

## FY2019 Marine Debris Removal

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## 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: FY2019 Marine Debris Removal

Announcement Type: Initial

Funding Opportunity Number: NOAA-NOS-ORR-2019-2005796

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 11.999, Marine Debris Program

Dates: Full proposals must be received and validated by Grants.gov, postmarked, or provided to a delivery service on or before 11:59 p.m. Eastern time, October 29, 2018. Applications may be mailed, but applications not adhering to postmark or submission deadlines will be rejected without further consideration.

Funding Opportunity Description: The NOAA Marine Debris Program, authorized in the Marine Debris Act, codified at 33 U.S.C. 1951-1958, supports the development and implementation of locally-driven, marine debris prevention, assessment, and removal projects that benefit coastal habitat, waterways, and NOAA trust resources. Projects awarded through this grant competition will create long-term, quantifiable ecological habitat improvements for NOAA trust resources through on-the-ground marine debris removal activities, with priority for those targeting derelict fishing gear and other medium- and large-scale debris. Projects should also foster awareness of the effects of marine debris to further the conservation of living marine resource habitats, and contribute to the understanding of marine debris composition, distribution and impacts.

Successful proposals through this solicitation will be funded through cooperative agreements. Funding of up to \$2,000,000 is expected to be available for Marine Debris Removal grants in Fiscal Year 2019. Typical awards will range from \$50,000 to \$150,000. Funding for this grant competition comes through the NOAA Marine Debris Program as appropriations to the Office of Response and Restoration, National Ocean Service.

## FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

## I. Funding Opportunity Description

## A. Program Objective

Marine debris is defined as "any persistent solid material that is manufactured or processed and directly or indirectly, intentionally or unintentionally, disposed of or abandoned into the marine environment or the Great Lakes" (15 C.F.R. § 909.1). Marine debris can include land-based solid waste items such as plastic bags, cigarette butts, foam take-out containers, or balloons, as well as ocean-based items such as derelict fishing gear and abandoned vessels. Marine debris is primarily the result of human actions such as ineffective or improper waste management, dumping and littering, or storm water runoff. Fishing gear may be lost from storms or accidents and become marine debris. There are many adverse impacts from marine debris, including wildlife injury and death from entanglement or ingestion, exposure to toxic chemicals which attach to or are in plastics, habitat destruction, vessel damage, and economic loss to tourism, fisheries and maritime activities.

The NOAA Marine Debris Program (MDP), a division of the Office of Response and Restoration, leads national efforts to address marine debris. The mission of the NOAA MDP is to investigate and prevent the adverse impacts of marine debris. A principal objective of the NOAA MDP in carrying out this mission is to provide financial and technical assistance to organizations with the expertise to identify, evaluate, and execute marine debris removal projects. The activities supported by this solicitation develop impactful, community-driven and cost-effective projects that improve living marine resource habitats through the removal of marine debris. These activities align with NOAA's mission to conserve and manage coastal and marine ecosystems and resources, and promote stewardship and a conservation ethic for NOAA trust resources.

NOAA trust resources are living marine resources and their habitats, including commercial and recreational fishery resources (marine and Great Lakes fish and shellfish); coastal habitats; diadromous fish species; endangered and threatened marine species; marine mammals and marine turtles; marshes, mangroves, seagrass beds, coral reefs, other coastal habitats; Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) and Habitat Areas of Particular Concern (HAPCs). NOAA trust resources can also include marine habitats and resources associated with National Marine Sanctuaries, National Estuarine Research Reserves and areas under state coastal management programs, including Areas of Concern within the Great Lakes.

A second objective of the NOAA MDP is to promote marine debris awareness, prevention

and tangible project outcomes by collaborating with diverse entities and groups. These include partnerships with public and nonprofit organizations, citizen and watershed groups, anglers, boaters, industry (e.g. the commercial fishing industry, the aquaculture industry, fishing gear manufacturers, other marine industries, and the plastics and waste management industries), corporations and businesses, youth conservation corps, students, landowners, academics, and local, state, and federal government agencies.

## B. Program Priorities

The highest program priorities for this solicitation are the detection and removal of derelict fishing gear and the removal of medium- to large-scale marine debris that have a negative impact on NOAA trust resources and important habitat areas. Derelict fishing gear includes, but is not limited to, such items as abandoned crab or lobster pots/traps, fishing nets, and synthetic (e.g., monofilament, polypropylene) line. Medium and large-scale debris are items that generally cannot be manually removed by an individual. Such projects must comply with applicable federal and state laws regarding handling and ownership.

Other priority activities include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Proposals that pair removal activities with technically-sound, cost-effective habitat monitoring that measures the benefits of debris removal to NOAA trust resources. This includes pre- and post-removal monitoring of the removal site, and should include information on the areal extent and habitat types impacted by the debris, objective measures of ecosystem health in and around the removal site, species impacts and mortality rates, length of time debris will cause impacts if not removed, or other additional data the NOAA MDP may require. Such monitoring projects may receive higher priority under this funding opportunity.
- Abandoned / derelict vessel (ADV) removal and associated vessel debris removal activities. Proposals for ADV removal activities must demonstrate direct benefits to the aforementioned habitats. Proposals should also identify specific vessels or discrete target removal areas and utilize existing prioritized inventories of derelict vessels such as those maintained by state regulatory agencies. Proposals with an ADV removal component should indicate that a search for responsible parties, such as the vessel's owner, has been conducted and that no acceptable responsible party exists. Recreational or commercial vessels are applicable under this funding opportunity. More information on ADV removal may be found at NOAA's ADV InfoHub (<https://marinedebris.noaa.gov/discover-issue/types-and-sources/abandoned-and-derelict-vessels>)
- Detection and removal of debris resulting from hurricanes or other natural disasters.

- Detection and removal of legacy aquaculture debris. Legacy aquaculture debris removal proposals should indicate that a search for responsible parties (such as the property's current or former owner) has been conducted and that no acceptable responsible party exists.
- Shoreline or riparian cleanup projects should be coupled with a comprehensive outreach program, monitoring program, or volunteer involvement that aims to reduce or prevent future accumulation of marine debris. Such projects may include cleanups of shoreline litter, as well as timed, targeted watershed "hot spot" cleanups to prevent seasonal debris inundation into sensitive habitats used by NOAA trust resources. Such projects will be considered a priority only if there is a strong link to NOAA trust resource impacts. For shoreline removal activities, the NOAA MDP has developed standardized marine debris shoreline survey protocols to facilitate regional and site-specific comparisons of debris loads. If a proposal has a shoreline cleanup component, applicants should contact the NOAA MDP to discuss whether it would be appropriate to incorporate NOAA MDP monitoring and data collection protocols, which are posted at <http://marinedebris.noaa.gov/research/marine-debris-monitoring-and-assessment-project>.
- Derelict piling removal projects should have a meaningful benefit to NOAA trust resources or have a strong debris impact-related reason supporting removal (e.g., derelict pilings that snag marine debris and add to the impact of this debris in that area or pilings that are breaking up and generating more debris). Such projects will be considered a priority only if there is a strong link to NOAA trust resource impacts, there is landowner and/or regulatory permission to conduct the removal, and the removal is one component of a greater marine debris removal proposal or are recognized as a priority through a regional prioritization process. Piling removal proposals should indicate that a search for responsible parties (such as the property's current or former owner) has been conducted and that no acceptable responsible party exists.

Strong proposals will integrate innovative, sustainable approaches to disposal of debris (i.e. re-use, recycling, energy recovery, use of open shipping capacity to reduce transport costs (also known as "backhauling"), partnering with local waste management companies, etc.). NOAA may consider the disposal methodology and whether these types of sustainable disposal options are integrated into the project as a selection factor when making final funding recommendations.

Prevention, outreach, education, volunteer activities and data collection are important aspects of debris removal projects. Proposals are encouraged to include such activities as project components, but they should not be the main focus of the project - proposals that

focus mainly on prevention through education and outreach are not a priority for this competition. These activities should be tied to, and include substantial interaction with the targeted user groups prioritized in Section I. A. For outreach activities in general, applicants are encouraged to incorporate existing outreach and educational resources into their projects, including those available for download at <http://www.marinedebris.noaa.gov/resources>. Similarly, proposals may include any associated habitat restoration costs that may be needed, however such costs must be minimal and directly address habitat impaired by debris removed under the project.

Projects taking place in Sanctuaries, Reserves, or other protected areas (as described in Section I.A above) may receive greater consideration for funding in this competition. However, projects are not limited to these areas and may even take place in remote or urbanized areas. Despite project location, all proposals must have a primary emphasis on removal activities that benefit NOAA trust resources described above and must clearly lay out the direct links to such resources.

The NOAA MDP encourages projects implementing activities that fit into any existing national or regional programs, priorities or strategic plans to address marine debris (e.g. National Estuary Program or NOAA Habitat Focus Area sites, the Great Lakes Land-based Marine Debris Action Plan, the Virginia Marine Debris Reduction Plan, the Hawai'i Marine Debris Action Plan, the Oregon Marine Debris Action Plan, the Florida Marine Debris Reduction Guidance Plan, the California Ocean Litter Prevention Strategy, etc.) and describe how they do so.

Because funding is limited, proposals requesting support for large equipment purchases, to expand an organization's day-to-day administrative or program management activities or to support strictly administration, salaries, overhead, and travel without being part of a specific project will be a low priority. If a project requires funding for large equipment purchases, collection facilities, or other long-term operations, the application should provide a lease versus purchase justification, identify how the overall project will continue into the future and how any equipment operation and maintenance costs will be paid for beyond the award period. Projects that are duplicative of those that the NOAA MDP currently supports or those that have been funded by NOAA, partner organizations, and/or other federal agencies may not receive priority.

All proposed removal projects will be evaluated based on the criteria outlined in Section V.A.

Projects focused on removing primarily hazards to navigation, human health, or removals for aesthetic purposes, with no clear connection to NOAA trust resources are not a focus of this

grant competition.

Applicants should also note that the following activities, in general, will not be considered under this competition: (1) activities that constitute legally required mitigation for the adverse effects of an activity regulated or otherwise governed by local, state, or federal law; (2) activities that constitute restoration for natural resource damages under federal, state, or local law; and (3) activities that are required by a separate consent decree, court order, statute, or regulation.

Applications addressing other types of pollution not fitting the definition of marine debris provided in Section I. A. are not priorities for this solicitation and may not be considered.

### C. Program Authority

Marine Debris Act (33 U.S.C. 1951-1958)

## II. Award Information

### A. Funding Availability

Funding of up to \$2,000,000 is expected to be available for this grant solicitation. The actual funding amount available is contingent upon Fiscal Year 2019 appropriations. The NOAA MDP does not plan to fund proposals for removal activities at less than \$50,000 or more than \$250,000 under this solicitation. Typical project awards range from \$50,000 to \$150,000. For projects that include habitat recovery monitoring activities, applicants may request additional funds not to exceed \$100,000 for such activities, for a project of up to \$350,000. In such cases the NOAA MDP would work with successful applicants to determine final levels of monitoring effort and funding.

The NOAA MDP anticipates that between 8 and 15 awards will be made under this solicitation. The exact amount of funds to be awarded and the number of awards made will be at the discretion of NOAA following pre-award negotiations with highly meritorious applicants. NOAA may request that a highly ranked applicant submitting more than one meritorious proposal combine all or parts of its proposals into one award. Publication of this opportunity does not obligate NOAA to award any specific project or obligate all or any part of available program funds. Awards may include funding from other programs or agencies. There is no guarantee that sufficient funds will be available to make awards for any or all proposals. The number of awards to be made under this solicitation will depend on the number of eligible applications received, the amount of funding requested by recommended applicants, the merit and ranking of the proposals, and the amount of funds made available to

the NOAA MDP by Congress.

#### B. Project/Award Period

Applications should cover a project period of performance of two years in duration. If monitoring activities are proposed to be conducted before or following removal, NOAA may consider applications with a period of performance of up to three years as long as there is reasonable justification provided. The earliest anticipated start date for awards will be August 1, 2019 – applicants should consider this date when developing plans for initiating proposed project activities. Applicants selected to receive funding may be asked to modify the project start date to accommodate any delays in federal appropriations. Applications for renewal or supplementation of previously-awarded NOAA MDP projects are allowed, however any proposal to continue work on an existing project will be subject to the competitive process and will not receive preferential treatment. In some cases NOAA may fund a project with incremental funding, usually in the form of a multi-year award. If incremental or multi-year funding is awarded, in which NOAA only obligates funds initially for the first phase of a project, NOAA has no obligation to provide any additional prospective funding in connection with that award in subsequent time periods; additional funding is contingent upon satisfactory performance, continued relevance to program mission and priorities, and the availability of funds.

#### C. Type of Funding Instrument

Selected applications will be funded through cooperative agreements since NOAA staff will be substantially involved in aspects of the project. Substantial involvement may include, but is not limited to, activities such as engagement with recipient on environmental compliance requirements, hands-on technical collaboration or permitting assistance, support in developing protocols (e.g., for data collection or monitoring), tracking the progress of removal efforts through site visits, regular conference calls, and progress report evaluation and milestone approval, developing performance measures to assess project outcomes, reviewing manuscript drafts (if any), and support in developing and disseminating public-facing communication materials or events to highlight marine debris removal activities.

Marine debris removal, prevention, or monitoring activities funded through this competition may have long term planning goals and objectives common to the programmatic needs of both NOAA and the recipients. As such, NOAA may seek to maintain a long-term partnership with recipients by establishing cooperative agreements in relevant situations as “institutional awards”. If a cooperative agreement is established as an institutional award, the initial cooperative agreement will be established for no more than five years and NOAA may issue new cooperative agreements to the recipient for similar or related activities through a non-competitive selection process.

### III. Eligibility Information

#### A. Eligible Applicants

In accordance with the Marine Debris Act, eligible applicants are state, local, and tribal governments whose activities affect research or regulation of marine debris and any institution of higher education, nonprofit organization, or commercial (for-profit) organization with expertise in a field related to marine debris. Applications from federal agencies or employees of federal agencies will not be considered. Interested federal agencies may collaborate with eligible applicants but may not receive funds through this competition.

All projects must take place within the United States or territories or their respective waterways. Foreign organizations and foreign public entities are not eligible to apply as the primary applicant but can be involved as a sub-awardee or sub-contractor.

NOAA is strongly committed to broadening the participation of veterans, minority-serving institutions, and entities that work in underserved areas. The NOAA MDP encourages proposals from, or involving any of the above types of institutions.

Applications that have been submitted to other NOAA grant programs or as part of another NOAA grant may be considered under this solicitation.

#### B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement

A major goal of the NOAA MDP is to fund projects that leverage the investment of federal funds with other contributions from a broad range of public and private partners. To this end, applicants must provide a minimum 1:1 ratio of non-federal matching contributions to NOAA funds requested to conduct the proposed project. In addition to required cost sharing, the NOAA MDP encourages applicants to leverage additional investment where possible.

"Cost share" or "match" is defined by 2 C.F.R. 200.29 as "the portion of project costs not paid by federal funds (unless otherwise authorized by federal statute)." Any shared costs or matching funds and all contributions, including cash and third party in-kind contributions, will be accepted as part of an applicant's cost sharing or matching when the contributions meet the criteria listed in 2 C.F.R. 200.306. For example, matching funds may come from a variety of public and private sources and may include third party in-kind goods and services (e.g., private boat use, volunteer labor, etc.). In addition, applicants are permitted to combine contributions for allowable costs from non-federal partners when they meet the criteria in Section 200.306, such as not being contributed as match for other projects, and being available within the project period stated in the application. Federal contributions cannot be

used as match without a specific legal authority, but can be described in the budget narrative to demonstrate additional leverage or partnership. Applicants may also choose to designate part or all of their federally-negotiated indirect costs as match. Refer to Section IV.F.2. "Indirect Costs".

If the match requirement cannot be met, the Marine Debris Act allows the NOAA Administrator to waive all or part of the matching requirement if the applicant can demonstrate the following:

- 1) no reasonable means are available through which applicants can meet the matching requirement, and
- 2) the probable benefit of such project outweighs the public interest in such matching requirement.

Applicants wishing to waive all or part of this competition's match requirement should include a request letter or provide other language in the required Budget Narrative as a part of the application package being submitted. Match waiver requests must justify the need for the waiver, describe attempts to obtain sources of matching funds, and explain how the benefit of the project outweighs the public interest in providing match, along with any other extenuating circumstances preventing the incorporation or local availability of matching contributions.

In accordance with 48 U.S.C. 1469a, NOAA has determined that any requirement for local matching funds less than \$200,000 (including in-kind contributions) to be provided by American Samoa, Guam, the Virgin Islands, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands shall be waived, notwithstanding any other provision of law. Any matching funds otherwise required by law to be provided by government entities of the above-mentioned insular areas may be waived at the discretion of NOAA.

Applicants should note that cost sharing is an evaluation criterion (See Section V.A. "Evaluation Criteria") for this funding opportunity. As such, if available, the inclusion of matching contributions is encouraged. Please note within the proposal whether cash or third party in-kind contributions have been secured at the time of application, or if such contributions are still pending.

Applicants whose proposals are selected for funding will be bound by the cost share amount reflected in the award document signed by the NOAA Grants Officer. Successful applicants should carefully document cost sharing, including but not limited to, the computed value of services and/or resources provided by the applicant's organization or a third party (e.g., real

property, equipment, supplies and expendable goods) as well as facilities and administration costs. Letters of commitment for any secured matching contributions expected for an award should be submitted as an attachment to the application.

The Marine Debris Act also allows the NOAA Administrator to authorize, as appropriate, the non-federal share of the cost of a project to include money paid pursuant to, or the value of any in-kind service performed under, an administrative order on consent or judicial consent decree that will remove or prevent marine debris. See 33 USC 1952(c)(3).

#### C. Other Criteria that Affect Eligibility

For removal and monitoring activities conducted under an award funded through this competition, recipients of financial assistance from the NOAA MDP involved in the collection, assessment, oversight, or interpretation of scientific information are required to adhere, to the best of their ability, to the principles, policies and codes of conduct identified in NOAA's Policy on Scientific Integrity (NOAA Administrative Order 202-735D), which is available at:

[http://www.corporateservices.noaa.gov/ames/administrative\\_orders/chapter\\_202/202-735-D.html](http://www.corporateservices.noaa.gov/ames/administrative_orders/chapter_202/202-735-D.html)

The intent of the policy is to strengthen widespread confidence (from scientists, decision-makers, and the general public) in the quality, validity, and reliability of NOAA-funded science. Further information on this policy can be found at:

<http://nrc.noaa.gov/scientificintegrity.html>.

### IV. Application and Submission Information

#### A. Address to Request Application Package

Complete application packages, including required federal forms, general instructions, and supplementary instructions specific to the Fiscal Year 2019 Marine Debris Removal grants competition, can be found on Grants.gov (<http://www.grants.gov>). If the application forms and instructions cannot be downloaded from Grants.gov, please contact Tom Barry ([tom.barry@noaa.gov](mailto:tom.barry@noaa.gov), 240-533-0425).

#### B. Content and Form of Application

Please visit <http://marinedebris.noaa.gov/proposal-submission-guidance-applicants> for helpful information on developing and submitting proposal documents/information.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to apply through the Grants.gov website.

Applicants are also encouraged to minimize the number of files uploaded to an application by combining the proposal's files as much as possible. Adobe PDF is the preferred file format for electronic applications.

If Grants.gov cannot reasonably be used, or internet access is not available to the applicant, a paper-copy application must be mailed to the NOAA MDP (see Section IV.G. "Other Submission Requirements" for complete mailing information). Forms SF-424, SF-424B, and CD-511 paper-copy submissions must be signed by the Authorized Representative (or appropriate designee) listed in the application. **IF PAPER COPY APPLICATIONS ARE NOT SIGNED BY THE AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE, THE APPLICATION MAY NOT BE ACCEPTED FOR REVIEW.** Paper applications should be printed on one side only, on 8.5" x 11" paper, and should not be bound or stapled in any manner.

Applications must adhere to page limits and any pages that exceed the limit for each section may not be reviewed. Files that cannot be opened or downloaded will not be reviewed. Full proposals will not be accepted if sent via fax or email.

Applications should be sufficiently detailed in accordance with the guidelines and information requirements listed below and elsewhere in this announcement, and should be able to be completed within the proposed period of performance. Each full proposal application must contain the following required federal application forms (available from Grants.gov)(and adhere to page limits indicated for each category), unless otherwise noted below:

- SF-424 - Application for Federal Assistance
- SF-424A - Budget Information, Non-construction Programs
- SF-424B - Assurances, Non-construction Programs
- CD-511 - Certifications Regarding Lobbying
- SF-LLL Disclosure of Lobbying Activities: (if applicable)
- Project Summary (described below, 2 pages or less);
- Project Narrative (described below, 12 pages or less);
- Data Sharing Plan (described below, 2 pages or less);
- Budget Narrative (described below, 4 pages or less);
- Curriculum vitae or résumé of each of the primary project personnel (10 pages or less);
- Maps with site location(s) highlighted (no page limit);
- Letter(s) documenting partner support (no page limit);
- Indirect cost rate agreement, if applicable (no page limit); and
- Other relevant attachments important to the overall understanding and evaluation of the proposed project, such as summaries of regional marine debris action plans or project site

photographs, or documentation about any permits necessary to perform the project (20 pages or less).

#### 1. Project Summary (2 pages or less):

A brief project summary must include the following components:

- a) Applicant Organization;
- b) Project Title;
- c) Principal Investigator(s) Name, Address, Telephone Number and Email Address.
- d) Project Location (list the geographic area(s) in which the project will be implemented. Include geographic coordinates of removal sites if known.);
- e) Project Description: clearly state the purpose of the project and briefly list specific tasks to be accomplished with requested funds and proposed techniques that will be used; identify NOAA trust resources that are likely to benefit (habitats and species currently using the project area or expected to benefit); and indicate the duration of the project.
- f) Removal activity start date (not the proposed award start date);
- g) Funding: approximate federal funds requested and non-federal match anticipated
- h) Project Outcomes: estimate how many pounds of debris will be removed from the marine/coastal environment, acreage to be cleared, volunteer participation, etc... Describe any anticipated ecological services to be restored by debris removal.

#### 2. Project Narrative (12 pages or less)

When writing the project narrative, applicants should understand the components of the evaluation criteria (see Section V.A. "Evaluation Criteria" in this announcement), as they explain how proposals will be scored for the application to be competitive. The project narrative must not be more than 12 pages long and should give a clear presentation of the proposed work. Generally, the project narrative should include:

**Introduction:** A summary of what the removal project will do, and why the removal project is needed, demonstrating anticipated benefits to specific NOAA trust resources (as described in Section I.A.). Describe how these benefits will be achieved through the marine debris detection, assessment, and removal techniques proposed in the application. Identify the range of species and/or resources expected to benefit from removal activities, including the anticipated ecological services to be restored by debris removal.

**Description:** Describe all phases and aspects of the proposed on-the-ground project activities, removal techniques and processes. Describe the project location. Proposals should also

describe the project's disposal arrangements to ensure debris would not potentially be re-introduced. Strong proposals will integrate innovative, sustainable approaches to disposal of debris (e.g. re-use, recycling, energy recovery, use of open shipping capacity to reduce transport costs (also known as "backhauling"), partnering with local waste management companies, etc.) as described in Section I.B.

Applicants should note, the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires NOAA to analyze a project's potential environmental impacts, hence applicants are required to provide as much detailed information as is reasonable on the project's activities in this section. To this end, and to support NOAA's analysis, applicants should include details about site locations, species and habitat(s) to be affected, on-the-ground project activities and processes proposed, the time of year that work will take place, and any environmental concerns that may exist (e.g., the use of and/or disposal of hazardous or toxic substances, potential introduction of non-indigenous species, impacts to endangered and threatened species, impacts to coral reef systems). See Section VI.B.10 for further detail on the NEPA process and requirements for applicants.

Describe the community involvement in the project, such as contributions from community partners, volunteer opportunities, citizen participation, education/outreach/stewardship plans, and efforts to disseminate information on project goals, results, and/or the sources of project funding and support. If applicable, the narrative should explain how the proposed project would complement or encourage other local marine debris prevention or removal, restoration or conservation activities. Community participation may include involvement in the physical debris removal during the project, involvement in marine debris prevention and education activities, hands-on training, cash contributions, or donation of in-kind goods and services such as boat time, and/or monitoring activities undertaken by volunteers or work crews. Letters demonstrating such participation should be included in the application.

Applicants should indicate whether the proposed project is part of a larger, ongoing effort or is otherwise prioritized in any existing regional or national, publicly vetted programs, priorities or strategic plans (e.g. National Estuary Program or NOAA Habitat Focus Area sites, the Great Lakes Land-based Marine Debris Action Plan, the Virginia Marine Debris Reduction Plan, the Hawai'i Marine Debris Action Plan, the Oregon Marine Debris Action Plan, the Florida Marine Debris Reduction Guidance Plan, the California Ocean Litter Prevention Strategy, etc.). Proposal narratives should explicitly list or otherwise cite such documents for verification purposes, including the page number if referencing a specific action or issue within the plan.

**Project Location:** Provide maps, exact coordinates of all removal locations, and the time of

year that removal activities will take place in each location. Be as specific as possible. If exact locations are unknown at the time of application, describe removal site locations in as much detail as possible.

**Project Implementation Timeline and Milestones:** Describe the anticipated project duration and the timeline and milestones for completing all project objectives.

**Objectives and Goals:** Describe short- and long-term objectives and goals including the expected results and potential performance measures that will be used to track the success of the project. Describe how the project will benefit the NOAA trust resources currently found in the project site. Describe the methods for carrying out and monitoring (if applicable) the project, and clearly explain the project's significance to enhancing habitat to benefit living marine resources with specific examples.

To ensure a basic level of assessment of project success, marine debris removal projects should have broad, clearly identified goals and specific, measurable objectives. In order to track project success, all funded projects will need to be able to report the total amount of debris removed (pounds), total area or extent cleaned (acres and/or miles), types of debris encountered, and number of volunteers as well as total volunteer hours contributed to the project. Other performance measures relevant to demonstrating project success may include: expected footprint or impacted area (in acres or square-feet) of removed debris; number of removal operations; number of discrete items removed (e.g., crab pots, gill nets, pilings); species by catch data (if appropriate); anticipated ecosystem services to be restored by the debris removal; percent of overall problem areas addressed by removal activities; comparisons of initial removal targets to post-removal results; estimated debris accumulation rates; number of fishers who receive training on the safe removal of derelict gear or specific debris types; expected (or actual) weight of material recycled; expected (or actual) weight (pounds) of material prevented from entering the marine environment; among others.

Not all projects and applicants are expected to include a habitat and/or species monitoring component. Those proposals that incorporate more in-depth monitoring in addition to debris removal activities (per Section I. B. above) should describe, in detail, the methodology for monitoring or post-removal evaluation. These studies should be designed in a scientifically rigorous manner to assess factors indicative of habitat or species improvement through project and location specific metrics. Such metrics may include: information on the areal extent and habitat types impacted by the debris, objective measures of ecosystem health in and around the removal site, species presence, abundance, density or other similar metrics, species impacts and mortality rates (number of animals killed annually by the targeted debris), length of time debris will cause impacts if not removed; and any others the applicant

deems appropriate to the removal site. Monitoring protocols should be designed to measure these improvements over a span of time appropriate to the targeted habitat/species (in some cases, monitoring may take longer than one year). Monitoring proposals should describe the anticipated, long-term ecological and socio-economic outcomes of the project; describe the approach to planning, developing and implementing the study design; describe rationale for proposed survey techniques and parameters; and advance our scientific understanding of marine debris monitoring by publishing peer-reviewed literature on project accomplishments (if appropriate). Any proposed monitoring must be cost-effective and appropriate to the scope and scale of the project to evaluate a project's benefits. The NOAA MDP will work with successful applicants who have included an in-depth monitoring plan to ensure an acceptable approach is implemented and that the appropriate metrics are monitored to link removal to habitat or species improvement.

**Permits and Consultations:** Applicants must demonstrate that they have the legal authority to conduct the project activities within the proposed project area, and understand what permitting requirements exist for work to be conducted as described in the proposal. To provide assurance that the project will expeditiously meet environmental compliance and permitting requirements, projects that would require permits and consultations should list all necessary permits required to complete the project. This should include the appropriate contact information for each permitting agency, permit status, and documentation of all secured permits. Proposals must indicate the project's readiness and should ensure that on-the-ground debris removal activities will begin reasonably soon after the project's start date.

Letters of commitment are required from relevant landowners for projects on private land or from relevant resource agency personnel for projects on public, permanently protected land. Letters of commitment should provide assurance that the project is supported, and will be maintained for its intended purpose. Documentation of plans for long-term project management should also be included.

**Organization Structure and Project Staff:** Describe the organizational structure of the applicant, and the qualifications of project staff. Describe the level of staff experience and qualifications in managing grants and implementing marine debris removal projects; this includes any relevant sub-contractors conducting project work. Include a CV for all key personnel. If applicable, describe any previous NOAA involvement in and/or support for the project and include name(s) of any relevant NOAA staff. Examples of successfully implemented past projects, or the organization's experience successfully managing federal grants should be provided. If project staff have no specific examples to provide, applicants will be evaluated on their potential to effectively manage and oversee all project phases, demonstrated by the level of education, training, and/or experience of primary project

participants.

**References Cited:** This section should include all references to source materials cited within the Project Narrative, if applicable. Please follow any accepted scholarly format for citations that includes authors' names, year of publication, article and journal (or chapter and book) title, volume number, and page numbers. The Reference Cited section is not included in the 12-page limit but should include bibliographic references only (i.e., no additional parenthetical information), and can be included as either a separate attachment or part of the Project Narrative.

### 3. Data Management Plan (2 pages or less)

Proposals must include a Data Management Plan of up to two pages describing how environmental data and information collected or created under an award made through this competition will be made discoverable by and accessible to the general public. Such data must be made available in a timely fashion (typically within two years), and should be free of charge or at no more than the cost of reproduction.

The Data Management Plan should be aligned with the Data Management Guidance provided by NOAA in Section VI. B. 9. below. 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 and the medium by which the data will be shared; approximate total volume of data to be collected; and prior experience in making such data accessible.

A sample Data Management Plan may be found at: <http://marinedebris.noaa.gov/proposal-submission-guidance-applicants>

### 4. Budget Justification (4 pages or less)

Applicants should follow NOAA's Budget Narrative Guidance document to ensure the appropriate content and format is provided with the proposal. This document can be found at:

<https://marinedebris.noaa.gov/sites/default/files/BudgetNarrativeGuidanceWithChecklist.pdf>

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The Budget Justification should include both a narrative and a summary budget table that lay out and describe each line item's various costs in as much detail as is reasonable. For clarification and simplicity, the Budget Justification should be organized using the object classes in the order that they appear on the SF424A. Include detailed descriptions of all cost justifications for both federal funds and any cost sharing or matching funds (cost share or matching funds should be described in the same level of detail as the federal funds). The amounts described in the Budget Justification narrative and summary table must match the dollar amounts on all required forms. The summary budget table does not count toward the 4 page limit.

The Budget Justification narrative should also indicate if the proposal has been submitted for funding consideration elsewhere, what amount has been requested or secured from other sources, and whether the funds requested/secured are federal or non-federal. The source of any matching funds, including applicant or third party in-kind contributions, should be explained. If funding will be used to complete part of a larger project, the Budget Justification should describe the overall budget for the entire project to allow NOAA to make an informed determination of a project's readiness and cost-benefit ratio. Any funding other than the federal funds requested and proposed cost share or match should be considered additional leverage.

Applicants should ensure personnel roles (including hours and costs by task) are clearly explained and allocable to the project. For projects with a monitoring component, applicants should separate out monitoring or post-project evaluation costs so that NOAA can evaluate the cost-effectiveness and efficiency of those activities.

If sub-awards are expected to be made, describe the process that will be used to identify recipients and justification for that process.

The Budget Justification narrative should also indicate if the applicant is requesting a waiver of all match requirements, as outlined above in Section III.B. "Cost Share or Matching Requirement." As previously stated, in accordance with 48 U.S.C. 1469a(d), NOAA has waived the requirement for local matching funds to the insular areas (up to \$200,000) defined above in Section III.B.

NOAA assesses budgets to determine the reasonableness, necessity, and adequacy of proposed costs for accomplishing the project objectives, and performs a cost analysis to assure that costs are reasonable, allowable, and allocable in accordance with applicable federal cost principles. NOAA MDP may recommend funding only specific components of a project, as such applicants should describe the extent to which project activities can be

scaled up or scaled down.

Requests for equipment (any single piece of equipment costing \$5,000 or more) should be strongly tied to achieving the project's stated goals, and a comparison with rental costs should be provided to justify the need to purchase. In general, funding requests for equipment purchases such as vehicles, boats, and similar items will be a low priority.

Refer to Section IV.F.2. regarding indirect costs in the budget.

## 5. Other Application Submission Information

Applicants should not assume NOAA has any prior knowledge relative to the merits of the project described in the proposal. As such, proposals should be written with an appropriate level of detail. Inclusion of supplementary materials (e.g., detailed maps of project activities, photographs, summaries of project designs, key diagrams, copies of secured permits) are strongly encouraged and do not count toward the project narrative page limit, although supplementary materials should not exceed 20 pages. Letters of support from partners, local and state governments, and Congressional representatives are also helpful in demonstrating support for the project. Such supplementary information should be combined and submitted as a single file in the Grants.gov application.

Participant safety is critically-important during project implementation. Proposals should demonstrate meaningful consideration for the safety of project participants during project activities. It should be noted that all funded projects will be required to have a written safety plan governing all project-related activities, especially regarding the safety and management of interns and volunteers. The safety plan should consider safety at all project sites during and after project implementation and take into account potential safety concerns for current and future uses of the project site.

If a project requires scuba diving or the use of surface-supplied air, it is the responsibility of the recipient organization to ensure that divers are qualified and trained to a level commensurate with the type and conditions of the diving activity being undertaken. The organization must describe their capacity (appropriate insurance, safety policies, etc.) to effectively oversee all proposed diving activities in the proposal. All diving activities must meet, or be specifically exempted from, OSHA guidelines. Assuming all other relevant safety conditions are satisfied, divers that are not advanced divers may perform only simple activities, such as underwater surveys and/or removal of light, non-entangling objects. Advanced divers are divers with advanced diving training for the proposed tasks and in compliance with OSHA guidelines. Snorkeling activities are similarly restricted, in that

snorkelers should complete only simple activities such as surveys and removal of light, non-entangling objects. Furthermore, it is the responsibility of the recipient to ensure that any diving activities under this award meet, at a minimum, all applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations pertaining to the type of diving being undertaken.

Activities that should be performed only by advanced divers include but are not limited to the following:

- Using hand tools or moving or lifting heavy objects where the tools or objects weigh more than 25 pounds underwater;
- Performing underwater tasks that require substantial physical exertion;
- Using lift bags; and
- Underwater removal of potentially entangling debris, such as nets, crab or lobster pots, or fishing line.

Files uploaded to Grants.gov should not have any special characters in the filename (example: &, &grave;, \*, %, /, #, -), and filenames should be limited to less than 50 characters.

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

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.

Applicants must be registered in the System for Award Management (SAM) in order to apply via Grants.gov and to be funded by NOAA. Applicants must: (1) Be registered in the federal System for Award Management (SAM) before submitting an application; (2) provide a valid Data Universal Number System (DUNS) number on an application; and (3) continue to maintain an active SAM registration with current information at all times during which it has an active federal award or an application or plan under consideration by a federal awarding agency. The federal awarding agency may not make a federal award to an applicant until the applicant has complied with all applicable DUNS and SAM requirements. If an applicant has not fully complied with the requirements by the time the federal awarding agency is ready to make a federal award, the federal awarding agency may determine that the applicant is not qualified to receive a federal award and use that determination as a basis for

making a federal award to another applicant.

Applicants 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>. The applicant organization's Employer Identification Number (EIN) will be needed on the application form.

Applicants should allow a minimum of several weeks to complete each of these registration processes. Registrations may need to be periodically renewed.

#### D. Submission Dates and Times

**WE STRONGLY RECOMMEND APPLICANTS BEGIN THE APPLICATION SUBMISSION PROCESS EARLY. THE NOAA MDP WILL NOT ACCEPT LATE SUBMISSIONS. APPLICANTS ARE STRONGLY ADVISED TO SUBMIT IN ADVANCE OF THE DEADLINE. PLEASE PLAN ACCORDINGLY.**

Full proposals must be received and validated by Grants.gov, postmarked, or provided to a delivery service on or before 11:59 p.m. Eastern time, October 29, 2018.

Please keep in mind that acquiring a DUNS number, and the registration processes for SAM.gov and Grants.gov may take as long as several weeks and may impact the submission timeline (see Sections IV.C and IV.G. of this announcement).

No fax or email applications will be accepted. Applications submitted via the U.S. Postal Service must have an official postmark; private metered postmarks are not acceptable. **PAPER APPLICATIONS RECEIVED LATER THAN 5 BUSINESS DAYS FOLLOWING THE CLOSING DATE WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED.** Applicants are responsible for tracking their own applications.

For all applicants, adequate time must be factored into applicant schedules for delivery of the application. Volume on Grants.gov is at times extremely heavy. Applicants may submit in paper format according to the requirements of this announcement. Applicants submitting a paper application should allow adequate time to ensure it will be received on time.

Applications that have been submitted to other NOAA grants programs or as part of another NOAA grant may be considered under this solicitation.

#### E. Intergovernmental Review

Applications for federal financial assistance are subject to the provisions of Executive

Order (EO) 12372, "Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs." All applications for funding under this competition are required to complete item 19 on the SF-424 regarding clearance by the State Single Point of Contact (SPOC) established as a result of EO 12372. To find out about and comply with a State's process under EO 12372, the names, addresses, and phone numbers of participating SPOCs are listed in the Office of Management and Budget's home page at [http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants\\_spoc](http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants_spoc).

## F. Funding Restrictions

### 1. Allowable Costs

Funds awarded cannot necessarily pay for all the costs that the recipient might incur in the course of carrying out the project. Generally, costs that are allowable include salaries, equipment, and supplies, as long as these are "necessary and reasonable" specifically for the purpose of the award. Currently, allowable costs are determined by reference to 2 C.F.R. 200, "Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards." All sub-awards are also subject to these federal cost principles. Award recipients are subject to 2 C.F.R. 200.317-.326 when implementing contracts under an award.

Pre-award costs are allowable only with the written approval by NOAA under 2 C.F.R. 200.458 except to the extent allowed for research awards under 2 C.F.R. 200.308(d)(4). Any pre-award costs incurred before the NOAA Grants Office provides a notice of award are at the applicant's own risk. Typically, the earliest date for receipt of awards will be August 1, 2019. Applicants should consider this award timing when developing plans for proposed project activities.

### 2. Indirect Costs

The budget may include an amount for indirect 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., lights, rent, water, insurance) that are incurred for common or joint objectives and therefore cannot be identified specifically within a particular project. Applicants with approved indirect cost rates may propose a portion or all of their indirect costs as match, since the valuation of such costs has already been federally-approved and documentation is readily available.

A copy of the current, approved negotiated indirect cost rate agreement with the federal government should be included with the application. 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 Modified Total Direct Costs (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 Section B.06. The NOAA contact for indirect or facilities and administrative costs is: The NOAA contact for indirect costs is Lamar Revis, Grants Officer, NOAA Grants Management Division; [lamar.revis@noaa.gov](mailto:lamar.revis@noaa.gov).

#### G. Other Submission Requirements

Electronic submission is strongly encouraged. Applications should be submitted through Grants.gov (<http://www.grants.gov>). To use Grants.gov, applicants must have active Grants.gov registration, a DUNS number, and be registered with SAM.gov (as described in Section IV.C). Applicants should note that it may take up to several weeks for first time users to register with each of these systems. Even if an applicant has registered with each of these systems previously, renewing, updating or reactivating accounts are required prior to proposal submission, and may take some time to complete. Grants.gov will not accept submissions if the applicant has not been authorized or if credentials are incorrect. Authorizations and credential corrections can take several days. For further information please visit <http://www.sam.gov>. See also 2 C.F.R. 25.

Users of Grants.gov will be able to download a copy of the application package, complete it off line, 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](mailto:support@grants.gov).

The Grants.gov validation process for a submitted application can take up to two business days to complete following submission through Grants.gov. After submission, Grants.gov will send a series of e-mail notifications (potentially for up to two business days) indicating the application's status and whether NOAA's system has received the application. Only validated applications are sent to NOAA for review. Please plan accordingly to avoid late submissions as such submissions will be rejected.

If Grants.gov cannot reasonably be used, or internet access is not available to the applicant, a paper-copy application package (as outlined in Section IV.B. "Content and Form of Application") must be postmarked, or provided to a delivery service by 11:59 p.m. Eastern time, October 29, 2018. Mailed applications must have a tracking number to ensure compliance with the submission deadline. Please notify NOAA MDP ([tom.barry@noaa.gov](mailto:tom.barry@noaa.gov)) by email if you are submitting a paper application. The mailing address for paper applications is:

Tom Barry, NOAA Office of Response and Restoration, ATTN: MDP Project Applications,

1305 East-West Highway, SSMC4 Rm. 10239 N/ORR5, Silver Spring, MD 20910

## V. Application Review Information

### A. Evaluation Criteria

Reviewers will assign scores to proposals ranging from 0 to 100 points based on the following five standard NOAA 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 Applicability of Proposal to the Program Goals (32 points)

This criterion ascertains whether the proposed work is relevant to the goals set out by the NOAA MDP in this announcement. Applications will be evaluated based on the following:

- The potential of the project activities to restore, protect, conserve, or enhance coastal and marine habitats and ecosystems vital to self-sustaining populations of living marine resources under NOAA stewardship (including commercial, recreational, threatened, or endangered species) through the removal of high-priority marine debris as defined in Section I. B. Projects with a direct benefit to endangered species or commercial and recreational fisheries (and their habitats) are likely to score higher on this criterion. (20 points)

- The project's significance with respect to project area, amount of debris removed, or potential to reduce marine debris, considered in the context of the local environment. (5 points)

- Whether the proposal addresses a marine debris problem area and/or priority habitat, identified in any existing regional or national, publicly vetted programs, priorities or strategic plans (e.g. National Estuary Program or NOAA Habitat Focus Area sites, the Great Lakes Land-based Marine Debris Action Plan, the Virginia Marine Debris Reduction Plan, the Hawai'i Marine Debris Action Plan, the Oregon Marine Debris Action Plan, the Florida Marine Debris Reduction Guidance Plan, the California Ocean Litter Prevention Strategy, etc.). (5 points)

- Whether the proposal includes a Data Management Plan that describes how data collected during the project will be made accessible and independently understandable to general users in a timely manner, in compliance with Data Management requirements described in Section VI.B.9. (2 points)

## 2. Technical/Scientific Merit (20 points)

This criterion assesses whether the approach is technically sound and if the methods are appropriate, and whether there are clear project goals and objectives. Applications will be evaluated based on the following:

- Whether the applicant provides sufficient information to complete a NEPA review. This includes maps, species information, project timing, and other project requirements detailed in Sections IV.B.2. and VI.B.10. This also includes the extent to which the applicant provides assurances that implementation will meet all federal, state, and local environmental laws. Applications submitted with evidence of completed environmental assessments, completed consultations and/or secured permits, and that demonstrate that proposed debris removal activities are legally permissible in the project area are likely to score higher on this criterion. (5 points)

- Whether the proposal clearly identifies goals and objectives, and whether the timelines for the project are reasonable and in line with the award period guidelines in Section II.B. If applicable, the applicant has outlined a realistic, rigorous, and sustainable monitoring plan to measure habitat and species benefit as a result of project effort. (5 points)

- Whether the project will deliver tangible, specific results that are measurable within the proposed time-frame. Such results should include the required performance metrics described above in Section IV. B. Those applications that identify parameters to reduce impacts to NOAA trust resources (e.g. accumulation and debris prevention rates, reduction in bycatch rates, number of acres restored, ecosystem services restored, etc...) are likely to score higher on this criterion. (5 points)

- Whether the proposed methods and approaches to be used in the project are valid to achieve project goals from a biological, ecological, and safety perspective. (5 points)

## 3. Overall Qualifications of Applicants (15 points)

This criterion ascertains whether the applicant possesses the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project. Applications will be evaluated based on the following:

- Whether the applicant and associated project personnel have demonstrated the ability or the potential to conduct the scope and scale of the proposed work. This should be indicated by the qualifications and past experience of the project leaders and/or partners in designing,

implementing, and effectively managing and overseeing marine debris removal projects. (10 points)

- Whether the organization has the capacity to administer the award. This includes the facilities and/or administrative resources and capabilities that are available to the applicant to support and successfully manage grant responsibilities. (5 points)

#### 4. Project Costs (18 points)

This criterion evaluates the budget to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and timeframe. Applications will be evaluated on the following:

- Whether the total budget is realistic, reasonable, and is likely to result in an effective and successful removal effort, given the project's goals and timeline. Budgets should cover all required project implementation and administration activities. Applications that do not identify a specific issue or project but propose to use NOAA funds to expand an organization's day-to-day administrative activities are unlikely to score high under this criterion. The proposal should contain a detailed breakdown of personnel roles including hours and costs by task. (5 points)

- Whether the project budget narrative and summary table are sufficiently detailed and clearly describe both federal and non-federal shares by object class as listed on form SF-424A. (5 points)

- Whether the proposal demonstrates a critical need for NOAA funding and support for debris removal activities to be implemented. (3 points)

- Whether the project budget includes sufficient matching contributions. NOAA requires a non-federal cost-share at a minimum 1:1 ratio, except for those proposals eligible for a waiver according to Section III.B. "Cost Sharing or Matching Requirements." Matching contributions should improve cost-effectiveness and further encourage partnerships among government, industry, and academia. Applicants that document secured match are likely to score higher on this criterion. (5 points)

#### 5. Outreach, Education, and Community Involvement (15 points)

This criterion evaluates whether the project provides a focused and effective education and outreach strategy to relevant stakeholders. Applications will be evaluated based on the following:

- Whether the activities proposed will involve local community members in removal activities and encourage awareness, long-term stewardship and conservation ethics among participants. (5 points)

- Whether there is an appropriate and effective level of public outreach to be conducted about the project and the potential for the proposed project to encourage future removal activities, as described in Section IV.B.2. (5 points)

- Whether there is strong community support for the project, as reflected by the diversity, strength and involvement of project partners and local entities. This includes whether letters of support from project partners, state and local governments, members of Congress, private landowners, or relevant resource agency personnel familiar with the issue are included with the proposal, and are positive and indicate willingness to assist the project achieve its objectives. (5 points)

#### B. Review and Selection Process

Applications will be screened to determine if they are eligible, complete and responsive to this funding announcement. NOAA, in its sole discretion, may continue the review process for an application with a minor administrative discrepancy that can be easily rectified or cured. Eligible proposals will then undergo a technical review, ranking, and selection process.

For applications for projects in areas severely affected by natural disasters or severe weather events, NOAA in its sole discretion may allow late submissions. Any applicants in project areas severely affected by such events and who are unable to comply with competition deadlines but are interested in submitting a proposal for consideration must inform the agency, in writing, of the circumstances and location of the project and contact the NOAA point of contact listed in Section VII to discuss submission options. Applications will not be accepted under any circumstances once proposal review has begun.

Applications will undergo a technical merit review where they will be evaluated by at least three professionally and technically qualified reviewers according to the evaluation criteria described in this announcement (see Section V.A.). Reviewers may include NOAA officials, officials from other federal agencies and state agencies with subject matter expertise, (e.g., coastal management agencies and fish and wildlife agencies), and other private and public sector experts. Each reviewer will evaluate their assigned proposals and provide individual scores, comments and/or recommendations. Reviewers may discuss applications with each other, but if more than one non-federal reviewer is involved, scoring will be on an individual

basis and no consensus advice will be given. Once complete, reviewer comments, project scores, and a rank order will be presented to the NOAA MDP Selecting Official. Based on the results of the technical merit review, the Selecting Official may recommend proposals for funding to the NOAA Grants Management Division. The Selecting Official may recommend proposals for funding out of rank order if justified by any of the selection factors listed below in Section V.C.

After the technical merit review is complete, NOAA may conduct a secondary panel review to determine which top-ranked proposals best meet the program's objectives and priorities (Sections I.A. and I.B.). The panel would be comprised of federal employees and may convene in person, by telephone or video conference. The panel would be presented with the top ranked applications (based on the results of the technical merit review), technical review scores, and comments for each application. The panel would then rate all top ranked proposals on the following scale:

3 (Excellent) - Application exceptionally addresses program priorities outlined in Section I.A. and I.B., and was highly responsive to Evaluation Criteria;

2 (Good) - Application partially addresses program priorities outlined in Section I.A. and I.B. and was strongly responsive to Evaluation Criteria; or

1 (Fair) - Application marginally addresses program priorities outlined in Section I.A. and I.B. and was moderately responsive to Evaluation Criteria.

The panel review rating would then be presented to the Selecting Official in order to determine which applications should be recommended to the NOAA Grants Management Division. The Selecting Official may recommend proposals for funding out of the panel review's rank order if justified by any of the selection factors listed below in Section V.C.

Applicants may be asked to modify objectives, work plans or budgets, and provide supplemental information required by the agency prior to 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. The exact amount of funds to be awarded, the final scope of activities, the project duration, and specific NOAA cooperative involvement with the activities of each project will be determined in pre-award negotiations among the applicant, the NOAA Grants Office, and NOAA program staff.

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. 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.

Applicants may submit comments to the Federal Awardee Performance and Integrity Information System (FAPIIS), accessible from the System for Award Management, about any information included in the system about their organization for consideration by the awarding agency. NOAA will consider any comments by the applicant, in addition to the other information in the designated integrity and performance system, in making a judgment about the applicant's integrity, business ethics, and record of performance under Federal awards when completing the review of risk posed by applicants as described in §200.205.

### C. Selection Factors

The proposals shall be recommended in the rank order unless the selection of a proposal out of rank order is justified based on one or more of the following factors:

1. The availability of funding
2. The balance/distribution of funds
  - a. Geographically
  - b. By institution type
  - c. By partner type
  - d. By habitat type
  - e. By debris type
3. Duplication of other projects funded or considered for funding by NOAA, partner organizations, and/or other federal agencies
4. Program priorities and policy factors as set out in Sections I.A. and I.B. of this announcement
5. The 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 Management Division.

Hence, awards may not necessarily be made to the highest-scored proposals. Unsuccessful applicants will be notified that their proposal was not among those recommended for funding.

#### D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

Successful applications generally will be identified by May 1, 2019. Typically, the earliest start date for projects will be August 1, 2019, dependent on the completion of all NOAA-applicant negotiations, NEPA analysis and documentation supporting cooperative agreement activities. Applicants should consider this timeline when developing requested start dates for proposed project activities.

## VI. Award Administration Information

### A. Award Notices

Successful applicants may be asked to modify objectives, work plans, and/or budgets prior to final approval of an award. The exact amount of funds to be awarded, final scope of activities, project duration, and specific NOAA substantial involvement with the activities of each project will be determined in pre-award negotiations between the applicant, the NOAA Grants Management Division, and NOAA program staff. Projects should not be announced or initiated in expectation of federal funding until a notice of award is received from the NOAA Grants Management Division. Award notification will be made electronically from the NOAA Grants Management Division via Grants Online, NOAA's online grants management program. The award cover page (i.e. CD-450, Financial Assistance Award), is available at <http://go.usa.gov/SNMR>.

Unsuccessful applications submitted in hard copy will be kept on file until in accordance with the policies set forth in the Department of Commerce Grants Manual, which in general is 3 years.

### B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

1. Department of Commerce Financial Assistance Standard 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. See <https://go.usa.gov/xRW4R>. This document will be provided in the award package in Grants

Online and can also be found at <http://www.ago.noaa.gov>. If the Department of Commerce publishes revised Standard Terms and Conditions prior to issuance of awards under this solicitation, the revised Standard Terms and Conditions will apply.

2. Special Award Conditions: In addition, award documents provided by the NOAA Grants Management Division in the Grants Online award package may contain special award conditions limiting the use of funds for activities that have outstanding environmental compliance requirements and/or stating other compliance requirements for the award as applicable, such as the required use of the NOAA Marine Debris Program Performance Progress Report approved by OMB under control number 0648-0718 for submitting semi-annual progress reports.

3. 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>.

4. Department of Commerce (DOC) Pre-Award Notification Requirements: 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. These may be accessed online at <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2014-12-30/pdf/2014-30297.pdf>.

5. 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, you should 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 you, the confidentiality of the content of funded applications will be maintained to the maximum extent permitted by law.

6. Certifications Regarding Tax Liability and Felony Criminal Convictions: When applicable under appropriations law, NOAA will provide certain applicants a form to be completed by the applicant's authorized representative making a certification regarding federally-assessed

unpaid or delinquent tax liability or recent felony criminal convictions under any federal law.

7. Limitation of Liability: NOAA or the DOC are not responsible for proposal preparation costs. Publication of this announcement does not oblige NOAA to award any specific project or to obligate any available funds. Recipients are subject to all federal laws and agency policies, regulations, and procedures applicable to federal financial assistance awards. This program is subject to the availability of funds.

8. Executive Order 12866: This action has been determined to be not significant for purposes of Executive Order 12866.

9. Data Management Guidance:

(a) 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 MDP. Data should be available in at least one machine-readable format (Machine-readable means the data are stored on a computer in a digital format whose structure is well described and the data can be read without the aid of a human), preferably a widely-used or open-standard format (An open-standard format is one that does not require proprietary software to be read), and should also be accompanied by machine-readable documentation (metadata), based on widely used or international standards.

(b) Funding recipients are responsible for ensuring that data is discoverable and accessible to the general public in the required timeframes. The NOAA Marine Debris Program recommends (or requires) that public access to grant-produced data be enabled by one of the following methods (1) data hosting by the NOAA MDP; (2) the recipient establishing their own procedures and hosting capabilities for collected environmental data; or (3) hosting by another authorized organization (such as NOAA National Centers for Environmental Information). Regardless of hosting method, the recipient is responsible for collecting, managing, and appropriately structuring data and metadata. The NOAA MDP does not require any specific data format, access method, or other technical guidance beyond what is described in this section, however the use of open-standard formats and widely used methods is encouraged. The proposal budget may include reasonable costs associated with compliance with this data management guidance. The NOAA MDP encourages grantees to coordinate with NOAA staff on the best approach ways to meet this public access requirement. In some cases, as appropriate, NOAA may request project data and share / post project data on NOAA systems, potentially in addition to the agreed data sharing/access

approach. The proposal may request permission not to make data publicly accessible and the proposal should explain rationale for lack of public access, and if funded to obtain approval from Responsible NOAA Official listed below).

(c) 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 (see Section IV.B.4 above). The Data Management Plan should be aligned with the Data Management Guidance described in this section. 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.

(d) The NOAA MDP may, at its own discretion, make publicly visible the Data Management Plan (and any subsequent revisions or updates) 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.

(e) Applicants 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 the NOAA Institutional Repository after acceptance, and no later than one year upon publication. Such manuscripts shall be made publicly available by NOAA one year after publication by the journal. Manuscripts submitted to the NOAA Institutional Repository must also be 508 compliant. For more information about the repository, see <https://repository.library.noaa.gov/welcome>.

(f) Failing to share environmental data and information in accordance with the submitted Data Management Plan may lead to disallowed costs and be considered by NOAA when making future award decisions.

(g) Information on NOAA's Environmental Data Management Policy is available under: [https://nosc.noaa.gov/EDMC/documents/Data\\_Sharing\\_Directive\\_v3.0.pdf](https://nosc.noaa.gov/EDMC/documents/Data_Sharing_Directive_v3.0.pdf)

(h) The Responsible NOAA MDP Official for questions regarding this guidance and for verifying accessibility of data produced by funding recipients: Tom Barry, Management and

Program Analyst, NOAA Marine Debris Program; tom.barry@noaa.gov; 240-533-0425

## 10. NEPA Requirements

As stated in Section IV.B., NOAA must analyze the potential environmental impacts, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), for applicant projects or proposals seeking NOAA funding. Detailed information on NOAA compliance with NEPA can be found at the NOAA NEPA website: <http://www.nepa.noaa.gov>, including NOAA Administrative Order 216-6 for NEPA and the Council on Environmental Quality implementation regulations. Consequently, as part of an applicant's award package, and under their description of 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). Providing as much detailed information as is reasonable is critical to the NOAA MDP evaluating the significance of a project's impacts and its readiness to use available funding.

Successful applications cannot be recommended for funding until NOAA completes the NEPA process. 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 or other NEPA analysis, or provide for NOAA review a copy of an EA that covers proposed activities, if one exists, if NOAA determines that it is required. This may also be required of applicants proposing marine debris removal activities that cannot be categorically excluded from further NEPA analysis or that are not covered by the NOAA MDP's Programmatic Environmental Assessment (PEA) and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI). Applicants will 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. Failure to do will result in denial of an application. Applicants will be notified if additional analysis is required after the peer review stage.

Special award conditions may be imposed limiting the use of funds for activities that have outstanding NEPA compliance requirements. Projects that would require permits to complete the project should list them and include the appropriate contact information for each permitting agency, documentation of all permits already secured for the project, and an expected timeline for those permits not yet acquired.

NOAA may make funding recommendations based on the level of effort needed to fulfill

NEPA requirements. The NOAA MDP PEA and FONSI can be found on the NOAA MDP website: [http://marinedebris.noaa.gov/sites/default/files/mdp\\_pea.pdf](http://marinedebris.noaa.gov/sites/default/files/mdp_pea.pdf).

It is the applicant's responsibility to obtain all necessary federal, state, and local government permits and approvals for the proposed work to be conducted. Applicants are expected to design their proposed activities to minimize the potential for adverse impacts to the environment. If applicable, documentation of requests for or approvals of required environmental permits should be included in the application package. Applications will be reviewed to ensure that they contain sufficient information to allow NOAA MDP staff to conduct a NEPA analysis so that appropriate NEPA documentation, required as part of the application package, can be submitted to the NOAA Grants Management Division along with the recommendation for funding for selected applications.

### C. Reporting

Reporting requirements are described at 2 CFR 200.327-.329, 2 CFR Part 170, and in the Department of Commerce Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions. Progress and financial reports are generally due semi-annually and cover 6 month periods, however more frequent reporting may be required. Progress reports are to be submitted to NOAA via NOAA's electronic Grants Online system and are due no later than 30 days after each reporting period ends. Interim reports for the last reporting period may not be required in some cases. A final report is due no later than 90 days after the expiration date of an award. Progress reports may be required to be submitted using a specific format for narrative information. The project progress report template will be provided by the NOAA MDP. Complete details on reporting requirements will be provided to successful applicants in the award documentation provided by the NOAA Grants Management Division in the Grants Online award package. The NOAA Marine Debris Program Performance Progress Report approved by OMB under control number 0648-0718 is required for submitting semi-annual progress reports.

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 sub-awards 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 [www.fsr.gov](http://www.fsr.gov) on all sub-awards over \$25,000.

## VII. Agency Contacts

For further information contact Tom Barry ([tom.barry@noaa.gov](mailto:tom.barry@noaa.gov), 240-533-0425).

VIII. Other Information

Not Applicable.