Fiscal Year 2024 - FY2025 Margaret A. Davidson Graduate Fellowships for the National Estuarine Research Reserve System

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NOTICE OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Federal Agency Name(s): National Ocean Service (NOS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Department of Commerce

Funding Opportunity Title: Fiscal Year 2024 - FY2025 Margaret A. Davidson Graduate Fellowships for the National Estuarine Research Reserve System

Announcement Type: Initial

Funding Opportunity Number: NOAA-NOS-OCM-2023-2008028

Federal Assistance Listings Number: 11.420, Coastal Zone Management Estuarine Research Reserves

Dates: Proposals must be received by the NOAA Office for Coastal Management no later than 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on December 4, 2023.

IMPORTANT NOTE: We encourage all prospective fellows to work with their advisor and their university's office of sponsored programs, or the equivalent, and begin the application process well before the December 4, 2023 deadline, as the university is the applicant for this opportunity. Adequate time must be factored in for processing within the sponsoring organization and for the submission of the application by an authorized representative of the sponsoring organization through Grants.gov.

Funding Opportunity Description: The purpose of this notice is to solicit grant proposals for the NOAA Margaret A. Davidson Graduate Fellowship (Davidson Fellowship) at the National Estuarine Research Reserves. Eligible fellows are master's and doctoral students admitted to or enrolled full-time in a graduate program at an accredited university. The National Estuarine Research Reserve System is a program of NOAA's Office for Coastal Management and authorized by the Coastal Zone Management Act. The research reserve program aims to balance the needs of the natural environment and coastal communities. The goal of the Davidson Fellowship is to provide research that meets priority management needs of the reserves and their coastal communities, while building the next generation of leaders in estuarine science and coastal management by affording qualified graduate students the opportunity to conduct collaborative science within National Estuarine Research Reserves (reserves); partake in professional development opportunities; and receive mentoring to support professional growth.

All Davidson Fellowship projects must be conducted in coordination with the reserve specified in the application and be designed to address one of the reserve's priority management questions.

Approaches to these questions may employ a variety of disciplines, spanning the range of natural and social sciences. Cross-discipline approaches are encouraged. Mentoring and professional development activities will be provided to enhance the fellow's skill set and contribute to the program's goal of building capable leaders. The program is also designed to create a strong network among the fellows during their tenure and into the early portion of their careers.

One fellow will be selected for each of the 30 reserves for a two-year duration. Total anticipated funding for all awards is approximately $1,800,000 per year and is subject to the availability of fiscal year (FY) 2024 and FY 2025 appropriations. The federal funding for each award must not exceed $60,000 per year (direct and indirect) for a 24-month project period. Of that amount, direct costs must not exceed $45,000 per year. Direct costs may include stipend, supplies, travel, and tuition to support the student. Awards will be made to the fellow's graduate institution through the use of a cooperative agreement. Funds are expected to be available on a competitive basis. To be eligible, fellows must be citizens or permanent residents of U.S. states or territories and admitted to or enrolled full-time in a master's or doctoral program at a U.S. accredited university. A prospective fellow may submit a signed letter from the institution indicating provisional acceptance to a graduate degree program conditional on obtaining financial support, such as this fellowship. Minority students are encouraged to apply. Office for Coastal Management fellowships are committed to being accessible to all interested and eligible candidates, allowing all fellows to be comfortable in their identities and participate fully in their fellowships, and removing barriers to becoming part of the next generation of coastal leaders. Additional information about the fellowship may be found at https://coast.noaa.gov/nerrs/research/davidson-fellowship.html

FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Program Objective

The goal of the Davidson Fellowship is to provide research that meets priority management needs of the reserves and their coastal communities, while building the next generation of leaders in estuarine science and coastal management by affording qualified graduate students the opportunity to conduct collaborative science within the National Estuarine Research Reserve System; partake in professional development opportunities; and receive mentoring to support professional growth. The program is also designed to create a strong network among the fellows during their tenure and into the early portion of their careers.

Proposed outcomes include:

Critical reserve management priorities are addressed through high-quality collaborative research directed towards local coastal and estuarine issues and contributing to regional and national efforts.

A diverse cadre of next-generation leaders in estuarine science and coastal management are supported and develop a strong network that continues after the fellowship and into their careers.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) recognizes the need to ensure that research in the National Estuarine Research Reserve System addresses critical gaps in knowledge about estuarine systems, ecological processes, socioeconomics, and related areas. The nature of research conducted at the reserves, as well as interactions with reserve staff, partners, and academic institutions with similar goals, can help students fulfill their degree requirements through work benefiting the reserves and the field of coastal resource management.

Office for Coastal Management fellowships are committed to being accessible to all interested and eligible candidates, allowing all fellows to be comfortable in their identities and participate fully in their fellowships, and removing barriers to becoming part of the next generation of coastal leaders. NOAA supports cultural and gender diversity and encourages women and individuals from minority groups to submit applications to this program. In addition, the Department of Commerce and NOAA are strongly committed to broadening the participation of Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Hispanic-serving Institutions,

Tribal Colleges and Universities, and institutions that work in underserved areas.

B. Program Priorities

The National Estuarine Research Reserve System consists of estuarine areas of the United States and its territories that are designated and managed for research and educational purposes. Each reserve within the system is chosen to reflect regional differences and to include a variety of ecosystem types in accordance with the classification scheme of the national program as presented in 15 CFR part 921. Each reserve supports a wide range of beneficial uses of ecological, economic, recreational, and aesthetic values that are dependent upon the maintenance of a healthy ecosystem. The research reserve sites provide habitats for a wide range of ecologically and commercially important species of fish, shellfish, birds, and other aquatic and terrestrial wildlife. Each reserve has been designed to ensure its effectiveness as a conservation unit and as a site for long-term research and monitoring. Reserves are heavily engaged with stakeholders to understand their needs, and also to provide data, information, and education opportunities to their local communities for science-based decisions. As part of a national system, the reserves collectively provide an excellent opportunity to address research questions and estuarine management issues of national significance.

Projects must be conducted in coordination with a reserve and the proposal must specify the intended reserve in the application. Proposed research projects submitted in response to this announcement must address the research priorities specified by the reserve site and clearly specify which research priority is being addressed. Descriptions of the research priorities for each reserve can be found here: https://coast.noaa.gov/nerrs/research/davidson-fellowship.html. Prospective fellows are strongly encouraged to contact the reserve (see points of contact associated with the research priorities) prior to submitting a proposal to discuss the feasibility of their project idea and the resources available at the reserve. Proposals may involve more than one reserve (e.g. a comparative study); however, a single reserve must serve as host and be specified in the application. Applicants may apply to more than one reserve; but a separate, full application package is required for each submission.

Each two-year project should employ the tenets of collaborative research, to include stakeholder and end-user engagement throughout the project; the incorporation of multiple disciplinary perspectives; and ensuring that outcomes are applicable to local management needs and decision-making. The research reserve system’s Science Collaborative has published a guide to collaborative research that may be helpful for project design (https://nerrssciencecollaborative.org/guide/start).

Fellows will be expected to implement the proposed research project as part of their graduate

course of study, and with the support and engagement of their university faculty sponsor and a reserve mentor. Fellows will also be involved in reserve activities that relate to their project and support the reserve's community engagement, education, and stewardship efforts. These responsibilities will be determined in consultation with the reserve at the start of the fellowship.

The expectation is that students will work closely with their faculty advisor and reserve mentor throughout the fellowship as they conduct their research and work to fully understand the ecology, mission, and capabilities of the reserve and the reserve system. To fully engage in the collaborative process and support reserve activities, it is anticipated that fellowship participants will work on-site for a minimum of six weeks per year (non-consecutive). Any necessary housing or accommodation needed to meet this requirement should be discussed with the reserve prior to submitting an application.

Additionally, fellows will be required to work with their reserve mentor and faculty advisor within the first 90 days of the start of the fellowship to complete a mentoring agreement, work plan, and professional learning plan. These documents will help guide their research and learning goals. Fellows are also required to participate in the following activities to support their professional development and secure a good fellowship experience:

Formal training in project design, collaborative science, facilitation, and communication (all offered virtually at no cost)

The research reserve system's annual meeting (Year 1 - East Coast location TBD; not required to attend in Year 2)

Annual fellow workshop (Year 1 - virtual; Year 2 - location TBD, but likely Charleston, SC or Silver Spring, MD)

Present research at a professional conference of the fellow's choosing (Year 2, but can be earlier)

C. Program Authority

Section 315 of the Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972, as amended CZMA, 16 U.S.C. 1461, establishes the National Estuarine Research Reserve System; and 16 U.S.C. 1461 (e)(1)(B) authorizes the Secretary of Commerce to make grants to any coastal state or public or private person for purposes of supporting research and monitoring within a National Estuarine Research Reserve that are consistent with the research guidelines developed under subsection (c).

II. Award Information

A. Funding Availability

One fellow will be selected for each of the 30 reserves for a two-year duration. Total anticipated funding for all awards is approximately $1,800,000 per year and is subject to the availability of fiscal year (FY) 2024 and FY 2025 appropriations. The federal funding per award must not exceed $60,000 per year (direct and indirect) with a 24-month project period. Direct costs must not exceed $45,000 per year. Direct costs should support the fellow and their research, and may include stipend, supplies, travel, and tuition.

There is no guarantee that funds will be available 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, the applicant does so at their own risk of not being selected and these costs not being included in a subsequent award. Direct costs of proposal preparation shall not be included within the project application budget. In addition, NOAA and DOC will not be responsible for project costs if this program fails to receive funding. Recipients and subrecipients are subject to all federal laws and agency policies, regulations, and procedures applicable to federal financial assistance awards.

Applicant universities must be in compliance with all existing NOAA grants or cooperative agreements and otherwise eligible to receive federal awards to receive funding under this competition.

B. Project/Award Period

The start date on proposals shall be August 1, 2024, and the performance period for projects is 24 months. Funding in year two is contingent upon the availability of funds from Congress, satisfactory performance, and is at the sole discretion of the agency.

C. Type of Funding Instrument

The funding instrument for Davidson Fellowship awards will be a cooperative agreement, which allows for substantial federal involvement in the planning and implementation of funded projects. Examples of substantial federal involvement may include consultation on project focus; facilitating communications among university, reserve, and partners if needed; and providing professional development and ensuring that student mentoring is occurring. The specific involvement will depend on each student and project needs.

III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants are institutions of higher education or other research-related organizations. Students interested in this fellowship opportunity should work with their advisor and the university's office of sponsored programs, or their equivalent. An authorized representative of the sponsoring organization will submit the application to Grants.gov. Awards will be made to the fellow's graduate institution through the use of a cooperative agreement. Funds are expected to be available on a competitive basis to qualified graduate students for research within a reserve(s) leading to a graduate degree. To be eligible to participate, prospective fellows must be citizens or permanent residents of U.S. states or territories, and admitted to or enrolled full-time in a master's or doctoral program at a U.S. accredited university. A prospective fellow may submit a signed letter from the institution indicating provisional acceptance to a graduate degree program conditional on obtaining financial support, such as this fellowship. The intent is for a two-year fellowship, thus successful prospective fellows must plan to be enrolled for all of the first year and at least the majority of the second year of funding.

Federal agencies and employees are not allowed to receive funds under this announcement but may serve as project partners. If federal agencies are collaborators, applicants are expected to provide details on the planned level of federal engagement in the application. Examples might include, but are not limited to, participating in an advisory capacity or providing facilities for research.

National Estuarine Research Reserve System staff are ineligible to submit an application for a fellowship under this announcement.

The Department of Commerce and NOAA support cultural and gender diversity and encourage women and minorities to submit applications to this program. In addition, the Department of Commerce and NOAA are strongly committed to broadening the participation of historically Black colleges and universities, Hispanic serving institutions, Tribal colleges and universities, and institutions that work in underserved areas. The Department of Commerce and NOAA encourage applications involving any of the above institutions.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement

There is no cost sharing or matching requirement. Any voluntary cost sharing or matching does not impact scoring and must be consistent with the requirements of 2 CFR 200.306.

C. Other Criteria that Affect Eligibility

None.

IV. Application and Submission Information

A. Address to Request Application Package

The standard SF-424 application package is available online at http://www.grants.gov. If the electronic version is not accessible, an application package may be requested from:

Margaret A. Davidson Graduate Fellowship
Attn: Christopher Katalinas (on contract for)
NOAA Office for Coastal Management
2234 South Hobson Ave. Charleston, SC 29405

or email: OCM.Davidsonfellowship@noaa.gov

B. Content and Form of Application

A complete standard NOAA financial assistance application package should be submitted in accordance with the guidelines in this document.

All application materials should use a legible 12-point font, single spaced, with 1-inch margins on all sides. Applicants should include page numbers in their proposal and any appendices. Applicants should plan to upload their proposal to Grants.gov in the .pdf format and include the following four components.

1. Federal forms - forms from the SF-424 form family are available at (https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/forms.html). At time of application submission, all applicants shall submit the following forms with signatures of the authorized representative of the submitting institution. Required forms will be digitally signed and dated when the application is submitted through Grants.gov; the authorized representative should be the person submitting the online application. If a hard copy final application is submitted, it must be signed and dated by the organization's authorized representative.

a. Application for Federal Assistance: Form SF-424

b. Budget Information for Non-construction Programs: Form SF-424A - Applicants requesting an award period longer than 12 months should include a year 1 and year 2 breakdown of their budget on the SF-424A form. An example SF-424A for the Davidson

Fellowship program can be found at https://coast.noaa.gov/data/docs/nerrs/davidson-sf424a-example.pdf.

c. Assurances for Non-construction Programs: Form SF-424B

d. Certification Regarding Lobbying: Form CD-511

e. Disclosure of Lobbying Activities: Form SF-LLL (if applicable)

2. Project Narrative - The project narrative should include the following sections:

a. Title Page

i. Project title.

ii. Reserve information (name of reserve at which the project will be conducted, and the priority management need to be addressed by the project, as described in the list on https://coast.noaa.gov/nerrs/research/davidson-fellowship.html).

iii. Proposed project period (start date must be August 1, 2024, and end date no later than July 31, 2026).

iv. Student information (name, citizenship, and contact information)

v. Degree information (university, department, degree being sought, and anticipated graduation date).

vi. Faculty advisor or university sponsor (name and contact information)

vii. Recipient name and UEI number (must match applicant information in SAM.gov). This is typically the university at which the student is enrolled.

viii. Applicant financial representative (name and contact information).

ix. Requested funding by year (Year 1: $__; Year 2: $__; Total: $__)

x. If the project is intended to be administered under an existing NOAA cooperative institute, provide the name of the institute that will administer the award.

b. Table of contents

c. Statement of interest (1 page max) from the applicant describing

i. the connections between the research being proposed and their interests and career goals;

ii. a demonstration of the understanding of the importance of the local reserve, its community, and how that understanding will contribute to a successful research project;

iii. their interest in the professional development opportunities.

d. Project summary (1 page max). The summary should contain the following sections:

i. Project title.

ii. Name of reserve at which the project will be conducted.

iii. Brief project summary including priority management need, project objectives, expected results, and intended benefits and outcomes.

e. Project description (5 pages max). The project description should clearly define research goals, demonstrate the technical knowledge needed for the research, and convey an understanding of the reserve and the community the research will benefit. The project will be evaluated on the alignment with reserve priorities, project feasibility, and technical understanding and clarity of the approach. Sufficient detail should be provided to enable reviewers to evaluate the relevance and applicability of proposed work to program priorities described in Section I.B of this announcement; to determine the technical and scientific merit of the proposed work, and to assess whether the proposed scope of work raises any concerns with regard to federal policy considerations, such as those related to the National Environmental Policy Act, Endangered Species Act, Historic Preservation Act, and the Marine Mammal Protection Act.

All project descriptions should include the following sections:

i. Problem Statement and Background Information. Describe the research problem in relation to relevant coastal management issues with emphasis on how the project will address the specific reserve management needs identified. It should include a brief review of pertinent literature.

ii. Project Approach. Identify the core research question(s) and a description of how the approach addresses the question(s). Clearly state the research objectives and/or hypotheses and proposed methods to conduct the work. Describe the technical approach supported by literature references. The proposal should indicate by way of discussion how any data are to be collected, synthesized, interpreted, and integrated into the final work products. The proposals should indicate an understanding of the function of the reserve, the diversity of stakeholders and intended end-users that would benefit from the research, and an approach to inclusion and collaboration throughout the project.

iii. Expected Outcomes. Identify and describe the anticipated project products or outcomes. Explain how they will meet the reserve needs related to management, research, training, education, or stewardship. The narrative should include information on dissemination of the findings and results to resource managers, local communities, and other stakeholders as appropriate. The project narrative also should include information on how the project will be evaluated for success.

iv. Milestone Schedule. Display timelines for major tasks, target milestones for important intermediate and final products, and key project outcomes.

v. References. Include a list of any cited literature. This section will not count toward the page limit.

3. Budget Narrative - The budget narrative should include a detailed justification of proposed costs in whole dollars, broken out by individual tasks. The budget narrative submitted with the final application should match the dollar amounts included on all required forms and clearly link to the project narrative. Please explain each calculation and provide a narrative justification to explain expenditures for each budget category. The budget narrative should describe, by category of expenditure, the total funding needed to accomplish the objectives described in the project narrative for the entire award period. Please explain how categorical costs are derived in sufficient detail to enable reviewers to determine if costs are 'allowable and reasonable' according to the cost principles referenced in 2 CFR 200, Subpart E. Budget narrative categories should correspond to the standard object class categories listed in Section B of the SF-424A. For additional details, please review the budget guidance provided at https://coast.noaa.gov/data/coasthome/funding/_pdf/forms/budget-narrative-guidance-for-NOAA-grants.pdf.

The amount of each multi-year award will not exceed $60,000 (direct and indirect costs) annually for two years. Direct costs cannot exceed $45,000/year and are intended to support the student and their research. Direct costs may include stipend, supplies, travel, and tuition.

To support the professional development activities and fellowship experience, travel must be budgeted for required attendance at the research reserve system's annual meeting in year 1 (East Coast location TBD), fellow workshop in year 2 (likely Silver Spring, MD or Charleston, SC), and a professional conference of the student's choice. We recommend a travel budget allocation of $7,000 per year for required travel and to support the fellow's travel to and from the reserve.

Students are strongly encouraged to work with their institution's sponsored programs office to develop their budget. The applicant may request funds under any of the following categories as long as the costs are reasonable and necessary: personnel, fringe benefits, travel, equipment, supplies, other, and indirect. The budget should contain itemized costs with appropriate narratives justifying proposed expenditures.

The budget narrative should provide, to the extent possible, detailed information on travel, including costs, a description of anticipated travel, destinations, the number of travelers, and a justification of how the requested travel is directly relevant to the successful completion of the project. If actual trip details are unknown, applicants should state the basis for the estimated travel charges. If a foreign air carrier is anticipated to be used for any portion of travel, prior approval is required under the Department of Commerce Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions, Section G.05.c. - https://www.commerce.gov/sites/default/files/2020-11/DOC%20Standard%20Terms%20and%20Conditions%20-%2012%20November%202020%20PDF_0.pdf, and therefore, such travel should be included in the proposal to avoid having to request prior approval after the project starts.

4. Appendices (please upload as a single pdf file under the "other attachments form" in Grants.gov).

Appendices for this notice of funding opportunity must include:

a. Signed letter of support and recommendation from the applicant's faculty advisor or sponsor (maximum of 2 pages). The letter should include an assurance that the student is in good academic standing, provide an indication of support for the project as part of the course of study, acknowledge the requirement to share data collected as part of the award with reserve staff (see VI. C. Reporting), acknowledge the requirements for the fellow's participation at the reserve and in professional development events (see I.B. Program Priorities), and include any other information, support, or recommendations the advisor offers for the applicant.

b. Additional letters of support and recommendation from faculty or professional colleagues (maximum of 2, two-page letters). The letter should describe their familiarity with the applicant's work, address the applicant's ability to succeed in the program, and include any other information, support, or recommendations the writer offers for the applicant.

c. Resume (maximum of 2 pages). A resume for the student should be provided. Include all graduate and undergraduate institutions (department or area of study, degree, and year of graduation), all publications (including undergraduate and graduate theses), awards or fellowships, and related work/research experience.

d. Transcripts. Unofficial copies of transcripts from all undergraduate and graduate institutions. Transcripts from the current institution should indicate the enrollment status.

e. Data management plan (maximum of 2 pages). The data management plan should address the requirements in this section of the announcement.

i. Environmental data and information collected or created under NOAA grants or cooperative agreements must be made discoverable by and accessible to the public, in a timely fashion (typically within two years), and 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 be accompanied by machine-readable documentation (metadata), preferably based on widely used or international standards.

ii. Proposals submitted in response to this announcement must include a data management plan of up to 2 pages describing how these requirements will be satisfied. 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 and 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. Accepted submission of data to the NOAA National Centers for Environmental Information (NCEI) is one way to satisfy data sharing requirements; however, this is not obligated to accept all submissions and may charge a fee, particularly for large or unusual datasets. The NOAA program is not offering specific data management technical guidance. Proposals are to describe their proposed approach. Use of open-standard formats and methods is encouraged. For more information about data sharing in this program, contact the agency

official listed in Section VII. of this funding announcement.

iii. NOAA may, at its own discretion, make public 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.

iv. 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.

v. NOAA's Administrative Order on the Management of Environmental Data Management and Information is available under:
http://www.corporateservices.noaa.gov/ames/administrative_orders/chapter_212/212-15.html

vi. Principal investigators should indicate how and when they have made their data accessible and usable by the community in the past.

vii. More information about the NOAA data sharing policy is available on NOAA’s Environmental Data Management Committee website at:
www.nosc.noaa.gov/EDMC/PD.DSP.php

viii. Responsible NOAA official for questions regarding this guidance and for verifying accessibility of data produced by funding recipients:

Randy Warren
Data Manager
NOAA’s Office for Coastal Management
randy.warren@noaa.gov

As a standard practice, NOAA requires that resumes for principal investigators (PIs) of competitive awards be on file and maintained in the grants processing system used by the Department of Commerce, Grants Online. Recipients of any award (competitive or non-competitive) are required to designate principal investigators in Grants Online within 30 days of receiving award offers.

f. National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Environmental Compliance Under

(NEPA). NOAA must analyze the potential environmental impacts of projects or proposals seeking funding from NOAA.

For your information, after the application is submitted, NOAA may require additional information to fulfill NEPA and other compliance requirements. If NOAA determines that an environmental assessment is required, applicants may also be requested to assist in drafting the assessment. Applicants may also be required to cooperate with NOAA in identifying and implementing feasible measures to reduce or avoid any identified adverse environmental impacts of their proposal. The failure to do so shall be grounds for the denial of 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.

The applicants selected for funding may be required to complete questions 1 - 13 of the Environmental Compliance Questionnaire for National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Federal Financial Assistance Applicants accessible at https://www.nepa.noaa.gov/docs/NOAA-Grants-Questionnaire-final.pdf 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). Questions 14 - 58 are not required initially because NOAA anticipates that most projects funded through this competition would not have impacts related to damage assessment and restoration or fisheries sampling and analysis.

Detailed information on NOAA compliance with NEPA can be found at the following NOAA NEPA websites: http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/ including NOAA Administrative Order 216-6 for NEPA, http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/NAO216_6.pdf and the Council on Environmental Quality implementation regulations under the Electronic Code of Federal Regulations: https://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?SID=30655823cf5f0dcb1c5ee59d01883b89&mc=true&tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title40/40chapterV.tpl

g. Permits and Approvals

If applicable, it is the responsibility of the applicant to obtain all necessary federal, state, and local government permits and approvals for the proposed work. Applicants must provide a

list of all known permits that will be required to perform the proposed work and an indication of the status of any permits needed (e.g., not yet applied, permit application submitted/pending, permit granted, etc.). If no permits are required, the applicant should include a statement indicating that no permits are necessary.

Failure to apply for and/or obtain federal, state, and local permits, approvals, letters of agreement, or failure to provide environmental analyses where necessary (i.e., NEPA and environmental assessment) will delay or prevent the award of funds for projects that have been preliminarily selected for funding.

h. Match waiver request (if applicable)

Matching funds are not required.

i. Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (if applicable)

The proposed budget may include an amount for indirect or “Facilities and Administrative” costs if the applicant has an established indirect cost rate with the federal government. Indirect costs are essentially overhead costs for basic operational functions (e.g., utilities, rent, and insurance) that are incurred for common or joint objectives and, therefore, cannot be identified specifically within a particular project. See 2 CFR 200.1 and 200.412-415.

A copy of the current, approved negotiated indirect cost agreement with the federal Government should be included with the application package. If an award recipient does not have a current indirect cost rate with any federal agency, the recipient may request to use the de minimis rate (10% of modified total direct costs) described at 2 CFR 200.414. Alternatively, the negotiation and approval of a new rate is subject to the procedures required by NOAA and the Department of Commerce. The Department of Commerce, Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions require that recipients within 90 days of the award start date, submit to the address listed below documentation (indirect cost proposal, cost allocation plan, etc.) necessary to perform the review.

Lamar Revis, Grants Officer
NOAA Grants Management Division
1325 East West Highway, 9th Floor
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910
Lamar.Revis@noaa.gov

The de minimis indirect cost rate should be used for all federal awards. Non-federal entities

may use this rate indefinitely, but may choose to negotiate an indirect (F&A) cost rate at any time. This de minimis rate option is not available to state and local governments, and tribes.

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 Unique Entity Identifier (UEI), as identified in OMB guidance published at 2 CFR Parts 25 at http://go.usa.gov/x9PYd.

Applicants should: (1) be registered in the federal SAM before submitting an application; (2) provide a valid UEI number on an application; and (3) continue to maintain an active SAM registration with current information at all times during which it has an active federal award or an application or plan under consideration by a federal awarding agency. The federal awarding agency may not make a federal award to an applicant until the applicant has complied with all applicable UEI and SAM requirements. If an applicant has not fully complied with the requirements by the time the federal awarding agency is ready to make a federal award, the federal awarding agency may determine that the applicant is not qualified to receive a federal award and use that determination as a basis for making a federal award to another applicant.

Applicants should allow a minimum of seven days to complete the SAM registration, although complete registration for SAM may take several weeks if problems arise.

Registration is required only once but must be renewed once a year.

Applicants are strongly encouraged not to wait until the application deadline date to begin the application process through www.grants.gov.

D. Submission Dates and Times

Applications must be postmarked, provided to a delivery service, or received by and validated by Grants.gov by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time, December 4, 2023.

We encourage all fellowship applicants to begin the application process well before the December 4, 2023, deadline as they are expected to work with their advisor and university’s Office of Sponsored Programs, or equivalent, to obtain necessary approvals and information, complete the required forms, and submit the application within the necessary timeline. All

applicants should be aware that adequate time must be factored into schedules for delivery of the application through Grants.gov.

If for any reason applicants are unable to submit their application through Grants.gov or are concerned about possible problems associated with the Grants.gov system, they may provide a paper copy of their full application by mail. Applications submitted by mail must include all relevant application elements described above, must include a SF-424 form with original ink or valid electronic signature and date from an authorized recipient organization representative, and must be stamped with an official U.S. Postal Service postmark or provided to a commercial carrier with tracking number and receipt on or before 11:59 pm Eastern on December 4, 2023; private metered postmarks are unacceptable. Please address all mailed applications to:

Margaret A. Davidson Graduate Fellowship
Attn: Christopher Katalinas (on contract for)
NOAA Office for Coastal Management
2234 South Hobson Ave., Charleston, SC 29405

No email or fax copies will be accepted. Paper applications received more than three business days after the deadline will not be reviewed, and applicants submitting by paper are responsible for tracking their applications.

Applicants should consider the possibility of storms and other unforeseen impacts from natural hazards that could affect their Internet access and use of Grants.gov on or before application due dates. Applicants should be aware that localized hazardous weather or other situations beyond their control impacting their ability to submit packages before deadlines may not result in changes to the application deadline.

E. Intergovernmental Review

Funding applications submitted under this competition are subject to Executive Order (EO) 12372, "Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs." It is the state agency's responsibility to contact their state's Single Point of Contact (SPOC) to find out about and comply with the state's process under EO 12372. To assist the applicant, the names and addresses of the SPOCs are listed on the Office of Management and Budget's website < https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/omb/grants_spoc>.

F. Funding Restrictions

1. Indirect Costs

Applicants are permitted to request indirect costs if their organization has an established Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement with a federal agency that covers the period of the award. Applicants requesting indirect costs should submit a copy of their current and signed Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement with their application package. More information on establishing or negotiating indirect cost rates can be found in Section IV.B.8 of this solicitation.

Indirect-cost-rate-agreement documentation is not required for sub awardees; however, indirect cost rates at the negotiated levels should be paid by the primary awardee. Under 2 CFR 200.414 "Indirect (Facilities & Administrative (F&A)) Costs," any applicant that does not have a current indirect cost rate may elect to charge a de minimis rate of 10% of modified total direct costs which may be used indefinitely. Costs must be consistently charged as either indirect or direct costs, but may not be double charged or inconsistently charged as both pursuant to 2 CFR 200.403 "Factors affecting allowability of costs." If chosen, this methodology once elected must be used consistently for all federal awards until such time as a cooperator chooses to negotiate for a rate, which the non-federal entity may apply to do at any time. The negotiation and approval of a rate is subject to the procedures required by NOAA and the Department of Commerce Standard Terms and Conditions Section B.06.

2. Ineligible Projects:

The following projects will not be eligible for funding: (1) activities that constitute legally required mitigation for the adverse effects of an activity regulated or otherwise governed by state or federal law; (2) activities that constitute mitigation for natural resource damages under federal or state law; and (3) activities that are required by a separate consent decree, court order, statute or regulation; (4) activities in which the major purpose of the project or program is construction.

3. Cost Principles:

Recipients are subject to the 2 CFR 200, Subpart E "Cost Principles," as well as any Department of Commerce regulations that may be in effect at the time of award. Generally, allowable costs include salaries, fringe benefits, travel, equipment, supplies, and training, as long as the costs are determined to be necessary, reasonable, and allocable to the award.

G. Other Submission Requirements

The standard NOAA funding application package is available at www.grants.gov (Grants.gov) by searching the Funding Opportunity Number or the Assistance Listings

number (11.420). Application packages, including all letters of collaboration, shall be submitted through the "Apply" function on Grants.gov. The Grants.gov site contains directions for submitting an application. Applicants must register with Grants.gov before any application materials can be submitted. To use Grants.gov, applicants must have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number and be registered in SAM.gov, which requires periodic renewals. Refer to Section IV.C. for details on receiving a UEI number and registering with SAM.gov.

After electronic submission of the application through Grants.gov, the person submitting the application will receive two email messages from Grants.gov within the next 24 to 48 hours updating them on the progress of their application. The first email provides a tracking number and confirms receipt of the application by the Grants.gov system. The second email indicates that the application has either been successfully validated by the system before transmission to the grantor agency or has been rejected because of errors. Only validated applications are sent to NOAA for review. After the application has been validated, this same person will receive a third email when the application has been downloaded by the federal agency.

If an applicant submits multiple electronic versions of the proposal, the applicant should advise the federal agency of the tracking number that should be withdrawn. Applicants shall not electronically submit packages with files embedded within files as any such files may not be reviewed or factored into the merit review process.

The federal program office has a process to review for completeness. Administrative reviews generally take place after deadlines because the majority of applicants apply just before deadlines. If there are available resources and no time constraints, the federal agency may contact applicants who submitted incomplete packages.

Margaret A. Davidson Graduate Fellowship
Attn: Christopher Katalinas (on contract for)
NOAA Office for Coastal Management
2234 South Hobson Ave., Charleston, SC 29405

V. Application Review Information

A. Evaluation Criteria

Applications will be evaluated based on their technical merit and how well the proposal approach aligns with the reserve's management priorities. Merit-based reviewers will evaluate proposals based on the criteria and corresponding weights detailed below.

1. Importance and/or relevance and applicability of proposed project to the program goals (25 points): This ascertains whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and/or relevance to NOAA, federal, regional, state, or local activities. For the Margaret A. Davidson Graduate Fellowship, this refers to addressing the priority management needs identified by the reserves (https://coast.noaa.gov/nerrs/research/davidson-fellowship.html). Does the proposed work relate to an identified reserve management need? Does the project demonstrate a sufficient understanding of the relevant coastal management issue? Does the project take an approach that is important to address a specific priority management need?

20-25 points: The proposal clearly and succinctly describes a project that directly addresses a management priority identified by the reserve. A comprehensive understanding of the scientific context is demonstrated and the approach directly addresses the coastal issue in a meaningful way that will inform management actions.

10-19 points: The proposal describes a project that addresses a management priority identified by the reserve. An understanding of the scientific context for the project is demonstrated and the approach may result in information useful for management action.

0-9 points: The proposal describes a project related to the reserve management priorities. There is minimal scientific context demonstrated and/or there is little evidence that the project will produce information useful to addressing the priority.

2. Technical and scientific merit (25 points): This criterion assesses whether the approach is technically sound, if the methods are appropriate, and whether there are clear project goals and objectives. Is the approach appropriate to address the reserve need and are the stated goals and objectives worthy and achievable within the proposed time-frame? Does the proposed approach incorporate sound science, scientific, and/or technical advancements in the design and implementation of the proposed work? Are the project milestones feasible and are sufficient guidance, support, time, and resources available for the methods proposed to conduct the proposed research?

20-25 points: The proposal has clear, achievable goals and objectives and describes a viable plan that incorporates sound and/or innovative scientific methods. Resources are available and the project timeline and milestones are feasible to ensure the approach has a high likelihood of providing useful results.

10-19 points: The proposal describes a plan that uses appropriate methods and has a timeline and milestones that are likely to provide useful results.

0-9 points: The proposal describes an approach that is not appropriate and/or the milestones are unlikely to be achieved within the proposed time-frame. The project has a low likelihood of providing useful results.

3. Overall qualifications of the funding applicant (20 points): This criterion ascertains whether the funding applicant possesses the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project. Has the applicant articulated significant interest in working within the National Estuarine Research Reserve System and with its stakeholders and staff? Is there interest in professional development as part of the fellowship? Does the applicant have the educational background and fortitude needed to successfully conduct this project? Does the application, including letters of support, indicate that the student has the potential to be successful? Do the letters from the faculty advisor demonstrate support for the fellowship?

16-20 points: The applicant demonstrates the educational background needed to successfully conduct the project, an interest in the reserve system, and an interest in further professional development. The applicant comes highly recommended and has the enthusiastic support of their faculty advisor to participate in research at the reserves and in the professional development opportunities offered by the fellowship.

8-15 points: The applicant demonstrates progress towards the educational background needed to conduct the project and some interest in the reserve system or further professional development. The recommendations and/or letters support the application but there may be some reservations about the potential of the applicant, their commitment, or support for the professional development opportunities.

0-7 points: The applicant does not demonstrate the educational background needed to conduct the project or there is little interest in working with the reserves or further professional development. The recommendations and/or letters of support describe reservations about the applicant, the commitment to reserve research, or professional development opportunities.

4. Project costs (5 points). This criterion evaluates the budget to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time-frame. Is the budget request reasonable and does the applicant justify the proposed budget request? Is the allocation sufficient to cover the travel requirements of the program? Is the allocation sufficient to provide the resources needed to conduct the project?

4-5 points: Budget request is reasonable and justified and sufficient funding is allocated to cover the travel requirements. Resources needed for the project are allocated or their availability is addressed in the proposal.

2-3 points: There are some concerns about the budget and whether the travel required and/or tasks proposed can be accomplished with the available resources.

0-1 points: Budget expenditures are not justified or resources are not available for the project.

5. Outreach and education (20 points): This criterion assesses whether the project provides a focused and effective education and outreach strategy regarding NOAA's mission to understand and protect the Nation's natural resources. Does the project identify potential stakeholders and end-users? Does the project propose a collaborative approach to incorporate appropriate input into the approach, outcomes, and any products? Does the applicant demonstrate knowledge of the target audience? Will the project outputs meet the identified end user needs?

16-20 points: The proposal includes a viable strategy for identifying end-user needs for the research and engaging stakeholders throughout the process such that the results are useful to address the management priority. The applicant is working with appropriate NERRS research, education, stewardship, and/or coastal training programs to conduct the engagement process.

8-15 points: The proposal includes a strategy for identifying end-user needs for the research and engaging stakeholders throughout the process. The applicant is working with appropriate NERRS research, education, stewardship, and/or coastal training programs but there may be concerns about the viability of the strategy.

0-7 points: The proposal does not include a strategy for identifying end-user needs for the research or engaging stakeholders. There is no plan for engagement of the NERRS research, education, stewardship, and coastal training programs.

6. Data management plan (5 points). Project includes a data management plan that ensures that environmental data collected as part of the project will be shared among the fellow, university faculty sponsor, and reserve staff prior to the conclusion of the fellowship. The data management plan should meet the requirement to be visible, accessible, and independently understandable to users in a timely fashion (typically within two years).

4-5 points: The proposal includes a clear, understandable data management plan that ensures that data collected as part of the project will be shared among the fellow, university faculty sponsor, and reserve staff during the course of the fellowship.

2-3 points: The proposal includes a data management plan but there are some concerns about the sharing of data among the fellow, university faculty sponsor, and reserve staff prior to the conclusion of the fellowship.

0-1 points: The proposal does not include a data management plan or data is not shared among the fellow, university faculty sponsor, and reserve staff prior to the conclusion of the fellowship.

B. Review and Selection Process

An initial administrative review is conducted on each application to assure that it is timely, responsive, and complete. NOAA, in its sole discretion, may continue the review process for applications with non-substantive issues that may be easily rectified or cured.

Applications that meet the minimum requirements will be reviewed by at least three independent peer reviewers with appropriate scientific expertise and coastal management experience during a merit-based review and ranking process. Each reviewer will be asked to individually evaluate and rank proposals using the weighted evaluation criteria above. Proposal evaluations will be based exclusively on information included in the application. Merit reviewer ratings will be averaged to produce a rank order of the proposals for each reserve.

Following the merit-based review, applications will be presented to a panel of experts in coastal and estuarine science and management, social science, and outreach and collaboration, as appropriate. Panel experts will have a familiarity with the reserve management priorities, resources, and capabilities. Applications will be grouped and reviewed separately by each reserve in consultation with NOAA to ensure no conflict of interest exists. Each member of the panel individually considers the following factors (referred to collectively as the Panel Evaluation Criteria):

1) if the project addresses the management need in a way that assists the reserve staff and stakeholder community to address the issue;

2) if the project approach and outcomes contribute and provide significant value to the reserve and/or local communities; and

3) if the reserve facilities, staff, and resources can support the proposed methods, sampling scheme, and approach;

Each member of the panel will independently assign a numerical rating between 1 and 4 for each application according to the following scale, and provide comments to support their score (fractions of whole numbers will not be accepted):

1 - Application did not address the Panel Evaluation Criteria as outlined above.
2 - Application marginally addressed the Panel Evaluation Criteria as outlined above.
3 - Application satisfactorily addressed the Panel Evaluation Criteria as outlined above.
4 - Application fully addressed the Panel Evaluation Criteria as outlined above.

The panel will give no consensus advice. The NOAA competition manager ranks the proposals in the order of average panel score. In the event that there are two or more projects tied in the panel's ranking, all tied projects will be given equal consideration by the selecting official based on the Selection Factors, regardless of the tied projects' peer review score.

Appropriate mechanisms will be implemented to avoid potential conflicts of interest during the proposal review process.

C. Selection Factors

The selecting official, an official within the NOAA Office for Coastal Management (or their designee) anticipates recommending applications for funding in rank order unless an application is justified to be selected out of rank order based upon one or more of the following selection factors:

1. Availability of funding;
2. Balance/distribution of funds: a) by geographic area, b) by type of institutions, c) by type of partners, d) by research areas; or e) by project types;
3. Whether the project duplicates other projects funded or considered for funding by NOAA or other federal agencies;
4. Program priorities and policy factors set out in Sections I.A. and I.B.;
5. An applicant's prior award performance;
6. Partnerships and/or participation of targeted groups; and
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 NOAA Grants Management Division.

The selecting official or designee may negotiate the funding level of the proposal. Awards

may not necessarily be made to the highest-scored applications. Unsuccessful applicants will be notified via email that their application was not among those recommended for funding. Unsuccessful applications submitted in hard copy will be kept on file in accordance with NOAA records requirements and then destroyed.

NOAA may select all, some, or none of the applications, or part of any application, ask applicants to work together or combine projects, defer applications to the future, or reallocate funds to different funding categories, to the extent authorized. Applicants may be asked to modify objectives, work plans or budgets, and provide supplemental information required by the agency prior to the award. The exact amount of funds to be awarded, the final scope of activities, the project duration, and specific NOAA cooperative involvement with the activities of each project will be determined in pre-award negotiations among the applicant, the NOAA Grants Management Division, and NOAA program staff.

D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

Successful applicants are expected to be notified by email in April 2024. The anticipated start date for cooperative agreement awards made under this competition is August 1, 2024, dependent on funding availability, acceptable completion of all NOAA/applicant negotiations including NEPA and environmental compliance analysis and permit requirements, and the provision of other supporting documentation as requested.

Unsuccessful applicants will be notified by email that their application was not recommended for funding after the final selection package has been approved by the NOAA Grants Management Division, which is expected to be May 2024. Unsuccessful applications submitted to this competition will be retained for three years and then destroyed.

VI. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notices

Applications recommended for funding by the selecting official will be forwarded to the NOAA Grants Management Division by the Program Office. The applicant will be notified by the program office by email that their application was recommended for funding and remains under consideration. The applicant should be aware that the notification by the program office is not the official award notice and funding is not assured. Official notification happens only when the applicant receives an award notice from the Grants Officer electronically.

The official notice of award is the Commerce Form 450 (CD-450), Financial Assistance

Award, issued by the NOAA Grants Officer Electronically through NOAA's electronic grants management system, Grants Online. Recipients of any award (competitive or non-competitive) are required to designate a principal investigator in Grants Online within 30 days of receiving award offers.

Risk Review: After applications are proposed for funding by the selecting official, the Grants Office will perform administration reviews. 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 SAM) about any information included in the system about their organization for consideration by the awarding agency. NOAA reserves the right to reject an application in its entirety where information is uncovered that raises a significant risk with respect to the responsibility or suitability of an applicant. The final approval of selected applications and issuance of awards will be made by the NOAA Grants Officer.

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 or cooperative 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.

In addition, award documents provided by NOAA may contain special award conditions limiting the use of funds for activities that have outstanding environmental compliance requirements and may lead to modification of the project's scope of work. These special award conditions may also include other compliance requirements for the award and will be applied on a case-by-case basis. Applicants are strongly encouraged to review award documents carefully before accepting a Federal award to ensure they are fully aware of the relevant terms that have been placed on the award.

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

1. Pre-Award Notice

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. Refer to http://go.usa.gov/cXC7A.

2. Uniform Administrative Requirements

Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements at 2 CFR 200, implemented by the Department of Commerce at 2 C.F.R. 1327.101, apply to awards in this program. Refer to http://go.usa.gov/cXCJQ.

3. Terms and Conditions

The Department of Commerce Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions will apply to awards in this program. These terms will be provided in the award package in Grants Online. A current version is available for review at https://www.commerce.gov/sites/default/files/2020-11/DOC%20Standard%20Terms%20and%20Conditions%20-%2012%20November%202020%20PDF_0.pdf. Also, NOAA will apply administrative terms, and a current version is at https://www.noaa.gov/sites/default/files/atoms/files/Administrative%20Standard%20Award%20Conditions%20for%20NOAA%20Financial%20Assistance%20Awards%2002.18.2021.pdf. In addition, award documents provided by NOAA may contain special award conditions, including those limiting the use of funds for compliance activities such as outstanding environmental compliance requirements, which will be applied on a case-by-case basis, and requirements for submitting progress reports.

4. NEPA Requirements

NOAA must analyze the potential environmental impacts, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), for applicant projects or proposals that are seeking NOAA federal 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.

5. Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)

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 federal 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.

6. Data Sharing Requirements

Refer to Section IV.B.5.e of this announcement for details on data sharing requirements.

7. 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. Publication of this announcement does not oblige NOAA to award any specific project or to obligate any available funds.

NOAA reserves the right to halt activity under the award through enforcement procedures under 2 CFR 200.339-.343, Remedies for Non-compliance, if the recipient is not fulfilling the requirements of the project as outlined in the grant award. Non-compliance with a federally approved project may result in termination of the award as described in 2 CFR 200.340.

8. Review of Risk

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. NOAA is required to review and consider any information about the applicant that is in the designated integrity and performance system accessible through SAM (see 41 U.S.C. 2313). An applicant, at its option, may review information in the designated integrity and performance systems accessible through SAM and comment on any information about itself that a Federal awarding agency previously entered and is currently in the designated integrity and performance system accessible through SAM. NOAA will consider any comments by the applicant, in addition to the other information in the designated integrity and performance system, in making a judgment about the applicant's integrity, business ethics, and record of performance under Federal awards when completing the review of risk posed by applicants as described in 2 C.F.R. §200.206 Federal awarding agency review of risk posed by applicants.

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. 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 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 addressed in a timely fashion 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 selected applications and issuance of awards will be by the NOAA Grants Officer.

9. 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.

10. NOAA Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment Prevention and Response Policy Applicable to Financial Assistance Awards

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. The recipient must report to the NOAA Grants Officer and Program Officer if the PI, co-PI, or other key personnel are placed on administrative leave relating to a harassment finding or investigation. NOAA may take unilateral action as necessary to protect the safety of all personnel on a project supported by financial assistance, to include suspending or terminating an award or requiring a recipient to replace or remove personnel.

If the award involves the use of NOAA-operated facilities and/or vessels, the recipient must adhere to the following specific requirements:

Financial assistance awards involving the use of NOAA operated-facilities: NOAA Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment Prevention and Response Policy Applicable to Financial

Assistance Awards Involving NOAA-Operated Facilities (May 2018)
Financial assistance awards involving the use of vessels: NOAA Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment Prevention and Response Policy Applicable to Financial Assistance Awards Involving the Use of a Vessel(s) under NOAA Contract, Order, Grant, or Cooperative Agreement (May 2018)

Direct links to the requirements for awards involving the use of NOAA operated-facilities and/or vessels may be found at https://www.noaa.gov/organization/acquisition-grants/noaa-workplace-harassment-training-for-contractors-and-financial. Note that these policies include required training.

RESEARCH TERMS AND CONDITIONS. For awards designated on the CD-450 as Research, the Commerce Terms, and the Federal-wide Research Terms and Conditions Research Terms) as implemented by the Department of Commerce, currently, at https://www.nsf.gov/awards/managing/rtc.jsp, both apply to the award. The Commerce Terms and the Research Terms are generally intended to harmonize with each other; however, where the Commerce Terms and the Research Terms differ in a Research award, the Research Terms prevail, unless otherwise indicated in a specific award condition.

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 NOAA's Grants Online system 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 "Research Involving Human Subjects" found at https://www.commerce.gov/oam/policy/financial-assistance-policy.

NOAA SEXUAL ASSAULT AND SEXUAL HARASSMENT PREVENTION AND RESPONSE POLICY.
NOAA requires organizations receiving federal assistance to report findings of sexual harassment, or any other kind of harassment, regarding a Principal Investigator (PI), co-PI, or any other key personnel in the award. NOAA expects all financial assistance recipients to establish and maintain clear and unambiguous standards of behavior to ensure harassment free workplaces wherever NOAA grant or cooperative agreement work is conducted, including notification pathways for all personnel, including students, on the awards. This expectation includes activities at all on- and offsite facilities and during conferences and workshops. All such settings should have accessible and evident means for reporting violations and recipients should exercise due diligence with timely investigations of allegations and corrective actions.
For more information, please visit: https://www.noaa.gov/organization/acquisition-grants/noaa-workplace-harassment-training-for-contractors-and-financial.

SCIENCE INTEGRITY.
1.Maintaining Integrity. The non-Federal entity shall maintain the scientific integrity of research performed pursuant to this grant or financial assistance award including the prevention, detection, and remediation of any allegations regarding the violation of scientific integrity or scientific and research misconduct, and the conduct of inquiries, investigations, and adjudications of allegations of violations of scientific integrity or scientific and research misconduct. All the requirements of this provision flow down to subrecipients.
2. Peer Review. The peer review of the results of scientific activities under a NOAA grant, financial assistance award or cooperative agreement shall be accomplished to ensure consistency with NOAA standards on quality, relevance, scientific integrity, reproducibility, transparency, and performance. NOAA will ensure that peer review of "influential scientific information" or "highly influential scientific assessments" is conducted in accordance with the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Final Information Quality Bulletin for Peer Review and NOAA policies on peer review, such as the Information Quality Guidelines.
3. In performing or presenting the results of scientific activities under the NOAA grant,

financial assistance award, or cooperative agreement and in responding to allegations regarding the violation of scientific integrity or scientific and research misconduct, the non-Federal entity and all subrecipients shall comply with the provisions herein and NOAA Administrative Order (NAO) 202-735D, Scientific Integrity, and its Procedural Handbook, including any amendments thereto. That Order can be found at http://nrc.noaa.gov/ScientificIntegrityCommons.aspx. 4. Primary Responsibility. The non-Federal entity shall have the primary responsibility to prevent, detect, and investigate allegations of a violation of scientific integrity or scientific and research misconduct. Unless otherwise instructed by the grants officer, the non-Federal entity shall promptly conduct an initial inquiry into any allegation of such misconduct and may rely on its internal policies and procedures, as appropriate, to do so. 5. By executing this grant, financial assistance award, or cooperative agreement the non-Federal entity provides its assurance that it has established an administrative process for performing an inquiry, investigating, and reporting allegations of a violation of scientific integrity or scientific and research misconduct; and that it will comply with its own administrative process for performing an inquiry, investigation, and reporting of such misconduct. 6. The non- Federal entity shall insert this provision in all subawards at all tiers under this grant,
financial assistance award, or cooperative agreement.

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

C. Reporting

NOAA and National Estuarine Research Reserve support must be acknowledged in all

relevant scientific presentations and publications. Data collected as part of the award must be shared in machine-readable format in accordance with NOAA's data management requirements among the fellow, faculty advisor, and reserve mentor prior to the end of the award.

Award recipients will be required to submit financial and performance (technical) progress reports consistent with 2 CFR 200.328 - .330 and Department of Commerce Standard Terms and Conditions electronically through NOAA's electronic grants management system, Grants Online. Performance reports must be submitted on a semi-annual schedule no later than 30 days following the end of each 6- month period from the start date of the award. Reports should be submitted with the assistance of the applicant's Office of Sponsored Programs and to the host reserve via electronic copy. Reports shall include academic progress, research accomplishments to date, and documenting attendance and outcomes of professional development opportunities.

Financial reports must be submitted every 6 months by the end of April and October during the period of the award in accordance with the Department of Commerce Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions. NOAA will provide instructions for submitting financial and progress reports upon request.

A comprehensive final report in lieu of the final interim report is due 120 days after the award expiration date along with copies of all products developed under the award. Copies of all materials (including but not limited to brochures, posters, videos, DVDs, publications, reports, management plans, public service announcements, workshop proceedings, etc.) produced through the award, along with copies of any reports submitted by subcontractors as part of the award, must be provided to the program office within 120 days of the end of the award. Except where limited by law, regulation, policy or security, recipients are requested to include a statement on the front page of all products to indicate the material is "Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited." If the applicant has requested publication costs, resulting journal publications must be made available to the public free of charge.

Successful applicants will be requested to ensure that all interim progress reports indicate whether financial reports have been submitted to NOAA's Grants Management Division and are up-to-date. In their final progress report, applicants will be asked to (a) clearly state the resulting overall impact of their project with respect to the National Estuarine Research Reserve System or within the coastal management community; and (b) certify that "Final financial reports have been submitted to NOAA's Grants Management Division and a final funding draw-down has been made through the Automated Standard Application for Payments (ASAP)."

If equipment or tangible personal property is purchased with grant funds, applicants shall submit an inventory in accordance with OMB guidance that Commerce adopted by regulation at 2 C.F.R. 1327.101, which shall be incorporated under the award. The equipment requirements of the OMB Uniform Guidance are set out at 2 C.F.R. Part 200.313.

Recipients must inventory tangible property at award closeout. As necessary, SF-428 forms may be attached as an appendix to progress reports or submitted directly to the NOAA program officer.

Recipients must submit reports at least annually and at award closeout on the status of real property in which the federal government retains an interest, unless the federal interest in the real property extends 15 years or more. As necessary, SF-429 forms may be attached as an appendix to progress reports or submitted directly to the NOAA program officer.

The program office recommends that if the equipment is no longer needed, recipients are encouraged to request disposition instructions for equipment approximately 150 days before the project period ends to allow sufficient time to have equipment disposition requests addressed before a project ends. Equipment disposition instructions typically require that recipients “Submit Additional Closeout Documents" as an award action request in Grants Online. NOAA will provide instructions for disposition in accordance with OMB requirements.

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 issued. All awardees of applicable grants and cooperative agreements are required to report to the Federal Subaward Reporting System (FSRS) available at www.FSRS.gov on all subawards over $30,000. See 2 CFR 170 at http://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title02/2cfr170_main_02.tpl.

VII. Agency Contacts

For administrative or technical questions regarding this announcement, contact the program office: OCM.Davidsonfellowship@noaa.gov

VIII. Other Information

Funds awarded cannot necessarily pay for all the costs that the recipient might incur in the course of carrying out an award. Generally, costs that are allowable include salaries, equipment and supplies, as long as these are "necessary and reasonable" specifically for the purpose of the award. Allowable costs are determined by reference to the OMB Uniform Guidance at 2 CFR Part 200, codified by the Department of Commerce at 1327.101. All cost reimbursement sub-awards (e.g. subgrants, subcontracts) are subject to those federal cost principles applicable to the particular type of organization concerned.

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, federal agents and contractors, and/or by non-federal personnel, all of whom enter into appropriate conflicts of interest and nondisclosure 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 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.