U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Notice of Funding Opportunity

F26AS00014 National Outreach and Communications Program

Funding Opportunity Number

F26AS00014

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BASIC INFORMATION

Announcement Type: Initial

Funding Opportunity Number: F26AS00014

Assistance Listing Number(s): 15.653

Estimated Total Program Funding: $26,000,000

Expected Number of Awards: 15

Award Ceiling: $26,000,000

Award Floor: $100,000

The expected award period is 1 to 2 years. For applications with a national scope, projects are expected to span 2 years to allow for sufficient reach and evaluation.

The Award Ceiling is the maximum total amount that may be requested per application over the full grant period. The Award Floor is the minimum total amount that may be requested. The wide range between the floor and ceiling is intended to encourage innovative and scalable approaches for attracting participation by new anglers and boaters and also encourage a diverse array of applicants. Applicants should select a funding band appropriate to the scale and geographic scope of their proposed project:

Band 1 – Local scope: $100,000 to $500,000 total

Band 2 – State or Regional scope: $500,000 to $5,000,000 total

Band 3 – National scope: $5,000,000 to $26,000,000 total

Please Note: While the award ceiling is $26 million, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service does not anticipate awarding more than $5 million per year to any single project. Applicants requesting funding at or near the ceiling, $13 million per year, should demonstrate exceptional need, scale, and national impact.

Estimated Program Funding and Award Limitations

The National Outreach and Communications Program (NOCP) anticipates approximately $26 million in total program funding across two fiscal years, with annual funding likely ranging from $10 million to $14 million, depending on the Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund deposits generated by excise taxes.

Since 2007, the amount awarded under the NOCP has been between $10.7 and $14.2 million per year.

For multi-year awards, funds are obligated on an annual basis. Each year's funding is subject to availability, and actual amounts may vary. Recipients of multi-year awards must submit updated budgets annually to reflect actual funding allocations. In cases where funds are lower than anticipated, recipients may be required to revise their project budgets and timelines accordingly.

Cost Sharing Required?
No

Closing Date Explanation
Electronic applications must be submitted in GrantSolutions.gov no later than 11:59 PM Eastern Time on August 17, 2025.

Incomplete or partial applications will not be considered. To be accepted for consideration, complete applications must be submitted in GrantSolutions.gov by the stated deadline and must include all required forms and supporting material. Applications that are received late or lacking any of the required elements will not be considered. However, applicants may revise and resubmit their application up until the identified application deadline.

U.S. states and local governments may be required under Executive Order 12372, Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs to submit their application to their State Single Point of Contact (SPOC) for review. For more information, see the Intergovernmental Review SPOC List.

OMB Control Number: 1018-0100

Have Questions?

- **Programmatic Technical Assistance Contact:**

  Holly_Richards@fws.gov or Thomas_McCann@fws.gov

- **Program Administrative Assistance Contact:**

  Karen_Bennett@fws.gov

  703-615-3226

Executive Summary

Healthy waters and abundant fisheries are the foundation of America's outdoor traditions and give everyone the freedom to fish, boat, and enjoy the benefits of outdoor recreation. Participation in recreational boating and fishing are important to our nation's economy, generating revenue for local communities and small businesses as well as larger retailers and manufacturers of boating and fishing equipment. State fish and wildlife agencies obtain revenue from the sale of fishing licenses and use these to leverage the Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund to accomplish fisheries research and management, aquatic resource education, and boating and fishing access construction and maintenance.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is seeking applications from eligible entities (eligible applicants) to implement the National Outreach and Communications Program (NOCP) through innovative programs that may be conducted at various geographic scales, ranging from local or state to regional or national levels. Applications must address one or more of the five purposes of an outreach and communications program, which are defined in the Sportfishing and Boating Safety Act of 1998 (16 U.S.C.777c-777g) as programs that:

- improve communications with anglers, boaters, and the general public regarding angling and boating opportunities;
- reduce barriers to access and participation in angling and boating activities;
- advance the adoption of sound angling and boating practices in the U.S.;
- promote conservation and the responsible use of the nation's aquatic resources; and
- further safety in angling and boating.

Funded efforts are expected to support at least one of the following key outcomes:

- increased participation in fishing and boating;
- enhanced public awareness and education about how and where to engage in these activities;

- targeted outreach using research-driven messaging;
- strengthened capacity among stakeholders to deliver effective outreach; and
- improved awareness of access to fishing and boating opportunities.

Applications should also consider the needs of potential stakeholders such as state and federal agencies, industry, non-governmental organizations, and the angling and boating community. Applications should align with resource management priorities of state, tribal and federal agencies and include collaboration with those agencies when appropriate.

Applications should demonstrate a clear alignment with relevant research and Recruitment, Retention and Reactivation (R3) best practices while advancing innovative approaches to public engagement. Activities should be evidence-based and designed to produce measurable outcomes. Expected outputs will vary by project but may include the creation and dissemination of outreach materials; digital and in-person engagement; participation in stakeholder training or technical assistance events; and findings from research or campaign evaluations. Funded efforts should build on existing knowledge, test new models, and contribute to the long-term sustainability of fishing and boating participation and aquatic resource stewardship.

ELIGIBILITY

Eligible Applicants

State governments

County governments

City or township governments

Special district governments

Independent school districts

Public and State controlled institutions of higher education

Native American tribal governments (Federally recognized)

Public housing authorities/Indian housing authorities

Native American tribal organizations (other than Federally recognized tribal governments)

Nonprofits having a 501(c)(3) status with the IRS, other than institutions of higher education

Nonprofits without 501(c)(3) status with the IRS, other than institutions of higher education

Private institutions of higher education

Individuals

For profit organization other than small businesses

Small businesses

Others (see text field entitled "Additional Information on Eligibility" for clarification)

Unrestricted (i.e., open to any type of entity above), subject to any clarification in text field entitled "Additional Information on Eligibility"

Additional Information on Eligibility

Eligible applicants are those with experience in addressing one or more of the five primary purposes of the NOCP (see Program Description) and experience with the following:

- planning and executing local, state, regional, or national marketing campaigns or outreach programs,

and

- identifying and engaging audiences to increase awareness, participation, and behavior change in outdoor recreation, aquatic conservation, or fishing and boating activities.

Eligible activities include, but are not limited to, those involving fishing and boating marketing campaigns, marketing and social science research and surveys, influencer and other social media campaigns, information and awareness signage or print materials, web-based or app-based tools, instructional videos, hands-on learning, training workshops and toolkits, and events.

Applications may request funding for equipment only to the extent that such equipment is necessary, reasonable and cost-effective for accomplishing project objectives. Equipment is defined under 2 CFR 200.1 as tangible personal property (including information technology systems) having a useful life of more than one year and a per-unit acquisition cost that equals or exceeds the lesser of the capitalization level established by the recipient or subrecipient for financial statement purposes, or $10,000.

Ineligible activities include, but may not be limited to, the following:

Applications requesting funding for projects involving non-motorized watercraft, such as kayaks and paddle boards, are ineligible unless they are directly associated with fishing activities. Any application proposing the use of unmotorized watercraft must demonstrate a purpose and objectives with a clear connection to fishing activities to be considered for funding.

Applications requesting funding for land acquisition or construction or renovation of infrastructure are ineligible for funding.

Applications that have a primary purpose or objectives that involve generating revenue from, for example, the sale of fishing licenses or boat registrations, are ineligible for funding. However, numbers of licenses, permits or registrations issued may be used as a surrogate measure of participation. For example, increasing participation of anglers and boaters may be the purpose of a proposed project, and participation may be measured by tracking fishing licenses and motorboat registrations issued over a defined time period. In this case, the purpose of project is not increasing revenue generated by registration fees or license sales. Rather, the purpose of the project is to increase participation in fishing and boating.

Restrictions and Requirements for Non-U.S. Entities or Projects

- We do not fund countries supporting terrorism subject to U.S. sanctions.
- We do not fund countries under U.S. Treasury sanctions without licenses.
- You must get all required approvals for work outside the U.S. We are not responsible for your compliance with local rules.
- For projects over $500,000, you may need to comply with 2 CFR 175.105(b) before we make an award.

Cost Sharing Requirement

Cost Sharing Required?
No

GET READY TO APPLY

Required System Registrations

Unique Entity Identifier and SAM.gov Registration

Before applying, all **applicants** except individuals applying as a natural person **must be registered in SAM.gov**. During the SAM.gov registration the entity will obtain their Unique Entity Identifier (UEI).

The SAM.gov registration process can take several months. If your organization is not already registered in SAM.gov, begin the registration process as soon as possible.

To register in SAM.gov, go to the [SAM.gov website] and use the available resources to complete registration.

- **Financial assistance registrants** must review and certify compliance with the SAM.gov “Financial Assistance General Representations and Certifications”.
- **Already registered?** You already have a Unique Entity ID. Before applying, check that your “Financial Assistance General Representations and Certifications” on SAM.gov is complete. Remember to renew your registration every year to keep it active while you have an award or application in progress. You can update your registration whenever you need, including during renewal.
- **Need help?** For additional information and contact information on the [SAM.gov Help page.]

This program may allow an applicant to apply while their SAM.gov registration is in progress, with prior approval. For more information, refer to the point of contact identified in the Basic Information section above.

GRANTSOLUTIONS

This program accepts applications through GrantSolutions.gov. You must register with GrantSolutions. See [Submission Instructions].

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Program Goals

- The National Outreach and Communications Program, or NOCP, aims to increase participation in recreational fishing and boating and promote public understanding of the value of conserving the nation's aquatic natural resources. As defined in statute, the NOCP is intended to improve communications with anglers, boaters, and the general public regarding angling and boating opportunities, reduce barriers to access and participation in angling and boating activities, advance the adoption of sound angling and boating practices in the United States, promote conservation and the responsible use of the nation's aquatic resources, and further safety in angling and boating.

Through this Funding Opportunity, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service expects recipients to implement projects or programs that address the purpose of the NOCP. Funded efforts are expected to support at least one of the following key outcomes: increased participation in fishing and boating, enhanced public awareness and education about how and where to engage in these activities, targeted outreach using research-driven messaging, strengthened capacity among stakeholders to deliver effective outreach, or improved awareness of access to fishing and boating opportunities.

Projects should demonstrate a clear alignment with relevant research and Recruitment, Retention and Reactivation (R3) best practices while advancing innovative approaches to public engagement. Applications may draw on a range of inputs, including federal funding, partner expertise, digital infrastructure, in-kind contributions, and cross-sector collaboration. Activities should be evidence-based and designed to produce measurable outcomes. While the program does not prescribe specific interventions, successful applications may include activities such as integrated outreach campaigns using behavior-based marketing, social media, or influencer partnerships, development of mobile apps using public data to highlight fishing or boating opportunities, expansion of how-to video libraries, coordinated signage or messaging across state and federal lands, or events co-hosted with tourism agencies or industry groups to promote participation.

Applicants may also propose strategies to build stakeholder capacity, such as trainings, toolkits, and information-sharing platforms that promote the adoption of effective outreach practices across jurisdictions. All proposed activities should be tied to clearly defined outcomes and include a plan for measuring performance. Evaluation approaches may include analysis of license sales and registration data, survey instruments, digital engagement metrics, or other indicators aligned with R3 objectives.

Expected outputs will vary by project but may include the creation and dissemination of outreach materials, digital and in-person engagement, participation in stakeholder training or technical assistance events, and findings from research or campaign evaluations. Funded efforts should build on existing knowledge, test new models, and contribute to the long-term sustainability of fishing and boating participation and aquatic resource stewardship.

Program Description

Recruitment, Retention, and Reactivation (R3) programs are strategic initiatives aimed at increasing participation in recreational boating and fishing as well as target shooting and hunting. As involvement in these activities has declined, R3 has emerged as a critical framework for sustaining and enhancing participation. Partnerships among federal and state fish and wildlife agencies, as well as non-governmental organizations, including industry and trade associations, coordinate R3 efforts, collaborate on projects, and encourage innovation and efficiencies. National, regional, state, and local R3 programs and projects foster engagement through outreach and communication, reduce barriers to participation, educate the public about safety, and promote conservation and responsible use of the nation's fish and wildlife resources.

The National Outreach and Communications Program (NOCP), established by the Sportfishing and Boating Safety Act of 1998 (Public Law 105-178) to reverse declining trends in participation, makes funding available to support R3 efforts for recreational fishing and boating.

The NOCP is funded by the Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund (Trust Fund). The Trust Fund is comprised of several sources of revenue, including excises taxes paid by manufacturers of fishing equipment and electric motors, the portion of federal fuel tax attributed to motorboats and small engines, and import duties on tackle, pleasure boats and yachts.

Healthy waters and abundant fisheries are the foundation of America's outdoor traditions and give everyone the freedom to fish, boat, and enjoy the benefits of outdoor recreation. Participation in recreational boating and fishing are important to our nation's economy, generating revenue for local communities and small businesses as well as larger retailers and manufacturers of boating and fishing equipment. State fish and wildlife agencies obtain revenue from the sale of fishing licenses and use these to leverage Trust Funds to accomplish fisheries research and management, aquatic resource education, and boating and fishing access construction and maintenance.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is seeking applications from eligible entities (eligible applicants) to implement the National Outreach and Communications Program (NOCP) through innovative programs that may be conducted at various geographic scales, ranging from local or state to regional or national levels. Applications must address one or more of the five purposes of an outreach and communications program, which are defined in the Sportfishing and Boating Safety Act of 1998 (16 U.S.C.777c-777g) as programs that:

- improve communications with anglers, boaters, and the general public regarding angling and boating opportunities;
- reduce barriers to access and participation in angling and boating activities;
- advance the adoption of sound angling and boating practices in the U.S.;
- promote conservation and the responsible use of the nation's aquatic resources; and/or
- further safety in angling and boating.

Funded efforts are expected to support at least one of the following key outcomes:

- increased participation in fishing and boating;
- enhanced public awareness and education about how and where to engage in these activities;
- targeted outreach using research-driven messaging;
- strengthened capacity among stakeholders to deliver effective outreach; and/or
- improved awareness of access to fishing and boating opportunities.

Applications should also consider needs of potential stakeholders such as state and federal agencies, industry, non-governmental organizations, and the angling and boating community. Applications should align with resource management priorities of state, tribal and federal agencies and include collaboration with those agencies when appropriate.

Applications should demonstrate a clear alignment with relevant research and R3 best practices while advancing innovative approaches to public engagement. Activities should be evidence-based and designed to produce measurable outcomes. While the program does not prescribe specific interventions, successful applications may include, but are not limited to, activities such as: integrated outreach campaigns using behavior-based marketing, social media, or influencer partnerships; development of mobile apps using public data to highlight fishing or boating opportunities; expansion of "how-to" video libraries; coordinated signage or messaging across state and federal lands; or events co-hosted with tourism agencies or industry groups to promote participation.

Applicants may also propose strategies to build stakeholder capacity, such as trainings, toolkits, and information-sharing platforms that promote the adoption of effective outreach practices across jurisdictions. All proposed activities should be tied to clearly defined outcomes and include a plan for measuring performance. Evaluation approaches may include analysis of license sales and registration data, development and use of survey instruments, use of digital engagement metrics, or other measurements of indicators aligned with R3 objectives.

Expected outputs will vary by project but may include the creation and dissemination of outreach materials; digital and in-person engagement; participation in stakeholder training or technical assistance events; and findings from research or campaign evaluations. Funded efforts should build on existing knowledge, test new models, and contribute to the long-term sustainability of fishing and boating participation and aquatic resource stewardship.

Legislative Authority

The National Outreach and Communications Program (NOCP) was established by the *Sportfishing and Boating Safety Act of 1998* (16 U.S.C. § 777g(d)) to address declining participation in recreational fishing and boating and to promote the conservation and responsible use of aquatic resources. The NOCP is funded through a 2% set-aside from the *Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund*, a permanent appropriation authorized under the *Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century* (23 U.S.C. § 101 note, § 7402). The Trust Fund is supported primarily by excise taxes on fishing equipment, motorboat fuels, and related items.

As defined in statute, the National Outreach and Communications Program is intended to:

- improve communications with anglers, boaters, and the general public regarding angling and boating opportunities,
- reduce barriers to access and participation in angling and boating activities,
- advance the adoption of sound angling and boating practices in the U.S.,
- promote conservation and the responsible use of the nation’s aquatic resources, and
- further safety in angling and boating.

Type of Award

Projects will be funded through CA (Cooperative Agreement), G (Grant).

Recipient should expect the Federal agency to have substantial involvement in the project.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service anticipates awarding funds under this opportunity through **either a grant** or **a cooperative agreement**, depending on the level of substantial involvement by Service staff.

- A **grant** will be used when the recipient will carry out the project independently, with minimal involvement from the Service beyond typical oversight and performance monitoring.
- A **cooperative agreement** will be used when the Service expects to be **substantially involved** in carrying out the project. Substantial involvement may include activities such

as collaboration on project planning, implementation, technical assistance, or ongoing participation in project activities.

No preference is given for either funding structure. The final determination of award instrument (grant or cooperative agreement) will be made by the Service in collaboration with the applicants during the pre-award process based on the nature of the proposed activities and the anticipated level of Service involvement.

PREPARE YOUR APPLICATION

Application Content and Format

Application Documents

Applicants must submit the following forms with their application as specified below. Instructions for accessing and submitting application forms are provided in the Submission Instructions section of this document below. For instructions on completing form fields, see the form instructions on the Grants.gov Forms Repository.

Application Required Elements	Submission Requirement
SF-424, Application for Federal Assistance Note: For applicants requesting more than $100,000 in Federal funds, the Authorized Representative's signature (or electronic equivalent) on the Application for Federal Assistance form also represents their certification of the statements in Appendix A to 43 CFR 18-Certification Regarding Lobbying	Required from all applicants; form provided in GrantSolutions.gov
SF-424A, Budget Information – Non-Construction Programs	Required for non-construction projects; form provided in GrantSolutions.gov
SF-LLL, Disclosure of Lobbying Activities	Required if requesting more than $100,000 in Federal funds and the applicant has used or plans to use funds other than Federal appropriated funds for lobbying related to the proposed project.
Project Abstract Summary (OMB 4040-0019). Must include, in plain language: • Award purpose, • Activities to be performed, • Expected deliverables or outcomes, • Intended beneficiaries, • Subrecipient activities (if known or specified at time of award)	• Required from all applicants; form provided in GrantSolutions.gov • 4,000-character limit including spaces • Use plain text • Do not include special characters
Project Narrative	Required from all applicants. There is no form or template; however, applicants must

Application Required Elements	Submission Requirement
	include information outlined under "Project Narrative".
Budget Narrative	Required from all applicants. There is no form or template; however, applicants must include information outlined under "Budget Narrative".
Conflict of Interest	Required from all applicants. There is no form or template; however, applicants must include information outlined under "Conflict of Interest". **If not applicable, confirm by stating "not applicable" in the application.**
Overlap or Duplication of Effort Statement	Required from all applicants. There is no form or template; however, applicants must include information outlined under "Overlap or Duplication of Effort Statement ". **If not applicable, confirm by stating "not applicable" in the application.**
Letters of Support or Commitment	Required if applicable to program/project scope of work.
Supporting Documentation	Required if applicable to program/project scope.
Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA)	Required, if applicable to the applicant.

Project Narrative

Applicants must submit a complete **Project Narrative** that clearly describes the proposed program or project and demonstrates how it addresses one or more of the statutory purposes of the National Outreach and Communications Program (NOCP) as defined in 16 U.S.C. § 777g(d). Applicants are encouraged to review the technical scoring criteria under "Application Review Information" to ensure their Project Narrative addresses these criteria. The Project Narrative must include the following sections:

- **Project Overview:** Provide a very brief summary of the project purpose, objectives and intended outcomes.
- **Project Title:** Provide a brief but descriptive title.
- **Project Location(s):** Specify the geographic scope (e.g., local, state, regional, or national), including city, state, or region.
- **Applicant Description:** Describe the organization(s) undertaking the project, including relevant experience, mission, and capacity to deliver outreach and communications programs.

- **Key Personnel:** Identify individuals essential to the project, with a summary of their qualifications, roles, and relevance to project success.
- **Needs Statement:** Briefly describe the specific need, challenge, or opportunity the project aims to address related to recreational boating and fishing participation, awareness, access, or safety. Include relevant data or stakeholder input that supports the need for the proposed intervention.
- **Objectives:** Identify measurable objectives tied to the program goals. Objectives should be presented in the SMART format (i.e., specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound).
- **Approach:** Describe the methods that will be used to achieve each stated objective, including the following:
    - Details describing activities that will be carried out, how, where (include specific locations, maps or GIS data, as applicable), when (specify dates or date ranges), and by whom (including roles for contractors or subrecipients, if involved).
    - Description of stakeholder involvement, if applicable.
    - Description of how data will be collected to measure progress (e.g., surveys, digital analytics, license or registration data). Sufficient information must be provided to support environmental compliance review requirements.
    - **Innovation and R3 Best Practices:** For activities described under Approach, specifically highlight any use of Recruitment, Retention, and Reactivation (R3) strategies or innovative approaches grounded in research and best practices.

- **Alignment with Program Goals:** Describe how the proposed project addresses one or more of the five statutory purposes of the NOCP:
    - improve communication with anglers, boaters and the general public regarding angling and boating opportunities;
    - reduce barriers to access and participation in these activities;
    - advance the adoption of sound angling and boating practices;
    - promote conservation and the responsible use of the nation's aquatic resources; and/or
    - further safety in fishing and boating.

- **Expected Results and Benefits:** Explain how your project will contribute to one or more of the following outcomes expected, on a short and/or long-term basis, under this funding opportunity:
    - increased participation in recreational boating and fishing;
    - enhanced public awareness and education about how and where to engage in these activities;
    - targeted outreach using research-driven messaging;
    - strengthened capacity among stakeholders to deliver effective outreach; and/or
    - improved awareness of access to fishing and boating opportunities.

- **Timeline:** Provide a project schedule identifying major milestones and deliverables across the grant period of performance. The timeline may be presented as a chart or bulleted list.

- **Stakeholder Coordination and Community Engagement:** Projects funded under the NOCP are expected to demonstrate strong community engagement and innovative stakeholder coordination. Applicants should describe how the project will engage, benefit, or be co-developed with a wide variety of interested parties such as:
    - Local small businesses, including outfitters, tackle shops, guides, boat rental operators, and other recreation-related enterprises;
    - Chambers of commerce and tourism boards;
    - Educational institutions such as community colleges, land-grant universities, or tribal colleges;
    - Civic groups, volunteer organizations, or other grassroots networks with a connection to aquatic recreation, conservation, or public education.
    - **Stakeholder Coordination:** While the NOCP emphasizes local initiative and innovation, all applications must also demonstrate alignment with the conservation priorities, regulatory frameworks, and strategic plans of the public agencies with jurisdiction over the resources or locations involved. For example, a proposed paddlefishing derby in Oklahoma must be developed in coordination with Oklahoma's fish and wildlife agency and support their management and outreach goals. Applications that demonstrate early coordination with state or tribal resource managers or that leverage existing agency resources such as facilities, data, or public lands are encouraged. Applicants should describe:
        - How stakeholders were identified and engaged in the planning process;
        - Any co-design efforts with local communities or partners;
        - Existing or planned coordination with local, state, or tribal natural resource agencies;
        - How stakeholder contributions will be reflected in project design, delivery, and evaluation.
        - **Letters of Support or Commitment:** Stakeholder coordination should be documented through letters of support. Letters of support or commitment from community partners or relevant public agencies should be submitted as attachments and referenced here, where applicable.

- **Deliverables:** List any products beyond required performance and financial reporting (e.g., engagement tools, training materials, campaign summaries, research or survey reports).
- **Federal Involvement or Technical Assistance Needs:** If applicable, describe any anticipated needs for federal substantial involvement, including technical assistance, collaboration, data sharing, or coordination with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service staff.
- **Regulatory Compliance:**
    - **Environmental Compliance**: For federal environmental compliance requirements (e.g., ESA, NEPA, NHPA), include any available information needed to support the review process (e.g., specific locations where activities will be performed including any ground disturbance or field activities away from already developed sites).
    - **Permits**: Applicants must also identify and address any local, state, or federal permits that may be required to carry out proposed activities. This may include, but is not limited to, event permits, public land use authorizations, wildlife

handling or filming permits, or other regulatory permissions. It is the applicant's responsibility to research applicable permitting requirements and demonstrate the ability to obtain any necessary approvals prior to project implementation.
  - **Executive Orders**: All applications must be in compliance with all current Executive Orders, including but not limited to E.O 14168 and E.O. 14151.

- **Supporting Documentation:** Cross-reference any materials provided as attachments to the Project Narrative (e.g., letters of support or commitment, maps, detailed work plans) as relevant to the application's scope of work.

Budget Narrative

Applicants must describe and justify items and costs listed in their budget. The budget narrative must identify the following cost items: total estimated costs, non-Federal cost share, third-party contributions, and any pre-award costs. Total project cost is the sum of all allowable costs, including required and voluntary cost share and third-party contributions.

Budget items must be**:**

- Reasonable, allowable, allocable, and necessary
- Compliant with 2 CFR §200 Subpart E cost principles

Indirect Costs: Applicants must indicate in their budget narrative how they will charge indirect costs, including the rate to be applied:

- De Minimis Rate: If eligible, state if your organization is opting to use the de minimis rate of up to 15% of total modified direct costs. Entities that do not have a current Federal negotiated indirect cost rate (including provisional rate) may propose to use the de minimis rate. For more information, refer to 2 CFR 200.414(f).
- Negotiated Rate: State if you will negotiate with your cognizant agency. If your organization has previously negotiated a rate, attach a copy of the most recently negotiated rate agreement (active or expired).

This program has a mandated cap on indirect costs or approved rate deviation.

Indirect Cost Management

The Service encourages applicants to effectively manage indirect costs in order to maximize funding for direct project activities. In your application, clearly state whether you are using a NICRA, the de minimis rate as defined in 2 CFR 200.414(f), or are not requesting indirect costs. Provide a clear and detailed justification for your proposed rate, explaining how it reflects the actual administrative needs of your organization. Describe how the proposed indirect costs, if any, will support efficient, effective project delivery and contribute to overall cost-effectiveness.

Bonus points may be awarded based on the appropriateness and justification of the proposed rate relative to the applicant's organizational structure, the clarity of the rationale for how the proposed rate supports project implementation, and the demonstrated alignment of indirect cost management with project success and budget efficiency. Applications that present clear, transparent, and cost-effective management of indirect costs will be scored more favorably. Please refer to the scoring rubric in the Merit Review for specific evaluation criteria regarding indirect cost management.

Data and Evaluation Costs: Applicant budgets may include costs related to data and evaluation as relevant per 2 CFR §200.455.

Refer to 2 CFR 200.455(c) for a description of costs related to data and evaluation.

The **Budget Narrative** must address each "**Object Class Category**" listed on the SF-424A Budget Information form. Total costs under each Object Class Category must be described in sufficient detail to demonstrate that costs are allowable, allocable, necessary and reasonable. Provide detailed descriptions justifying requested budget items and describing how costs were determined for the following Object Class Categories:

- **Personnel Salary:** For each position involved in the project, indicate baseline salary figures and the estimates of time for each position involved with the project. Include a brief description of their role in the project.
- **Fringe Benefits:** Identify your organization's current fringe rate(s) and what is included in the rate (e.g., social security, employee life, health, unemployment, workers' compensation insurance, pension, and unemployment).
- **Travel:** Describe how travel supports the project objectives, including the purpose of travel and the specific name of the meeting(s) or event(s) that employees are attending. For each travel, describe who is traveling to the meeting or event and their roles (e.g., presenting, leading program, facilitating, or participating in the discussion), and describe the breakdown of estimated costs per traveler (e.g., airfare, lodging, meals), as allowable under 2 CFR 200.475 Travel Costs.
- **Equipment:** Equipment means 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 (2 CFR 200.1). Grantees and subrecipients must follow the requirements at 2 CFR 200 when acquiring equipment under an award, with emphasis on 200.313, 200.317 through 200.327, and 200.439. Please note the prohibitions on certain ***telecommunications and video surveillance services o***r equipment in 2 CFR 200.216. The Department of the Interior's Unmanned Aircraft web page lists approved unmanned aircraft and related equipment and software. If equipment previously purchased with Federal funds is available for the project, provide a list of that equipment and identify the Federal funding source. Recipients and sub-recipients must follow the requirements of 2 CFR 200 when acquiring equipment under an award, emphasizing 200.313, 200.317 through 200.327 and 200.439.
- **Supplies**: Supplies mean all tangible personal property other than those described in the equipment definition. A computing device is a supply if the acquisition cost is less than the lesser of the capitalization level established by the non-Federal entity for financial statement purposes or $10,000, regardless of the length of its useful life.
- **Contractual:** Provide a separate description of services and total estimated cost for each contract anticipated during the project. **NOTE:** Do not describe subawards and subrecipients in this section. See 2 CFR 200.331 "Subrecipient and contractor determinations" to determine the difference between contracts and subawards.
- **Other:**
  - **Subawards:** Provide a separate description of services and total estimated cost for each subaward anticipated during the project. **NOTE:** Do not describe contracts

and contractors in this section. See 2 CFR 200.331 "Subrecipient and contractor determinations" to determine the difference between contracts and subawards.

  - **Participant Support Costs:** Participant support costs mean direct costs for items such as stipends or subsistence allowances, travel allowances, and registration fees paid to or on behalf of participants or trainees (but not the applicant's employees) concerning conferences or training projects (see 2 CFR 200.1). These costs should be described in the narrative and identified in the budget under the "Other" cost category. Recipients and subrecipients must follow the requirements of 2 CFR 200 when expending participant support costs under an award, emphasizing 200.68, 200.75, 200.308, and 200.456.
  - Any other costs that are not included in the above Object Class Categories.

- **Indirect**: Indicate rate type and rate to be applied and include specific information described above under Budget Narrative and Indirect Cost Management.
- **Program Income:** Program income is gross income received by the recipient or subrecipient and earned only as a result of the grant during the grant period. Estimate the amount of program income that the project is likely to generate. Indicate the method or combination of methods (deduction, addition, or matching) of applying anticipated program income. The Service's approval is required for the additive or matching method.
- **Prior Written Approval:** Describe any other item of cost that requires prior written approval under the Federal cost principles. See 2 CFR 200.407 "Prior written approval (prior approval)" for more information.
- **Cost-share**: Cost-share is not required; however, applicants may identify any cash or in-kind contributions that the applicant, a partner, or other entity will contribute to the project and describe how the contributions directly and substantively benefit completion of the project. For in-kind contributions, include the source, the amount, and the valuation methodology used to determine the total value. See 2 CFR 200.306 "Cost sharing or matching" for more information.

Conflict of Interest and Unresolved Matters Disclosures:

If any actual or potential conflict of interest exists related to this project at the time of application, the applicant must provide sufficient information to support a program determination of significance per 2 CFR 1402.112. Refer to 2 CFR 200.112 Conflict of Interest and 2 CFR 200.113.

Overlap or Duplication of Effort Statement:

Applicants must state in their application if the activities, costs, or time commitment of key personnel proposed in this application overlap with those in any other Federal proposal or award or not. If no overlap exists, include a statement to that effect. If any overlap exists, provide:

- Activities: Description any overlapping activities.
- Costs: Description of any overlapping costs.
- Time: Description of any overlapping key personnel time.
- A copy of any overlapping or duplicative proposal submitted to any other potential funding entity.

- Details on when any overlapping proposal was submitted, to whom, and the expected date of the funding decision.

Other Required Information
Stakeholder coordination should be documented through letters of support. Letters of support or commitment from community partners or relevant public agencies should be submitted as attachments, as applicable.

SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS AND DEADLINES

Address to Request Application Package

Applications must be submitted in GrantSolutions.gov by the deadline published in this Notice of Funding Opportunity. Please see Application Documents for the required forms, project narrative and budget narrative content, and other required information.

Submission Dates and Times

Closing Date for Applications: 08/17/2025

Closing Date Explanation

Electronic applications must be submitted in GrantSolutions.gov no later than 11:59 PM Eastern Time on August 17, 2025.

Incomplete or partial applications will not be considered. To be accepted for consideration, complete applications must be submitted in GrantSolutions.gov by the stated deadline and must include all required forms and supporting material. Applications that are received late or lacking any of the required elements will not be considered. However, applicants may revise and resubmit their application up until the identified application deadline.

Submission Instructions

Apply Through GrantSolutions
To apply through GrantSolutions, follow these steps:

1. **Register your organization.** Send an e-mail to help@grantsolutions.gov with:
    - Subject: New Organization Request
    - Entity name (organization or individual applying as a natural person)
    - Entity type
    - SAM.gov Unique Entity Identifier (not required for individuals)
    - Employer Identification Number (individuals, do not include your SSN)
    - Address
    - Contact details (First and last name, e-mail, phone)
    This information should be the same as entered on the entity’s SAM.gov profile.

2. **Assign system user roles.** Follow the GrantSolutions “Recipient user” registration instructions. Submit a separate Recipient User Account Request form for each official to be assigned a system role. At minimum, the Authorizing Official (ADO) and Principal Investigator/Program Director (PI/PD) must be assigned.

3. **Log in.** GrantSolutions requires users to log in through Login.gov. Each user must create a Login.gov account. For instructions, see the GrantSolutions Training Resources web page.
4. **Find and apply to this Funding Opportunity.** After logging in, click on either the "Begin an application" link (first time applicants) or the "Funding Opportunity" link to go to the "Competing Announcements-Application Kits" list screen. Search the list for this Funding Opportunity's title and number. Click on the associated "Apply" link. Follow the prompts from there. Required applications forms are provided with the Funding Opportunity in GrantSolutions unless otherwise indicated on the Required Forms table above.
5. For detailed instructions, see the GrantSolutions Training Resources web page.
6. **Need help?** Find help topics and contact information on the GrantSolutions Contact Us page.

APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

Eligibility Review

During the eligibility review, the application is checked for timely submission, completed packages (see Application Documents above) and alignment with the requirements of this announcement. The Federal agency may remove an application if it does not pass the eligibility review.

The Service will conduct an initial eligibility screening before applications are subject to technical review and associated scoring and ranking. Eligibility standards must be met to be considered in the review and selection process, including eligible applicants and eligible activities. Please see Eligibility for detailed description of eligibility requirements.

If an applicant selected for funding hasn't finished their SAM.gov registration (see 2 CFR 25.200 and 2 CFR 25.110) when the federal agency is ready to make an award, we may decide that the applicant is ineligible for the award and choose to grant it to someone else. Please refer 2 CFR 25.205 for more information.

Prior to making an award, the DOI checks the anticipated recipient and their key project personnel against the current list of prohibited or restricted persons or entities in the System for Award Management (SAM.gov) Exclusions database. We are prohibited from making an award if a recipient or any key personnel are found ineligible, prohibited, restricted, or otherwise excluded from receiving or participating in an award, as their ineligibility condition applies to this program.

If removed from consideration for ineligibility, the Federal agency will notify the applicant in writing.

Merit Review

Applications that have passed eligibility screening will be evaluated according to the following merit review criteria.

Additional details on scoring can be found at https://www.fws.gov/service/national-outreach-and-communications-program.

Total Possible Points: 100, plus up to 5 bonus points

1. Strategic Alignment – NOCP (20 points)

Evaluates the extent to which the application addresses one or more of the five statutory purposes of the NOCP:

- Improve communication about angling and boating opportunities
- Reduce barriers to participation
- Advance sound angling and boating practices
- Promote conservation and responsible use
- Further safety in fishing and boating

2. R3 Outcomes and Best Practices (10 points)

Assesses the extent to which the application is aligned with effective Recruitment, Retention, and Reactivation (R3) strategies and demonstrates alignment with current best practices in outreach, marketing, or public engagement:

- **Incorporate R3 Strategies**: Clearly articulates the use of effective strategies that aim to recruit new participants, retain existing participants, and reactivate former participants in fishing and boating activities.
- **Alignment with Best Practices**: Demonstrates adherence to recognized best practices in outreach and marketing, supported by evidence from research or successful case studies.
- **Evidence-based Approaches**: Uses data and research to inform strategies, ensuring that proposed activities are grounded in proven methods relevant to the intended audience.
- **Adaptation to Local Context**: Tailors R3 strategies to fit the specific needs and characteristics of the target audience and participation trends.

3. Innovation (10 points)

Evaluates the originality and creativity of the proposed approach, including:

- **Originality**: Demonstrates unique concepts and innovative solutions that distinguish the project from existing initiatives.
- **Creative Use of Technology**: Effectively integrates new technologies and digital tools that enhance project implementation and outreach.
- **Adaptation of Successful Models**: Applies proven strategies in new contexts or settings, showcasing adaptability and foresight for improving longer-term outcomes.

4. Measurable Outcomes and Evaluation Plan (20 points)

Evaluates the clarity and quality of the performance measures and evaluation framework. Strong applications will include:

- **Specific, measurable objectives**: Clearly defined targets that articulate what success looks like for the project and align with one or more of the program's key outcomes (e.g., increased participation in fishing and boating; enhanced awareness of how and where to participate; targeted outreach; stakeholder capacity-building; or improved access awareness).

- **Use of baseline data**: Incorporation of relevant baseline data to support the measurement of progress against set objectives.
- **Plans for data collection**: Detailed descriptions of methods and tools for data collection (e.g., license data, web analytics, surveys) that will be used to evaluate progress toward outcomes.
- **Continuous performance monitoring and reporting**: Plans for ongoing performance tracking and adjustment of strategies over the grant period, including milestones and evaluation checkpoints to assess progress at regular intervals (e.g., quarterly or semi-annual evaluations).

5. Stakeholder Coordination (20 points)

Assesses the level of coordination with relevant partners such as state or tribal agencies, tourism boards, industry partners, or educational institutions. Strong application will show evidence of:

- Early coordination with key stakeholders
- Use of existing facilities, data, or outreach systems
- Letters of support or documented collaboration

6. Feasibility (10 points)

Evaluates the viability of the proposed project based on:

- Realistic timeline and work plan
- Clear roles and responsibilities
- Organizational capacity and experience
- Budget appropriate to scope

7. Impact Potential (10 points)

Assesses the potential for meaningful, lasting change through:

- Scalability or replicability
- Potential to increase participation or awareness at broader levels
- Ability to inform future efforts

Bonus: Indirect Cost Management (up to 5 bonus points)

Applications may receive bonus points effective management of indirect costs by demonstrating:

- Appropriate Use of Indirect Cost Rate: Use of a federally recognized indirect cost rate (NICRA or de minimis), no indirect costs, or a reduced rate when appropriate to the applicant's organizational structure and capacity.
- Justification for Proposed Rate: A clear and detailed explanation of the chosen indirect cost rate, including how it reflects actual administrative needs and supports sound financial management.

- Support for Project Success and Cost-Effectiveness: A compelling description of how the indirect costs—if requested—enable effective project delivery, oversight, and outcomes without compromising cost-efficiency.

Review and Selection Process

This program reviews proposed budgets to ensure:

- figures are correct
- estimated costs are necessary and reasonable and clearly linked to project narratives
- avoid obviously unallowable costs
- identify costs requiring prior approval
- ensure indirect cost rates are applied correctly
- confirm cost sharing requirements are reflected in the budget.

This program reviews applications for potential overlap or duplication between the proposed project and any other funded or proposed project. Depending on the circumstances, DOI may choose to not make an award.

Prior to award, the program will review any applicant statement regarding potential overlap or duplication between the project to be funded and any other funded or proposed project in terms of activities, funding, or time commitment of key personnel. Depending on the circumstances, the program may request modification to the application, other pending applications, or an active award, as needed to eliminate any duplication of effort, or the Service may choose not to fund the selected project.

The Service may not make a Federal award to an applicant that has not completed the SAM.gov registration. If an applicant selected for funding has not completed their SAM.gov registration by the time the Service is ready to make an award, the Service may determine that the applicant is not qualified to receive an award. The Service can use that determination as a basis for making an award to another applicant.

Application review and selection is a 3-step process:

1. **Application acceptance**:
    - Complete applications must be submitted in GrantSolutions.gov by 11:59 ET, August 17, 2025. Incomplete or partial applications will not be considered.
    - To be accepted for consideration applicants must submit a complete application by the stated deadline and must include all the required forms and supporting material.
    - Applicants may revise and resubmit their application up until the identified application deadline.
    - Applicants will be notified after the August 17 deadline that their applications have been received and if they have been marked complete and accepted for review.

2. **Application ranking:** A National Review Panel will be convened for this evaluation. Up to eight subject-matter experts from within the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and

relevant state/federal or industry organizations will complete the review, scoring and ranking of the applications using the merit review criteria. The National Review Panel will include representatives from different programs and with a variety of expertise. After the initial application ranking, you may be asked to revise the project scope and/or budget.

3. **Application selection:** The National Review Panel evaluates the ranked applications and provides the scores and award recommendations to the Service Director. The Service Director makes final award selections.The final award selections may require additional review and approval by the Department of the Interior.

Risk Review

Prior to making an award, the program assesses the risk posed by the applicant per 2 CFR 200.206. If an award will be made, the program may apply special conditions corresponding to the risk assessed. For awards over the simplified acquisition threshold (currently $250,000), the program reviews eligibility and financial integrity information in the applicant's SAM.gov records per 2 CFR 200.206(a). The program also assesses financial management capabilities, project delivery experience, staffing resources, past performance, administration and reporting compliance records, and overall project complexity and potential challenges.

The Service will consider this information when completing the risk review. The Service uses the results of the risk evaluation to establish monitoring plans and recipient reporting frequency requirements, and to determine if one or more of the specific award conditions in 2 CFR §200.208 should be applied to the award.

AWARD NOTICES

Notices of Federal Award are sent electronically via GrantSolutions or e-mail. These notices outline the terms, conditions, and payment instructions per 2 CFR 200.211. The Notice of Federal Award signed by an authorized Grants Officer is the legal instrument obligating financial assistance to a recipient. Any other prior notice is not an authorization to begin work. If the program allows pre-award costs per 2 CFR 200.458, beginning performance before receiving a Notice of Federal Award is at the applicant's own risk.

Anticipated Project Start Date: 10/01/2025

Anticipated Project End Date: 09/30/2027

- Applications will be accepted until August 17, 2025.
- Application acceptance process, National Review Panel ranking and review will take place during August-September 2025.
- The Service will aim to announce the grant selections by October 1, 2025. Selected applications may be subject to additional review and approval by the Department of the Interior.

POST AWARD REQUIREMENTS AND ADMINISTRATION

Administration and National Policy Requirements

For award administration and national policy requirements, see the DOI General Terms and Conditions. Infrastructure projects require the use of American iron, steel, manufacture products, and construction materials per 2 CFR 184.

See the FWS General Award Terms and Conditions for national policy requirements for FWS awards. Special terms and conditions will be detailed in award notices.

Reporting

The recipient's Notice of Award will detail all reporting requirements, including frequency, due dates, and instructions for requesting extensions. In general, but not limited to, recipients must:

- Submit Federal Financial reports and Program Performance reports.
- Use the Federal Financial Report (SF-425) form for financial reporting,
- Monitor award activities and report on program performance per 2 CFR 200.329,
- Promptly notify the awarding program in writing of any issues, delays, or conditions impairing award objectives per 2 CFR 200.329(e),
- Disclose any conflicts of interest related to their award that arise during the award period per 2 CFR 1402.112,
- Report on the status of real property acquired under the award in which the Federal government retains an interest per 2 CFR 200.330, and
- Report all violations of Federal criminal law involving fraud, bribery, or gratuity violations potentially affecting the Federal award per 2 CFR 200.113.
- Report any matters related to recipient integrity and performance to SAM.gov per Appendix XII to 2 CFR 200.
- If the Federal share of the award is more than $100,000 and the recipient makes or agrees to make any payment using non-appropriated funds for lobbying in connection to the award, disclose those activities using the Disclosure of Lobbying (SF-LLL) form per 43 CFR 18.100.
- Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006 (FFATA) requires certain recipients to report information on executive compensation through SAM.gov and information on all sub-awards, subcontracts, and consortiums over $30,000 to the FFATA Subaward Reporting System (FSRS).

Other Information

For more information, see the Service's National Outreach and Communication Program website.