

ANNOUNCEMENT OF FEDERAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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

Funding Opportunity Title: National Estuarine Research Reserve System (NERRS) Land Acquisition and Construction Program for Fiscal Year 2016

Announcement Type: Initial

Funding Opportunity Number: NOAA-NOS-OCM-2016-2004712

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 11.420, Coastal Zone Management Estuarine Research Reserves

Dates: Complete grant applications must be submitted by 11:59 p.m., Eastern Time, January 29, 2016

Funding Opportunity Description: The National Estuarine Research Reserve System (NERRS or System) consists of estuarine areas of the United States and its territories designated and managed for research and educational purposes. Each Reserve within the system is chosen to represent a different bio-geographic region and to include a variety of ecosystem types in accordance with the classification scheme of the national program as specified in 15 C.F.R. Part 921. By funding designated Reserve agencies and universities to conduct land acquisition and construction projects that support the NERRS mission, NOAA will strengthen protection of key land and water areas, enhance long-term protection of Reserve areas for research and education, and provide for facility and exhibit construction that meet the highest sustainable design standards possible.

NOAA anticipates approximately \$1.7 million in Fiscal Year 2016 will be available to designated lead Reserve agencies or universities in coastal states for approximately 1-10 construction and acquisition projects, from approximately \$20,000 to \$800,000 each and with project periods typically covering 12-36 months, depending on the availability of funds.

FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Program Objective

The National Estuarine Research Reserve System (NERRS or System) consists of estuarine areas of the United States and its territories designated and managed for research and educational purposes. Each Reserve within the system is chosen to represent a different bio-geographic region and to include a variety of ecosystem types in accordance with the classification scheme of the national program as specified in 15 C.F.R. Part 921. By funding designated Reserve agencies and universities to conduct land acquisition and construction projects that support the NERRS mission, NOAA will strengthen protection of key land and water areas, enhance long-term protection of Reserve areas for research and education, and provide for facility and exhibit construction that meet the highest sustainable design standards possible.

NOAA provides funding to designated Reserve agencies for acquiring additional property interests and for construction projects that serve to strengthen protection of reserve key land and water areas; to enhance long-term protection of reserve areas for research and education; and provide for facility and exhibit construction. Each Reserve supports a wide range of beneficial uses important to ecological, economic, recreational, and aesthetic values, which are dependent upon the maintenance of a healthy ecosystem. The sites provide habitats for a wide range of ecologically and commercially important species of fish, shellfish, birds, and other aquatic and terrestrial wildlife. Each Reserve has been designed to ensure its effectiveness as a conservation unit and as a site for long-term research and monitoring. In maintaining their effectiveness, the Reserves may find it necessary to expand their boundaries through strategically planned land acquisitions and/or to develop or enhance their reserve facilities, including their in-situ monitoring infrastructure, to meet the demands of research, monitoring, and education program objectives.

B. Program Priorities

Projects eligible for funding must be identified in construction and/or acquisition plans, within current NOAA approved reserve management plans, in compliance with 15 C.F.R. 921.13. Acquisition projects that involve the potential to invoke eminent domain are not eligible for funding. Construction projects must occur on land under adequate state control either through direct state ownership or pursuant to a long-term lease between the Reserve

and the land owner. See also the clarification on the meaning of adequate state control set out at 15 C.F.R. 921.30(d).

Construction and/or acquisition plans require the following information:

1. A construction plan must include general descriptions of proposed projects and general cost estimates. Sufficient information should be provided for both major and minor proposed construction projects to clearly articulate requirements in the initial phase of the project. See 15 C.F.R. 921.13(a)(6).

2. An acquisition plan must identify the ecologically key land and water areas of the Reserve, rank these areas according to their relative importance, describe the methods of acquisition, and include a strategy for establishing adequate long-term state control over these areas sufficient to provide protection for reserve resources to ensure a stable environment for research.

With the exception of lands to be acquired for reserve facility construction, priority will be given to projects that increase ecosystem resiliency and factor anticipated climate change effects. With regard to acquisition, priority will be given to those projects that address the following adaptation principles: (i) connecting habitats to facilitate habitat and species migrations; (ii) reducing existing stressors that hinder the ability of species or ecosystems to withstand climatic events; (iii) protecting key ecosystem features, e.g. keystone species or habitats; and (iv) maintaining diversity. With regard to construction projects, priority will be given to core facilities (National Estuarine Research Reserve Standard Reserve 2004) that are proposed in already disturbed areas outside of the 100 year flood zone and minimally disrupt the environment, conserve and protect water resources, incorporate sustainable design principles (National Estuarine Research Reserve Sustainable Design Guidelines), optimize energy performance and reduce the Reserve's overall carbon footprint and greenhouse gas emissions. Core facilities are those facilities that support the primary mission and goals of the Reserve and should be located near, and/or within, the reserve boundary, preferably in the designated buffer area of the Reserve.

Eligible costs associated with the priorities above include funds for administrative purposes related to acquisition and/or facility construction per 15 C.F.R. 921.81; see also 2 C.F.R. Part 200, Subpart E. Cost Principles [for Federal Awards]. Facility and acquisition planning alone may not constitute a proposal, but planning and administrative tasks may constitute up to 20% of facility and/or acquisition costs within the proposal. These planning efforts may address, among other things, evaluation of sustainable features appropriate for reserve future facility needs and associated maintenance.

Construction or acquisition projects identified in the approved management plan, including small scale projects to support monitoring infrastructure such as boardwalks and

monitoring platforms, as well as small scale habitat restoration activities associated with construction and acquisition, are eligible for funding per 15 C.F.R. 921.31. Per this announcement, funding may be proposed for preserving historic or culturally significant structures, preparing a site for facility construction or acquisition, installing an ecological demonstration project, restoring habitat impacted by construction activities, or for minor restoration or enhancement activities to improve properties being acquired (e.g., clearing of invasive species or hydrologic obstructions). No more than 20% of the total budget of a project budget (federal and matching share combined) may be applied to restoration activities associated with construction or acquisition projects.

C. Program Authority

Statutory authority for the NERRS Land Acquisition and Construction Program is established under Section 1461(e) of the Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA) 16 U.S.C. 1461 (e)

II. Award Information

A. Funding Availability

This funding opportunity announces that NOAA anticipates approximately \$1.7 million will available to designated reserve agencies or universities for construction and acquisition projects in fiscal year 2016. Depending on the availability of funds, NOAA anticipates funding approximately 1-10 projects. In the past, funding for land acquisition and construction awards has ranged in amount from approximately \$20,000 to \$800,000.

There is no guarantee that funds will be available to make awards for this federal funding opportunity or that any proposal will be selected for funding. If an applicant incurs any costs prior to receiving an award agreement signed by an authorized NOAA official, the applicant do so at their own risk of these costs not being included in a subsequent award. Proposal preparation costs shall not be included within the project application budget. In addition, NOAA and DOC will not be responsible for project costs if this program fails to receive funding. Recipients and sub-recipients are subject to all federal laws and agency policies, regulations, and procedures applicable to federal financial assistance awards. Applicants must be in compliance with all existing NOAA grants or cooperative agreements and otherwise eligible to receive federal awards in order to be considered for funding under this competition.

Publication of this announcement does not obligate NOAA to establish any specific partnership or to obligate available funds for partnership activities. There is no guarantee that funds will be available to make awards for this funding opportunity or that any proposal will be selected for funding. If an applicant incurs any costs prior to receiving an award agreement signed by an authorized NOAA official, it does so at its own risk of not being selected or of these costs not being included in a subsequent award. In no event will NOAA or the Department of Commerce be responsible for any proposal preparation costs. In addition, NOAA and DOC will not be responsible for any incurred project costs if this program fails to receive funding.

B. Project/Award Period

The performance period for FY 2016-funded projects is up to 36 months.

Applicants may submit applications covering a 12 to 36- month project period with anticipated start date(s) as early as July 1, 2016 or as late as November 1, 2016. The Federal share of project funding will be fully obligated at the time of award and subject to payment provisions in 2. C.F.R. 200.305 and further implementing award terms.

C. Type of Funding Instrument

NOAA anticipates issuing awards as grants.

III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants are NERRS lead state agencies or universities in coastal states including the Pacific, Gulf, Atlantic Coast and Great Lakes. Eligible applicants should meet requirements as stated in the NERRS regulations codified at 15 C.F.R. Part 921, which are available online at <http://www.nerrs.noaa.gov>.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement

The amount of federal funds requested must be matched by the applicant as follows: 30 percent total project match for construction awards and 50 percent total project match for land acquisition awards. Cash and third party in-kind contributions directly benefiting the project may be used to satisfy the matching requirements. If using previously acquired reserve land as match, a list of the banked match, and a description of the method of valuation of the cost consistent with 2 C.F.R. 200.306(d),(h), or (i) should be included in the

application. Applicants must identify all match sources and amounts equal to that requested above. Projects without match or with highly speculative match will not be considered (see Section V.A of this federal funding opportunity (FFO).

“Cost sharing or matching” is defined by 2 C.F.R. 200.29 as “the portion of project costs not paid by federal funds (unless otherwise authorized by federal statute).” NOAA will accept any shared costs or matching funds and all contributions, including cash and third party in-kind contributions of goods and services, will be accepted as part of an applications cost sharing or matching when they meet all of the following criteria listed in 2 C.F.R. 200.306.(b):

- (1) Are verifiable from the non-federal entity's records;
- (2) Are not included as contributions for any other federal award;
- (3) Are necessary and reasonable for accomplishment of project or program objectives;
- (4) Are allowable under Subpart E—Cost Principles of this part;
- (5) Are not paid by the federal Government under another federal award, except where the federal statute authorizing a program specifically provides that federal funds made available for such program can be applied to matching or cost sharing requirements of other federal programs;
- (6) Are provided for in the approved budget when required by the federal awarding agency; and
- (7) Conform to other provisions of this part, as applicable.

Matching funds may come from a variety of public and private sources and may include third party in-kind goods and services such as private boat use and volunteer labor. Goods and services provided by the recipient have the valuation described in 2 C.F.R. 200.306.

Federal agencies and employees’ in-kind services cannot be considered as part of an applicant’s matching funds, but can be described in the budget narrative to demonstrate additional leverage. Applicants are permitted to combine contributions from multiple non-federal partners in order to meet the 1:1 match requirement, consistent with the standards described in 2 C.F.R. 200.306, and if funds are available within the project period stated in the application.

Applicants should specify the source(s) of match in their proposal and detailed budget narrative and may provide or be asked to provide letters of commitment to confirm stated match contributions. Applicants whose proposals are selected for funding will be bound by the percentage of cost sharing reflected in the award document signed by the NOAA Grants

Officer. Successful applicants should be prepared to carefully document matching contributions, including the number of volunteer or community participation hours devoted to specific projects, and all other cash or third party in-kind contributions.

Applicants may choose to designate part or all of their federally-negotiated indirect costs as match. This may be convenient because the valuation of such costs has already been federally-approved and documentation is readily available. Refer to the “Indirect Costs” policies in Section IV B 12 and Section IV E of this announcement.

In addition, any Program Income that may arise in the project may be put toward cost sharing or added to the project, consistent with 2 C.F.R. 200.307.

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

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

In the case of a waiver request, the applicant should provide a detailed justification explaining the need for the waiver including attempts to obtain sources of matching funds, how the benefit of the project outweighs the public interest in providing match, and any other extenuating circumstances preventing the availability of match. Match waiver requests, including the appropriate justification, should be submitted as part of the final application. Please address the waiver request as described in Section IV B 11 of this announcement.

C. Other Criteria that Affect Eligibility

Eligible projects are those indicated in approved management plans per 15 C.F.R. 921.31. Construction projects must be proposed on land under adequate state control. Acquisition projects that involve the potential of invoking eminent domain are not eligible for funding.

IV. Application and Submission Information

A. Address to Request Application Package

The standard SF-424 application package is available online at <http://www.grants.gov>. If this is not feasible, application packages or program information may be requested from:

Nina Garfield of Office for Coastal Management at 301-563-1171 or
Nina.Garfield@noaa.gov.

B. Content and Form of Application

All application packages must contain the following components:

1. Federal forms

A complete standard NOAA financial assistance application package should be submitted in accordance with the guidelines in this document. Each application must include the application forms from the SF-424 form family:

- Application for Federal Assistance: Form SF-424 (7/03 version or newer)
- Budget Information for Non-Construction projects: Form SF-424A
- Assurance for Non-construction Projects: Form SF-424B
- Certification Regarding Lobbying: Form CD-511
- Disclosure of Lobbying Activities: Form SF-LLL (if applicable)
- Budget Information for Construction Projects: Form SF-424C
- Standard Assurances for Construction Projects: Form SF-424D

Forms may be accessed through the Grants.gov website. Please see Section C for submission guidelines. In addition and as applicable, applicants should submit an Indirect Cost Rate Agreement as described further in Section IV.B.5.e of this announcement.

All application materials should use a legible 11- or 12-point font with 1-inch margins on all sides. The complete package should total no more than 15 pages, not including the title page, a table of contents if one is included, necessary federal forms, or any appendices.

Appendices should be limited to materials that directly support the main body of the proposal (e.g., resumes, references, lists of relevant work products or reports, detailed methodologies, data sources, detailed budget information, letters of collaboration, letters of support, National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) information, lists of data sources, and maps). Applicants should paginate their proposal and any appendices. Appendices should not total more than 30 total pages excluding government forms, NEPA information, and information provided to complete government forms. Schematics such as maps, surveys, floor plans, etc. may be included as appendices that do not count against the 15 page limit.

Applications that exceed the 15-page limit will be shortened by removing pages at the end of the proposal narrative (element 3 below) before it is forwarded to merit reviewers for evaluation. Pages excised from lengthy applications will not be reviewed or considered.. Applications that are incomplete, unclear, or contain numerous typographical errors may not be understood effectively by reviewers, resulting in lower evaluation scores, so applicants are advised to review their application materials closely before they are submitted to the agency for consideration.

Please keep in mind that the total electronic file size of the proposal narrative and appendices combined shall not exceed 5 megabytes. Files that are larger than five megabytes may not be properly downloaded, uploaded, or received by the agency or the reviewers. Files that cannot be opened or downloaded will not be reviewed.

All applications should contain the following components:

1. Title page (Proposal Cover Sheet)
 - a. Project Title
 - b. Proposed project period (start and end dates)
 - c. Type of Project (i.e. land acquisition or construction)
 - d. Recipient name (must match registered name in DUNS)
 - e. Reserve Name
 - f. Recipient DUNS number (must match applicant information in Sam.gov)
 - g. Principal and other investigator and Financial Representative (names, organization, and contact information)
 - h. Financial representative (names, organization, and contact information)
 - i. Identify the following aspects of the project including the: i) region and specific area where the project will take place, ii) partners or technical networks that will be leveraged or created, if applicable; and iii) identification of the programmatic priority or priorities identified in the NERRS management plan and/or strategic plan applicable to the project
 - j. Funding type (grant)

2. Project summary. Provide a one to two-page summary of the proposed project. The summary must contain the following sections:

a. Project name/title

b. Requested funding by year (as appropriate) Brief project summary including objectives, expected results and intended benefits and outcomes, and, if applicable, a short description of partners and professional or technical networks that will be leveraged or created.

3. Project Description.

All project proposals should include the following sections:

a. Goal and Objective(s). Describe in the narrative the specific project goals and objectives to be achieved. Goals and objectives must be specific for each year of the work plan presented. Recipients will be required to submit semi-annual progress reports in which progress against these goals and objectives will be reported.

Sufficient detail should be provided to enable reviewers to evaluate the relevance and applicability of proposed work to program priorities described in Section I.B. of this announcement; to determine the technical/scientific merit of the proposed work; to adequately review the qualifications of the applicants; and to assess whether the proposed scope of work raises any concerns with regard to federal policy considerations, such as those related to the National Environmental Policy Act, Endangered Species Act, Historic Preservation Act, and Marine Mammal Protection Act.

b. Background. Provide sufficient background information for NOAA and non NOAA reviewers to independently assess the significance of the proposed project. Summarize the problem, gap or need that the proposal addresses, the relationship of the proposed work to other regional efforts, and the importance of the project to the reserve including specific reference and page number(s) within the current NOAA approved Reserve management plan summary of NOAA/NERRS funds provided for construction or acquisition from FY10-FY15 with summary of progress; and any reference to the project in a CZMA Section 312 evaluation.

c. Approach. Provide a work plan that: identifies specific tasks to be accomplished; explains the technical approach (including quality assurance) needed to accomplish the tasks; identifies the roles of partners and cooperators; and identifies potential obstacles to successful completion of the goals and objectives. The description should align with budget categories and fully explain the scope of work including preparatory work, planning, design elements, sustainable features, etc. The description should address how the project will be resilient to climate change and/or reflect climate change related outreach. For facility retrofits, a description of the cost savings and reduction in greenhouse gas emissions as a result of the sustainable design features should be included. See Section B. Program Priorities of this FFO. The work plan must clearly address data management requirements, and the steps to be taken to achieve efficient and effective data access and archive that is compliant with federal regulations. If the project includes federal partners, the roles and responsibilities of the federal partners must be clearly identified.

Provide detailed information on environmental concerns related to the activities to be conducted and locations, sites, species and habitat to be affected during and after the construction process (e.g., a description of the construction footprint and associated short and long-term impacts, 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). Note that as part of the National Environmental Policy Act, this information will be reviewed to determine whether a Categorical Exclusion or Environmental Assessment is required. If an assessment is required, applicants will be required to support development of the assessment and cooperate with NOAA in identifying and implementing feasible measures to reduce or avoid any identified adverse environmental impacts of the proposal

d. Milestone Schedule. Display time lines for major tasks, target milestones for important intermediate and final products, and key project outcomes.

4. Project Budget. Detailed budget guidance provided by the NOAA Grants Management Division is accessible under:

http://coast.noaa.gov/funding/_pdf/forms/budget-narrative-guidance-GMD-04.0

In order to allow reviewers to evaluate the appropriateness of all costs, applications should include a detailed budget narrative and a budget justification broken out by individual task. The budget narrative submitted with the final application should match the dollar amounts included on all required forms and clearly link to the project narrative. Please explain each calculation and provide a narrative justification to explain expenditures for each budget category. The budget narrative should describe, by category of expenditure, the total funding needed to accomplish the objectives described in the project narrative for the entire award period. Please explain how categorical costs are derived in sufficient detail to enable reviewers to determine if costs are 'allowable and reasonable' according to the cost principles referenced in 2 CFR part 200, Subpart E. Budget narrative categories should correspond to the standard object class categories listed in Section B of the SF-424A. For additional details, please review the budget guidance provided at:

http://coast.noaa.gov/funding/_pdf/forms/budget-narrative-guidance-GMD-04.09.2015.pdf

Applicants should include detailed budget information regarding all sub-awards, and indicate the basis for the cost estimates in the narrative. Describe project activities to occur and indicate the applicability or necessity of each to the project. Each identified sub-award should include form SF-424A. Detailed budget information includes:

- Name of identified qualified sub-recipient. Sub-recipient, affiliation, contact information, and method of selection. For "to be determined," describe plans for selection.
- Period of Performance. Include the dates for the performance period. If it involves a number of tasks, include the performance period for each task.
- Scope of Work. List and describe the specific activities or tasks to be performed.
- Criteria for Measuring Accountability. Include reporting schedule.
- Itemized Budget. Include categories used in program budget.

All sub-awards and contracts must be made consistent with the requirements of 2 CFR §§200.330-200.332 for subawards, and §§200.317-200.326 for procurements.

A contract does not need an SF-424A per se, but requires an itemized budget to include all the same categories on the SF-424A. Applicants shall not incorporate contractual indirect costs under the indirect costs line item for the applicant/granteee on the SF-424A or in the

budget narrative.

For any equipment, a description of the item and associated costs is required, including a description of how it will be used in the project. Equipment purchases also require a lease vs. purchase assessment. Note that equipment is defined as tangible personal property (including information technology systems) having a useful life of more than one year and a per-unit acquisition cost which equals or exceeds the lesser of the capitalization level established by the non-federal entity for financial statement purposes, or \$5,000. See 2 C.F.R. 200.33 Equipment, and see 2 CFR §200.313.

Non-federal applicants should identify, if this information is known when submitting the grant application, who they plan to request that NOAA transfer equipment or property ownership titles to after the project ends. The decision on grant ownership requests will be made by the Grants Officer during the grant closeout process.

The cost or price, purpose, and method of selection for identified and planned acquisition contracts should be thoroughly justified in the Budget Narrative. Describe products or services to be obtained and indicate the applicability or necessity of each to the project. Procurements are subject to policies described in 2 C.F.R. 200.317-326. For “to be determined,” describe plans for selection.

The budget narrative should also provide, to the extent possible, detailed information on travel, including costs, a description of anticipated travel, destinations, the number of travelers, and a justification of how the requested travel is directly relevant to the successful completion of the project. If actual trip details are unknown, applicants should state the basis for the proposed travel charges. Applicants should allocate travel funds for any coordination meetings at regional or national levels.

If a foreign air carrier is anticipated to be used for any portion of travel, prior approval is required under the Department of Commerce Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions, Section K.03.c., <http://go.usa.gov/3zVu9>, and therefore, such travel should be included in the proposal to avoid having to request prior approval after the project starts. Applicants may factor in travel costs for participation in an annual NOAA Grants Management Division workshop for recipients. See <http://go.usa.gov/3zVeH>.

Refer to item 13 below in this Section regarding treatment of Indirect Costs in the Budget Narrative.

Federal and non-federal costs per object class category identified in the NOAA grants package (Form SF 424-A and/or C) and a brief narrative justification of the budget including the source of match (50% for acquisition and 30% for construction). Administrative and/or planning costs up to 20% of the federal portion of the budget are allowable. Restoration costs up to 20% of the proposed project are allowed for restoration or enhancement associated with the proposed (See Section I.B of this FFO). Cost categories for construction include: project planning and design; administrative and legal expenses; architectural and engineering costs; project inspection fees; site work; demolition and removal costs; equipment costs; and other construction tasks breakdown such as structural (i.e., windows, doors, roofing, flooring), carpentry, plumbing, heating, electrical. For acquisition costs: personnel involved in the project; land acquisition fees; travel, equipment, supplies, and contractual. A detailed budget narrative that includes additional information regarding the use of funds for budget categories found in Form SF-424A must be included in an appendix. In this appendix, the budget narrative also shall clearly identify the cost of separable elements of the proposed work and shall identify the elements of the project prioritized for revision or elimination if sufficient funding is not available for all proposed activities. For any equipment, a description of the item and associated costs is required, including a description of how it will be used in the project.

5. Appendices

The following information should be included as appendices to the project description. Only material that is submitted as a single package will be reviewed. Appendices should be limited to materials that directly support the main body of the proposal (for example, detailed budget information, letters of collaboration, resumes, references, lists of data sources, and maps).

a. Mandatory detailed budget information, for example separate Forms SF-424A for each identified sub-award. Information must include the name and location (city, state, and Congressional district) of the entity receiving the funds and the location of the primary place of performance under the sub-award. Applicants should provide cost or price information to support acquisition contracts, which are subject to procurement policies and procedures in 2 C.F.R. 200.317-.326.

b. Résumés. Provide résumés of the Principal Investigator for the project and other key personnel critical to the success of the project that address qualifications relevant to conducting the proposed work. Please limit résumés to a maximum of two pages for each

key investigator.

c. Data Sharing Plan. Environmental data and information, collected and/or created under NOAA grants/cooperative agreements must be made visible, accessible, and independently understandable to general users, free of charge or at minimal cost, in a timely manner (typically no later than two years after the data are collected or created), except where limited by law, regulation, policy or by security requirements.

1. A Data/Information Sharing Plan of no more than two pages shall be required as part of the project narrative. A typical plan may include the types of environmental data and information 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; policies addressing data stewardship and preservation; procedures for providing access, data, and security; and prior experience in publishing such data. The Data/Information Sharing Plan will be reviewed as part of the Evaluation Criteria, Item 1.

2. The Data/Information Sharing Plan (and any subsequent revisions or updates) will be made publicly available at time of award and, thereafter, will be posted with the published data.

3. Failing to share environmental data and information in accordance with the submitted Data/Information Sharing Plan may lead to disallowed costs and be considered by NOAA when making future award decisions.

Principal Investigators must indicate how and when they have made their data accessible and usable by the community in the past.

NOAA's Administrative Order on the Management of Environmental Data Management and Information is available under:

http://www.corporateservices.noaa.gov/ames/administrative_orders/chapter_212/212-15.html

4. If no environmental data and information will be collected and or created under this grant, indicate this within the Project Narrative to satisfy the data sharing requirement.

d. National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) -- Under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), NOAA must analyze the potential environmental impacts of projects or proposals seeking funding from NOAA.

After the application is submitted, NOAA may require additional information to fulfill NEPA and other compliance requirements. If NOAA determines that an environmental assessment is required, applicants may also be requested to assist in drafting the assessment. Applicants may also be required to cooperate with NOAA in identifying and implementing feasible measures to reduce or avoid any identified adverse environmental impacts of their proposal. The failure to do so shall be grounds for the denial of an application. In some cases if additional information is required after an application is selected, funds can be withheld by the Grants Officer under a special award condition requiring the recipient to submit additional environmental compliance information sufficient to enable NOAA to make an assessment on any impacts that a project may have on the environment.

The applicants selected for funding must complete sections A, B, C, D, E, and F of the Environmental Compliance Questionnaire for National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Federal Financial Assistance Applicants (OMB Approval No.: 0648-0538) <http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/questionnaire.pdf> to provide detailed information on the activities to be conducted, locations, sites, species and habitat to be affected, possible construction activities, and any environmental concerns that may exist (e.g., the use and disposal of hazardous or toxic chemicals, introduction of non-indigenous species, impacts to endangered and threatened species, aquaculture projects, and impacts to coral reef systems). Sections G, and H are not required with the initial application because NOAA anticipates that most projects funded through this competition would not have impacts related to damage assessment and restoration or fisheries sampling and analysis.

Detailed information on NOAA compliance with NEPA can be found at the following NOAA NEPA website: <http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/> including NOAA Administrative Order 216-6 for NEPA, http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/NAO216_6.pdf and the Council on Environmental Quality implementation regulations http://ceq.hss.doe.gov/ceq_regulations/regulations.html or http://www.csc.noaa.gov/funding/_pdf/CEQ%20Regulations%20for%20Implementing%20the%20Procedural%20Provisions%20of%20NEPA.pdf?redirect=301ocm

e. Applicants requesting indirect costs must submit a copy of their current and signed indirect cost rate agreement with their application package, if available. If an award recipient has not previously established an indirect cost rate with a Federal agency, it may choose to use the de minimus indirect cost rate of 10% of Modified Total Director Costs as described in 2 C.F.R. 200.68 and 200.414, or it may negotiate a new rate with the

Department of Commerce. The negotiation and approval of a new rate is subject to the procedures required by the NOAA and the Department of Commerce. The U.S. Department of Commerce Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions require that within 90 days of the award start date, recipients submit documentation (indirect cost proposal, cost allocation, plan, etc.) necessary to perform the review to establish a new rate to the address listed below.

Lamar Revis, Grants Officer
NOAA Grants Management Division
1325 East West Highway
9th Floor
Silver Spring, MD 20910

f. Paperwork Reduction Act - This collection of information contains requirements subject to the Paperwork Reduction Act. The use of Forms SF- 424, SF- 424A, SF-424B, and SF-LLL has been approved by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) under the respective control numbers 0348-0040, 0348-0044, 0348-0043, and 0348-0046. Form CD-511 and CD-512 are also required by the DOC. Applicants shall not submit form CD-512 with their application package; this form must remain on file with the applicant only. Form SF-LLL is required only if lobbying activities are being reported; otherwise, this form shall remain on file with the applicant only and not with the federal program office. The NEPA Questionnaire has been approved by OMB under control number: 0648-0538.

This collection is further approved by OMB under control number: 0648-0121

Notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person is required to respond to, nor shall any person be subject to a penalty for failure to comply with, a collection of information subject to the requirements of the PRA unless that collection of information displays a currently valid OMB control number.

6. Standard Form 424: Application for Federal Assistance (7/2003 version or newer)

Applicants requesting Federal funding in this program must submit a copy of Standard Form SF-424, 'Application for Federal Assistance'. If a hard copy final application is submitted, it must be signed and dated by the organization's authorized representative, and used as the cover page for the final application. An electronic signature and date stamp will automatically be included on SF-424 forms submitted via Grants.gov.

7. Standard Form 424A: Budget Information for Non-construction Programs (include a separate form for each proposed sub-award of \$25,000 or more)

Applicants are required to submit a SF-424A Budget Form to summarize the budget for the proposed scope of work. The first column of sections A and B shows the federal funds requested, while the second column of sections A and B shows the non-federal matching funds provided for the project. Total award funding is shown in the final column of section B. Non-federal funding is broken out by source in section C. Forecasted cash needs in Section D should be inclusive of all funding for the project. Both federal and non-federal funds should be expended at a similar rate throughout the course of the project. Section E may be left blank. Section F summarizes the direct charges in line 21 and lists the indirect charges requested; please show the rate used in line 22. Please note that completion of the SF-424A form as described above represents NOAA's preference and may not be consistent with the instructions that accompany the SF-424A form. All budget figures should match the funding requested on the application cover sheet and correspond with the descriptions contained in the project and budget narratives.

The Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006 includes a requirement for awardees of applicable Federal grants to report information about first-tier subawards and executive compensation under Federal assistance awards issued in FY 2011 or later. All awardees of applicable grants and cooperative agreements are required to report to the Federal Subaward Reporting System (FSRS) available at www.FSRS.gov on all subawards over \$25,000. Please see the OMB guidance published at 2 C.F.R. Part 170 (2015), which can be accessed at
<http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CFR-2015-title2-vol1/pdf/CFR-2015-title2-vol1-part170>.

All subawards should also be accompanied by a separate SF-424A form to fully document the proposed subaward budget.

8. Standard Form 424B: Assurances for Non-Construction Programs

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

9. Standard Form CD-511: Certification Regarding Lobbying

Applicants are required to submit a form CD-511, 'Certifications Regarding Lobbying.'

10. Standard Form LLL Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (if applicable)

If applicable, applicants may be required to disclose certain lobbying activities described in form SF-LLL.

11. Permits and Approvals

It is the responsibility of the applicant to obtain all necessary federal, state, and local government permits and approvals for the proposed work. Applicants must provide a list of all known permits that will be required to perform the proposed work and an indication of the status of any permits needed (e.g., not yet applied, permit application submitted/pending, permit granted, etc.) or a statement indicating that no permits are necessary. You should include this required element even if permits are not required.

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

12. . Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (if applicable)

The proposed budget may include an amount for indirect or Facilities and Administrative costs if the applicant has an established indirect cost rate with the federal government. Indirect costs are essentially overhead costs for basic operational functions (e.g., utilities, rent, and insurance) that are incurred for common or joint objectives and, therefore, cannot be identified specifically within a particular project. See 2 C.F.R. 200.56-.57 and 200.412-.415.

A copy of the current, approved negotiated indirect cost agreement with the federal

Government should be included with the final application package. If an award recipient has never established an indirect cost rate with any federal agency, the recipient may request to use the de minimis rate described at 2 CFR 200.414. Non-federal entities that have never received a negotiated indirect (F&A) cost rate elect to charge a de minimis rate at 10% of modified total direct costs (MTDC). The de minimis indirect cost rate should be used for all federal awards. Non-federal entities may use this rate indefinitely, but may choose to negotiate an indirect (F&A) cost rate at any time. This de minimis rate option is not available to state and local governments, and Indian tribes.

If the applicant does not have a current negotiated rate and plans to establish a new negotiated indirect cost rate agreement, documentation necessary to establish a rate must be submitted within 90 days of receiving an award. See Section IV B 12 and Section IV E for more information on indirect cost rates and establishing a new indirect cost rate with the Department of Commerce.

In addition to the 13 standard elements described above, applicants may upload additional supporting documentation, such as the resumes and qualifications of applicants, and letters of support or statements of collaboration, by using the 'Optional Form' box under 'Other Attachments' in Grants.gov during the application submission process.

For applications submitted in electronic format, acceptable formats are limited to Adobe Acrobat (.PDF) or Microsoft Word files.

C. Submission Dates and Times

Applications submitted for funding under this competition must be (1) received and validated by Grants.gov; or (2) postmarked or provided to a delivery service that provides a tracking number and receipt on or before the deadline of 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time, on January 29, 2016.

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

January 29, 2016; private metered postmarks are unacceptable. Please address all mailed applications to: Nina Garfield, NOAA Office for Coastal Management, 1305 East West Highway, SSMC4, 10th floor, Silver Spring, MD 20910. Paper applications received more than 3 business days after the deadline will not be reviewed, and applicants submitting by paper are responsible for tracking their applications.

When developing your submission timeline, keep in mind the following information necessary to submit an application on Grants.gov: (1) a free annual registration process in the electronic System for Award Management (SAM) may take between three and five business days or as long as several weeks (see Section IV.F. of this Announcement), and (2) if you submit an application via Grants.gov you will receive a series of e-mail notifications for up to two business days before learning via validation or rejection whether NOAA has received your application.

D. Intergovernmental Review

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

E. Funding Restrictions

1. Indirect Costs

Applicants are permitted to request indirect costs if their organization has an established Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement with a federal agency that covers the period of the award. Applicants requesting indirect costs should submit a copy of their current and signed indirect cost rate agreement with their application package.

If an award recipient has not previously established an indirect cost rate with any federal agency, the recipient may request to use the de minimus rate described at 2 CFR 200.414, as described in Section IV.B.12 of this Announcement. Alternatively, the negotiation and approval of a new rate is subject to the procedures required by NOAA and the Department of Commerce. The U.S. Department of Commerce, Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions require that recipients within 90 days of the award start date, submit to the address listed below documentation (indirect cost proposal, cost allocation plan, etc.)

necessary to perform the review.

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

Indirect-cost-rate-agreement documentation is not required for sub-awardees, however indirect cost rates at the negotiated levels should be paid by the primary awardee. Under 2 C.F.R. § 200.414 “Indirect (F&A) Costs,” any applicant that has never received a negotiated indirect cost rate may elect to charge a de minimis rate of 10% of modified total direct costs which may be used indefinitely. Costs must be consistently charged as either indirect or direct costs, but may not be double charged or inconsistently charged as both pursuant to 2 C.F.R. § 200.403 “Factors affecting allowability of costs.” If chosen, this methodology once elected must be used consistently for all Federal awards until such time as a cooperator chooses to negotiate for a rate, which the non-federal entity may apply to do at any time. The negotiation and approval of a rate is subject to the procedures required by NOAA and the Department of Commerce Standard Terms and Conditions Section B.06.

2. Ineligible projects:

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

3. Cost Principles:

Funds awarded cannot necessarily pay for all the costs that the recipient might incur in the course of carrying out the project. Allowable costs are limited to costs necessary and reasonable to achieve the approved goals and objectives and are determined by reference to relevant Office of Management and Budget (OMB) requirements.

Recipients are subject to the 2 CFR 200, Subpart E “Cost Principles” and as well as any Department of Commerce implementing regulations that may be in effect at the time of

award. Generally, costs that are allowable include salaries, fringe benefits, travel, equipment, supplies, and training, as long as the costs are determined to be necessary, reasonable, and allocable to the award.

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F. Other Submission Requirements

The standard NOAA funding application package is available at www.grants.gov (Grants.gov); Potential funding applicants must register with Grants.gov before any application materials can be submitted. To use Grants.gov, applicant must have a Dun and Bradstreet Data Universal Number System (DUNS) number and be registered in the System for Award Management (SAM), and periodic renewals are required. Allow a minimum of five days to complete the SAM registration. (Note: Your organization's Employer Identification Number (EIN) will be needed on the application form.).

Applicants can receive a DUNS number at no cost by calling the dedicated toll-free DUNS Number request line at 1-866-705-5711 or online at <http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform>. An organization's one time registration or the renewal process may take up to three weeks or more to complete so allow sufficient time to ensure applications are submitted before the closing date.

The Grants.gov site contains directions for submitting an application, the application package (forms), and is also where the completed application is submitted. Applicants using Grants.gov must locate the downloadable application package for this solicitation by the Funding Opportunity Number or the CFDA number (11.420). Applicants 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.

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

review.

If use of Grants.gov is not feasible, one original set of the complete application and related SF-424 with original ink signature and date by the applicant's authorized representative shall be mailed to the attention of Nina Garfield at the NOAA Office for Coastal Management, 1305 East West Highway, SSMC4, 10th floor, Silver Spring, MD 20910. Mailed applications must include documentation to demonstrate that the application was submitted prior to the application deadline, such as an official U.S. Postal Service postmark; private metered postmarks are unacceptable. No email or fax copies will be accepted. Paper applications received more than 3 business days after the deadline will not be reviewed; applicants submitting by paper are responsible for tracking their applications. Proposal application packages, including all letters of collaboration and letters of support, shall be submitted together in one package.

No email or fax copies will be accepted. Application packages, including all letters of collaborations and any letters of support, shall be submitted together in one package.

Unique Entity Identifier and System for Award Management (SAM)

To enable the use of a universal identifier and to build the quality of information available to the public as required by the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act, 16 U.S.C. 6106 Note, to the extent applicable, any applicant 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 and will be subject to reporting requirements, as identified in OMB guidance published at 2 CFR Part 25 (<http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CFR-2015-title2-vol1/pdf/CFR-2015-title2-vol1-part25.pdf>), and 2 CFR Part 170 (<http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CFR-2015-title2-vol1/pdf/CFR-2015-title2-vol1-part170.pdf>).

Each applicant (unless the applicant is an individual or Federal awarding agency that is excepted from those requirements under 2 CFR §25.110(b) or (c), or has an exception approved by the federal awarding agency under 2 CFR §25.110(d)) is required to: (i) Be

registered in SAM before submitting its application; (ii) provide a valid unique entity identifier in its application; and (iii) continue to maintain an active SAM registration with current information at all times during which it has an active federal award or an application or plan under consideration by a federal awarding agency. A federal awarding agency may not make a federal award to an applicant until the applicant has complied with all applicable unique entity identifier and SAM requirements and, if an applicant has not fully complied with the requirements by the time the federal awarding agency is ready to make a federal award, the federal awarding agency may determine that the applicant is not qualified to receive a federal award and use that determination as a basis for making a federal award to another applicant.

The Grants.gov site contains directions for submitting an application, the application package (forms), and is also where the completed application is submitted. Applicants using Grants.gov must locate the downloadable application package for this solicitation by the Funding Opportunity Number or the CFDA number (11.420). Applicants 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.

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

If use of Grants.gov is not feasible, one original set of the complete application and related SF-424 with original ink signature and date by the applicant's authorized representative shall be mailed to the attention of Nina Garfield at the NOAA Office for Coastal Management, 1305 East West Highway, SSMC4, 10th floor, Silver Spring, MD 20910. Mailed applications must include documentation to demonstrate that the application was submitted prior to the application deadline, such as an official U.S. Postal Service postmark; private metered postmarks are unacceptable. No email or fax copies will be accepted. Paper applications received more than 3 business days after the deadline will not be reviewed; applicants submitting by paper are responsible for tracking their applications.

Proposal application packages, including all letters of collaboration and letters of support, shall be submitted together in one package.

No email or fax copies will be accepted. Application packages, including all letters of collaborations and any letters of support, shall be submitted together in one package.

V. Application Review Information

A. Evaluation Criteria

Reviewers will assign scores to proposals ranging from 0 to 100 points based on the following evaluation criteria and respective weights specified below. Applications that address the issues contained in these criteria are likely to be more competitive.

1. Importance and/or relevance and applicability of proposed project to the program goals (30 points): This ascertains whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and/or relevance to NOAA, federal, regional, state, or local activities. For this competition, this includes whether this project is identified as a priority in the approved reserve management plan or the last CZMA Section 312 evaluation of the Reserve and is relevant to meeting NERRS national priorities. Planned core facilities projects are given a higher score than those facilities not deemed as core. This criterion is used to evaluate whether the project is appropriate under the definition of acquisition (as described in Section 1461 (e)(A)(i) of the CZMA (16 U.S.C. 1461(e)(A)(i)), which states that funding will be provided for purposes of acquiring such lands and waters, and any property interests therein, as are necessary to ensure the appropriate long-term management of an area as a national estuarine Reserve) and/or construction (construction or enhancement of facilities or exhibits, or associated infrastructure (as defined in Section I of this FFO)). A higher score will be given to projects clearly within the definitions. Those projects outside of the definition will rank lower (e.g., projects for routine structural maintenance, vessels used as floating classrooms, and boats capable of being routinely transported from land to water are outside the definition and would rate lower).

2. Technical/scientific merit (30 points): 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. For this competition, this criterion is used to assess the opportunity gained by funding this project now and/or lost by not funding it now (e.g., availability of match or additional construction or land acquisition funds; option on a parcel

of land; protection of a critical resource). Projects of greater immediacy are given a higher score. This criterion relates to whether the applicant is able to undertake the project. This criterion is used to determine how far along the recipient is in the acquisition process (e.g., contact with landowners, negotiations, title options) or the planning process for facilities construction (plans, design, etc.). Projects that can reasonably be expected to be completed during the proposed project award period will score higher. For acquisition projects, the type of acquisition being proposed (fee-simple, easement, etc.) should provide adequate state control of the property to be included in the Reserve and increase the resiliency of the reserve ecosystem. For construction projects, those that have minimal impact to sensitive resources and incorporate sustainable features and/or construction techniques in core facilities will score higher. These include projects that demonstrate efforts to: optimize energy performance; protect and conserve water; enhance indoor environmental quality; or reduce the environmental impacts of materials. Examples of sustainable efforts:

- Optimize Energy Performance

The proposed project: (a) improves energy efficiency and reduces greenhouse gas emissions of current or proposed structures, through reduction of energy intensity or through the use of renewable energy; and (b) to the extent feasible, implements renewable energy generation projects on its property.

- Protect and Conserve Water

The project reduces indoor or outdoor water consumption.

- Enhance Indoor Environmental Quality

The project employs low-emitting materials (such as materials and products with low pollutant emissions).

- Reduce the Environmental Impact of Materials

The project: (a) uses materials with recycled content or bio-based content; (b) minimizes construction waste; (c) uses paper of at least 30 percent post-consumer fiber content; (d) reduces the quantity of hazardous chemicals and materials acquired, used, or disposed of by the facility, (e) increases diversion of solid waste as appropriate, and (f) maintains cost effective waste prevention and recycling programs at the facility.

To the extent, relevant, NOAA assesses whether this project provides a focused and effective education and outreach strategy regarding NOAA's mission to protect the National's natural resources. However, no points are assigned to an education strategy, or deducted if no education strategy is omitted.

3. Overall qualifications of funding applicants (25 points): This criterion ascertains whether the funding applicant possesses the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources, accomplish the project. This criterion is used to assess how the individual Reserve performed in general (based on performance reports, CZMA Section 312 evaluations, previous or ongoing projects, etc.) and if they can support the project and have done so in the past by supplying the required match amounts (50/50 for acquisition projects and 70/30 for construction projects). Reserves with solid operating performance and a full complement of core staff (manager, education coordinator, and research coordinator) will generally be given a higher score than those without those items. Performance in completing past construction and acquisition projects will be considered. An exception may be where a particular construction or acquisition project is necessary to conduct core program activities. New Reserves need to demonstrate that they have, or have access to, the necessary capabilities and capacities to complete the project. An applicant is only qualified to submit a proposal if they have an approved current management plan and adhere to eligibility requirements.

4. Project costs (15 points): This criterion evaluates the budget to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time-frame. This criterion is used to determine whether the cost estimates and budget are reasonable, realistic, and cost-effective for the proposed project. Higher evaluation scores will be given to projects that have realistic budgets and demonstrate cost-sharing by the project proponent. Projects without or with highly speculative match will not be considered. Applicants must identify necessary match (50/50 for acquisition; 70/30 for construction) and its source and that it will be available at the time the award will be made.

B. Review and Selection Process

An initial administrative review is conducted on each application to assure that it is timely, responsive, and complete. NOAA, in its sole discretion, may continue the review process for applications with non-substantive issues that may be easily rectified or cured. Applications that meet the minimum requirements will be reviewed by at least three independent peer reviewers during a merit-based review and ranking process. Appropriate mechanisms will be implemented to avoid potential conflicts of interest during the proposal review process. Each reviewer will be asked to individually evaluate and rank proposals using the weighted evaluation criteria above. Proposal evaluations will be based exclusively on information included in the application. Merit reviewer ratings will be used to produce a

rank order of the proposals.

The Selecting Official or their designee may negotiate the funding level or other major aspects of the proposal, and the Selecting Official will make the final recommendation for award based on the rank order and selection factors below to the Grants Officer, who is authorized to obligate Federal funding and execute the award.

NOAA may select all, some, or none of the applications, or part of any application, ask applicants to work together or combine projects, defer applications to the future, or reallocate funds to different funding categories, to the extent authorized.

Please note that not all activities submitted under a single proposal may be deemed appropriate for funding, and the Selecting Official may recommend alternate activities as appropriate or only partial funding, based on the selection factors and the merit and/or panel review written evaluations. For a proposal to be selected for funding, the applicant may be asked to modify objectives and activities, work plans, and budgets, and to provide supplemental information required by the agency prior to the award. This may result in submission of a revised application before final funding decisions are made. The exact amount of funds to be awarded, the final scope of activities, the project duration, and other relevant application details will be determined in pre-award negotiations among the applicant, NOAA GMD, and Office for Coastal Management officials. Applicants should also note that modifications to projects may be necessary as a result of NOAA's efforts to comply with NEPA and other legislation.

The NOAA Grants Officer will review financial and grants administration aspects of a proposed award, including conducting an assessment of the risk posed by the applicant in accordance with 2 C.F.R. 200.205. In addition to reviewing repositories of government-wide eligibility, qualifications or financial integrity information, the risk assessment conducted by NOAA may consider items such as the financial stability of an applicant, quality of the applicant's management systems, an applicant's history of performance, previous audit reports and audit findings concerning the applicant and the applicant's ability to effectively implement statutory, regulatory, or other requirements imposed on non-Federal entities. Applicants should be in compliance with the terms of any existing NOAA grants or cooperative agreements and otherwise eligible to receive Federal awards, or make arrangements satisfactory to the Grants Officer, to be considered for funding under this competition. All reports due should be received and any concerns raised by the agency should be timely addressed in order to receive a new award. Upon review of these factors, if appropriate, specific award conditions that respond to the degree of risk may be applied by the NOAA Grants Officer pursuant to 2 C.F.R. 200.207. In addition, NOAA reserves the right to reject an application in its entirety where information is uncovered that raises a significant risk with respect to the responsibility or suitability of an applicant. The final approval of selected applications and issuance of awards will be by the NOAA Grants

Officer. The award decision of the Grants Officer is final and there is no right of appeal.

When a decision has been made (whether an award or declination), anonymous copies of mail merit review comments or summaries of panel deliberations, can be made available to the applicant upon request.

C. Selection Factors

The final panel ratings shall provide a rank order to the Selecting Official for final funding recommendations. The competition manager will 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 project types
3. Whether this project duplicates other projects funded or considered for funding by NOAA or other Federal agencies
4. Program priorities and policy factors as described in section I.B of this federal funding opportunity.
5. Applicant s prior award performance: Unsatisfactory performance by a recipient under prior Federal awards may result in an application not being considered for funding.
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 Grants Officer.

The Selecting Official or designee may negotiate the funding level of the proposal.

D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

Successful applicants will be notified in approximately March 15, 2016. The anticipated start date for grants made under this competition is between July 1, 2016 and November 1, 2016, dependent on funding availability, acceptable completion of all NOAA/applicant negotiations including NEPA and environmental compliance analysis and permit requirements, and the provision of other supporting documentation as requested.

Unsuccessful applicants will be notified by e-mail that their application was not recommended for funding after the final section package has been approved by the NOAA Grants Management Division, which is expected to be approximately March 22, 2016. Unsuccessful applications submitted to this competition will be retained for a period of up to 12 months and then destroyed.

VI. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notices

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

The official notice of award is the Standard Form CD-450, Financial Assistance Award, issued by the NOAA Grants Officer Electronically through NOAA's electronic grants management system, Grants Online. The CD-450 award cover page is available at <http://go.usa.gov/SNMR>. The Internet Explorer browser should be used with Grants Online.

The Department of Commerce Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions will apply to awards in this program. A current version of this document is available at <http://go.usa.gov/hKbj>. These terms will be provided in the award package in Grants Online at <http://www.ago.noaa.gov>.

In addition, award documents provided by NOAA may contain special award conditions limiting the use of funds for activities that have outstanding environmental compliance

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

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

1. Pre-Award Notice

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 Announcement and may be accessed online at <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2014-12-30/pdf/2014-30297.pdf>.

2. Uniform Administrative Guidance

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

3. Limitation of Liability

There is no guarantee that funds will be available to make awards for this federal funding opportunity or that any proposal will be selected for funding. Applicants are hereby given notice that funds have not yet been appropriated for the competition described in this notice and are advised that the competition described herein may be subject to cancellation due to unavailability of funding or revision of agency priorities. Publication of this announcement does not obligate NOAA to award funding for specific projects or obligate available funds.

If an applicant incurs any costs prior to receiving an award agreement signed by the NOAA, Grants Management Division, Grants Officer, it does so at its own risk of not receiving an award or of these costs not being included in a subsequent award. In no event

will NOAA or the Department of Commerce be responsible for any proposal preparation costs.

Recipients and sub-recipients are subject to all federal laws and agency policies, regulations, and procedures applicable to federal financial assistance awards.

Publication of this announcement does not oblige NOAA to award any specific project, obligate any available funds, or provide special fishing privileges.

Funded awards are subject to enforcement and termination provisions under 2 C.F.R. 200.338-.342.

4. National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

See the NEPA information in Section IV. B of this Announcement.

5. Unpaid or delinquent tax liability

In accordance with current Federal appropriations law, NOAA will provide a successful corporate applicant a form to be completed by its authorized representative making a certification regarding whether the corporation has Federally-assessed unpaid or delinquent tax liability or recent felony criminal convictions under any Federal law.

6. Permits and Approvals

It is the responsibility of the applicant to obtain all necessary Federal, state, and local government permits and approvals for the proposed work. For work within National Marine Sanctuaries, National Parks, National Seashores, and other Federally-designated protected areas, it is the responsibility of the applicant to request and obtain any necessary permits or letters of agreement from the appropriate government agencies prior to commencement of an award.

Applicants are expected to design their proposals so that they minimize potential adverse impact on the environment. If applicable, documentation of requests or approvals of environmental permits should be included in the proposal package.

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

7. NERRS Regulations

The provisions of this Announcement implement NERRS regulations at 15 C.F.R. Part 921, and a corresponding Federal Register Notice will not be issued. In addition, references in NERRS regulations to Commerce regulations at 15 C.F.R. 14 and 24 are superseded by Commerce implementation of 2 C.F.R. Part 200 through 2 C.F.R. 1327.101.

8. Confidentiality and Access to Information

Application materials may be considered public documents and may be released to individuals outside the agency pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act. The CRCP reserves the right to share application materials with relevant individuals and organizations as authorized for the purposes of improved coordination and collaboration. However, the Office for Coastal Management will not ordinarily release the names of applicants submitting proposals unless ordered by a court or requested to do so by an appropriate NOAA official and administrative protocol. Applicants can use a NOAA public search feature to find out information about NOAA awards <<https://grantsonline.rdc.noaa.gov/flows/publicSearch/begin.do>> or go through the Freedom of Information Act process to request more information about grant competitions. More information about the NOAA FOI process is online at <http://www.noaa.gov/foia/>. Department of Commerce regulations implementing FOIA are found at 15 C.F.R. Part 4, Public Information. These regulations set forth rules for the Department regarding making requested materials, information, and records publicly available under the FOIA. Applications submitted in response to this FFO may be subject to requests for release under the Act. In the event that an application contains information or data that the applicant deems to be confidential commercial information which is exempt from disclosure under FOIA,

that information should be identified, bracketed, and marked as Privileged, Confidential, Commercial or Financial Information. Based on these markings, the confidentiality of the contents of those pages will be protected to the extent permitted by law.

C. Reporting

Award recipients will be required to submit financial and performance (technical) progress reports consistent with 2 C.F.R. 200.327-.329 and Department of Commerce Standard Terms and Conditions electronically through NOAA's electronic grants management system, Grants Online. Performance reports must be submitted on a semi-annual schedule no later than 30 days following the end of each 6- month period from the start date of the award. Financial reports must be submitted every 6 months by the end of April and October during the period of the award in accordance with the Department of Commerce Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions. NOAA will provide instructions for submitting financial and progress reports upon request.

A comprehensive final report is due 90 days after the award expiration date along with copies of all products developed under the award. Copies of all materials (including but not limited to brochures, posters, videos, DVDs, publications, reports, management plans, public service announcements, workshop proceedings, etc.) produced through the award, along with copies of any reports submitted by subcontractors as part of the award, must be provided to the program office within 90 days of the end of the award. Except where limited by law, regulation, policy or security, recipients are requested to include a statement on the front page of all products to indicate the material is "Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited." If the applicant has requested publication costs, resulting journal publications must be made available to the public free of charge.

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

The Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act, 31 U.S.C. 6106 Note, includes a requirement for awardees of applicable Federal grants to report information about first-tier subawards and executive compensation under Federal assistance awards issued in

FY 2011 or later. All awardees of applicable grants and cooperative agreements are required to report to the Federal Subaward Reporting System (FSRS) available at www.FSRS.gov on all subawards over \$25,000.

If equipment or tangible personal property is purchased with grant funds, applicants shall submit an inventory in accordance with relevant OMB requirements. The program office recommends that if the equipment is no longer needed, recipients are encouraged to request disposition instructions for equipment approximately 150 days before the project period ends to allow sufficient time to have equipment disposition requests addressed before a project ends. Equipment disposition instructions typically require that recipients complete an "other" award action request in Grants Online. NOAA will provide instructions for disposition in accordance with 2 C.F.R. Part 200.

As applicable, the recipient must report on real property annually and at award closeout, by completing Form SF-429 (Real Property Status Report).

VII. Agency Contacts

For administrative and technical questions regarding the program and application process, please contact Nina Garfield, program coordinator, at NOAA/Office for Coastal Management, 1305 East-West Highway, SSMC4, 10th Floor, Silver Spring, MD 20910 or via phone: 301-563-1171, email: contact.Nina.Garfield@noaa.gov. The program website can be accessed at coast.noaa.gov. or Erica Seiden at (301) 563-1172 or at Erica.Seiden@noaa.gov.

VIII. Other Information

There is no guarantee that funds will be available to make awards for this Federal funding opportunity or that any proposal will be selected for funding. If an applicant incurs any costs prior to receiving an award agreement signed by an authorized NOAA official, they do so at their own risk of these costs not being included in a subsequent award. In no event will NOAA or the Department of Commerce be responsible for any proposal preparation costs. In addition, NOAA and DOC will not be responsible for proposal or project costs if this program fails to receive funding. Recipients and sub-recipients are subject to all federal laws and agency policies, regulations, and procedures applicable to federal financial assistance awards. Applicants must be in good standing with all existing NOAA grants and/or cooperative funding agreements in order to receive funds under this announcement.

The NOAA program office reserves the right to immediately halt activity under the award if the recipient fails to fulfill the requirements of the project as described in the final negotiated application submitted to the agency. Non-compliance may result in termination of the award.

The Office for Coastal Management will not release the names of applicants submitting proposals unless ordered by a court or requested to do so by an appropriate NOAA official and administrative protocol. Applicants can use a NOAA public search feature to find out information about NOAA awards

<<https://grantsonline.rdc.noaa.gov/flows/publicSearch/begin.do> > or go through the Freedom of Information Act process to request more information about grant competitions. More information about the NOAA FOI process is online at www.noaa.gov/foia/

Department of Commerce regulations implementing FOIA are found at 15 C.F.R. Part 4, Public Information. These regulations set forth rules for the Department regarding making requested materials, information, and records publicly available under the FOIA.

Applications submitted in response to this FFO may be subject to requests for release under the Act. In the event that an application contains information or data that the applicant deems to be confidential commercial information which is exempt from disclosure under FOIA, that information should be identified, bracketed, and marked as Privileged, Confidential, Commercial or Financial Information. Based on these markings, the confidentiality of the contents of those pages will be protected to the extent permitted by law.

Please be advised that potential funding applicants must register with Grants.gov before any application materials can be submitted. An organization's one-time registration process may take up to three weeks to complete so please allow sufficient time to ensure applications are submitted before the closing date. To use Grants.gov, applicants must have a Dun and Bradstreet Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number and be registered in the Central Contractor Registry (CCR). Allow a minimum of five days to complete the CCR registration. (Note: Your organization's Employer Identification Number (EIN) will be needed on the application form.)

The Grants.gov site contains directions for submitting an application, the application package (forms), and is also where the completed application is submitted. Applicants using Grants.gov must locate the downloadable application package for this solicitation by the Funding Opportunity Number or the CFDA number (11.420). Applicants 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 use of grants.gov is not feasible, one set of originals (signed) and an electronic copy of the proposal and related forms shall be mailed to the attention:

Nina Garfield

NOAA Office for Coastal Management

1305 East West Highway, room 10650

Silver Spring, MD 20910

If possible submit applications electronically via grants.gov.