and whether it is relevant to NOAA and the specific program goals and priorities outlined in this notice of funding opportunity (10 points). Importantly, this criterion also assesses the degree to which the proposed activity bolsters scientific capacity for OA research in the Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Maldives, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Palau, the Philippines, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, and Vietnam; specifically whether the applicant is a citizen, national, or permanent resident of these nations, whether the work will be conducted in these nations, and whether the work is being conducted in other non-US countries and territories in the Pacific Islands region but directly benefits these nations (10 points). Additionally, this criterion assesses whether the research plan is technically sound; specifically, this criterion will be used to determine whether the research plan has clear objectives, sound methodological approaches, a high likelihood of producing the anticipated

results, outcomes, and deliverables, and appropriate data management considerations (25 points).

2. Recommendations and/or endorsements of the student (15 points) - This criterion evaluates the letter of support from the applicant's academic advisor and the two letters of recommendation submitted on the applicant's behalf.

3. Academic record and statement of career goals of the student (10 points) - This criterion ascertains whether the applicant possesses the necessary experience, education, training, facilities, administrative support, and advisor supervision to accomplish the project and support the applicant's professional growth. In addition, this assesses the applicant's career goal statement and how well it aligns with the program priorities.

4. Additional relevant experience related to diversity of education; extracurricular activities; honors and awards; and interpersonal, written and oral communication skills (10 points) - This criterion assesses any additional relevant experience, honors and awards and the applicant's communication skills.

5. Project costs (10 points) - This criterion evaluates the budget to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time frame.

6. Outreach and education (10 points) - This criterion assesses the clarity and thoughtfulness of the outreach and education plan. Specifically, this criterion assesses the effectiveness of their outreach and education plan to effectively communicate their research outcomes within local communities where the research is occurring. This criterion also assesses how well the overall proposal broadens the participation of underrepresented groups in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM).

B. Review and Selection Process

Once a full proposal application has been received by NOAA, an initial administrative review is conducted to determine compliance with requirements and completeness of the application. Applications that are missing required elements listed in Section IV B 2 Full Proposal Application Requirements or applications coming from ineligible applicants may be rejected without further review.

Applications that pass the administrative review will be reviewed by a technical review panel drawn from experts in a range of disciplines that are relevant to the applications. Each proposal will receive at least three written reviews from the pool of reviewers. The reviewers will assess each proposal on its merits and score in accordance with the assigned weights of

the evaluation criteria listed above in Section V. A. Each reviewer may not score each application during the written review process.

After written reviews have been collected, the reviewers will be assembled into an in-person or virtual panel. The panel will have access to all applications and all written reviews of the applications. The panel reviewers will use these materials to evaluate each of the applications. The panel reviewers will score applications based on a qualitative 10-point scale, with panel scores designated as "Poor" (0-2), "Fair" (3-4), "Good" (5-6), "Very Good" (7-8), and "Excellent" (9-10). The panel scores of each reviewer shall be averaged for each application and presented to the Program Manager. This is not a consensus panel. The Program Manager will neither vote nor score applications as part of the review process. The Program Manager will also not participate in discussions on the merits of the applications.

Both average written review scores and average panel scores will be considered when determining the final ranking of applications. Each application's average panel score will be added to its average written review score to produce a final score. If 10 or more applications are reviewed, the lowest quintile (0-20 percentile) of final scores will be designated "Poor", the second quintile (20-40 percentile) will be designated as "Fair", the middle quintile (40-60 percentile) will be designated as "Good", the fourth quintile (60-80 percentile) will be designated as "Very Good", and the top quintile (80-100 percentile) will be designated as "Excellent". Those applications receiving a "Fair" or "Poor" score will not be given further consideration, and applicants will be notified of non-selection.

The Program Manager will then create a ranking of the applications to be recommended for funding using the final panel scores and the selection factors listed in Section V. C.. The Program Manager will also determine the total duration of funding for each application and determine the amount of funds available for each application subject to the availability of fiscal year funds. Awards may not necessarily be made in rank order. In addition, applications that are not funded in the current fiscal period, but receive final scores designated as "Excellent," "Very Good," or "Good", may be considered for funding in fiscal year 2023 without having to repeat the competitive review process.

Before selections are finalized, the Program Manager will also review the applications, supplemented with information from the Abbreviated Environmental Compliance Questionnaire, to assess the environmental compliance of the proposed actions. The Program Manager, NEPA staff lead, or grants specialist may contact the applicants to discuss questions about the environmental effects, 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.

Recommendations for funding will be forwarded from the Program Manager to the Selecting Official, the Director of OAP, for the final funding decision. In making the recommendations, the Program Manager will propose awarding in rank order from the peer review process unless the proposal is justified to be selected out of rank order based on the selection factors listed below in Section V. C.

Investigators may be asked to modify objectives, work plans, or budgets, and provide supplemental information required by the agency prior to the award. When a decision has been made (whether an award or declination), anonymous copies of written reviews and summaries of review panel deliberations, if any, will be made available to the applicant.

C. Selection Factors

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

1. Availability of funding
2. Balance/distribution of funds:
 - a. geographically, specifically representation of the following nations: Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Maldives, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Palau, Philippines, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, and Vietnam.
 - 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 or the performance of the applicant's institution
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.

D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

Proposals will be reviewed during the spring of 2022 following the full proposal application due date. Applicants will be notified no later than July 2022. Subject to the availability of funds, awards are expected to start September 1, 2022.

VI. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notices

Successful applicants will receive notification when the application has been recommended for funding to the NOAA Grants Management Division. This notification is not an authorization to begin performance of the project. Official notification of funding, signed by the NOAA grants officer, is the authorizing document that allows the project to begin. Notification will be issued to the authorizing official and the PI of the project either electronically or in hard copy. Unsuccessful applicants will be notified that their proposal was not selected. Anonymous copies of reviews and summaries of review panel deliberations, if any, will be made available to all applicants, regardless of whether they were selected to be funded.

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

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 <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2014-12-30/pdf/2014-30297.pdf>.

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 Terms and Conditions - Successful applicants who accept a NOAA award under this solicitation will be bound by Department of Commerce Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions. This document will be provided in the award package in NOAA's Grants Online system at <https://grantsonline.rdc.noaa.gov/flows/home/Login/LoginController.jspf> and is also available at http://www.ago.noaa.gov/grants/external_links.html, as well as https://osec.doc.gov/oam/grants_management/policy/documents/Department%20of%20Commerce%20Standard%20Terms%20Conditions%2030%20April%202019.pdf

Limitation of Liability - Funding for programs listed in this notice is contingent upon the availability of appropriations. Applicants are hereby given notice that funds may not have been appropriated yet for the programs listed in this notice. In no event will NOAA or the Department of Commerce 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.

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 216-6A for NEPA, https://www.noaa.gov/sites/default/files/atoms/files/NAO_216-6A.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.

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.

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.

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 Department of Commerce or use the de minimis indirect cost rate of 10% of Modified Total Direct Cost (MTDC) (as allowable under 2 C.F.R. §200.414). 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 Modified Total Direct Cost base when calculating indirect costs. Applicants should reference their official agreements. The NOAA contact for indirect or facilities and administrative costs is: Lamar Revis, Grants Officer, NOAA Grants Management Division, lamar.revis@noaa.gov.

Minority Serving Institutions - The Department of Commerce National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (DOC NOAA) is strongly committed to increasing the participation of Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs), i.e., Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Hispanic-serving institutions, Tribal colleges and universities, Alaskan Native and Native Hawaiian institutions, and institutions that work in underserved communities.

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.

NOAA Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment Prevention and Response Policy - 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/administration/nao-202-1106-noaa-sexual-assault-and-sexual-harassment-prevention-and>

C. Reporting

The US 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 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.

Applicants will be required to submit biannual reports. Applicants will also be required to submit their data to a public repository (e.g., GOA-ON Data Portal include link) in a timely manner following the conclusion of the award.

VII. Agency Contacts

The following individuals are Program Managers responsible for administering this federal funding opportunity. Please email both individuals with any inquiries.

Primary point-of-contact

Erica Ombres, NOAA Ocean Acidification Program, Federal Program Officer

Erica.H.Ombres@noaa.gov

Secondary point-of-contact

Michael Acquafredda, NOAA Ocean Acidification Program, Program Specialist

Michael.Acquafredda@noaa.gov

VIII. Other Information

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 US 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 United States 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 United States 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 United States Department of Commerce and external program evaluators. In accordance with 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 United States Department of Commerce financial assistance award.

In addition, United States 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 United States 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.

There is no guarantee that funds will be available to make awards for this federal funding opportunity or that any proposal will be selected for funding. If an applicant incurs any costs prior to receiving an award agreement signed by an authorized NOAA official, they do so at their own risk of these costs not being included in a subsequent award. NOAA or the United States Department of Commerce are not responsible for any direct costs of proposal preparation. Recipients and subrecipients are subject to all US federal laws and agency policies, regulations, and procedures applicable to federal financial assistance awards.