

# **NOTICE OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY**

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## Executive Summary

### **Federal Agency Name**

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)

### **Funding Opportunity Title**

FY26 Ruth D. Gates Coral Reef Conservation Grants - Fishery Management

### **Announcement Type**

Competitive

### **Funding Opportunity Number**

NOAA-NMFS-OHC-2026-33125

### **Assistance Listing Number(s)**

11.482

### **Dates**

Applications must be postmarked, provided to a delivery service, or received by [www.Grants.gov](http://www.Grants.gov) by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on Thursday, July 23, 2026.

### **Funding Opportunity Description**

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Coral Reef Conservation Program provides financial assistance through the Ruth D. Gates Coral Reef Conservation Grants - Fishery Management competition for projects to sustainably manage coral reef fisheries, as authorized under the Coral Reef Conservation Act, 16 U.S.C. § 6410. Projects funded through this competition are for activities that: 1) Develop or update sustainable coral reef fisheries management plans; 2) Address science/information gaps that help advance sustainable management of coral reef fisheries stocks; 3) Advance ecosystem-based fisheries management by modernizing analysis of existing data and application of fisheries management tools. Proposals selected for funding through this solicitation will be implemented through one- to three-year grants or cooperative agreements. Approximately \$1,000,000 is expected to be available for this competition. The NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program anticipates that awards will range from \$50,000-\$200,000. NOAA will not accept proposals requesting less than \$50,000. Funds will be administered by the Office of Habitat Conservation in conjunction with the NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program. Funding may be divided among the U.S. Pacific and Atlantic regions to maintain the geographic balance of the NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program grant portfolio, as required by the Coral Reef Conservation Act.

Please see the National Marine Fisheries Service website on the [Grant Application Process](#). You will need to pay close attention to the submission checks section and the common error section. There are common errors that prevent successful application submission and receipt in eRA Commons. Grants.gov may allow you to apply, but eRA Commons will not accept the application if it includes these errors, and therefore NOAA will not receive it. When you apply to this competition you will receive notification of submission validation from Grants.gov and eRA Commons. Only validated applications are sent to NOAA to review. To ensure successful submission of an application, we strongly recommend that you submit a final and complete application at least two business days prior to the submission deadline.

In addition to the Grants.gov automated notification messages, once an electronic application is accepted in eRA Commons, you will receive an automated notification from eRA Commons that the completed application was received and that an application number will be assigned. If there are errors in the application, eRA Commons will send an automated email notification(s) of any errors or warnings identified by eRA Commons. You must resolve all eRA Commons errors prior to the application due date for the application to be processed.

You should save and print the proof of submission messages from both Grants.gov and eRA Commons. If you do not receive an acceptance message from both Grants.gov and eRA Commons, you should follow up with the eRA Helpdesk at 1-866-504-9552 and the agency contact listed in Section VII to confirm NOAA's receipt of the complete submission. See Section IV(G) for detailed instructions on submission validation requirements.

## Full Text of Announcement

### I. Funding Opportunity Description

#### A. Program Objective

Coral reefs are among the most complex and diverse ecosystems on earth. They support important fishing and tourism industries, protect coasts from wave and storm damage, build tropical islands, are a source of compounds for new drugs and treatments, and provide essential services like food security, livelihood, and culture, among other benefits. As shallow water, nearshore ecosystems, coral reefs are ecologically linked to adjacent watersheds and are highly vulnerable to human activity. Stresses in the coral reef environment include poor water quality from runoff and inadequate sewage treatment, sedimentation, fishing impacts, recreational overuse and misuse, and changing ocean conditions.

To address these and other threats, the NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program, working with federal, state, and territorial partners, drafted a National Coral Reef Resilience Strategy that is based on sound science, innovative management approaches, effective enforcement, meaningful partnerships, and inclusive public participation. This draft strategy outlines efforts in four conservation goals that are designed to support healthy, resilient United States (U.S.) coral reef ecosystems capable of providing valuable services to current and future generations. The goals of this draft strategy are to improve water quality; restore or preserve resilient, genetically diverse, reproductively viable coral populations; maintain stable or increasing fisheries taxa to support sustainable fisheries and ecosystem services; and enhance coral reef ecosystem services that support resilience and well-being for coastal communities.

This grant competition directly contributes to the draft National Coral Reef Resilience Strategy's 'sustainable fisheries' focus area and supports Executive Order 14276, "Restoring American Seafood Competitiveness." Improving fisheries sustainability is about managing coral reef fisheries in a manner that not only maintains healthy populations and habitats but also preserves the ecosystem services upon which communities depend, including sustainable seafood. This focus area also recognizes the need for accurate and updated fisheries information to inform adaptive management approaches that direct and adjust management actions, including reducing regulatory burdens, as needed, per Executive Order 14276. There are two strategies under this focus area: building capacity for coral reef fisheries management and providing data essential for coral reef fisheries management.

This competition falls under the Ruth D. Gates Coral Reef Conservation Grants Program (16 U.S.C. § 6410), which supports projects for the conservation and restoration of coral reef ecosystems. This Grants Program, in alignment with the draft National Coral Reef Resilience Strategy, aims to improve coral reef conservation and restoration by supporting community-based planning, enhancing compliance with regulations, mapping habitats, and fostering innovation in research, monitoring, and management of coral reef ecosystems.

## **B. Program Priorities**

The primary focus of this funding announcement is to support activities that improve fisheries sustainability within the shallow (<30 m [ $<90$  ft] depth) and associated mesophotic (30–150 m [90–500 ft] depth) coral reef ecosystems found within the U.S. waters. This includes U.S. coral jurisdictions (American Samoa, the Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands, Florida, Guam, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands) and the federal waters under the four regional fishery management councils with shallow coral in their jurisdiction (Caribbean, Gulf, South Atlantic, and Western Pacific). All applications must be consistent with the draft National Coral Reef Resilience Strategy.

Activities under this competition should support sustainable fisheries management, which is a dynamic process that requires constant and routine attention to new information to adjust management actions. Proposed projects should directly address coral reef fisheries management needs, data gaps, and/or improve adaptive management tools and processes. This may also include activities that promote data sharing among the jurisdictional and federal management agencies where coral reef fisheries management overlaps. Successful applications under this competition will clearly indicate how the proposed work supports improved fisheries management. Over the long term, this will benefit seafood competitiveness and U.S. fishermen.

Applicants that are not management agencies should work closely with the jurisdictional fishery management agencies and/or regional fishery management councils as project partners or collaborators, or ensure the application includes a letter of support from the management agency stating the proposed work will address a known gap or need.

The following program priorities not only support identified needs within the U.S. coral jurisdictions and fisheries management councils, but also support the need to streamline regulations, improve data collection, and solicit public input as identified in Executive Order 14276. Projects should address one or more of the shallow coral reef fisheries management objectives within the following categories:

- Develop or update sustainable coral reef fisheries management plans. This may include activities such as
  - Conducting analysis to feed into new or revised plans
  - Assisting with drafting or revising plans
  - Facilitating public input into plans via meetings or other public engagement activities and/or
  - Developing communication tools related to management plans
- Address science/information gaps that help advance sustainable management of coral reef fisheries stocks. Activities may include
  - Obtaining life history and ecological data related to key fishery taxa that are ecologically important for coral reef conditions and particularly vulnerable to overfishing
  - Conducting cooperative research with fishers, communities, or other stakeholders to obtain information on coral reef fishery species abundance, habitat utilization, or habitat-gear interactions
  - Develop, modernize, and/or implement monitoring data collection protocols that evaluate place-based management performance relative to real-time conditions
- Advance ecosystem-based fisheries management by modernizing analysis of existing data and application of fisheries management tools. Activities may include
  - Modeling the effects of coral cover (habitat) changes on coral reef fishery production
  - Development of decision-support tools (e.g., risk and vulnerability assessments, ecosystem and well-being indicators, and management strategy evaluation)

Travel supported through this grant/cooperative agreement must be related to the implementation of activities described in the project narrative. Expenditures on large equipment, real property, capital expenditures, and/or infrastructure are not a priority for funding under this program.

### **C. Program Authority**

The Coral Reef Conservation Act, 16 U.S.C. § 6410.

## **II. Award Information**

### **A. Funding Availability**

Pursuant to 16 U.S.C. § 6410, and pending appropriations in fiscal year 2027, the NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program expects to provide approximately \$1,000,000 in funding for this competition. The NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program anticipates that awards will range from \$50,000-\$200,000. The exact amount of funds that may be awarded will be determined in pre-award negotiations between the applicant and NOAA.

NOAA or the Department of Commerce are not responsible for direct costs of application preparation. Publication of this announcement does not obligate NOAA to award any specific project or to obligate any available funds. There is no guarantee that sufficient funds will be available to make awards for all top-ranked applications. Federal funds have not yet been appropriated for this program, and there is no guarantee that sufficient funds will be available to make awards for all qualified projects. Publication of this notice does not obligate NOAA to award any specific project or to obligate any available funds.

### **B. Project/Award Period**

Applications should use an anticipated start date of January 1, 2027, or later. The period of performance for projects in this program should be 12 months.

### **C. Type of Funding Instrument**

Successful applicants will enter into a grant or cooperative agreement with the NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program. The instrument will depend on the level of federal involvement. Federal cooperative agreements, as described in 2 C.F.R. Sec. 200.1, are different from traditional grants in that they allow for 'substantial federal involvement' in the implementation of funded projects. Applications that propose substantial federal government involvement should suggest anticipated federal roles and responsibilities in their proposals. Proposed roles and responsibilities on the part of NOAA or other federal partners may include activities, such as assisting in the implementation of fieldwork and/or laboratory support and providing federal data that is not yet publicly available. Applicants are neither required nor prohibited from proposing substantial federal involvement in a project, and this will not result in a higher merit review score. If a project is selected for funding, NOAA may consider becoming substantially involved by proposing joint collaboration or participation, requiring performance specifications, approving stages of work before subsequent stages may proceed, reviewing substantive aspects of subawards or contracts, involvement in key personnel selection, monitoring to permit redirection of the work due to interrelationships with other projects, significant operational involvement in compliance, or highly prescriptive requirements limiting recipient discretion on the project scope or management processes, combined with operational involvement.

### **III. Eligibility Information**

#### **A. Eligible Applicants**

Eligible applicants are regional fishery management councils established under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (16 U.S.C. 1801 et seq.), nongovernmental organizations or research institutions that have demonstrated expertise in coral reef conservation or restoration and/or scientific research; designated coral reef research centers, U.S. states, territories, or local governments with authority over coral reefs; and Native entities with interests in a coral reef ecosystem.

NOAA employees are not permitted to assist in the preparation of applications. NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program staff are available to provide general information on programmatic goals and objectives, ongoing coral reef conservation programs/activities, and regional funding priorities. For proposals that involve collaboration with current NOAA projects or staff, NOAA employees may provide a limited statement verifying the nature and extent of the collaboration and confirming prior coordination activities. Letters of support from NOAA employees are not allowable and will not be included among the application materials considered by merit reviewers.

#### **B. Cost Share or Matching Requirement**

NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program financial assistance awards are subject to statutory and regulatory matching fund policies. Federal funds for any coral conservation project under 16 U.S.C. § 6410(b) may not exceed 50 percent of the total cost of the award. Therefore, any coral conservation project under this grant competition requires a 1:1 contribution of non-federal matching funds.

Cost sharing or matching is defined by 2 C.F.R. § 200.29 as “the portion of project costs not paid by federal funds (unless otherwise authorized by federal statute).” Any shared costs or matching funds and all contributions, including cash and third-party in-kind contributions of property and services, will be accepted as part of an applicant’s cost sharing or matching when the contributions meet the criteria listed in 2 C.F.R. § 200.306(b). That is, the contributions: (1) are verifiable from the non-federal entity’s records; (2) are not included as contributions for any other federal award; (3) are necessary and reasonable for accomplishment of project or program objectives; (4) are allowable under Subpart E - Cost Principles of this part; (5) are not paid by the federal government under another federal award, except where the federal statute authorizing a program specifically provides that Federal funds made available for such a program can be applied to matching or cost sharing requirements of other Federal programs; (6) are provided for in the approved budget when required by the federal awarding agency; and (7) conform to other provisions of this part, as applicable. Contributions can come from a variety of public and private sources and can include third party in-kind goods and services such as private boat use, lab space or equipment, and volunteer labor. In addition, applicants are permitted to combine contributions for allowable costs from multiple non-Federal partners to meet the 1:1 match requirement, consistent with the standards described in 2 C.F.R. § 200.306.

Applicants should specify the source(s) of match in the budget narrative and should provide or may be asked to provide letters of commitment to confirm stated match contributions. Applicants whose proposals are selected for funding will be bound by the percentage of cost sharing reflected in the award document signed by the NOAA Grants Officer. Applicants should be prepared to carefully document matching contributions for each project selected for funding. Valuation of proposed cost sharing is described in 2 C.F.R. § 200.306(d)-(k). Applicants may choose to designate part or all of their federally negotiated indirect costs as match. This may be convenient because the valuation of such costs has already been federally approved, and documentation is readily available. Refer to the “Indirect Costs” policies in Section IV.F. of this funding announcement.

The NOAA Administrator or designee may waive all or part of the matching requirement if the Administrator determines that the project meets two requirements identified in 16 U.S.C. § 6403(b)(2):

1. No reasonable means are available through which an applicant can meet the matching requirement, and
2. The probable benefit of such a project outweighs the public interest in such matching requirements.

In the case of a waiver request, the applicant should provide a detailed justification explaining the need for the waiver, including attempts to obtain sources of matching funds, how the benefit of the project outweighs the public interest in providing matching funds, and any other extenuating circumstances preventing the availability of matching funds. Match waiver requests including the appropriate justification should be submitted as part of the final application package. Please address all waiver requests to Jennifer Koss, Coral Reef Conservation Program Manager, NOAA National Ocean Service, 1305 East West Highway, 10th Floor, SSMC4, N/ORM, Silver Spring, MD 20910.

### **C. Other Criteria that Affect Eligibility**

Full applications submitted through Grants.gov must be submitted by the due date and time provided in Section IV.D. Late applications will not be considered for funding.

The following information describes ineligible project proposal types and activities:

- Activities that alleviate the liability associated with legally required mitigation for the adverse environmental impacts of an activity regulated or otherwise governed by local, state, or federal law are ineligible.
- Activities that constitute compensatory restoration for natural resource damages under federal, state, or local law are ineligible.

- Activities that are required by a separate consent decree, court order, statute, or regulation are ineligible. Applicants planning to combine grant or matching funds with mitigation should review the Compensatory Mitigation for Losses of Aquatic Resources; Final Rule at 73 Fed. Reg. 19594 (April 10, 2008). NOAA plans to follow the approach adopted by some other Federal agencies on Page 19,636 that describes scenarios where mitigation credits may or may not be obtained in association with federal financial incentives.

## IV. Application and Submission Information

### A. Address to Request Application Package

Complete application packages, including required federal forms and instructions, can be found on [www.Grants.gov](http://www.Grants.gov). If a prospective applicant is having difficulty downloading the application forms from [www.Grants.gov](http://www.Grants.gov), contact [www.Grants.gov](http://www.Grants.gov) Customer Support at 1- 800-518-4726 or [support@Grants.gov](mailto:support@Grants.gov). Information about the recommended format for full applications is contained in Section IV.B.

### B. Content and Form of Application

The application process for this competition requires submission of a complete application on or before the submission date and time listed above. All application materials should use a legible 12-point font with 1-inch margins on all sides. For each application, the information provided in elements 1-4 (described below) may not exceed 50 pages total; the 50-page limit does not apply to required federal forms and other documentation (elements 5 - 11 below). Applications that exceed the 50-page limit will be shortened by removing pages before they are forwarded to merit reviewers. Pages excised from lengthy applications will not be reviewed, and any activities described therein will not be eligible for funding consideration. Applications that are incomplete, unclear, or contain numerous typographical errors may not be understood effectively by the reviewers, leading to lower evaluation scores; so, applicants are advised to review their application materials closely before they are submitted to the agency for consideration.

Applications submitted through [www.Grants.gov](http://www.Grants.gov) should have no more than three attachments in addition to the federal forms: 1) Cover page and project narrative (elements 1-4 below), 2) Budget table and budget narrative (element 5), and 3) all additional information (elements 6-8) combined into one file. Applications submitted as flattened Adobe Acrobat (PDF) documents. The total electronic file size of the proposal narrative and appendices combined shall not exceed 100 megabytes in storage space. Files that are larger than five megabytes may not be properly downloaded, uploaded, or received by the agency or the reviewers. Files that cannot be opened or downloaded will not be reviewed.

Each application should include the following information:

#### Element 1: Cover Sheet and Project Summary - A one-page cover sheet that includes:

- Short title of the proposed project.
- Applicant organization name, address, phone number.
- Principal investigators and their contact information.
- Geographic locations of the project and the site names.
- The amount of federal funds requested.
- The amount of matching funds provided and the source of matching funds.
- The requested award start date and end date.
- A one or two paragraph project summary emphasizing the overall goal of application objectives and activities.

#### Element 2: Project Description (Proposal Narrative):

Provide sufficient background and contextual information for reviewers to independently assess the significance of the proposed project.

a) Importance and Applicability. The applicant should provide a brief summary of relevant background information that justifies the need for the proposed project. This information should identify the management need, issue, or fisheries data gap the project intends to address; describe how the project is expected to support sustainable coral reef fishery management. Project objectives should be simple and understandable, as specific and quantitative as possible, and attainable within the proposed time-frame, the described budget, and the human resources available. Projects should be accomplishment-oriented and identify attainable goals, outcomes, and products. If the work is part of a larger project, applicants should provide information on the larger project and how the proposed work feeds into the larger project.

b) Project objectives: This section is the scientific or technical plan to be accomplished to meet the project objectives and should be written in sufficient detail to allow a review of the suitability of the proposed work and the likelihood of successful completion in the stated time frame. Please ensure your project narrative includes detailed descriptions of each activity, including the rationale for the activity, how it will be accomplished, specific milestones, and expected products. The narrative should include outreach and education information such as dissemination of the findings/results and/or data to resource managers, fishers, local communities, and other stakeholders, or other activities as appropriate. If the work is one component of a larger project and proposed activities will continue after the end of the grant period, applicants should describe future activities and potential future funding sources (and other mechanisms) to continue the work.

The applications in-water tasks should note the use or take of Endangered Species Act listed corals or fish; anticipated impacts to other Endangered Species Act listed species or critical habitat (e.g., sea turtles and whales); any National Historic Preservation Act resources in the action area, as well as a commitment to quickly provide information needed by NOAA to analyze project impacts under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA, see Section IV.B.5 Supporting Documents, below).

c) Project Timeline: A description of specific activities and associated timelines necessary to meet them. Describe the timelines in increments (e.g., month 1, month 2, etc. or 1st quarter, 2nd quarter, etc.), rather than by specific dates.

d) Project Management/Personnel and Partner Justification and Roles: Describe how the project will be organized and managed. Provide an overview of the qualifications of the principal investigator(s) through a summary of professional backgrounds, which may be supplemented by short biographies, curricula vitae, or resumes in Element 6 below, Supporting Documents. The principal investigator may or may not be the applicant. However, if the applicant is not the principal investigator, there should be an explanation of the relationship between the applicant and the principal investigator (e.g., the applicant may be responsible for managing the grant funds and the principal investigator will be responsible for completing the work). Please also include information about the specific responsibilities of other personnel funded through the proposal, including the technical and administrative points of contact as appropriate.

For projects that are done collaboratively or in support of fishery management agencies or regional fishery management council needs, the project narrative should indicate the key agency or council contacts and their roles in supporting the proposed work. For proposals that would like to have NOAA substantially involved in them, the narrative should include any NOAA contact(s) and a description of NOAA's involvement.

e) Table or List of Products/Outputs and Outcomes for the project: Please provide a table to summarize the specific products/outputs and outcomes that will be produced for each activity under the award. All products resulting from federally funded awards should be provided to NOAA within 120 days of the end of the award period and should be of publishable quality. All products will need to comply with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (see Section VI.C., Reporting, below). NOAA may make award products available to the public, so recipients are encouraged to omit sensitive information (i.e., budget or salary information) from products submitted to NOAA. All products should explicitly acknowledge the support of the NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program. For each product entry, please provide a description of the product, the type or format of the product (e.g., journal publication, white paper, public service announcement, presentation, newsletter, metadata record, and/or annual monitoring summary), and the expected date(s) when the product will be submitted to NOAA. NOAA will use this information to ensure that products are submitted to the agency in a timely manner and made available to the public whenever possible.

### **Element 3. Budget table and narrative for the project**

Reviewers will evaluate project costs by reviewing your budget justification. The budget justification narrative must include a detailed breakdown by category of applicable costs (i.e., object class) separated into federal and non-federal shares as they relate to specific aspects of the award, with a detailed narrative justification for both the federal and non-federal (if applicable) shares. The object classes should match those found in the SF-424A. If funding will be used to complete part of a larger project, a budget overview for the entire project to demonstrate how the NOAA request relates to the overall project budget and outcomes should be provided. If a task has been submitted for funding consideration elsewhere, the amount requested or secured from other sources, and whether the funds requested/secured are federal or non-federal should be included. If the proposed task includes a monitoring component, the applicant should provide an estimate of all monitoring-related costs within the proposed budget.

The NOAA Habitat Conservation and Grants Management Division staff will review budget information in recommended applications to determine if costs are allowable, allocable, reasonable, and realistic. The narrative budget justification should be sufficiently detailed to enable a clear understanding of the cost breakdown and calculations used to derive the line-item subtotals in each object class of the SF-424A budget form. An SF-424A for each year of requested funding will be required prior to an award offer, but not as part of the initial application.

Please follow this additional budget development guidance.

Applicants should include detailed budget information regarding all known cost-based contracts and sub-awards and indicate the basis for the cost and price estimates for contracts in the narrative. Applicants should describe activities to occur or products or services to be obtained and indicate the applicability or necessity of each to the project. Each sub-award should be included on the SF-424A. Detailed budget information includes:

- Name of identified qualified sub recipient or contractor, affiliation, contact information, and method of selection. For “to be determined,” describe plans for selection.
- Period of Performance. The dates for the performance period. If it involves a number of tasks, including the performance period for each task.
- Scope of Work. List and describe the specific activities or tasks to be performed.
- Criteria for Measuring Accountability: An itemized line-item breakdown as well as the total contract/award amount. If applicable, include any indirect costs paid under the cost-based contract/award and the indirect cost rate used.
- Itemized Budget. Use the categories used in the program budget for sub-recipients or cost-based contractors. If applicable, include any direct cost paid under the sub-award or contract and the indirect cost rate used.

All sub awards and contracts must be made consistent with the requirements of 2 CFR 200.331-200.333 for sub awards, and 200.317-200.327 for procurements.

For any equipment, a description of the item and associated costs or price is required, including a description of how it will be used in the project. Note that equipment is defined as tangible personal property (including information technology systems) having a useful life of more than one year and a per-unit acquisition cost, which equals or exceeds the lesser of the capitalization level established by the non-federal entity for financial statement purposes, or \$10,000; see 2 CFR 200.1. Non-federal applicants should identify, if this information is known when submitting the grant application, who they plan to request that NOAA transfer equipment or property ownership titles to after the project ends. The decision on grant ownership requests will be made by the Grants Officer during the grant closeout process.

The budget narrative should also 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 proposed travel charges.

#### **Element 4. Supporting documents:**

This section includes the qualifications of the primary project personnel; letters of support received from the relevant jurisdictional fishery agencies, regional fishery management councils, project partners, or communities involved in the project; permits; and additional environmental compliance information. All supporting attachments should be combined into one file, which includes a list of the documents and associated page numbers.

The application should include short biographies or resumes of key personnel. It should also include evidence of support for the project by the fishery management agencies and/or regional fishery management councils. Letters of collaboration from partners and any letters of support should be included in the application to confirm their participation. Additional letters of support are not required but are encouraged.

For in-water work, applications should include a list or copy of all applicable permits that will be required to perform the proposed work. It is the responsibility of the applicant to obtain all necessary federal, state, and local government permits and approvals for the proposed work. For work within National Marine Sanctuaries, National Parks, National Seashores, and other federally designated protected areas, it is the responsibility of the applicant to request and obtain any necessary permits or letters of agreement from the appropriate government agencies prior to commencement of an award. Applicants are expected to design their proposals so that they minimize potential adverse impacts on the environment. If applicable, documentation of requests or approvals of environmental permits should be included in the proposal package.

Failure to apply for and/or obtain federal, state, and local permits, approvals, letters of agreement, or failure to provide environmental analyzes where necessary (i.e., National Environmental Policy Act [NEPA] environmental impact assessment) will delay or prevent the award of funds for projects that have been preliminarily selected for funding. More information on NEPA is provided below, under Additional NEPA information.

#### **Element 5. Data/Information Sharing Directive (2-page limit)**

All 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), free of charge or at no more than the cost of reproduction, unless an exemption is granted by the NOAA Program. Applications proposing the collection of environmental data must include a Data Management Plan of up to two pages describing how these requirements will be satisfied. Please see additional information under Section VI. B. Data Sharing Plan.

Here is some additional data management guidance for proposal writers:

- The NOAA contact for questions regarding this guidance and for verifying accessibility of data produced by funding recipients: Liz Fairey, Federal Program Officer, NOAA Office of Habitat Conservation, Liz.Fairey@noaa.gov, 301-427-8632.
- Data Accessibility: The NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program requires that public access to grant/contract-produced data be enabled and has held preliminary consultation with NOAA National Centers for Environmental Information regarding these pending data. Funding recipients are expected to submit data to NOAA National Centers for Environmental Information, which will provide public access and permanent archiving.
- Technical Recommendations: The NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program does not offer specific technical guidance. Proposals are to describe their proposed approach. Use of open-standard formats and methods is encouraged.
- Resources: NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program's resources for data sharing or archiving have already been identified; proposals should not include such costs (unless data volume is expected to exceed 20GB).

**Element 6: Standard Form 424 (SF-424)**

At the time of application submission, all applicants must submit a signed and dated copy of Standard Form SF-424, "Application for Federal Assistance," to indicate the total amount of Federal funds and non-Federal matching funds proposed for the project period. An electronic signature is applied automatically when an application is successfully submitted via [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov).

**Element 7: Standard Form 424A (SF-424A)**

At the time of application submission, all applicants are required to submit an SF-424A Budget Form. The first column of Sections A and B shows the Federal funds requested. In the second and third column in Section B, the funding for the two additional years can be added; the total three-year funding is shown in the final column of Section B. Provide the forecasted cash needs for year one in Section D. In Section E add the second- and third- year funding requests. Section F summarizes the direct charges in line 21 and lists the indirect charges requested; please show the rate used in line 22. Please note that completion of the SF-424A as described above represents NOAA's preference and may not be consistent with the instructions that accompany the SF424A. All budget figures should match the funding requested on the application cover sheet and correspond with the descriptions contained in the project and budget narratives. Each proposed sub-award of \$30,000 or more should be accompanied by a separate SF-424A form to fully document the proposed sub-award budget.

**Element 8: Standard Form 424B**

All applicants are required to submit a signed SF- 424B, Assurances for Non-Construction Programs.

**Element 9: Standard Form CD-511**

All applicants are required to submit a completed CD-511, Certifications Regarding Debarment, Suspension, and Other Responsibility Matters, Drug-Free Workplace Requirements, and Lobbying.

**Element 10: Other Federal Forms (if applicable)**

Applicants may be required to disclose certain lobbying activities by filling out form SF-LLL, regarding any payment or agreement to make payment to any lobbying entity for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress in connection with a covered federal action under 31 U.S.C. § 1352.

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

**Additional NEPA Information**

Under NEPA, NOAA must analyze the potential environmental impacts of projects or proposals seeking funding from NOAA. After the application is submitted, NOAA may require additional information to fulfill NEPA and other compliance requirements. The applicants selected for funding may be required to complete a subset of questions (based on activities outlined in your application as identified by the Federal Program Officer) from the [Environmental Compliance Questionnaire for NOAA](#). 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 work with NOAA on environmental compliance or refusal to implement any required action (e.g., the best management practices, conservation recommendations, or mitigation measures) related to consultations may be grounds for the denial of an application.

The NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program has a [Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement](#) (PEIS; NEPA) and a joint programmatic [Biological and Conference Opinion and Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act Essential Fish Habitat Consultation on the National Coral Reef Conservation Program and Mission: Iconic Reefs](#) (BiCOP; Endangered Species Act and essential fish habitat) that streamlines the environmental evaluation and compliance process. NOAA will need to ensure the proposed work aligns with actions and levels of impact described in these documents. To ensure alignment, selected applicants must agree to implement all relevant 1) required best management practices (Appendix A of the PEIS); 2) reasonable and prudent measures and conservation recommendations from the BiCOP; and/or 3) any other required actions from other environmental consultations (e.g., National Historic Preservation Act). If a successful applicant chooses not to implement requirements in the NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program's programmatic documents, NOAA will need to complete independent environmental compliance actions, which may delay the funding or start of the work.

In cases where 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 of the impact that a project may have on the environment. Detailed information on NOAA compliance with NEPA can be found at the following [NOAA NEPA website](#).

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

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

### **D. Submission Dates and Times**

Full applications in electronic form must be received and validated through [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov) by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time, on July 23, 2026. See Section IV. G. for more information, including a limit on transit time and address to submit paper applications.

### **E. Intergovernmental Review**

Applications submitted by state and local governments are subject to the provisions of Executive Order 12372, "Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs." Any applicant submitting an application for funding is required to complete item 19 on SF-424 regarding clearance by the State Single Point of Contact established because of Executive Order 12372. To find out about and comply with a state's process under Executive Order 12372, contact the official listed in Section VII of this announcement for referral information.

## **F. Funding Restrictions**

The budget may include indirect (facilities & administrative [F&A]) costs if the applicant has an established indirect cost rate with the federal government. As defined at 2 C.F.R. § 200.1, indirect (F&A) costs are incurred for a common or joint purpose benefiting more than one cost objective, and not readily assignable to the cost objectives specifically benefited, without effort disproportionate to the results achieved (e.g., lights, rent, water, and insurance). A copy of the current, approved negotiated indirect (F&A) cost agreement with the federal government should be included with the application. In addition, an eligible applicant under 2 C.F.R. § 200.414(f), may elect to charge a de minimis rate of 15% of modified total direct costs. An applicant may also describe all costs as direct costs in the budget narrative or establish a new rate through the Department of Commerce by contacting Jennifer Jackson Grants Officer at NOAA Grants Management Division, 1325 East-West Highway, 9th Floor, Silver Spring, MD 20910, or [jennifer.jackson@noaa.gov](mailto:jennifer.jackson@noaa.gov). Applicants may elect to propose the reduction of part, or all, of allowable indirect costs as a component of cost sharing.

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; (3) Activities that are required by a separate consent decree, court order, statute or regulation; (4) Construction projects; and (5) Large equipment and/or infrastructure acquisitions; and (6) Real property acquisitions.

## **G. Other Submission Requirements**

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

The first PD/PI listed on the application must include their eRA Commons ID in the "Credential, e.g., agency login" Applicant Identifier field on the SF424 form. Failure to register in the Commons and to include a valid PD/PI Commons ID in the Applicant Identifier field will prevent the successful submission of an electronic application.

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

For more information on the registration process and common application errors, please see the National Marine Fisheries Service website on [the Grant Application Process](#). You will need to pay close attention to the submission checks section and the common error section.

## **H. Address for Submitting Proposals**

Applicants should submit full applications electronically through [www.Grants.gov](http://www.Grants.gov). Users of Grants.gov will be able to create an online application workspace to submit the application. If an applicant has problems accessing the online workspace at Grants.gov, contact Grants.gov Customer Support at 1-800-518-4726 or [support@Grants.gov](mailto:support@Grants.gov).

If you are unable to submit electronically, the paper submission must have a U.S. Postal Service postmark, or a delivery service receipt for paper applications. Facsimile or electronic mail applications will not be accepted. Applications submitted via the U.S. Postal Service must have an official postmark; private metered postmarks are not acceptable. Applications received later than ten business days following the closing date will not be accepted. Paper applications should be sent to: Elizabeth Fahey, ATTN: Ruth D. Gate Coral Reef Conservation Grants – Fishery Management, NOAA Fisheries Office of Habitat Conservation, 1315 East West Highway, SSMC3, Silver Spring, MD 20910.

## V. Application Review Information

<b>1. Importance/relevance and applicability of proposed projects to the program goals</b>	<b>Maximum Points: 35</b>
<p>This section evaluates how well the proposed project addresses a coral reef fisheries management need and the likelihood of project outcomes to support management actions or changes. Reviewers will use this scale: Poor = 0, Fair = 8, Good = 15, Commendable = 28, and Excellent = 35 to determine how the application addressed the following questions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How well does the proposed project meet the program priorities listed in Section 1.B. of the funding announcement?</li> <li>• Is there a need for the proposed work in the jurisdiction where the project will be implemented?</li> <li>• Does the application clearly describe how the project is intended to directly support coral reef fisheries management?</li> <li>• What is the likelihood that any outcomes, results, or products will contribute to coral reef fisheries management?</li> <li>• Does the application include evidence of support and coordination with the appropriate regional fishery management council(s) or state management agency(ies) that would be needed to ensure project success and utilization of outcomes, if applicable?</li> </ul>	
<b>2. Technical/scientific merit</b>	<b>Maximum Points: 35</b>
<p>This section evaluates how clearly the applicant identified objectives and explained the methods, including the suitability of those methods for evaluating the success or failure of the task/project in terms of meeting its original goals. Reviewers will use this scale: Poor = 0, Fair = 8, Good = 15, Commendable = 28, and Excellent = 35 to determine how the application addressed the following questions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are the application objectives clearly defined, focused, and realistic; and can they be reached within the proposed project period?</li> <li>• Does the applicant demonstrate familiarity with previous activities, studies, and/or assessments and describe how the proposed work builds upon or incorporates previous work?</li> <li>• What is the project's technical feasibility; is the proposed approach technically sound; are the methods appropriate; and are the proposed methods likely to achieve the task goals and objectives?</li> <li>• Are there effective mechanisms to evaluate project success; are there well-described milestones and a planned timeline?</li> </ul>	
<b>3. Overall qualifications of applicants</b>	<b>Maximum Points: 10</b>
<p>Reviewers will use this scale: Poor = 0, Fair = 3.5, Good = 5.0, Commendable = 7.5, and Excellent = 10.0 to determine how the application addressed the following questions.</p>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does the applicant and associated project personnel (including subcontractors) have the capacity/knowledge to conduct the scope and scale of the proposed work, as indicated by the qualifications and experience of the project leaders and/or partners in designing, implementing, and effectively managing the project?</li> <li>• Do the applicant and project partners have the facilities; administrative resources and capabilities; and equipment and other physical resources available to support and successfully manage the work, including the availability of NOAA or other technical expertise to guide the project to a successful completion?</li> </ul>	
<b>4. Project costs</b>	<b>Maximum Points: 10</b>
<p>Reviewers will use this scale: Poor = 0.0, Fair = 3.5, Good = 5.0, Commendable = 7.5, and Excellent = 10.0 to determine how the application addressed the following questions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the proposed budget, including both federal and non-federal sources, cost-effective and realistic based on the applicant's stated objectives and time frame?</li> <li>• Is the proposed budget, including both federal and non-federal sources, sufficiently detailed, with appropriate budget breakdown and justification of costs by object class?</li> </ul>	
<b>5. Outreach and Education</b>	<b>Maximum Points: 10</b>
<p>Reviewers will use this scale: Poor = 0.0, Fair = 3.5, Good = 5.0, Commendable = 7.5, and Excellent = 10.0 to determine how the application addressed the following questions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the level of outreach appropriate for the proposed project, including the dissemination of information, data, and findings to the fisheries management agencies, fishing community, and/or other appropriate user groups?</li> <li>• Are the proposed products suitable for the project, and if environmental data is collected, did the applicant provide a detailed data management plan?</li> </ul>	

## Evaluation Criteria

### Review and Selection Process

Screening, review, and selection procedures will take place in five steps, including: (1) an initial administrative review by the competition manager; (2) technical merit review; (3) internal Habitat Conservation and NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program review and recommendation; (4) selection by the Selecting Official; and (5) obligation of funding by the Grants Officer.

Initial Administrative of the Applications: Application packages will be screened to ensure that they are timely, responsive, and complete. NOAA, in its sole discretion, may continue the review process for applications with non-substantive issues that can easily be rectified or cured.

Technical Merit Review: Technical merit review is conducted by a minimum of three technical reviewers with expertise regarding the type of work or subject matter proposed in the application. Each reviewer will individually evaluate application(s), scores ranging from 0-100, using the evaluation criteria provided in Section V., above. This review may involve experts from both NOAA and non-NOAA organizations. The technical reviewers' ratings will be used to produce a rank order of the proposals. No consensus advice will be given by the technical reviewers. NOAA may also request and consider written comments on proposed projects from each state, territorial, or federal agency with jurisdiction over coral reef ecosystems in the area where the project is to be conducted.

Internal Habitat Conservation/NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program review: The Competition Manager, Office of Habitat Conservation, and NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program staff will evaluate comments and scores provided by the technical-merit review process and conduct a further analysis to identify any major issues or shortcomings with the application (e.g., additional information needed to conduct NEPA/environmental compliance analysis, overlap in ongoing work, and lack of key partners). The Competition Manager will summarize comments received on each proposal and identify modifications that may be needed prior to final selection.

Preliminary Selection: The reviewer comments, application scores, rank order, and a summary of the concerns (if any) identified through the technical review process and internal review will be presented to the Selecting Official. The Selecting Official, in consultation with the Competition Manager and NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program staff, will identify proposals to be recommended for funding, as described below under Selection Factors. The Selecting Official or designee may negotiate the funding level of the proposal. NOAA may select all, some, or none of the applications, or part of any application, or ask applicants to work together. NOAA may defer applications to the future or reallocate funds to different grant funding categories to the extent authorized.

Grants Management Division Review. Selected applications will be given to the NOAA Grants Officer, who will review financial and grants administration aspects of a proposed award, including assessing the risk posed by the applicant in accordance with 2 C.F.R. 200.206. In addition to reviewing repositories of government-wide eligibility, qualifications or financial integrity information, the risk assessment conducted by NOAA may consider items such as the financial stability of an applicant, quality of the applicant's management systems, an applicant's history of performance, previous audit reports and audit findings concerning the applicant and the applicant's ability to effectively implement statutory, regulatory, or other requirements imposed on non-federal entities. 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 timely addressed in order to receive a new award. Upon review of these factors, if appropriate, specific award conditions that respond to the degree of risk may be applied by the NOAA Grants Officer pursuant to 2 C.F.R. 200.208. In addition, NOAA reserves the right to reject an application in its entirety where information is uncovered that raises a significant risk with respect to the responsibility of an applicant. The final approval of selected applications and issuance of awards will be by the NOAA Grants Officer. The award decision of the Grants Officer is final.

## **Selection Factors**

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

1. Availability of funding.
2. Balance/distribution of funds:
  - a. geographically
  - b. by type of institution
  - c. by type of partners
  - d. by research priority
  - e. by project types
3. Duplication of other projects funded or considered for funding by NOAA/Federal agencies.
4. Program priorities and policy factors.
5. Applicant's prior award performance.

6. Partnerships with/Participation of targeted groups.

7. Adequacy of information necessary for NOAA staff to make a NEPA determination and draft necessary documentation before recommendations for funding are made to the Grants Officer.

### **Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates**

NOAA anticipates that grant or cooperative agreement awards will have a start date of January 1, 2027, or later dependent on funding availability, the completion of all NOAA/applicant negotiations, NEPA analysis, and documentation supporting any grant activities. Recipients should receive award notices one month before the award start date.

## **VI. Award Administration Information**

### **A. Award Notices**

**PRE-AWARD COSTS.** Written pre-approval is required from NOAA for pre-award costs but prior approval will be waived for awards designated by NOAA as research. Award recipients expend pre-award costs up to 90 days before the period of performance start date at the applicant's own risk and in accordance with the applicant's internal policies and procedures. Such costs are allowable only to the extent that they would have been allowable if incurred after the date of the Federal award. This does not include direct proposal costs (as defined at 2 CFR 200.460). In no event will NOAA or the Department of Commerce be responsible for direct proposal preparation costs. Pre-award costs will be a portion of, not in addition to, the approved total budget of the award. Pre-award costs expended more than 90 days prior to the period of performance start date require approval from the Grants Officer. This does not change the period of performance start date.

**GRANTS OFFICER SIGNATURE.** Proposals submitted in response to this solicitation are not considered awards until the Grants Officer has signed the grant agreement. Only Grants Officers can bind the Government to the expenditure of funds. The Grants Officer's digital signature constitutes an obligation of funds by the federal government and formal approval of the award.

**LIMITATION OF LIABILITY.** Funding for programs listed in this notice is contingent upon the availability of funds. Applicants are hereby given notice that funds may not have been appropriated yet for the programs listed in this notice. Publication of this announcement does not oblige NOAA to award any specific project or to obligate any available funds.

### **B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements**

#### **UNIFORM ADMINISTRATIVE REQUIREMENTS, COST PRINCIPLES, AND AUDIT REQUIREMENTS.**

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

#### **DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE PRE-AWARD NOTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS FOR GRANTS AND COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS.**

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

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

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

**NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT (NEPA).** NOAA must analyze the potential environmental impacts, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), for applicant projects or proposals which are seeking NOAA federal funding opportunities. Detailed information on NOAA compliance with NEPA can be found at the following NOAA NEPA website: <http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/>, including our NOAA Administrative Order 216-6 for NEPA, [http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/NAO216\\_6.pdf](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](http://energy.gov/sites/prod/files/NEPA-40CFR1500_1508.pdf). Consequently, as part of an applicant's package, and under their description of their program activities, applicants are required to provide detailed information on the activities to be conducted, locations, sites, species and habitat to be affected, possible construction activities, and any environmental concerns that may exist (e.g., the use and disposal of hazardous or toxic chemicals, introduction of non- indigenous species, impacts to endangered and threatened species, aquaculture projects, and impacts to coral reef systems). In addition to providing specific information that will serve as the basis for any required impact analyses, applicants may also be requested to assist NOAA in drafting an environmental assessment, if NOAA determines an assessment is required. Applicants will also be required to cooperate with NOAA in identifying feasible measures to reduce or avoid any identified adverse environmental impacts of their proposal. Failure to do so shall be grounds for not selecting an application. In some cases if additional information is required after an application is selected, funds can be withheld by the Grants Officer under a special award condition requiring the recipient to submit additional environmental compliance information sufficient to enable NOAA to make an assessment on any impacts that a project may have on the environment.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**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 15% of 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. The NOAA contact for indirect or facilities and administrative costs is: Jennifer Jackson, NOAA Grants Management Division, 1325 East West Highway, 9th Floor, Silver Spring, MD 20910, or [jennifer.jackson@noaa.gov](mailto:jennifer.jackson@noaa.gov).

**EXECUTIVE ORDER 14173.** Ending Illegal Discrimination and Restoring Merit-Based Opportunity. This award term implements Executive Order 14173, 90 FR 8633 (Jan. 21, 2025), Ending Illegal Discrimination and Restoring Merit-Based Opportunity. By accepting this U.S. Department of Commerce financial assistance award, the recipient: (1) agrees that compliance in all respects with all applicable Federal anti-discrimination laws is material to the government's payment decisions for purposes of section 3729(b)(4) of Title 31 United States Code; and (2) certifies to the Department that it does not operate any programs promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion that violate any applicable Federal anti-discrimination laws.

**RESTORING AMERICAN SEAFOOD COMPETITIVENESS.** Pursuant to Executive Order (EO) 14276, Restoring American Seafood, the United States aims to address unfair trade practices, eliminate unsafe imports, level the unfair playing field that has benefited foreign fishing companies, promote ethical sourcing, reduce regulatory burdens, and ensure the integrity of the seafood supply chain. As applicable, the purpose, policies, and requirements of EO 14276 apply to awards made under this notice.

**GOLD STANDARD SCIENCE.** In performing activities under Federal awards, applicants should commit to complying with administration policies, procedures, and guidance respecting Gold Standard Science. As detailed in Executive Order 14303, Restoring Gold Standard Science (May 23, 2025), Gold Standard Science refers to science conducted in a manner that is:

- Reproducible.
- Transparent.
- Communicative of error and uncertainty.
- Collaborative and interdisciplinary.
- Skeptical of its findings and assumptions.
- Structured for falsifiability of hypotheses.
- Subject to unbiased peer review.
- Accepting of negative results as positive outcomes.
- Without conflicts of interest.

**PROHIBITION ON USING FEDERAL AWARDS TO PROMOTE OR SUPPORT THEORIES OF DISPARATE-IMPACT LIABILITY.** In accordance with Executive Order 14281, Restoring Equality of Opportunity and Meritocracy (April 23, 2025), it is the policy of the Federal Government to eliminate the use of disparate-impact liability in all contexts to the maximum possible and permitted by law.

**TERMINATION.** In accordance with 2 CFR § 200.340(a), this federal award may be terminated in part or in its entirety as follows:

1. By DOC or the pass-through entity if the recipient or subrecipient fails to comply with the terms and conditions of this federal award.
2. By DOC or the pass-through entity with the consent of the recipient or subrecipient, in which case the two parties must agree upon the termination conditions. These conditions include the effective date and, in the case of partial termination, the portion to be terminated.
3. By the recipient or subrecipient upon sending DOC or the pass-through entity a written notification of the reasons for termination, the effective date, and, in the case of partial termination, the portion to be terminated. If DOC or the pass-through entity determines that the remaining portion of this federal award will not accomplish the purposes for which this federal award was made, DOC or the pass-through entity may terminate this federal award in its entirety.

4. By DOC or the pass-through entity to the extent authorized by law, if the award no longer effectuates the program goals or agency priorities.

### **C. Reporting**

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

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

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. Financial reports must be submitted every six months by the end of April and October during the period of the award in accordance with the DOC Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions.

NOAA will provide instructions for submitting financial and progress reports upon request. A comprehensive final 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) 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.

All products must be appropriate for public dissemination and acknowledge the support provided by NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program as described at: <http://coralreef.noaa.gov/about/graphicid.html>. Because products may be made available to the public via the [DigiCoral](#) (formally Coral Reef Information System), it is the recipient's responsibility to ensure that products are professionally written and edited and do not contain sensitive information (e.g., personnel identification and budget data). Products must be [Section 508 compliant](#).

If equipment or tangible personal property is purchased with grant funds, applicants shall submit an inventory in accordance with Office of Management and Budget 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 Office of Management and Budget Uniform Guidance are set out at 2 C.F.R. Part 200.313.

**Performance Measures:** NOAA will evaluate project performance based on alignment with administration priorities, including but not limited to, domestic economic expansion, infrastructure modernization, capacity building, and national food security, alongside adherence to Executive Orders and 'Gold Standard Science.' These overarching criteria are assessed through a framework that measures a project's contribution to fishery economic optimization, domestic seafood utilization, infrastructure capacity, supply chain resilience, and national maritime strategy. To ensure effective implementation, NOAA reserves the right to incorporate specific quantitative and qualitative metrics into the award agreement (i.e. Notice of Award; Specific Award Conditions), These metrics will be focused on the project's objectives and its ability to foster industry growth, technical modernization, and workforce readiness.

## **VII. Agency Contacts**

For administrative or technical questions regarding this announcement, contact the competition manager: Liz Fairey. She can be reached by phone at 301-427- 8632 or by email at [Liz.Fairey@noaa.gov](mailto:Liz.Fairey@noaa.gov).

## **VIII. Other Information**

Not Applicable.