NCCOS | NATIONAL CENTERS FOR COASTAL OCEAN SCIENCE

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Webinar Summary for NOAA Funding Opportunity Titled: Advancing coastal flood protection through public-private partnerships, innovative insurance products, and improved sediment management

This document provides responses to the questions provided to the Effects of Sea Level RIse Program managers during the introductory webinar that took place on October 20, 2026.

There are four sections:

- Webinar Materials
- Questions on Applicant Types and Budget
- Questions on Applicability of Priorities and Concepts to the NOFO
- Submission Details

Webinar Materials

Full Funding Opportunity - https://grants.gov/search-results-detail/363958

The direct ESLR subscription link for Program Information should be here: https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/USNOAANOS/subscriber/new?topic_id=USNOAANOS_275

WEBINAR RECORDING will be posted to the ESLR Website

Webinar Slides - Are found on the ESLR website

Due Dates:

- November 9, 2026 by 11:59 p.m. ET – Letters of Intent (LOI) due by email to nccos.grant.awards@noaa.gov
- February 12, 2027 by 11:59 p.m. ET – Full applications due to grants.gov but we recommend notifying nccos.grant.awards@noaa.gov of your submission.

Questions on Applicant Types and Budget:

Can profit be earned on this grant and is it fixed at a pre-agreed NICRA rate?

NCCOS/CRP will not fund start-up or operational costs for private business ventures and neither fees nor profits will be considered as allowable costs. NCCOS/CRP will not pay for ship overhead expenses. Ship costs may not be included in indirect cost calculations unless specified within the indirect cost rate agreement of the institution. If indirect costs are applied, an approved indirect cost agreement or budget revision will be required before an application can be recommended for funding.

Can a for-profit entity lead either a CI or CESU type project team?

A for-profit entity can lead a proposal. If you are a member of a CI or CESU, you can use that funding mechanism. We aren't aware of for-profit entities being members of a CI or CESU, but the ESLR program does not create these rules.

Are non-profit organizations considered "private sector"?

We did not define the private sector in detail in the NOFO, though reference three sectors including public, private, and non-profit. We primarily are referencing for-profit teams within the private sector. For the first priority, we highlight that the private sector plays a key role in implementing flood mitigation projects and has not consistently been part of past CRP teams. Therefore, this funding opportunity will incentivize partnerships that advance the science-to-management framework through inclusion of private sector team members throughout the life of the project and in support of project planning, design, and implementation. Please note the emphasis on the inclusion of natural infrastructure in outcomes.

Are university overhead rates to be applied at on-campus or off-campus or federal rates?

We do not decide the correct campus rates at a program level, these are negotiated and would depend on the location of activity.

Does the project team have to be local to their study area?

There is no requirement for where the team should be located. Please review the section of the NOFO on "Engagement with Intended Users."

If we are tying the proposal to specific projects that have not yet been funded, but we are in the process of applying for other sources of funding for their implementation, would such proposals be considered favorably during review?

Proposing a project that contains a team with a clear understanding of a pathway to science application at the proposal stage with plans to acquire resources, usually benefits the proposal. To the degree that the work appears to rely on additional funding to be successful could be seen as a weakness. We can not recommend the best direction here, but those are aspects to consider in your presentation of the work.

Can non-NCCOS NOAA staff be involved either as named Co-PIs or otherwise, and can they be funded through this program?

NCCOS NOAA staff can be a co-PI, as well as others at NOAA can be leads or co-PI's. We operate distinctly for these funding opportunities. NOAA NCCOS staff can not lead proposals (only be Co-PI).

Can other federal/state/tribal/local government agencies be funded through this program?

Yes.

Can you fund Tribal governments / Tribal consortia that have those collaborative partnerships?

Yes. Eligible applicants for Federal financial assistance in this competition are U.S. institutions of higher education, non-profits, state and local governments, tribal government entities, U.S. Territories, U.S. Affiliated Pacific Islands institutions, and for-profit organizations. Federal applicants (including NOAA) are eligible provided legal authority exists for the Federal applicant to receive funds from another agency.

Can entities such as RAE, ASCE, or SCDRP lead or be part of these proposals?

We are unaware of anyone we can not support: Eligible applicants for Federal financial assistance in this competition are U.S. institutions of higher education, non-profits, state and local governments, tribal government entities, U.S. Territories, U.S. Affiliated Pacific Islands institutions, and for-profit organizations. Federal applicants (including NOAA) are eligible, provided that legal authority exists for the Federal applicant to receive funds from another agency.

Under Priority 2, what counts as meaningful private-sector engagement for a parametric-insurance concept — would an unpaid industry collaborator providing in-kind structuring and reinsurance-engagement guidance satisfy the requirement, or does the program expect the industry partner to hold a funded role with project budget?

Generally, this could be appropriate. Private sector involvement is not fully required for this priority. Unpaid involvement of a contributor should be carefully explained. An unpaid partner could possibly also meet priority one but the NOFO does emphasize the need for the private and non-private sector entities to be supported sufficiently to participate across all phases (planning, design, and possibly implementation). Competitive proposals will need to make the case that all partners are sufficiently supported within their sector role.

Academics " Can a PhD student in their final year who is planning to transfer to a Post doc in 2027 apply for this with their academic advisor as the PI?

There are no limitations on who can apply to this NOFO.

Cooperative agreement -- do you anticipate NCCOS/CRP or NOAA interacting or assisting in data gathering with other Federal Agencies -- or PIs?

Most of these are cooperative agreements. Substantial involvement is referring largely to program managers, we can help with advisory group aspects and coordinate across projects to enhance outcomes.Sometimes NCCOS or NOAA are involved as PIs on projects, but the cooperative agreement language is principally referring to PM involvement and in-kind support by NOAA.

Can a special improvement district or business association serve as the required private-sector partner, or does it have to be a for-profit company?

We did not define the private sector in detail in the NOFO, though reference three sectors including public, private, and non-profit. However, we primarily are referencing for-profit team characteristics within the private sector and especially within priority one.

Questions on Applicability of Priorities and Concepts to the NOFO

Should project proposals and teams have a specific regional focus, or can the proposals and teams be nationwide?

We do not have an official position regarding a regional versus a national focus. While the funding opportunity highlights the importance of strong relationships to ensure effective science application, our primary focus is on achieving the greatest impact and applied outcomes. We recognize these goals can sometimes be in conflict with a limited budget, but we do not prescribe a specific approach. It is valuable to demonstrate an understanding of intended user needs and a relationship at the proposal phase can be advantageous.

This question builds on a previous one: Is there any definition that the program uses for the phrase "coastal flood protection"? For example, increased exposure to ocean processes might result in damage to navigation channels. But those channels are already "flooded" in that they are underwater. Is there any issue there? Similarly, if a project is aiming to improve wetland health or area, does the benefit to a wetland need to be connected to a specific community at risk of flooding?

We focus broadly on flood protection, this could include risk to natural or built infrastructure. It is usually a benefit within the values highlighted in this funding opportunity for priority 1 and 2 to include a link to community risk, but not required.

Is there a limit to the number of submissions a single individual can lead during the LOI or full proposal phases?

There is no limit.

Do the current projects align with the three priorities?

In some cases the current ESLR portfolio projects could fit within the highlighted priorities of this funding opportunity. However some of these priorities are different from what we have focused on in the past.

Would you consider funding proposals that focus on the development of guidance documents/manuals of practice for nature-based infrastructure? For example, would the development of the ASCE manual of practice on nature based

infrastructure aimed at achieving the goals of the ASCE-NOAA programmatic MoU to eventually incorporate future uncertainty into design guidance be something this program might fund?

The development of materials could be a component of a successful project if outcomes of the funding opportunity are being accomplished and all other requirements are met.

Are you interested in funding any aspects of efficient data center development that might reduce infrastructure exposure risk, mitigate the dependence on water for cooling, etc., especially in coastal areas?

We encourage you to review the priorities and example outcomes to determine if you are able to align this focus with the goals of the NOFO.

Priority 3 dredge material – does this focus on a particular dredge material type and activity (e.g. polluted spoils and disposal; beach quality sediment and reuse)?

Priority 3 focuses on supporting sediment management practices and the efficient beneficial use of dredged material. We have not designated a focus on a particular dredge material type or activity but the focus will need to address the overall stated goal to “support projects utilizing state-of-the-art methods to advance long-term, comprehensive coastal flood protection with the use or consideration of natural infrastructure within” the priority area.

Priority 1-3; is there a preference for a proposal to pick one, or is it competitive to have elements of more than one Priority?

We expect to fund projects in all three areas and do not have a preference on how many priorities are addressed within a single proposal. Proposals will be ranked within a single competition, though selection could occur out of rank order to ensure that projects meet each of our priorities. It is possible that proposals that meet more priorities well, could receive a higher rank, though this will not be an instruction given to reviewers.

Is conducting modeling as an activity and/or models as an output a requirement, or a preference?

It is expected that successful proposals will include a model component as outlined in each priority.

Are partnerships as an activity and/or as an outcome a requirement, or a preference (especially for a for-profit applicant)?

Private sector and non-private sector engagement "...is only required for Priority 1, though it is relevant and valued in all three priority areas. Collaboration with intended users is required…". For priority one, we would expect proposals to outline true collaboration, leveraging strengths of each sector throughout the project.

Priority 2 mentions innovative insurance products. Is a proposal centered on a parametric insurance product for mangroves, paired with premium-reduction and CRS-incentive mechanisms, squarely in scope — or should the insurance component be framed more as research and product development rather than a designed product?

Depending on the activities either approach could be in scope. The NOFO does emphasize science advancement, and in particular model advancement that would need to be satisfied within the range of approaches provided. Refining an existing product is not necessarily out of scope and complete development of new products and approaches comes with the need of "substantial justification".

Natural systems (protection vs natural services) is there any ranking difference there? Or preference by ESLR and scoring?

We expect projects to consider the role of natural systems in influencing flood risk, and other benefits for understanding the value of different options beyond flood risk and to make a case for whether a natural infrastructure, conventional, or hybrid system is more appropriate.

Is a county resilience director plus a county floodplain administrator enough for the LOI's advisory group, or do the non-governmental intended users need to be listed at this stage.

At the LOI phase, it is not necessary to go out and contact intended users. Understanding the intended user types and how they would use the information you plan to develop would be helpful context at the LOI phase for us to be able to provide the most useful feedback.

What level of modeling integration is expected under priority 3? Is there an expectation to actively model specific scenarios in real world applications using

existing or new models or is it sufficient to catalogue existing models and describe potential uses/applications?

Model integration and advancement are detailed in the NOFO. Project teams frequently integrate various water, ecological, morphological, economic, transportation, and other models based on their specific research focus. While there is no rigid requirement for how this must be accomplished, the program highly values the interdisciplinary advancement of coastal science and the integration of models across fields. Reviewing previously funded projects may serve as a helpful reference.

The NOFO states that funds can't be used for construction, can you clarify if the project proposes to install gages or monitoring equipment, is that considered construction, or are those activities eligible for funding?

Monitoring activities are not considered construction within the NOFO. Monitoring equipment is acceptable. Construction as used in the NOFO is primarily referencing projects that would restore natural systems or build some form of infrastructure.

For priority 1, is the private sector partner expected to fund and implement proposed nature based solutions? And if so, should this happen during the time span of the project?

For priority 1, the private sector is not limited to a specific task, and should have some involvement in all phases. The strength of the private sector in supporting science application and navigating construction of natural infrastructure is noted in the NOFO: "The private sector plays a key role in implementing flood mitigation projects and has not consistently been part of past CRP teams. Therefore, this funding opportunity will incentivize partnerships that advance the science-to-management framework through inclusion of private sector team members throughout the life of the project and in support of project planning, design, and implementation." We do expect a successful proposal in priority one to have a private sector entity to serve in some aspect of the construction role. In terms of completing construction within the lifespan of the project, that is not required, but a successful project would likely make clear connections between science outputs and at minimum planning or design phases.

Could you elaborate on examples of acceptable outputs? for example, if a local government were to apply: Would expanding existing findings from university partners to planning implementation be eligible? This could be an eligible component of an output/outcome.

If you are working to advance the science (as defined in NOFO), you could likely meet priorities. There are advancement requirements. There is an example of ideal outcomes, and the information to need those outcomes would be examples. The ESLR website does have projects that could serve as examples of the types of information that could be useful to this funding opportunity.

Do you prefer we identify specific sites in LOI? In a proposal? Or is there some flexibility on those decisions assuming we can provide certainty that existing data is accessible and the concept is solid?

We have funded projects that aimed to work with a flexible approach with a plan to engage with communities during the project that were not known at the proposal stage based on their regional capacity. There is no rule here. There is always a balance between area of coverage and ability to successfully inform efforts that reduce flood risk and incorporate natural infrastructure. As a general concept, reviewers sometimes seem more comfortable reviewing the concept for identified sites, even if we do not comment on this component.

In NOFO you said you're interested in "transition guidance" -- can you define that? Pg 6 "Guidance and strategies for regional transition and application of natural infrastructure and/or metrics for objective evaluation of performance"?

This refers to resources such as design guidance for natural infrastructure used to plan projects that are likely to be effective and the advancement of metrics to consistently assess performance, ultimately building operational practice for implementing natural infrastructure projects.

I have a question about the expected modeling scale on Priority 3. The NOFO emphasizes developing transferable and scalable approaches, while also discouraging highly localized or specialized models.

This is more of a guide than a rule. There is usually a tradeoff between area of coverage and ability to successfully inform efforts that reduce flood risk and incorporate natural infrastructure. ESLR aims to support projects that support the most research that serve the most people, this is usually not national (difficult to provide project level resolution) nor hyper local (single small project within a community with a very expensive science approach).

Does the installation of small pilots or test plots count as construction?

No, if the goal is research, this is an acceptable project component.

For a project integrating sediment management, coastal flood-risk modeling, and economic valuation of natural infrastructure for private and public investment on NbS, could a scenario-based modeling framework generate actionable outputs responsive to all three priority areas?

Yes. We do not highlight any preference on a priority or any number of priorities. We will compete all proposals together. There could be some value to reviewers to meet more than one priority, but we will not instruct reviewers to value this. Though there is no guidance, there could be an advantage in the selection process if a proposal hits greater than one priority and it is the top scoring proposal for that priority, and meets the programmatic goals of the program.

We can propose modeling and scenario related tools, but we do have to make sure we have partners providing letters of support stating that they need the tool or model for future implementation, correct?

We do not require letters of support. We state that “The creation of new models, rather than utilizing existing models, should come with substantial justification.” Successful projects do explain an understanding of need.

For priority 3, is the active involvement of an advisory group comprised of practitioners /end-users considered sufficient? Or is there a requirement/encouragement of showing field-scale implementation of proposed technical solutions? Could you provide an example of what is acceptable in priority 3?

The active involvement of an advisory group is sufficient to satisfy the requirement. Demonstration of a pathway for the science to be implemented is recommended but. Field-scale implementation during the project period is not a requirement. Please see some possible outcomes by priority beginning on page 6 of the NOFO.

The title of the opportunity mentions 'Flood protection' while in priority 2 'reduction in coastal erosion' is mentioned. Are projects focused on reducing both hazards in a relatively equal manner eligible?

Flood protection and erosion are usually both acceptable hazards to focus on and often can be linked in their consideration.

Would researching innovative public financing of sea level rise/coastal resilience projects be eligible? I believe this falls under priority 2 but wanted some clarification on the goals behind this!

Depending on the methodology and details of the research this could be an eligible activity.

For Priority 3, where sediment management and beneficial use of dredged material often require site-specific modeling, does NOAA expect applicants to develop regional-scale modeling approaches? Or would a local case study using existing models be acceptable, as long as the methodology can be transferred and applied to other coastal locations?

Either could be appropriate, NOAA aims to support projects that support the most research that serve the most people. To the degree that your work is impactful to the most people you can and the budget aligns with the effort, it could be a competitive approach. There is no perfect balance between maximizing impact and science, but the bigger the impact (based on cost) is preferred. In some cases prior projects have developed regional scale models that were used locally to inform work or policy at the appropriate scale.

It doesn't look like any projects in Puget Sound have been funded in the past, would a project focused on Priority 3 in Puget Sound be eligible?

We have no eligibility concerns for any state or territories. At this time we do not expect to have a project in the PNW next fiscal year.

Will there be another funding opportunity to implement the construction projects (nature-based solutions, etc.) that are identified through this NFO?

No, this is outside of the scope of our program. Ideally we want our projects to feed into implementation. There is value in understanding what the process is in your region for seeing the research outcomes implemented.

AND -- Can you give an example of what you mean by this? Pg. 5 "intended users should be able to use the outputs to inform policies and projects that reduce the impacts of coastal flooding without additional conversion of the output in terms of unit or data type, ensuring a smooth transition from outputs to desired outcomes"

Intended users, could be used by someone to install a project that would influence their coastal flood risk. Be clear how your outputs could guide policy or project outcomes.

You don't have preference for priorities, but somewhere else in NOFO it does reiterate private engagement. Can you clarify?

Only priority one requires private sector engagement. Some of the others often benefit from private sector engagement, but it is not required. We value improved collaboration that leverages strengths of all sectors in collaborative teams but it is not a requirement or a scored variable.

Can grant funds pay for parametric trigger design and pricing work by an insurance broker or reinsurer, or only for research?

It is unclear how this would alone meet priorities, but this could be a component of the work.

And could a pilot premium ever be an allowable cost?

If this is referencing paying for the initiation of an insurance policy, the answer is no.

Do coral reefs and beaches count as natural infrastructure here?

Yes.

Do green stormwater infrastructure that reduces flooding where a canal meets the coast natural infrastructure here?

Water-holding designs could fit. Fully gray water storage en-catchment probably isn’t inline with what we are looking for though we do allow for consideration of both natural and built infrastructure for comparison purposes and their influence on flood risk.

Insurance question: Would a feasibility study that ends with a policy ready to buy be competitive, or do you expect the insurance mechanism to be piloted during the award?

This concept is inline with the funding opporsuity. It is not a requirement to pilot the policy during the award. Advancing science that informs a policy and works with those

that are capable of executing a policy would be relevant, from the purpose of coastal science to inform actions

Priority areas are just distinct priorities and not ranked 1 above 2 above 3, right?

No priority is valued over another.

For priority 3, can the project include sediment core sampling from potential borrow/dredge sites to inform the project's modeling and sediment management decisions?

This is an eligible activity.

I see that the grant is focused on coastal communities, but what is the boundary of "coastal"? Can we also model flooding for inland communities that are in coastal counties, just not immediately on the coast

NOAA uses the coast to reference tidally influenced and Great Lakes systems. States and territories are eligible, review the NOFO for details.

Submission Details:

Are references cited part of the page count?

No, references cited are not part of the 15 page limit for the Project Description. While there is no established page limitation for the references cited, this section should include bibliographic citations only and should not be used to provide parenthetical information outside of the Project Description.

In a case where more than 2 entities are collaborating together, should all be registered in SAM or does only the lead PI need to register?

All applicants require a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) for the full proposal submission. The lead applicant should be also registered with SAM for the full proposal submission, but this is not required for the LOI submission by email.

Are any attachments allowed/needed at LOI stage, e.g. maps, detailed budget, etc.

Attachments are not allowed beyond the two page limit. Please provide enough information for us to provide useful feedback on whether the concept appears to align with this funding opportunity. Detailed budgets are not required.

Does the 4 to 6 week registration warning apply to eRA Commons specifically, and does only the lead applicant need SAM.gov, Grants.gov, and eRA Commons registration, or do subawardees need it too?

All applicants require a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) for the full proposal submission. The lead applicant should be also registered with SAM for the full proposal submission, but this is not required for the LOI submission by email.

Will this be an annual opportunity also posted next year? Or one and done?

We do not expect to have this exact NOFO again, and often fund new projects for multiple years from the results from a single competition.