Competition for a Cooperative Institute for Research in the Atmosphere

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ANNOUNCEMENT OF FEDERAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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

Funding Opportunity Title: Competition for a Cooperative Institute for Research in the Atmosphere

Announcement Type: Initial

Funding Opportunity Number: NOAA-OAR-CIPO-2019-2005602

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 11.432, NOAA Cooperative Institutes

Dates: Applications must be received by OAR no later than November 14, 2018, 5:00 p.m. EDT. For applications submitted via Grants.gov, a date and time receipt indication will form the basis for determining timeliness. For those applicants not having access to the Internet, one signed
original and two hard copy applications must be received by OAR at the following address: NOAA/OAR, Attn: Dr. Candice Jongsma, 1315 East-West Highway, Room 11350, Silver Spring, Maryland 20910. Use of U.S. mail or another delivery service must be documented with a receipt. (Note that late-arriving hardcopy applications provided to a delivery service on or before 5:00 p.m. EDT on the closing date for applications will be accepted for review if the applicant is able to document that the application was provided to the guaranteed delivery service by the specified closing date and time and if the application is received by OAR no later than 5:00 p.m., EDT, two business days following the closing date.) No facsimile or electronic mail applications will be accepted. Applications submitted after 5:00 p.m. EDT, November 14, 2018 will not be reviewed or considered for funding.

Funding Opportunity Description: The NOAA Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research (OAR) invites applications for the establishment of a Cooperative Institute (CI) for Research in the Atmosphere. This new cooperative institute supports the Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research's Earth System Research Laboratory (ESRL) and Atlantic Oceanographic and Meteorological Laboratory (AOML), National Weather Service (NWS), and the NOAA National Environmental Satellite, Data and Information Service (NESDIS) Regional and Mesoscale Meteorology (RAMM) Branch in helping NOAA meet its mission responsibilities.

This new CI will need expertise and resources necessary to conduct research associated with the development of satellite applications for atmospheric forecast systems applicable to scales that

span the spectrum from regional to global. The research will focus on the regional up to the global spatial scales and include time scales from minutes to months, a period typically considered the climate-weather connection. Their work will include the development of algorithms and numerical modeling techniques ranging in complexity from statistically based multi-satellite weather forecast products, to complete forecast systems that utilize earth system modeling frameworks. Data assimilation studies will also be needed to extract the information content from satellite and other observing systems. The new CI will emphasize short to medium range weather forecasting, on satellite-based decision tools to improve warnings, and on improvements to Impact-based Decision Support tools. It is also anticipated that there will be close coordination with on-going work at existing NOAA CIs that focus on climate, chemistry and oceanography and other data sources (such as radar). Because of the complex processes involved, research using complex coupled atmosphere, ocean, and land surface modeling systems will be needed in order to understand and predict regional weather events (such as hurricanes and fire weather), as well as for studies of weather influences on regional climate variability and climate influences on weather systems.

The new CI will need capabilities to validate such models using satellite, in situ and remotely-sensed observations; to evaluate problem areas; and to improve forecasts. In addition, the CI will need the ability to develop multi-sensor products from satellite and other observing systems for regional and mesoscale meteorology applications, with particular emphasis on high impact hazardous weather detection and prediction where modeling approaches sometimes have limited utility. Since some of this research will need to be transitioned to NOAA operations, these activities will require the CI to develop and use sophisticated proxy data and observing system simulation techniques to test the future value of these systems before it become operationally available.

FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Program Objective

CI Concept/Program Background

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

* conduct collaborative, long-term research that involves NOAA scientists and those at the research institution(s) from one or more scientific disciplines of interest to NOAA;

* utilize the scientific, education, and outreach expertise at the research institution(s) that, depending on NOAA's research needs, may or may not be located near a NOAA facility;

* support student participation in NOAA-related research studies; and

* strengthen or expand NOAA-related research capabilities and capacity at the research institution(s) that complements and contributes to NOAA's ability to reach its mission goals.

A CI may be comprised of a single academic institution or a consortium of academic institutions and supporting research affiliates, each of which demonstrate outstanding performance within one or more established research programs in NOAA-related sciences. CIs conduct research under approved administrative tasks, as described below. These tasks may not be redefined or abbreviated:

* Task I activities are related to the management of the CI, as well as general education and

outreach. This task also includes support of postdoctoral and visiting scientists conducting activities within the research themes of the CI that are approved by the CI Director, in consultation with NOAA, and are relevant to NOAA and the CI's mission goals.

* Task II research activities usually involve on-going direct collaboration with NOAA scientists. This collaboration typically is fostered by the collocation of Federal and CI employees.

* Task III research activities require minimal collaboration with NOAA scientists and may include research funded by other NOAA competitive grant programs.

B. Program Priorities

Research Themes of Proposed Cooperative Institute for Research in the Atmosphere:

I. Satellite algorithm development, training and education – The CI must be capable of developing satellite-based algorithms for weather forecasting, with emphasis on regional and mesoscale meteorological phenomenon. They must have expertise in basic satellite products such as feature track winds, thermodynamic retrievals, sea surface temperature, etc., in combination with model analyses and forecasts, as well as in situ and other remote sensing observations. Applications may be for current or future satellites including cube-sats, commercial sensors and other platforms. The CI will be expected to explore of machine learning and artificial intelligence and other Big Data concepts in algorithms and applications. They must also be capable of creating satellite and related training material for a wide variety of users, with emphasis on operational forecasters. They may be asked to use a variety of techniques, including distance learning methods, web-based demonstration projects and instructor-led training. The CI should also have expertise in social sciences to evaluate the value of satellite data products and services.

II. Regional to Global Scale Modeling Systems – The CI is expected to improve weather and climate models (minutes to months) that simulate and predict changes in the Earth system. Their areas of expertise should include atmospheric and ocean dynamics, radiative forcing, clouds and moist convection, and land surface modeling. They should also be capable of performing analysis of hydrologic forcings, hydrologic modeling, and coupled modeling of the earth system.

III. Data Assimilation – The CI must be capable of developing and improving techniques to assimilate environmental observations, including satellite, terrestrial, oceanic, and biological observations. Theses observations will be used to produce the best estimate of the

environmental state at the time of the observations. This is anticipated to be used for analysis, modeling, and prediction activities associated with weather/climate predictions (minutes to months).

IV. Climate-Weather Processes – The CI is expected to have expertise using numerical models and environmental data, including satellite and radar observations. They will use this expertise to understand processes that are important to creating environmental changes on weather and water, and short-term climate timescales (minutes to months). The CI will also need expertise for understanding processes important to the two-way interactions between weather and water systems and regional climate.

V. Data Distribution – The CI should be able to identify effective and efficient methods of quickly distributing and displaying large and very large sets of environmental and model data using data networks, cloud services, web map services, data compression algorithms, and other techniques. These data sets are anticipated to be used for machine learning and artificial intelligence technique development, and for real-time decision support.

COOPERATIVE INSTITUTE CAPABILITIES

The proposed CI should provide the flexibility needed to work on multi-disciplinary research in collaboration primarily with NOAA's Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research's (OAR) Earth System Research Laboratory (ESRL) and Atlantic Oceanographic and Meteorological Laboratory (AOML), National Weather Service (NWS), and the NOAA National Environmental Satellite, Data and Information Service (NESDIS) Regional and Mesoscale Meteorology (RAMM) Branch and other NOAA-related research laboratories or entities.

It is anticipated that the CI will be involved in all aspects of the multifaceted problems, from nowcasting applications to the climate-weather interface. The central theme of the proposed CI is to maximize the utility of current and future satellite and other observations for short to medium-scale weather forecast and hazardous weather warning systems, including initialization of numerical weather prediction models, algorithm development and decision-tool generation, for the evaluation of the physical processes in weather prediction systems, improved warnings, and for studies of climate effects on weather systems. Since it is important to maximize utilization of satellite, coupled model, and other environmental data to ensure that users are properly trained, and that a future workforce is properly educated and trained, the CI also should be heavily involved in research, education, training and outreach activities.

In addition, new contributions in the areas of data compression, massively parallel computing, the testing and evaluation of hurricane intensity forecast modeling systems, probabilistic ensemble model post-processing, and forecasting of extreme weather events are needed. In order to sustain strong interactions between NOAA scientists and the CI, NOAA will provide office space in ESRL for CI personnel who are working with NOAA/ESRL scientists.

The CI is expected to promote student and postdoctoral involvement in research projects in ways to train the next generation of scientists. The CI should provide substantial support for graduate and undergraduate students and post-doctoral scientists that will support the development of a wide range of expertise. NOAA can capitalize on this expertise, as CI employees and students will work with NOAA to conduct research that complements NOAA's mission needs. The Nation's underrepresented minority students enrolled in undergraduate science, technology, engineering or mathematics (STEM) degree programs and gaining degrees, are an untapped talent pool. NOAA is committed to developing a future workforce that reflects the diversity of the Nation and encourages the CI to work with Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) and NOAA Cooperative Science Centers (CSCs). Applicants should clearly describe how they will recruit and train a more diverse and inclusive workforce.

The MSI designation is determined by statute, with the U.S. Department of Education serving as the cognizant Federal education agency. The U.S. Department of Education provides the following MSI definitions:
(1) a part B institution (a historically Black college or university) [§322 of the HEA, 20 U.S.C. §1061(2)];
(2) a Hispanic-serving institution [§502 of the HEA, 20 U.S.C. §1101a(a)(5)];
(3) a Tribal College or University {§316 of the HEA, 20 U.S.C. §1059c(b)(3)];
(4) an Alaska Native-serving institution [§317(b) of the HEA, 20 USC 1509d(b)(2)] or a Native Hawaiian-serving institution [§317(b) of the HEA, 20 U.S.C. §1059d(b)(4)];
(5) a Predominantly Black Institution [§§318(b) and 371(c)(9) of the HEA; 20 U.S.C. §§ 1059e(b)(6) and 1067q(c)(9)];
(6) an Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-serving institution [§§ 320(b) and 371(c)(2) of the HEA, 20 U.S.C. §§1059g(b)(2) and 1067q(c)(2)]; or
(7) a Native American-serving nontribal institution [§§319(b) and 371(c)(8) of the HEA; 20 U.S.C. §§ 1059f(b)(2) and 1067q(c)(8)].

COMPOSITION OF THE INSTITUTE
The proposed CI can be comprised of a single academic institution that offers accredited graduate level degree-granting programs in NOAA-related sciences or a consortium of

academic institutions with the aforementioned programs and their supporting research affiliates. Each proposing entity must have strong programs in support of at least one of the identified research areas. The CI would be expected to develop and implement mechanisms to facilitate collaborative research, education, and outreach with NOAA (e.g., post-doctoral appointments, graduate research assistantships and research appointments).

DEMONSTRATED ABILITY TO SUPPORT NOAA'S LONG-TERM GOALS AND RESEARCH FOCI
The CI will also help NOAA meet a number of critical research objectives identified in the Agency's 20-year research vision and numerous research plans that have been developed including U.S. Department of Commerce Strategic Plan 2018-2022, and
Weather Research and Forecasting Innovation Act (https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/house-bill/353) to reduce the impact of extreme weather and water events.

C. Program Authority

15 U.S.C. 1540; 118 Stat. 71 (January 23, 2004)

II. Award Information

A. Funding Availability

All funding is contingent upon the availability of Federal appropriations. NOAA anticipates that up to approximately $30M will be available annually for this CI. The actual annual funding that the CI receives may be less than the anticipated amount and will depend on the actual projects that are approved by NOAA after the main CI award begins, the availability of funding, the quality of the research, the satisfactory progress in achieving the stated goals described in project proposals, and continued relevance to program objectives.

B. Project/Award Period

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

C. Type of Funding Instrument

The funding instrument for this award will be a cooperative agreement since several NOAA organizations will be substantially involved in working with the CI. Examples of substantial involvement may include, but are not limited to, proposals for collaboration between NOAA scientists and a CI scientist and/or assistance by NOAA personnel in developing curricula. NOAA will issue only one award to the successful institution or, in the

event that a consortium of academic institutions and supporting research affiliates submits the successful application, to the lead academic institution of the proposed consortium that applied for the award and where the CI will be established and resident.

III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applicants

Eligibility is limited to non-Federal public and private non-profit universities, colleges and research institutions that offer accredited graduate-level degree-granting programs in NOAA-related sciences.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement

To stress the collaborative nature and investment of a CI by both NOAA and the research institution, cost sharing is required. There is no minimum cost sharing requirement; however, the amount of cost sharing will be considered when determining the level of the CI's commitment under NOAA's standard evaluation criteria for overall qualifications of applicants. Acceptable cost-sharing proposals include, but are not limited to, offering a reduced indirect cost rate against activities in one or more Tasks, waiver of any indirect costs assessed by the awardee on subawards, waiver of indirect costs assessed against base funds and/or Task I activities, waiver or reduction of any costs associated with the use of facilities at the CI, and full or partial salary funding for the CI director, administrative staff, graduate students, visiting scientists, or postdoctoral scientists.

C. Other Criteria that Affect Eligibility

Not applicable

IV. Application and Submission Information

A. Address to Request Application Package

The standard application package, consisting of the standard forms, i.e., SF-424, SF-424A, SF-424B, SF-LLL, and the CD-511, is available at http://www.grants.gov. Users of Grants.gov will be able to download a copy of the application package, complete it offline, and then upload and submit the application via the Grants.gov site. If an applicant has problems downloading the application forms from Grants.gov, contact Grants.gov Customer support at 1-800-518-4726 or support@Grants.gov. For applicants without Internet access, an application package may be secured by contacting:

Dr. Candice Jongsma

OAR Cooperative Institutes
1315 East West Highway, Room 11350
Silver Spring, MD 20910
Telephone: (301) 734-1177
candice.jongsma@noaa.gov

B. Content and Form of Application

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.

• As required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), NOAA must analyze the potential environmental impacts of applications that request Federal funding. In order for NOAA to complete its analysis, NOAA must address the following questionnaires:

1. The U.S. Department of Commerce National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Environmental Questionnaire & Checklist, which may be found at: http://hr.commerce.gov/s/groups/public/@doc/@os/@ocio/@oitpp/documents/web_assets/prod01_008655.pdf and

2. NOAA's Environmental Compliance Questionnaire for Federal Financial Assistance Applicants, which may be found at: http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/questionnaire.pdf
Applicants are required to submit answers to the following abbreviated set of questions and, depending on the specifics of the project as indicated in response to those questions, may be required to provide additional detail, prior to a funding decision, as NOAA deems necessary in order for NOAA to fulfill its NEPA responsibilities:

Project Title
Name and contact information for the principal investigator
Describe the proposed activity, including, as applicable:
- its purpose, objectives, and goals;
- graphics (i.e. figures, photographs), site plans, plan diagrams, models, etc.;
- sampling, collection, or observation protocols and operational procedures;
- any proposed mitigation or monitoring measures and protocols;
- a description and plan diagram of the proposed impact area, if the proposed activity involves construction, restoration, dredging, excavation, and/or fill;
- a description (i.e. specifications) of the equipment or structures (e.g. scientific monitoring equipment, deployment platforms, etc.) that would need to be temporarily or permanently placed in the environment.

Proposals must adhere to the provisions under “Proposals” and the requirements under “Required Elements” in this section.

1. PROPOSALS
a. Proposals must include elements requested on the Grants.gov portal. If a hard copy application is submitted, NOAA requests that the original and two unbound copies of the proposal be included.
b. Proposals, electronic or paper, should be no more than 75 pages (numbered) in length, excluding budget, investigators vitae, and all appendices. Federally mandated forms are not included within the page count. Facsimile transmissions and electronic mail submission of full proposals will not be accepted.

2. REQUIRED ELEMENTS
a. Title page. The title page should clearly indicate the proposed name of the CI, principal investigators, total amount of Federal funds being requested, and award period. Applications submitted by a CI consortium should include the name of each research participant and associated principal investigator. In the event that the application is submitted by a consortium of academic institutions, the lead academic institution for the consortium should submit the application on behalf of its supporting research affiliates.
b. Abstract. An abstract must be included and should contain a brief description of the CI, research themes, and proposed activities. The abstract should appear on a separate page, headed with the proposal title, institution’s investigators, total proposed cost, and budget period.
c. Results from prior research. The results of related projects supported by NOAA and other agencies should be described, including their relation to the currently proposed work. Reference to each prior research award should include the title, agency, award number, Principal Investigators, period of award, and total award. The section should be a brief summary and should not exceed two pages.
d. Project Description. The information provided in this section will be used to evaluate the proposal according to NOAA’s standard evaluation criteria described in Section V of this document. The project description includes the following sections:
The Goals Section should clearly describe the mission and vision of the CI, and what the CI expects to accomplish during the award.
The Research Theme Section includes information that will help NOAA determine the quality of the CI’s capabilities and the expertise at the CI needed to conduct outstanding research in each of the research themes described in Section I.B. This Section also includes project descriptions of research projects that could be conducted by the CI under each theme (or combination of themes), if sufficient funding during the five-year award is provided. The selection of this proposal neither precludes the CI from proposing additional research

projects after the award has been made as long as it fits under one of the research themes, nor obligates NOAA to fund the projects proposed in this application. Following the selection of the award, the CI will be required to provide a complete proposal and budget for each research project funded under the CI award after consulting with the OAR CI Program Director and the NOAA program(s) that provide funding for the project.

The Education Section includes information on NOAA-related education programs offered at the CI's institution(s), including a complete list of terminal degrees in these programs. This Section should also describe how the CI will integrate students and post-docs into the research projects at the CI, as well conduct outreach and education activities in support of the research themes.

The Business Plan should be well-developed and include details regarding fiscal and human resource management, as well as strategic planning and accountability. It must describe the organizational structure of the CI, how it will operate, the responsibilities of the participants from multiple institutions, and how the CI will use the Executive Council and Council of Fellows described in the CI Interim Handbook. The Business Plan must describe how the CI chooses projects and reviews its progress, as well as how the CI will support enhanced communication and collaborations with NOAA.

The Performance Measures Section must include proposed measures to be used by the CI to gauge, quantify, and/or evaluate progress on both individual projects and its overall performance. After the award is made, NOAA will work with the CI to finalize a set of performance measures that are acceptable to the CI and NOAA.

Immediately after the CI award has been established, the CI must produce an annual research plan that provides specific information about the research projects described in the Research Themes Section that will be accomplished during the first year. The plan will be developed after consultations with the OAR CI Program Director and the NOAA programs that will provide project funding to the CI. This plan must state the goals and objectives of each project, along with a description of the research that the CI expects to accomplish and a detailed budget for these projects. CI funding for the projects described in this plan will be released upon NOAA's approval of the annual research plan. Funding for subsequent years of the award will require additional annual research plans.

e. Budget. Applicants must submit a Standard Form 424 "Application for Federal Assistance," including a detailed budget using the Standard Form 424A, "Budget Information--Non-Construction Programs," and a Standard Form 424B, "Assurances -- Non-Construction Programs." These and other forms, including Commerce Department Form CD-511 "Certification Regarding Lobbying," and, if applicable, Standard Form SF-LLL "Disclosure of Lobbying Activities," are provided in the Grants.gov application package. Additionally, the CD-512 "Certifications Regarding Debarment, Suspension, Ineligibility and Voluntary Exclusion-Lower Tier Covered Transactions and Lobbying" is required to be submitted with the application package. To do this, download the form from

http://ci.noaa.gov/sites/lci/Documents/Forms/funding_forms_CD-512.pdf. Fill out, sign, scan, and attach the form to the application package.
The proposal must include total and annual budgets corresponding to the descriptions provided in the project description not to exceed $15M in the first year, with reasonable inflationary escalation in subsequent years. NOAA uses the proposed annual budgets to establish a funding for the entire award. After award selection, annual funding will be provided only after approval by the NOAA Grants Officer of an annual research plan or any other proposal submitted to NOAA that includes a detailed budget. While this level of funding is not guaranteed, this amount will allow for the possibility of funding for projects that were not originally planned for the CI award. Annual and total budgets should be stratified by Task and Institution, particularly if the CI award has proposed a reduced indirect cost rate for certain tasks. A budget justification should include information described in the budget guidelines provided in the Grants.gov application package. NOAA AGO also provides guidance on preparing the budget narrative on its website at http://www.ago.noaa.gov/grants/docs/gmd_budget_narrative_guidance_-_05-24-2017_final.pdf.
f. Vitae. Abbreviated 1-2 page curriculum vitae are sought with each proposal. Publication lists should be limited to all publications in the last 3 years with up to five other relevant papers.
g. Current and pending support. For each principal investigator, submit a list which includes project title, supporting agency with grant number, investigator months, dollar value, and duration. Requested values should be listed for pending support.

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

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

D. Submission Dates and Times

The deadline for receipt of proposals in Grants.gov or at the NOAA/OAR office is 5:00 p.m., EDT, November 14, 2018. Proposals received after the deadline will not be considered. NOAA uses information from Grants.gov to determine whether an application has been submitted before the deadline. If a hard copy proposal is submitted, the original and two unbound copies of the proposal should be included. Paper submissions should be sent to:

Dr. Candice Jongsma 1315 East-West Highway, Room 11350, Silver Spring, Maryland 20910; telephone (301) 734-1177. Hard copy applications will be date/time stamped as the documentation is physically received in the NOAA/OAR office. (Note that late-arriving hard copy
proposals provided to a delivery service on or before 5:00 p.m., E.T., November 14, 2018, will be accepted for review if the applicant can document that the proposal was provided to the
guaranteed delivery service by the specified closing date and time and if the proposal is received by OAR no later than 5 p.m., two business days following the closing date.) No email or facsimile proposal submissions will be accepted.

E. Intergovernmental Review

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

F. Funding Restrictions

NOAA will not consider expenses associated with fees, fund-raising activities, travel for activities not directly related to project implementation, travel or salaries for Federal employees, or profit as allowable costs in the proposed budget. The total costs of a project consist of all allowable costs incurred in accomplishing project activities during the project period. Project costs can only include support for activities conducted between the effective start date and end date of the award, and cannot include activities undertaken either before or after the agreed upon dates. Applicants will not be reimbursed for time expended or costs incurred in developing a project or in preparing an application, or in any discussions or negotiations with the agency prior to the award. Such expenditures may not be considered as part of the applicant's cost share or matching contribution.

G. Other Submission Requirements

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

All applicants are strongly encouraged to submit proposals through the Grants.gov portal. For applicants without Internet access, hard copy proposals will be accepted. The hard copies must be submitted by postal mail, commercial delivery service, or hand-delivery.

Proposals must be submitted to: NOAA/OAR, 1315 East-West Highway, Room 11350, Silver Spring, Maryland 20910, Attn: Dr. Candice Jongsma.

V. Application Review Information

A. Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated using the standard NOAA evaluation criteria. Various questions under each criterion are provided to ensure that the applicant includes information that NOAA will consider important during the evaluation, in addition to any other information provided by the applicant.

1. Importance and/or relevance and applicability of proposed project to the program goals (25 percent): This criterion ascertains whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and/or relevance to NOAA, Federal, regional, state, or local activities.

* Does the proposal include research goals and projects that address the priorities described in the program priorities (see Section I.B.)?

* Is there a demonstrated commitment (in terms of resources and facilities) to enhance existing NOAA and CI resources to foster a long-term collaborative research environment/culture?

2. Technical/scientific merit (30 percent): This criterion assesses whether the approach is technically sound and/or innovative, if the methods are appropriate, and whether there are clear project goals and objectives.

* Does the project description include a summary of clearly stated goals to be achieved during the five-year period that reflect NOAA’s strategic plan and goals?

* Does the CI involve partnerships with other universities or research institutions, including Minority Serving Institutions and universities that can contribute to the proposed activities of the CI?

* Does the proposal include a Data Management Plans that is appropriate for work and that addresses the intent of NOAA’s Data and Publication Sharing Directive for NOAA Grants, Cooperative Agreements, and Contracts?

3. Overall qualifications of applicants (30 percent): This criterion ascertains whether the

applicant possesses the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project.

* If the institution(s) and/or Principal Investigators have received current or recent NOAA funding, is there a demonstrated record of outstanding performance working with NOAA and/or NOAA scientists on research projects?

* Is there nationally and/or internationally recognized expertise within the appropriate disciplines needed to conduct the collaborative/interdisciplinary research described in the proposal?

* Is there a well-developed business plan that includes fiscal and human resource management, as well as strategic planning and accountability?

* Are there any unique capabilities in a mission-critical area of research for NOAA?

* Has the applicant shown a substantial investment to the NOAA partnership, as demonstrated by the amount of the cost-sharing contribution?

4. Project costs (5 percent): The budget is evaluated to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time-frame

5. Outreach and education (10 percent): This criterion assesses whether the project provides a focused and effective education and outreach strategy regarding NOAA’s mission to protect the Nation’s natural resources.

* Is there a strong education program with established graduate degree programs in NOAA related sciences that also encourages student participation in NOAA-related research studies?

B. Review and Selection Process

An initial administrative review/screening is conducted to determine compliance with requirements/completeness. All proposals will be evaluated and individually ranked in accordance with the assigned weights of the above-listed evaluation criteria by an independent peer review panel. At least three experts, who may be Federal or non-Federal, will be used in this process. Each expert will submit an individual merit review and there will be no consensus opinion. The merit reviewers’ ratings are used to produce a rank order of the proposals. The Selecting Official selects proposals after considering the peer reviews and selection factors listed below. In making the final selections, the Selecting Official will

award in rank order unless the proposal is justified to be selected out of rank order based upon one or more of the selection factors. The Selecting Official makes the final award recommendation to the Grants Officer authorized to obligate funds.

C. Selection Factors

The merit review ratings shall provide a rank order to the Selecting Official for final funding recommendations. A program officer may first make recommendations to the Selecting Official applying the selection factors below. The Selecting Official shall award in the rank order unless the proposal is justified to be selected out of rank order based upon one or more of the following factors:

1. Availability of funding.
2. Balance/distribution of funds:
a. Geographically
b. By type of institutions
c. By type of partners
d. By research areas
e. By project types
3. Duplication of other projects funded or considered for funding by NOAA or other federal agencies.
4. Program priorities and policy factors.
5. Applicant’s prior award performance.
6. Partnerships and/or 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 NOAA Grants Officer.

Awards may not necessarily be made to the highest scored proposals.

D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

July 1, 2019, should be used as the proposed start date on proposals. The announcement of the award is expected around January 2019.

VI. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notices

1. Successful applicants will receive notification that the application has been recommended for funding to the NOAA Grants Management Division. This notification is

not an authorization to begin performance of the project. Official notification of funding, signed by the NOAA Grants Officer, is the authorizing document that allows the project to begin. Notification will be issued to the Authorizing Official and the Principal Investigator of the project electronically via Grants Online or in hard copy. Unsuccessful applicants will be notified that their proposals were not selected for recommendation. Applications not selected for funding will be destroyed.

2. Modification of Applications. Successful applicants may be asked to modify objectives, work plans, or budgets prior to final approval of an award. The exact amount of funds to be awarded, the final scope of activities, the project duration, and specific NOAA substantial involvement (if any) with the activities of each project will be determined in pre-award negotiations among the applicant, the NOAA Grants Office, and NOAA program staff.

3. Award documents provided by the Grants Officer may contain special award conditions limiting the use of funds for activities that have outstanding environmental compliance requirements. These special award conditions may also include other compliance requirements for the award as applicable and will be applied on a case-by-case basis. Applicants are strongly encouraged to review award documents carefully before accepting a Federal award so they are fully aware of the relevant Standard Terms and Conditions as well as any Special Award Conditions that have been placed on the award.

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

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

UNIFORM ADMINISTRATIVE REQUIREMENTS, COST PRINCIPLES, AND AUDIT REQUIREMENTS. Through 2 C.F.R. § 1327.101, the Department of Commerce adopted Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards at 2 C.F.R. Part 200, which apply to awards in this program. Refer to http://go.usa.gov/SBYh and http://go.usa.gov/SBg4.

DOC TERMS AND CONDITIONS. Successful applicants who accept a NOAA award under this solicitation will be bound by Department of Commerce Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions. This document will be provided in the award package in NOAA's Grants Online system at http://www.ago.noaa.gov and at http://go.usa.gov/hKbj.

LIMITATION OF LIABILITY. Funding for programs listed in this notice is contingent upon the availability of appropriations. Applicants are hereby given notice that funds may not have been appropriated yet for the programs listed in this notice. In no event will NOAA or the Department of Commerce be responsible for proposal preparation costs. Publication of this announcement does not oblige NOAA to award any specific project or to obligate any available funds.

UNPAID OR DELINQUENT TAX LIABILITY. In accordance with Section 523 of Division B and Sections 744 and 745 of Division E of the Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act, 2015 (Pub. L. 113-235) or a future public law, an authorized representative of the selected applicant(s) will be required to provide certain pre-award representations regarding federal felony and federal criminal tax convictions, unpaid federal tax assessments, and delinquent federal tax returns. The form must be completed and submitted with grant applications for: (a) all for-profit and non-profit organization applicants (Part I, and if required, Part II); and (b) all non-Federal entity applicants anticipating receipt of $5 million or more in the current Federal Fiscal Year appropriated funding (Part II only). The form can be found at http://www.ago.noaa.gov/grants/forms.html.

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 NOAA Administrative Order 216-6A for NEPA, http://www.corporateservices.noaa.gov/ames/administrative_orders/chapter_216/216-6A.html, and the Council on Environmental Quality implementation regulations, http://energy.gov/sites/prod/files/NEPA-40CFR1500_1508.pdf. Consequently, as part of an applicant's package, and under its description of its program activities, applicants are required to provide detailed information on the activities to be conducted, locations, sites, species and habitat to be affected, possible construction activities, and any environmental concerns that may exist (e.g., the use and disposal of hazardous or toxic chemicals, introduction of non- indigenous species, impacts to endangered and threatened species, aquaculture projects, and impacts to coral reef systems). In addition to providing specific information that will serve as the basis for any required impact analyses, applicants may also be requested to assist NOAA in drafting an environmental assessment, if NOAA determines an assessment is required. Applicants will also be required to cooperate with NOAA in identifying feasible measures to reduce or avoid any identified adverse environmental impacts of their proposal. Failure to do so shall be grounds for not selecting an application.

In some cases if additional information is required after an application is selected, funds can be withheld by the Grants Officer under a special award condition requiring the recipient to submit additional environmental compliance information sufficient to enable NOAA to make an assessment on any impacts that a project may have on the environment.

REVIEW OF RISK. After applications are proposed for funding by the Selecting Official, the Grants Office will perform administrative reviews, including an assessment of risk posed by the applicant under 2 C.F.R. 200.205. These may include assessments of the financial stability of an applicant and the quality of the applicant's management systems, history of performance, and the applicant's ability to effectively implement statutory, regulatory, or other requirements imposed on non-Federal entities. Special conditions that address any risks determined to exist may be applied. Applicants may submit comments to the Federal Awardee Performance and Integrity Information System (FAPIIS) about any information included in the system about their organization for consideration by the awarding agency.

DATA SHARING PLAN. 1. Environmental data and information collected or created under NOAA grants or cooperative agreements must be made discoverable by and accessible to the general public, in a timely fashion (typically within two years), free of charge or at no more than the cost of reproduction, unless an exemption is granted by the NOAA Program. Data should be available in at least one machine-readable format, preferably a widely-used or open-standard format, and should also be accompanied by machine-readable documentation (metadata), preferably based on widely used or international standards.

2. Proposals submitted in response to this Announcement must include a Data Management Plan of up to two pages describing how these requirements will be satisfied. The Data Management Plan should be aligned with the Data Management Guidance provided by NOAA in the Announcement. The contents of the Data Management Plan (or absence thereof), and past performance regarding such plans, will be considered as part of proposal review. A typical plan should include descriptions of the types of environmental data and information expected to be created during the course of the project; the tentative date by which data will be shared; the standards to be used for data/metadata format and content; methods for providing data access; approximate total volume of data to be collected; and prior experience in making such data accessible. The costs of data preparation, accessibility, or archiving may be included in the proposal budget unless otherwise stated in the Guidance. Accepted submission of data to the NOAA National Centers for Environmental Information (NCEI) is one way to satisfy data sharing requirements; however, NCEI is not obligated to accept all submissions and may charge a fee, particularly for large or unusual datasets.

3. NOAA may, at its own discretion, make publicly visible the Data Management Plan from

funded proposals, or use information from the Data Management Plan to produce a formal metadata record and include that metadata in a Catalog to indicate the pending availability of new data.

4. Proposal submitters are hereby advised that the final pre-publication manuscripts of scholarly articles produced entirely or primarily with NOAA funding will be required to be submitted to NOAA Institutional Repository after acceptance, and no later than upon publication. Such manuscripts shall be made publicly available by NOAA one year after publication by the journal.

INDIRECT COST RATE - If an applicant has not previously established an indirect cost rate with a Federal agency they may choose to negotiate a rate with the Department of Commerce or use the de minimis indirect cost rate of 10% of 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: Lamar Revis, Grants Officer, NOAA Grants Management Division, 1325 East West Highway, 9th Floor, Silver Spring, MD 20910, or lamar.revis@noaa.gov.

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

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT (FOIA) - In the event that an application contains information or data that you do not want disclosed prior to award for purposes other than the evaluation of the application, mark each page containing such information or data with the words “Privileged, Confidential, Commercial, or Financial Information - Limited Use” at the top of the page to assist NOAA in making disclosure determinations. DOC regulations implementing the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), 5 U.S.C. 552, are found at 15 C.F.R. Part 4, which sets forth rules for DOC to make requested materials, information, and records publicly available under FOIA. The contents of funded applications may be subject to requests for release under the FOIA. Based on the information provided by the applicant, the confidentiality of the content of funded applications will be maintained to the maximum extent permitted by law.

NOAA SEXUAL ASSAULT AND SEXUAL HARASSMENT
a. If NOAA-operated, leased, or owned facilities are involved in any awards funded under

this announcement, such awards are subject to the NOAA Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment Prevention and Response Policy Applicable to Financial Assistance Awards Involving NOAA-Operated Facilities (May 2018) found at: http://www.ago.noaa.gov/grants/facilities_assault_policy.html.

b. If the use of a vessel(s) under NOAA contract, order, grant, or cooperative agreement is involved in any awards funded under this announcement where the non-Federal entity employees are anticipated to be crew members aboard the vessel(s), such awards are subject to the NOAA Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment Prevention and Response Policy Applicable to Financial Assistance Awards Involving the use of a Vessel(s) under NOAA Contract, Order, Grant, or Cooperative Agreement (May 2018) found at: http://www.ago.noaa.gov/grants/vessel_assault_policy.html.

C. Reporting

In accordance with the terms and conditions of the award, financial reports are to be submitted to the NOAA Grants Officer semiannually and Performance (technical) reports are to be submitted to the NOAA program officer annually. Near the end of each award year, NOAA will provide the CI with guidance on what information should be submitted as part of the annual performance report. This information will be used by NOAA to assess the quality of the research and provide NOAA with general information about the quality of activities at the CI, including how many students are participating, scientific output, and number of employees associated with the CI receiving NOAA support. Reports should be submitted electronically through NOAA's Grants Online system.

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 Federal Sub-award Reporting System (FSRS) available at https://www.fsrs.gov/ on all sub-awards over $25,000. Refer to 2 CFR Part 170.

Publications, Videos and Acknowledgement of Sponsorship. Publication of the results or findings of the funded award activities in appropriate professional journals, outreach materials, or press releases, and production of video or other media is encouraged as an important method of recording and reporting scientific information. These are also constructive means to expand access to federally funded research. The recipient is required to submit a copy of any publication to the funding agency, and when releasing information related to a funded project, include a statement that the project or effort undertaken was or is sponsored by NOAA Cooperative Institute Program. The recipient is also responsible for

assuring that every publication of material (including Internet sites and videos) based on or developed under an award, except scientific articles or papers appearing in scientific, technical or professional journals, contains the following acknowledgement and disclaimer: "This project received funding under award [number] from NOAA Cooperative Institute Program. The statements, findings, conclusions, and recommendations are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of NOAA." The final report is a public document and may be posted, partially or in its entirety, on the NOAA Cooperative Institute Program's website.

VII. Agency Contacts

Contact: Dr. Candice Jongsma
OAR Cooperative Institutes
1315 East-West Highway, Room 11350
Silver Spring, MD 20910
301-734-1177
Candice.Jongsma@noaa.gov

VIII. Other Information

Permits and Approvals

It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that all necessary Federal, state and local government permits and approvals for the proposed work to be conducted are obtained and effective before any research begins. Permits for proposed projects can be held by any formally and substantially involved collaborator, including a NOAA collaborator, provided the collaborator is receiving or providing resources associated with this announcement and related awards. Failure to apply for and/or obtain Federal, state, and local permits, approvals, letters of agreement, or failure to provide environmental analysis, when necessary, will eliminate any further consideration of a proposed project for funding.